



The Wickbourne Centre, Clun Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 7DZ
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Complaints Policy and Procedures

Last updated: July 2025 by Jon Jolly

Summary of Changes:

- Section added on Governance complaints
- Section added on vexatious complaints

Next Review: September 2027

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Complaints Policy

This policy applies to everyone within Arun Community Church, Arun Community Church: Wickbourne Centre, Refresh Trading Ltd. and Arun Creative Ltd, whether on a paid or voluntary basis. The term 'company' is used in this document and represents all four organisations.

The purpose of this policy:

We recognise that an effective complaints' management system is a proven way of maintaining and building relationships between the Company and other individuals or bodies with whom we interact. Effective handling of complaints demonstrates our commitment to providing the best possible service. It helps us to find out how things have gone wrong, how to put them right, and to prevent future re-occurrences.

We commit to:

- ensuring that everyone is treated equally, regardless of: age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.
- ensuring everyone receives a high standard of service.
- providing a fair and easily understood procedure for dealing with complaints ensuring everyone knows how to make a complaint and how a complaint will be handled.
- making known the existence of this policy, together with relevant contact details and procedural guides, and to ensure that all who are responsible for the Company understand what needs to be done should a complaint occur.
- ensuring that complaints are dealt with consistently, fairly, and sensitively within clear time frames, and that every effort is made to resolve matters satisfactorily for all parties.
- ensure that complaints are monitored to improve our services through being used as a source of information for future reference and improvements in process, where appropriate.
- ensure all complaint information will be handled sensitively and confidentially in line with our Data Protection Policy and Privacy Notice (available at www.arunchurch.com/privacy)

It is not intended for this policy to be used by Company employees regarding their experience in the workplace. Employees should use the Grievance Procedure available in the employee handbook. It is also not intended to cover concerns that staff or volunteers may have about issues of possible malpractice or wrongdoing in the company. These should be dealt with under the Public Interest Disclosure (whistleblowing) procedure also available in the employee handbook.

If anyone is concerned that a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm, they should refer to our Safeguarding policy available at www.arunchurch.com/safeguarding.

Defining a complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of our operations, whether actions taken or lack of action, justified or not. It can initially come verbally, by telephone, e-

mail, or by letter. The complaint might be about; the behaviour of an employee or volunteer, the behaviour of others using our services, the level or type of service received, being refused a service altogether, the building or facilities we use, someone feeling that they have been treated unfairly or in a way that is discriminatory, a specific activity or outing, and anything else related to the service provided by the company.

If a serious incident takes place, charity trustees are required to report what has happened to the Charity Commission and explain how it is being managed. An actual or alleged incident must be promptly reported to all the relevant authorities which, depending on the nature of the complaint, may include the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), Charity Commission, Fundraising Regulator, Ofsted, the police, social services, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). Please refer to [Specific Types of Complaints](#) in the Complaints Procedure for more information.

Complaints Procedure

Where possible, if you have a concern about an aspect of our service, you should initially talk with an employee or manager regarding your concern. They will, in the first instance, try to resolve the matter informally for you. This is often possible and can mean that the problem is sorted out simply and more quickly.

If an informal solution has been tried and not resolved the issue, or if you feel that informal discussions are inadequate or likely to be ineffective, you should follow the complaints procedure below. There are four steps in the process: Complaint, Investigation, Outcome, and if necessary, Appeal.

1. Complaint

Complaints can be made in the following ways:

- Online at www.arunchurch.com/complaints
- By email to hello@arunchurch.com with the subject as 'Complaint'
- By telephone on 01903 782744
- By post to The Executive Leader, Arun Community Church, The Wickbourne Centre, Clun Road, Littlehampton, West Sussex, BN17 7DZ
- Verbally to a member of the Company Management, Leadership or Trustees.

All complaints will be logged in writing. If the complaint was made verbally, the person making the complaint should be encouraged to put it in writing so that a record of their own words can be kept. The following details will be recorded:

- The date, and name of the person receiving the complaint.
- Name, address and contact details of the person making the complaint.
- The relationship between the person making the complaint and the company.
- The facts of the complaint.
- What outcome (if any) they are hoping for.

The person making the complaint will be contacted within two weeks (10 working days) of the complaint being submitted, and told the following information:

- That the complaint has been registered.
- That we regret a complaint has been necessary.
- That we have a procedure we will follow, referring them to this document.
- That the information will be handled confidentially and only shared with those who need to know in order to help resolve it, except in circumstances where we believe someone may be at risk of harm.
- The name of the person investigating the complaint.
- What will happen next; and how long it should take to be dealt with. Any timescale for the investigation should be realistic but avoid delay.
- To get in touch directly if they have any questions in the meantime.

