



Complaints Policy

This policy sets out a procedure whereby anyone may raise a complaint against Cornerstone Evangelical Church Abergavenny, its activities, leaders, or members of staff. It outlines the process that will be followed to achieve a resolution of the problem.

This policy does not cover safeguarding concerns, which are addressed in CEC's Safeguarding Policy.

Complaints by staff or volunteers in relation to their employment or role should be addressed through CEC's Grievance Procedure.

Stage 1 – Informal resolution of concerns

A formal complaint is not the same as raising a concern. Concerns can often be dealt with by taking the matter up with the individual involved, or with the pastor or elders, before there is a need to raise it to the level of a formal complaint.

As a Church, we encourage those with a concern or complaint to seek to resolve it informally, speedily and fairly through discussion, problem solving, mediation and negotiation, and without recourse to the formal procedure set out in this policy.

If a grievance is against a fellow church member, it should first be dealt with in the manner of Matthew 18. If it is in relation to a pastor or elder, then 1 Timothy 5 should be followed. It is only once these Biblical and informal resolution processes have been followed that a formal complaint should be raised.

Making a Complaint

A formal complaint must be received by email or in writing, and can be made by anyone, whether they are a CEC member or not.

Where possible, complaints should be made using the Complaints Form in Appendix 1, which should be emailed to the Church Administrator at admin@abercec.org.uk. Once received, your complaint will be recorded anonymously in our register of complaints which is audited annually by the Trustees.

If someone is submitting a complaint on behalf of another person, the Administrator will need written confirmation from the complainant giving agreement for that person to act for you.

Acknowledgement

CEC will aim to resolve complaints as soon as possible, and will aim to acknowledge complaints within 14 working days of receipt. The acknowledgement will explain the next steps and the likely timescale for sending a written response. We will always aim to respond to complaints within 8 weeks of receipt.

Understanding

In order to ensure that complaints are fully understood and can be investigated appropriately, it may be necessary to take any of the following steps:

- 1) ask the complainant to provide further details in writing;
- 2) write to the complainant to understand the outcome he/she may be seeking; or
- 3) to arrange a time to have a further discussion with the complainant to hear more details;
- 4) to seek information as appropriate from any other staff members or volunteers involved in the complaint

Confidentiality

All complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially. Information concerning the complaint may be shared to gain a better understanding of the complaint, but this will be done on a need-to-know basis, and in line with the CEC Data Protection Policy.

Investigation

The complaint will be overseen by the Trustee with lead responsibility for investigating complaints, who will carry out the investigation him/herself. In the case of any possible compromise of independence, the Chair of Trustees will arrange for an independent investigation to be carried out by another

named person. The investigator will be a member of the church, not related to either the complainant, or the person or ministry area that is the subject of the complaint.

The complaint will be reviewed carefully and the findings will be shared with the Trustees.

Response

The outcome of the investigation will be communicated to the complainant in writing, by email whenever possible. The response will set out how the investigation was carried out, and whether the complaint has been upheld (whether fully or partially), plus any actions that will be taken as a result.

Remedies

CEC Trustees will discuss any remedies that may be appropriate in the light of the investigation. These remedies will be shared with the complainant.

CEC will always aim to seek a resolution with which all parties are satisfied and we will work to the best of our abilities towards this end.

Right to Appeal

If the outcome of the investigation is not satisfactory to all parties, the complainant may submit an appeal to the Chair of Trustees within 28 days of receipt of the outcome. The appeal is NOT a reinvestigation of the original complaint. The Chair of Trustees will review the process undertaken and establish whether any further investigation is required. Once any necessary inquiries/investigations are complete a final decision will be made, and the complainant notified.

Vexatious Complaints

If the church leadership and trustees conclude that a complaint is vexatious (i.e., unreasonable, and repeated, once the above processes have been exhausted), the church is under no obligation to investigate further the complaint made once all available avenues of resolution have been explored.

Cornerstone Church Abergavenny Complaint Form

Your details

Name:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

If anyone else is involved in raising this complaint or are you raising the complaint on behalf of someone else, please give details:

About the complaint

Date(s):

Person(s) involved:

Complaint about: (please clearly describe the nature of your complaint)

Supporting information:

- *State the matter or name of the person who is the subject of the complaint.*
- *What happened, when and where.*
- *Provide the contact details or statements of any witnesses.*
- *If complaining about a decision, explain what the decision was about, when it was taken, and who made it.*
 - *Explain what impact this decision has had, or you may fear will have, and upon whom.*
- *Provide any additional information that you believe would be helpful.*

Q1. Have you tried to resolve this matter informally? YES/NO

If YES, please move to Q2.

If NO, please explain briefly why you decided not to try to resolve the matter informally, then move to Q3.

Q2. If you tried to resolve this matter informally, what happened?

State who you dealt with, when and where, what information you provided to them, and what you felt was unsatisfactory about the outcome.

Q3. What actions are you wanting the church to take and what outcomes are you seeking?

Whilst the charity trustees cannot promise to do what you ask, it would be helpful to understand what resolution you are seeking.

The church will treat your data carefully and in accordance with the church's data protection policy **[insert link to church data protection policy]**. The church cannot guarantee to keep the fact and details of your complaint confidential if it is necessary and proportionate to share your data to review and resolve your complaint.

Signature of complainant:

Date: