

Grievance Policy

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ANGELICAN MISSION IN ENGLAND



cornerstone
CHURCH - GRAYS

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Next review date in 2027.

If anything in this policy contradicts an employment contract between Cornerstone Church Grays and an employed individual, the employment contract takes precedence.

Policy and Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide employees with a readily accessible procedure for addressing any problems or concerns they may have while they are working for the Cornerstone Church Grays. This procedure should not replace normal employee–manager dialogue. However, where such informal dialogue has failed to resolve an issue of concern, then an employee may utilise this procedure in an effort to have an issue resolved to his/her satisfaction.

It is accepted that when people work together there will inevitably be situations where misunderstandings, problems or concerns need to be resolved. It is the policy of the Cornerstone Church Grays that a culture of good communication, openness and a willingness to co-operate and listen will exist. Therefore, it is envisaged that the majority of these issues or misunderstandings will be capable of being addressed informally in an efficient and effective manner. However, where such issues are unresolved, they may become grievances. Employees are encouraged to seek resolution of an issue by utilising this procedure.

At each grievance meeting held under the formal procedure, the employee has a right to be accompanied by a colleague, friend or trade union representative.

The grievance procedure should not be used to lodge appeals against disciplinary sanctions. The Cornerstone Church Grays' disciplinary procedure contains sufficient mechanism for dealing with an employee's dissatisfaction at a disciplinary sanction applied to them.

The Cornerstone Church Grays reserves the right to engage external third party assistance at any stage of the grievance process. In addition, the Cornerstone Church Grays may seek external HR advice if required.

This procedure does not constitute contractual terms and conditions. The Cornerstone Church Grays reserves the right to amend any provision of this procedure subsequent to appropriate consultation.

Acas Code of Practice: Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures

This policy fully incorporates the provisions of the Acas code.

Procedure

In order to provide an effective and timely resolution of employee concerns, the following procedure will be followed to ensure that employee complaints or problems receive full and careful attention.

Reasonable adjustments will be made to the procedure for disabled employees. Any employee who experiences difficulty with the procedure for any reason should seek assistance from their manager.

Informal discussion

Employees are encouraged to approach their line manager in the first instance to discuss issues and attempt to informally resolve them. Informal discussion can frequently solve problems without the need for written record. Employees will receive an outcome within 5 working days. If your grievance is about the trustee responsible for employment – or there is some other reason you don't want to raise it with them – you must instead notify another trustee.

If an employee is dissatisfied with the outcome, they may invoke the formal grievance procedure.

Formal procedure

Stage one

The employee should raise the grievance in writing with their line manager. This should explain the nature and extent of the grievance and indicate the outcome the employee is looking for.

If the employee's grievance relates to concerns regarding their line manager, then the employee should raise the complaint to their manager or to the trustees of the Cornerstone Church Grays.

Concerns regarding any matter which would fall within the scope of legislation on public interest disclosures (otherwise known as whistleblowing) must be raised directly using the Whistleblowing procedure.

Under stage one, a meeting will be arranged between the line manager and the employee. A minute taker will also be present. The employee may be accompanied by a fellow colleague, friend or trade union official. The meeting will be held to discuss the grievance in detail and the employee should take any documents or evidence they have regarding the grievance to the meeting.

Please do not record the meeting without our consent, as this suggests that you do not trust the Church's process or the trustees who are conducting it. If you have misgivings about either the process or the trustees leading it, you should tell us openly so that we can address your concerns. For our part, we in turn will not record the meeting without your knowledge.

The line manager will complete a full investigation into the matter. This may involve holding investigation meetings with witnesses, requiring witness statements to be produced and reviewing written evidence. A decision will be taken by the line manager following the investigation and they will respond to the grievance, in writing, within 10 working days of the meeting being held. If there is a delay in the process, the employee will be kept informed of the reasons for the delay and the date that the outcome will be delivered. The employee will be informed of actions to take if they wish to appeal the outcome.

Minutes of the meeting will be taken and copies will be made available to the employee. A copy of the minutes will be stored securely by the appropriate person.