The complaint will also be communicated to the Senior Leader and Chair of Trustees within two weeks (10 working days) of the complaint being made. If the complaint is about something that has already been resolved, then no further action will be taken. If the complaint is unresolved, the issue will be investigated.

2. Investigation

Once a complaint has been logged, we will start an investigation into the complaint. Depending on the nature and seriousness of the complaint, other responsible persons from the Company, and appropriate external agencies may need to be involved. Please see the section [Specific Types of Complaints](#) below for more information. This may change the expected timeframe of the investigation, but the person making the complaint will be kept informed of any developments.

The manager of the service or department mentioned in the complaint will be responsible for the investigation unless the complaint is about them, in which case another manager or senior manager will investigate. They will plan the investigation according to the nature of the complaint ensuring:

- The person making the complaint (and their parent/carer if they are a child/young person) is interviewed.
- Any witnesses are interviewed
- If the complaint is about a specific person, then that person (and the parent/carer if the person is a child) should be informed that a complaint has been made against them, including the nature of the complaint, and they will be given a chance to respond unless doing so would compromise anyone's safety or a police investigation.
- If, at any point during the investigation, it appears that a criminal offence may have been committed, the matter will be reported to the police. Discussions will be held with the police about whether the investigation into the complaint can continue alongside their own enquiries.
- If it emerges that a child or vulnerable adult may have been caused harm or may be at risk of harm, the Company safeguarding procedures will be followed. See the [Safeguarding Complaints](#) section below.

Any service provided to the person making the complaint should continue as normal during the investigation. If this is not possible (e.g., because a child has had to be

excluded from an activity, or because the person making the complaint does not want to use the service at that point, or because it would not be appropriate to continue working with them) then this should be acknowledged, and temporary alternative arrangements made, if possible.

The investigating manager will make notes of the investigation, including notes of any meetings that take place. The person making the complaint will receive an outcome report or, if the investigation will take longer, a progress update within four weeks (20 working days) from the acknowledgment of the complaint.

3. Outcome

The investigating manager will write an outcome report based on their findings. The report will:

- Detail any actions taken in the investigation.
- State clearly whether the complaint is upheld or not, giving reasons why.
- Make recommendations about how the matter can be resolved.
- Make recommendations for action to prevent any recurrence of the problem.
- Be shared with both the person making the complaint and any specific employee, volunteer or other persons who may be involved.

The person making the complaint will be asked to comment about the findings of the report and these will also be recorded on the file. The complaint will be closed and the progress on any recommended actions will be reviewed regularly by the Company following the outcome. Summary notes of complaints, with any personal details removed, will be kept on the complaints file to assist the company in the process of monitoring and learning from complaints.

If the complaint leads to any disciplinary action or a referral to a statutory authority, copies of the notes made during the investigation and the report of the investigation (together with any notes relating to the outcome) will be kept confidentially on the file of any person who is the subject of the complaint.

4. Appeal

If either the person making the complaint or a person who is the subject of the complaint does not accept the findings of the outcome report, they should confirm in writing their intent to appeal the decision. A complaint can also progress directly to appeal if it has previously been handled as a complaint, but the same concerns have resurfaced within 12 months. Any intent to appeal should:

- Be addressed to the investigating manager who handled the original complaint using the contact details in the Complaint section above.
- Outline the reasons they disagree with the findings.
- State their intent to appeal the outcome.

Appeals will be reviewed by a manager senior to the person who was investigating the original complaint, a trustee, or by a completely independent person, not employed or acting as a volunteer for the company who will be nominated by the company.

The person making the appeal will be contacted within one week of the appeal being submitted, and told the following information:

- That the appeal has been registered.
- That we have a procedure we will follow, referring them back to this document.
- The name of the person reviewing the appeal.
- What will happen next; and how long it should take to be dealt with.

The appeal will review the original investigation and outcome, and an appeal outcome report will be compiled. The report will:

- Detail any additional actions taken in the appeal review
- State clearly whether the appeal is upheld or not, giving reasons why.
- Make any further recommendations.
- Be shared with both the person making the complaint and any specific employee, volunteer or other persons who may be involved.

The appeal will be closed and the progress on any recommended actions will be reviewed regularly by the Company following the outcome. Summary notes of complaints, with any personal details removed, will be kept on the complaints file to assist the company in the process of monitoring and learning from complaints.

If the complaint leads to any disciplinary action or a referral to a statutory authority, copies of the notes made during the investigation and the report of the investigation (together with any notes relating to the outcome) will be kept confidentially on the file of any person who is the subject of the complaint.

