

**The Charity of the Order of The Regular Canonesses
of the Holy Sepulchre of our Lord
Registered Charity Number 1167869**

Complaints Procedure

Written complaints may be sent to the Compliance Coordinator, The Old Stores, Fuller Street, CM3 2AZ, or by email to michaeldalder@hotmail.com

Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 01245 363649 and will be passed to the Compliance Coordinator.

The Compliance Coordinator will:

- write down the facts of the complaint
- take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- note down the relationship of the complainant to the project
- tell the complainant that there is a complaints procedure
- tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it should take to deal with the complaint
- where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

Further guidelines about verbal complaints is given in Appendix 1.

Resolving complaints

Many complaints are simply dealt with 'on the spot' between the complainant and volunteer or other responsible individual on site. If this is not the case then the following procedures will be put into action:

Stage 1

- If a complaint has not been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the Compliance Coordinator (Professor M Alder) within one week.
- On receiving the complaint it will be recorded in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved an appropriate person will be asked to investigate and to take appropriate action.
- If the complaint relates to a specific person, the person should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.
- Complaints should be acknowledged by the Compliance Coordinator within a week. A copy of the complaints procedure will be given to the complainant who should normally receive a definitive reply to the complaint within four weeks. If this is not possible, the reasons for the delay will be fully explained.

Stage 2

- If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1, they can request that the complaint is reviewed by an independent group established by the Provincial.
- The request for a group level review should be acknowledged within a week of receipt. The acknowledgement should state who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.
- The group may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage 1.
- If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage 1 should be kept informed of what is happening.
- Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible, because for example an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a fully reply will be given.
- Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.
- The decision taken at this stage is final unless the group decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The group may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example a complaint about the Chair of the group should not also have the Chair as the person leading a Stage 2 review.

Monitoring and learning from complaints

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

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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 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 the 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.