# Complaints and Serious Incidents Policy and Procedures

**Reviewed and accepted Signed** P S Fermor **08/03/2026**

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## Serious Incident Reporting Policy and Procedures

### What is a serious incident?

A serious incident is an adverse event, whether actual or alleged, which results in or risks significant:

- harm to Deal Pentecostal Church's beneficiaries, staff, volunteers or others who come into contact with the Church through its work.
- loss of the Church's money or assets
- damage to the Church's property
- harm to Deal Pentecostal Church's work or reputation

### Reporting a serious incident

Any actual or alleged serious incident must be reported to the Charity Commission as soon as is reasonably possible after it happens. The Chairman is usually the person who would report any serious incidents, however, all Trustees bear ultimate responsibility for ensuring that an actual or alleged incident is reported as soon as is reasonably possible after it happens or immediately after they become aware of it.

As "whistleblowing" only applies to employees and workers, the Trustees believe that the Church's Complaints Policy and Procedure is adequate to cover any potential incidents.

Deal Pentecostal Church views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person that has made the complaint.

# Complaints Policy

**What do we try to achieve?**

We want to resolve any concerns or complaints quickly, fairly, informally if that is possible; and restore people and relationships.

**How do we do this?**

We let people know how to raise their concerns or complaints, we make the process as easy to use as we can, and we learn from our experience and improve for the future.

**What is a complaint and how can it be raised?**

Any expression of unhappiness or concern with the way the organisation or individuals do things can be treated as a complaint. It can be raised face to face, by phone, email or letter.

**Who can raise a complaint?**

Any person or organisation that has a substantial interest in, and has been affected by what the Church does.

**Who will be responsible for dealing with my complaint?**

It depends on the stage reached but those involved with complaints investigation are the Chairman, a person appointed by him to investigate, and the Church Council.

**Are complaints confidential?**

If you would like us to investigate your complaint please understand that to be fair to everyone we have to disclose your complaint and your identity to the people who need to answer it and may need to disclose it to those who witnessed what happened. Your complaint will also be disclosed to the people responsible for dealing with your complaint.

**Could the Church's Policy be changed?**

The Church reviews and updates its Policy in the light of experience and where it feels it can be improved.

## Complaints Procedure

**How to raise concerns or complaints?**

Verbally to: any of our Trustees at any of our events or activities
By phone to: 01304 366137 or 07710 182013
By letter to: Deal Pentecostal Church, 69 Mill Hill, Deal, Kent. CT14 9EW
By Email to: dealpentecostal@gmail.com

**What happens next?**

The person that you made your complaint to, will record:

i) Your name, address and telephone number
ii) What your relationship is with the Church
iii) The facts of your complaint

You will be given a copy of our complaints procedure.

We will ask you whether you would like us to try to resolve your complaint informally or whether you wish to make a formal complaint. If you wish to make a formal complaint then you will be asked to put this in writing.

You will be told what the next step will be and how long we expect it to take.

**How we try to resolve complaints by the informal route**

**<u>Stage 1</u>**

We will immediately inform the person or organisation you have complained about and ask them to work with us and with you to repair the relationship within one week.

Whether or not the complaint is resolved by this stage, the Chairman will be informed within one week of your making your complaint and will record the complaint in the Church's complaints log.

**Stage 2**

If your complaint has not been resolved informally the Chairman will:

i) Ask you to put your complaint in writing within 14 days
ii) If you do not put your complaint in writing it will be recorded as not proceeded with and no further action will be taken
iii) Following a written complaint the Chairman will appoint a person to investigate your complaint and acknowledge your complaint and inform you who will be investigating it within 10 days
iv) The investigator will send a copy of your complaint to the person or organisation complained of (unless it compromises the confidentiality of a third person) and ask them to respond in writing to the investigator within 14 days
v) After receiving the response the investigator will tell you that he has received a response and will either let you have his findings about your complaint or will let you know of what further steps he will be taking and when he expects to let you have his full reply
vi) When any further steps are taken the investigator will let you have his findings

**Stage 3**

If you are not satisfied with the investigator's response you can request that the complaint is reviewed by the Church Council. The request must be in writing (by letter or email) and addressed to the Chairman.

The Chairman may personally deal with the investigation at this stage or appoint someone else. He will write to acknowledge your request for a review and tell you who will be investigating within 10 days.