The result of the appeal is final, and no further actions will be taken on the original complaint. If any party wishes to complain further following the completion of this procedure, they should take it up with an external party such as a local councillor, MP or regulatory body (see [Specific Types of Complaints](#) below for more information).

Specific Types of Complaints:

Some complaints may fall into areas that are governed by law and/or external bodies that regulate them. The following section outlines additional information related to specific types of complaint including:

- Data Protection
- Fundraising
- Childcare
- Safeguarding

Data Protection Complaints

Data Protection complaints are defined as an expression of dissatisfaction at any aspect of our handling of your (or others') personal data, including acts carried out by third party suppliers. Data protection complaints may include concern over how your personal information has been processed, how your data complaint has been handled, or an appeal against any decision made following a data complaint. We are registered as a data

processor with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). For more information about how we use your personal data, view our privacy notice at www.arunchurch.com/privacy.

To make a complaint about data protection, [first follow the Complaints Procedure](#) above.

Taking your complaint further

If you are not happy with our response to your complaint, you can contact the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO). There is no set timeframe for ICO to deal with complaints but they outline what to expect when you make a complaint on their website here: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/data-protection-complaints/what-to-expect/>. We will ensure that we keep all correspondence on file and it can be made available to the ICO if the complaint is pursued further.

Contact details for the Information Commissioner's Office

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow, Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Phone: 0303 123 1113
<https://ico.org.uk/concerns/handling/>

Fundraising Complaints

Fundraising complaints are defined as an expression of dissatisfaction at any aspect of our fundraising activities, including administrative practices or procedures, and acts carried out by third party suppliers. The charity is committed to being open and honest in all our dealings with our supporters. Arun Community Church is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and follows the fundraising code.

To make a complaint about our fundraising, [first follow the Complaints Procedure](#) above.

As part of the investigation, the investigating manager will record whether it is about an alleged breach of the Institute of Fundraising's Codes of Fundraising Practice, and/ or the Fundraising Promise. The Fundraising Regulator will need this information if the complaint is referred to them and the complaint will be included in our annual report to the Fundraising Regulator. We may also need to report to the Charity Commission.

Taking your complaint further

If you are not happy with our response to your complaint, you should contact the Fundraising Regulator. We will ensure that we keep all correspondence on file and it can be

made available to the Fundraising Regulator if the complaint is pursued further. The charity agrees to abide by decisions made by the Fundraising Regulator Board.

Contact details for the Fundraising Regulator

Fundraising Regulator staff are available to assist and advise members of the public, charities and fundraising organisations. The contact details are as follows:

2nd floor CAN Mezzanine
Building, 49-51 East Road,
London,
N1 6AH

Phone: 0300 999 3407

Email: enquiries@fundraisingregulator.org.uk

<https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/complaints>

Contact details for the Charity Commission

The Charity Commission should also be contacted where your concerns relate to:

- dishonest handling of funds;
- misapplication of charitable funds;
- actions that contravene the Charity's Governing Document or charity law; and
- actions that threaten to bring the Charity into disrepute

Charity Commission
PO Box 211
Bootle
L20 7YX

Phone: 0300 066 9197

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

Governance Complaints

Governance complaints typically involve concerns regarding how the charity is being managed and operated. This can include issues such as:

- a charity not following the law, which significantly damages its reputation and public trust in charities generally
- serious harm to the people the charity helps or other people who come into contact with the charity through its work
- charities being used for significant private advantage
- a charity set up for illegal or improper purposes, for example to avoid paying tax
- a charity losing significant amounts of money
- a charity losing significant assets, for example land or buildings
- criminal, illegal or terrorist activity

To make a complaint about our governance, [first follow the Complaints Procedure](#) above.

As part of the investigation, the investigating manager will record whether it is about an alleged misuse or mismanagement of the charity. Typically, serious issues of this nature will be reported directly to the Charity Commission by the charity as a Serious Incident Report. If this happens, we will let you know that your complaint has been reported to the Commission.

Taking your complaint further

If you are not happy with our response to your complaint, you should contact the Charity Commission directly. We will ensure that we keep all correspondence on file and it can be made available to the Charity Commission if the complaint is pursued further. The charity agrees to abide by decisions made by the Charity Commission.

Contact details for the Charity Commission

The Charity Commission should also be contacted where your concerns relate to:

- dishonest handling of funds;
- misapplication of charitable funds;
- actions that contravene the Charity's Governing Document or charity law; and
- actions that threaten to bring the Charity into disrepute

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PO Box 211
Bootle
L20 7YX

Phone: 0300 066 9197

<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

Childcare Complaints

Childcare complaints are defined as an expression of dissatisfaction at any aspect of our Ofsted registered childcare services, namely Playcentre Rustington and Playcentre Wickbourne pre-schools. This may be related to the standard of care towards a child, the conduct of staff and volunteers, or the administration of the setting.

