

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

At Grace Church Brockley (GCB) we aim to treat everyone with understanding and appreciation as fellow human beings made in the image of God. However, we recognise that frictions can occur between individuals from time to time. Concerns, problems or complaints with other members of GCB (including staff), or with working conditions at GCB are called 'grievances'. If a member of GCB wishes to raise a grievance, we will treat it in accordance with this procedure.

Our grievance procedure is based on Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18:15-18: *If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. ¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses'. ¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church...*

Stage 1. Informal Resolution

Individuals are encouraged to meet informally with the relevant person and verbally discuss their grievance. Concerns within different ministry areas would usually be raised with the person leading the ministry area (e.g. Fellowship Group Leader, Youth Group Leader, Children's Church Leader) or the person responsible for an activity (e.g. preacher, Trustee).

The person receiving the information will aim to resolve the grievance quickly. They will then verbally communicate the outcome to the individual raising the grievance. If an individual is not satisfied with the outcome they can raise a formal grievance. This should be done without undue delay.

Stage 2. Formal Resolution

The individual may put their grievance in writing to the Minister or a Trustee. They should state in the letter that they are making a formal grievance and be as factual as they can.

The person receiving the information will arrange a formal meeting to take place without undue delay and normally within 14 days. Both the complainant and the recipient would be encouraged to have a companion of their choice to accompany them at the meeting.

Prior to the meeting it may be necessary for the recipient to investigate the grievance. During the meeting the complainant will be encouraged to explain their concern, and to suggest how they feel it should be resolved. Consideration should be given to adjourning the meeting for any investigation that may be necessary.

Following the meeting, a decision will be made on what action, if any, to take. The decision will be communicated in writing to the complainant, without undue delay and normally within 14 days. A written record should be kept of meetings and interviews.

Stage 3. Appeal

If the individual feels their grievance has not been satisfactorily resolved, they can appeal. They should put their appeal in writing to the Minister or a Trustee, setting out the grounds for their appeal. This should be done within 14 days of receipt of the decision from grievance meeting above.

The person receiving the appeal request will arrange an appeal hearing to take place without undue delay. Appeals will be heard by a panel of at least two church members who have not previously been involved in the case. Panel members will be selected by the person receiving the appeal request. The complainant may choose to have a companion accompany them at the meeting.

During the meeting the complainant will have a chance to state their case. The outcome of the appeal will be communicated to the complainant in writing within 14 days.

Additional Notes

Companions

In the case where a complainant wishes to have a companion attend a meeting with them, they must inform the meeting organiser in advance. The companion should not be acting in a legal capacity. GCB employees: please refer to additional information on companions below.

Confidentiality

As far as possible all proceedings will be treated as confidential to the parties involved. However, as a pastoral organisation the person dealing with the grievance may seek advice from other church members in leadership roles, or from thirtyone:eight, in order to reach a good resolution. They may also involve other church members who could contribute to the resolution of the grievance. Complainants will be informed in advance of any additional parties who will be present in any of the meetings.

Data protection

GCB processes personal data collected during the Grievance Procedure in accordance with its Data Protection Policy. Data will be held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of conducting the Grievance Procedure.

Alternative Pathways

There may be situations where an individual feels concerned about raising a formal grievance with the Minister or a Trustee. In these cases, the individual should speak confidentially to someone else whom they think could advise them. For example, a wise friend outside GCB, a Safeguarding Co-ordinator, or in serious situations a member of GCB's Panel of Reference (details available from Trustees and Safeguarding Co-ordinators). The aim should be to resolve the situation, not to grumble or gossip.

Bullying, harassment and disciplinary procedures

The Grievance Procedure will be used in any cases where there is alleged bullying or harassment. The Safeguarding Co-ordinators should be involved early in the procedure (unless implicated).

The following notes relate only to GCB employees raising grievances with their employer, GCB.

GCB employees will put formal grievances / appeals in writing to their line manager. If a grievance relates to their line manager, they will put the grievance / appeal in writing to a Trustee or (when necessary) Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

Where an employee raises a grievance during a disciplinary process, the disciplinary process may be temporarily suspended in order to deal with the grievance.

Employees have a statutory right to be accompanied by a companion at a grievance meeting/hearing which deals with a complaint about a duty owed by the employer to the employee. The companion may be a colleague, a trade union representative, or an official employed by a trade union. A trade union representative who is not an employed official must have been certified by their union as being competent to accompany a worker. The companion should not be acting in a legal capacity. Employers must agree to an employee's request to be accompanied by any companion from one of these categories.

To exercise their statutory right to be accompanied, an employee must make a reasonable request to the person who convenes the meeting. This does not have to be in writing or within a certain time frame, but the employee should provide GCB with the name of the companion and in what capacity they are attending. This should be done with enough time for GCB to deal with the companion's attendance at the meeting.

If the chosen companion will not be available at the time proposed for the hearing by the GCB, then GCB will postpone the hearing to a time proposed by the employee, provided that the alternative time is both reasonable and not more than five working days after the date originally proposed.

The companion should be allowed to address the hearing to put and sum up the employee's case, respond on behalf of the employee to any views expressed at the meeting and confer with the employee during the hearing. The companion does not, however, have the right to answer questions on the employee's behalf, address the hearing if the employee does not wish it or prevent the employer from explaining their case.