

The Vine Community Church

Complaints Procedure in Respect of Assist

This procedure relates to **Assist**-which is one of several services and projects provided or organised by The Trustees of the Vine Community Church. It describes what a complaint is, and what must happen when one occurs.

This procedure does not apply to Safeguarding concerns. The Safeguarding Policy must be followed in these circumstances.

The "Responsible Person" for this procedure is: Jenny Pepper, the Assist Coordinator who can be contacted on 01522 370164

DEFINITIONS

A complaint is:

- Any expression of dissatisfaction or discontent about the Assist project, whether this is justified or not,
- This can be verbal, written or any other form of communication, either from the person who is dissatisfied or by another person acting on their behalf
- A person might complain if they feel:
 - They have not been provided with an acceptable standard of help or support,
 - They have been treated unfairly or discriminated against,
 - Someone associated with Assist has behaved unacceptably towards them or other people,
 - There has been a breach of the standards of behaviour or rules of Assist

Points to note:

- A person may not always describe their concern as a "complaint", saying instead that they have a problem, a concern or a worry.
- If in doubt it is important to ask the person if they wish to make a complaint.
- If the person does not wish to make a complaint, it is still important to seek a resolution to their concern.

PROCEDURE

The person who first becomes aware of the complaint must:

- Ensure that (if safe to do so) immediate actions are taken to prevent any potential harm to people,
- Verbally acknowledge the complaint.
- Report the complaint to the Assist Coordinator (Tel 01522 370164)
- Make a written record of the complaint

The Responsible Person will:

- Acknowledge the complaint in writing within one week explaining the process that will be followed
- Ensure any necessary actions for protecting the well-being and safety of people involved in the complaint are taken.
- Inform the Chair of the Assist Management Committee or other member of the Vine Community Church's Board of Trustees of the complaint.
- Confirm that the complaint is not related to Child or Adult Safeguarding concerns (if it is, the Safeguarding Policy **must** be followed),
- Ensure a written record of the complaint is/has been made
- Consider the effect of the complaint on the people affected, and ensure they receive any support and information they need.
- Ensure that information about the complaint is shared only with people who may need to know
- Investigate the complaint, or arrange for an investigation to be undertaken, in line with the following stages:

STAGE 1 – INFORMAL INVESTIGATION AND RESOLUTION (Timescale-Within 10 working days of the complaint)

- The Responsible Person will investigate the complaint or arrange for another appropriate person to investigate it on their behalf. Every effort will be made to resolve the complaint quickly and informally.
- Key tasks will include listening, checking facts, and providing information. Possible outcomes will include offering an apology, providing an explanation, changing practices.

The outcome of Stage 1 will be communicated in writing to the complainant, and a record of the investigation and outcome will be retained by the Responsible Person

STAGE 2 – FORMAL INVESTIGATION AND RESOLUTION (Timescale-Within 20 days of the receipt of the complaint)

If the complaint is not resolved at Stage 1 then the complainant has the right to have the complaint investigated further. This may be undertaken by the Responsible Person (if they did not handle the investigation at Stage 1) or another appointed person.

The appointed person will:

- Meet the complainant to clarify the specifics of the complaint, assess why the complainant remains dissatisfied, and clarify what resolution is being sought.
- Investigate matters and interview other parties as appropriate.
- Assess whether the complaint is justified.
- Put in place and implement a plan to:
 - Resolve the issues arising as a result of the complaint,
 - Minimise the risk of a similar complaint happening in future,
 - Consider what, if any, communication is needed, including funders and the media.

The outcome of Stage 2 will be communicated in writing to the complainant, and a record of the outcome will be maintained by the organisation (including whether the complaint is resolved at Stage 2 or progresses to Stage 3).

STAGE 3 – GOVERNING BODY OR INDEPENDENT REVIEW AND RESOLUTION (Timescale-Within 30 working days of the receipt of the initial complaint)

If the complaint is not resolved at Stage 2 then the complainant has the right to have the complaint investigated by a member of the Vine Community Church's Board of Trustees (hereafter referred to as 'the Trustees') or by an independent person appointed by the Trustees.

Following the investigation a meeting will be held by the Trustees to consider the facts, and review all relevant findings.

The complainant may attend the relevant part of the meeting, and bring someone with them for support if they wish to (this must not be a solicitor or legal representative),

The Trustees will make a decision about whether the outcome and earlier findings were fair and whether any other actions are still needed to resolve the complaint.

If necessary, the Trustees will put in place and implement a plan to:

- Resolve the issues arising as a result of the complaint,
- Minimise the risk of a similar complaint happening in future,
- Consider what, if any, communication is needed, including funders and the media.

The outcome of Stage 3 will be communicated in writing to the complainant, and a record of the outcome will be retained by the organisation.

The Trustees may, on occasions, conclude that a complaint has been made maliciously. In these circumstances the complainant will be advised in writing that the complaint has not been upheld and a record of this will be retained by the organisation.

Other duties of the Responsible Person:

- Ensure people know how to complain.
- Ensure the person investigating a complaint is independent from the concerns raised in the complaint.
- Ensure that personal information is not shared with anyone who does not have a right to that information.
- Ensure that information is shared with other relevant agencies if appropriate to do so.
- Ensure that records are confidentially destroyed 3 years after the last contact with the complainant unless:
 - The record contains details of a Children's or Adult's Safeguarding concern, or
 - The record is a Stage 2 or Stage 3 formal complaint, and
 - In each case, the record is kept for 6 years from the date of the ruling on the complaint,
- Give due consideration to the support that may be needed to all parties involved in the circumstances leading up to, and during the investigation of, the complaint.

LEARNING

The Trustees will routinely receive reports on any complaints made in relation to Assist and consider the lessons learnt as a result.

LINK WITH SERIOUS INCIDENTS

The incidents procedure may be considered a more appropriate route for the investigation of some serious concerns –particularly where the complaint relates to an issue concerning the risks of or actual harm to a service user or is associated with a matter which is likely to cause serious public concern.

TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

People involved with the Assist will be made aware of this procedure and where they can find it. They will receive training, as appropriate to their involvement, in:

- Their roles and responsibilities,
- How to use this procedure,
- Lessons learnt and actions arising.

Date approved by the Board of Trustees: Aug 2025

Date of Next Review of this Procedure: Aug 2027

Assist**COMPLAINTS REPORTING FORM .**

To be completed by the person reporting or receiving the complaint

Date and time of complaint:	Date this form completed:
Location (if applicable) of :	Person reporting the complaint:
Details of the Complaint: What happened, who was involved, what harm, injury or damage was caused?	
What immediate action was taken to manage the complaint and reduce the risk of harm?	

Signed:

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE RESPONSIBLE PERSON

Date Form Received:	Name of Responsible Person:																		
<p>Immediate actions taken following receipt of the complaint: Include actions taken to support the people involved</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #d9e1f2;"> <th style="width: 55%;">What Action</th> <th style="width: 20%;">By Who</th> <th style="width: 25%;">Time and Date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>		What Action	By Who	Time and Date															
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<p>What further actions will be taken? Action Plan, to include date of Review</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #d9e1f2;"> <th style="width: 55%;">What Action</th> <th style="width: 20%;">By Who</th> <th style="width: 25%;">By When</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> <tr><td> </td><td> </td><td> </td></tr> </tbody> </table>		What Action	By Who	By When															
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