Stage two

If the employee is not satisfied with the outcome of stage one then they should write a letter of appeal. The employee should write to an Elder setting out the reasons for their dissatisfaction. Stage two will involve the same procedural steps as stage one, and the outcome will be provided to the employee within 10 working days of the hearing.

There will be no further appeal after stage two.

Simultaneous grievance and disciplinary matters

The Cornerstone Church Grays will make a decision on how to progress matters when an employee raises a grievance about a disciplinary procedure involving them. Acas guidance suggests that disciplinary hearings may be suspended for a short duration

while the grievance is investigated. The Cornerstone Church Grays will assess the exact nature of the grievance and will have the final say over suspension of a disciplinary procedure.

Extending timescales under the procedure

The timescales outlined in this procedure will be adhered to whenever this is reasonably practicable. There may be extenuating circumstances that are outside of either parties' control, for example, where a key witness is unavailable, or the grievance requires extensive investigation.

Where it is not reasonably practicable to adhere to the deadlines, both parties will discuss and agree any extension to the timelines.

Mediation

The Cornerstone Church Grays reserves the right to seek assistance from external mediators at any stage in the grievance procedure. Where both parties agree to undertake mediation, the grievance process will be suspended whilst this is ongoing.

Protection against detriment

Nothing in this procedure is intended to prevent the employee from raising any concerns they have. Employees who raise concerns under this procedure will not be subject to any detrimental or less favourable treatment as a result of doing so.

Where the grievance is made with malicious intent, the employee will be subject to the Cornerstone Church Grays' disciplinary procedure.

Guide

Managing Grievance

From time to time, employees may have concerns regarding their employment and therefore each employer needs to have a mechanism by which they can have their concerns heard. The Grievance Procedure has 3 stages, one informal and two formal stages.

Most issues can be resolved without invoking the formal procedure. By keeping a clear communication channel open between manager and employee, you can address concerns quickly before they become major problems.

The informal procedure

Where a grievance is being brought to you informally, you should arrange to have a confidential discussion with your employee. Listen to their concerns and address them where you can. If the concerns will necessitate you having to speak to other people, ensure that you get their agreement to investigate further before you carry out any investigation. Then ensure you close the loop by reporting back to the employee who made the complaint. There is no need to document any of this formally.

The formal procedure

Where the employee isn't happy with the outcome of their informal grievance or if the issue is sufficiently serious that it needs to be addressed via the formal procedure, they should submit their concerns in writing, and you should arrange to hear their formal grievance. The employee should be invited to a meeting with their line manager (unless the issue is about their line manager in which case it should go to the next level of manager, or an external representative such as a trustee). The meeting should take place as soon as possible after the letter of grievance has been submitted as this will significantly improve the chances of reaching a successful outcome.

The employee raising the grievance can bring a colleague or trade union representative to the meeting for support. If you as a church wish to allow someone other than a colleague or trade union rep into the meeting, you can do so but be careful about allowing family members to attend (as they tend to struggle not to intervene in the process). Legal representatives should not be allowed to attend.

At the meeting, the employee will explain the grounds for their grievance and should present evidence to support their views. The meeting chair should ask questions to ensure they have enough information to be able to investigate the matters of concern.

After the interview with the complainant, the chair should adjourn the meeting to conduct an investigation into the grievance. This will involve speaking to any witnesses but also may involve gathering other evidence (depending on the nature of the issue in question) such as CCTV, computer records etc.

Once the investigation has been concluded, the chair should compile a report of all the evidence proven and unproven and determine an outcome: Whether they uphold or don't uphold the grievance. That outcome will then be delivered in writing.

The appeal

If the complainant is unhappy with the outcome of the original hearing, they can appeal that outcome. The appeal letter should be sent to a senior manager or trustee and should detail why the original outcome was unfair. The appeal manager will interview the complainant and will give them the opportunity to explain their appeal in more detail. The appeal manager will review the original report and outcome letter and will decide whether they need to complete further investigations to come to an outcome. Once they have delivered the appeal outcome, this concludes the grievance process.

Normalising working relationships

Normalising working relationships after a formal grievance can be difficult. You may wish to consider mediation as a way of rebuilding trust and working relationships. Mediation only works if both parties are willing to engage. Done well, it can help both parties to understand where the other is coming from and provides a platform for better working relationships going forwards.