The person or organisation complained about will be sent a copy of your request for review and invited to make a further response within 10 days.

You will be sent a response within 28 days of your request for a review. This will either give you a final response or update you on what is happening and let you know when the matter is likely to be concluded.

The full conclusion is final so far as the internal process of the Church is concerned unless the Church Council decides to seek the help of Assemblies of God Inc. to resolve the complaint.

**Charity Commission**

It is open to you at any stage to raise your complaint with the Charity Commission. Information about the kind of complaints the Commission will involve itself in can be found on its website at www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission

**Can we change or vary our Complaints Procedure?**

We strive to constantly improve our Policies and Procedures and the Church Council reviews these in the light of experience.

If in any individual case there is a conflict of interest (an example would be a complaint about the Chairman) then steps will be taken to vary the procedure to make it fair. You will be fully informed if there is a problem and told how the Church will address it.

**How do we learn from complaints?**

We take on board any lessons learned from individual complaints and review the complaints annually to identify any trends which should be addressed.

## Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation.
- Listen — allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words.
- Sometimes a person just wants to "*let off steam*".
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry.
- Show an interest in what is being said.
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details.
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary.
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) — you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation *e.g.* "*I understand that this situation is frustrating for you*".
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise.
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue.
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver.
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met.
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told.
- Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal.

### Advice on Communicating

Be very cautious about sending emails when either the sender or recipient is agitated or angry – best to wait until the next morning!

Don't send emails containing personal complaints or disciplinary matters if there is a possibility someone could pass it on. It is better to use snail-mail!

Always try to have someone to check your correspondence for accuracy, grammar and grace!

If corresponding on behalf of a committee, ensure that the others have seen and agreed the content before sending it.

**See also Deal Pentecostal Church's Constitution:**

## 9 DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

9.1 It is implicit in membership of the Church that members accept the responsibilities and privileges of membership as set out in this Constitution

9.2 Church membership may be terminated by the Minister together with the Church Council for any of the following reasons:

a. failure to attend the Church Services for three consecutive months
b. death or presumed death
c. misconduct
d. regular attendance at another Church unless approved by the Church Council
e. unable to worship and serve God within the context of the Church's Statement of Faith
f. unable to actively support the Church's Vision and Values

9.3 The Minister/Church Council are responsible for maintaining good discipline within the Church for the glory of God and the sake of the testimony.

9.4 The Minister/Church Council shall investigate any alleged breach of the accepted rules of Christian conduct. Where such breach is substantiated the following disciplinary measures may be imposed:

a. private verbal caution by the Minister
b. verbal caution in the presence of the Minister and Church Council
c. written caution as to future behaviour
d. temporary suspension of membership for a limited period, involving possible absence from Church activities and meetings
e. removal from office
f. permanent revocation of membership

9.5 The making of apologies and/or restitution may also be required. The individual shall have the right to make representation in person or writing to the Ministers and Church Council when the matter is considered.

9.6 In accordance with Scriptural requirements it may also be necessary for the Minister and Church Council to inform the Church of a disciplinary measure.

9.7 Notwithstanding the provisions of 9.3 and 9.5 above it will be the Minister and Church Council's intention to restore and reinstate in a loving and discreet manner. The more severe measures will only be adopted where the greater interests of the Church require such a course of action.

**12.2. Complaints**

A member with a grievance other than one relating to a disciplinary matter may ask the Minister and Church Council to investigate the matter. They shall investigate the matter and shall inform interested parties of their findings and any proposed recommendations. Interested parties may make further representations to the Church Council. The Church Council shall then decide on the matter and their decision shall be final

The Church Leadership would take any substantiated complaint seriously but where there is a conflict between personalities we expect the individuals to try to address the matter with each other before approaching the church. The biblical principle for

resolving difficulties is for the offended party to go and see the other person to seek reconciliation as found in Matthew 5:23-24 and Matthew 18:15-17.[1]
If members have a misunderstanding, disagreement or grievance within the Church, but find it difficult to approach the Pastor, they should contact one of the Church Leadership, another Pastor who regularly ministers at the Church, or the AoG Offices. This safety-net is here so that no-one needs to feel they are beyond help or that they are being disloyal.

[1] Agreed at Church Council Meeting 05/07/04