To make a complaint about our childcare provision, [first follow the Complaints Procedure](#) above.

If your complaint relates to the conduct of employees or volunteers that may have put a child or vulnerable adult at risk of harm, it will be considered a safeguarding issue and dealt with under our safeguarding processes (see below). For serious concerns relating to a childcare setting, the Company will contact Ofsted directly within 14 days of becoming aware of the issue. We may also need to report to the Charity Commission.

Taking your complaint further

If you are not happy with our response to your complaint, you can contact Ofsted. Ofsted advise that they cannot resolve disputes between individuals and childcare providers, so you should only contact them if you believe we are not meeting the statutory requirements for registered childcare providers set out in the [early years foundation stage framework](#).

Ofsted will review the information you provide and decide whether to carry out an immediate inspection, ask us (the provider) to take action, or work with other agencies to look at any issues. Ofsted will not contact you to let you know the outcome of your complaint.

Contact details for Ofsted

Phone: 0300 123 4666

Email: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ofsted/about/complaints-procedure#complain-about-childcare>

Safeguarding Complaints

Safeguarding complaints are defined as an expression of dissatisfaction at any aspect of our safeguarding practices designed to keep people safe from harm. This could include administrative practices or procedures, action, or lack of action taken by the company, and acts carried out by third party suppliers. Complaints that relate to the conduct of employees or volunteers that may have put a child or vulnerable adult at risk of harm, or relating to someone at risk of abuse, will be dealt with under our safeguarding processes, available at www.arunchurch.com/safeguarding.

To make a complaint about our safeguarding practices, [first follow the Complaints Procedure](#) above.

Any concerns regarding the conduct of employees or volunteers that may have put a child or vulnerable adult at risk of harm, will be reported to the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) within 24 hours by the company's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

For serious safeguarding concerns relating to a childcare setting, the Company will contact Ofsted directly within 14 days of becoming aware of the issue. We may also need to report a serious concern to the Charity Commission, to the police if the concern involves criminal behaviour, or trigger a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) referral. Depending on the investigation, the company may need to instigate the disciplinary procedure against an employee. Where other agencies are involved, we will keep all parties informed within the limits of confidentiality.

Taking your complaint further

If you are not happy with our response to your safeguarding complaint, you can report any safeguarding concerns directly to the appropriate agencies including West Sussex County Council Integrated Front Door (IFD) and Sussex Police.

If you believe a person is in immediate risk of harm, call 999 and follow their instructions.

Contact details for Safeguarding Agencies

West Sussex County Council Integrated Front Door (IFD)

Children

- Report online: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/education-children-and-families/keeping-children-safe/raise-a-concern-about-a-child/>
- Phone: **01403 229900** (Mon-Fri 9am to 5pm)

Adults

- Report online: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/social-care-support/adults/raise-a-concern-about-an-adult/>
- Phone: 01243 642121

Sussex Police (non-emergency):

- Report online: <https://www.sussex.police.uk/ro/report/>
- Phone: 101

If you have a concern about an adult working or volunteering with children who may have behaved inappropriately, contact the Local Area Designated Officer (LADO):

- Email: LADO@westsussex.gov.uk
- Phone: [033 022 26450](tel:03302226450)

Vexatious Complaints

A vexatious complaint is one that is made without merit, often repeatedly or with the intention of causing disruption or distress rather than addressing a genuine concern. Such complaints typically lack substance, may be harassing or abusive, and do not contribute constructively to resolving an issue. Sometimes a genuine complaint can become vexatious if the process or outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant.

Identifying Vexatious Complaints

A complaint may be considered vexatious if it meets any of the following criteria:

- Repeatedly made without any new evidence or information.
- Clearly intended to cause disruption, annoyance, or distress.
- Lacking any serious purpose or value.
- Harassing or abusive in nature.
- Causes harm, or at risk of causing harm to the complainant themselves.

Dealing with Vexatious Complaints

If your complaint is found to be vexatious, or becomes vexatious during or after the complaint investigation:

- We will let you know that we consider the complaint vexatious and provide a clear explanation for our reasoning.
- You will be informed that, if the issue remains unchanged and no new evidence is provided, the charity may not respond to further correspondence on the same topic.
- The charity will keep detailed records of your complaint, the review process, and any decisions made to ensure transparency and accountability.