buckingham vineyard
church : reimagined

Public Complaints Policy

Date of Last Revision: 3rd March 2026

Overview

Buckingham Vineyard Church (the "Church") recognises that from time to time the quality of services provided by the Church may not meet up with the standards that individuals have come to expect. The 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 or organisation that has made the complaint.

The Church also welcomes positive feedback when things have gone right, and general feedback on how things can be improved. We love to hear from you so please send us feedback by emailing us at churchplant@oneillfamily.uk

To make a formal complaint about any experiences you have had, please follow the guidance below.

What is the purpose of this policy?

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to follow for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To make sure everyone at the Church knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely manner.
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

We believe that it is best to follow the Scriptural principles of reconciling differences wherever possible before resorting to this formal complaint process. However, we recognise that, from time to time, there may be occasions when there will be no alternative but to resort to a formal complaint. This formal procedure should only be instigated when attempts to resolve the issue informally have failed or where, due to the nature of the complaint, it is not appropriate to address it with the person concerned.

Complaint Focus

The types of complaints that will fall under this policy will include:

- conduct of our staff, volunteers and/or senior leaders,
- the standard of service we provide as a local church,
- discrimination,
- provision of inaccurate information,
- poor administration including delays in responding to enquiries, or
- financial mismanagement.

Safeguarding Concerns

This policy is not intended to be used for raising safeguarding concerns regarding allegations of abuse against children and/or adults at risk of harm.

All safeguarding concerns should be directed to the designated safeguarding lead, currently the senior pastors. They can be contacted at churchplant@oneillfamily.uk

Any complaint received that contains a safeguarding concern will be dealt with in accordance with the Church's Safeguarding Policy.

Responsibilities

The Church's responsibility will be to:

- acknowledge the formal complaint in writing or by email;
- respond within a stated period of time;
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint; and
- act where appropriate.

A complainant's responsibility is to:

- bring their complaint, in writing, to the Church's attention normally within 8 weeks of the issue arising;
- raise concerns promptly and directly with a member of staff in the Church;
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- allow the Church a reasonable time to deal with the matter, and
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond Charity's control.

Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution

Wherever possible it is always better to try and resolve any disagreements/grievances informally before making a formal complaint. If it is appropriate to do so, we would always encourage people to reach out to an individual or team that is responsible for causing a grievance and ask them to address this with you.

In most cases, complaints and grievances that can be resolved informally usually bring about reconciliation in a speedy and fair way by mutual discussion.

We recognise however, that it is not always possible, nor appropriate, to address a matter informally first. In such cases. It may be necessary to raise a formal complaint by following the process outlined below.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint Process

- Your complaint should be made in writing (or by email), marked "Private & Confidential", and sent to the senior pastor, either Oli O'Neill or Grace O'Neill at 13 Badgers Way, Buckingham, MK18 7EG or oli@oneillfamily.uk or grace@oneillfamily.uk who will acknowledge it in writing or by email (normally within 7 days). You should provide as much detail as possible about your complaint. If you have previously submitted your complaint to an affiliated church, please indicate this and explain your reasons for now bringing the complaint to the Church. Remember to keep a copy of your letter.

- The senior pastor will then assess your complaint and either:
    - a) arrange for your complaint to be investigated or
    - b) contact you to explain why your complaint will not be investigated.

- The results of the investigation will be communicated to you within a reasonable time – normally 21 days.

Stage 3 – Appeal

- If, after receiving notice of the outcome of your complaint, you believe that your complaint has not been fairly heard or been addressed in accordance with this policy, you may request an appeal by putting your case in writing to the VCUKI Board of Trustees. Appeals will usually only be considered where:
    - There is evidence of significant procedural irregularity in the conduct or delivery of the investigation process, which has adversely affected the outcome.
    - New and significant evidence, not available at the time of the investigation process, has come to light that would have significantly affected the outcome had it been available at the time.

- Please note, an appeal must be submitted within 28 days of the outcome being communicated to you or it will be automatically rejected.

- If an appeal is accepted by the trustees, the board will appoint an appeal panel to review the complaint and ensure that no one previously involved in the complaint is a member of that panel.

- The result of any appeal will be communicated to you and any decision of the appeal panel shall be final.

Contacting VCUKI

As an affiliated church of Vineyard Churches UK and Ireland (VCUKI), the Church is permitted to use the 'Vineyard' name through a license that is granted to the Senior Pastor/s.

After having your complaint heard by the Church, you can raise your concerns with VCUKI. Your complaint will then be assessed by VCUKI in accordance with their Complaints Policy.

To contact VCUKI about a complaint please use the following link
https://www.vineyardchurches.org.uk/vcuki-complaints-policy/

Confidentiality and record keeping

The Church will make every effort to handle all complaints with a high degree of integrity and confidentiality. However, confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed. The nature of the circumstances of the complaint may be such that it is not possible to maintain complete confidentiality throughout the investigatory process. By detailing the complaint made against an individual, so that they may give their response, it is possible that the identity of the complainant could be surmised. If this is likely to be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant before further action is taken.

All formal complaints and responses made to the Church will be recorded and filed in a secure place in accordance with the Church's Data Protection Policy.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Charity Commission

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself with can be found on its website at www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx

Initial Contact

Complaints should be sent to the senior pastors, Oli or Grace O'Neill
Email address: oli@oneillfamily.uk / grace@oneillfamily.uk
Postal Address: 13 Badgers Way, Buckingham, Buckinghamshire, MK18 7EG