

# **Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers**

## **External complaints handling policy**

### **1. General policy**

- 1.1** The directors of the Corporate Trustee of the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers (ACAT) take complaints seriously and commit to deal with all complaints in a confidential, timely and appropriate manner. We take seriously the Biblical call to be excellent in what we do and value complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve.
- 1.2** Our policy is:
- To be fair in handling complaints;
  - To make sure that directors, volunteers and staff are aware of this policy and know how to handle complaints;
  - To gather information which helps us improve what we do in the future.
- 1.3** All complaints and any associated information provided will be handled sensitively, and in accordance with relevant data protection requirements. However, the directors reserve the right to involve external parties (including the police and other authorities) and to take legal advice where this is considered necessary.
- 1.4** The overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation rests with the directors of ACAT.
- 1.5** In constructing this policy, the directors have paid due consideration to the Good Governance Code with the aim that the charity demonstrates internal and external complaints are handled constructively, impartially and effectively and it learns from mistakes.

### **2. Receiving complaints**

- 2.1** Complaints may be addressed to any director either orally or in writing.
- 2.2** Where complaints are received by other contacts in the charity, complainants will be directed towards a nominated director in the first instance.
- 2.3** At the time of receiving the complaint or within any initial response, complainants will be informed of the existence of this policy and provided with a copy if requested.
- 2.4** In certain cases and for the avoidance of doubt, the nominated director may request oral complaints to be repeated in writing and reserve the right to share complaints with other directors, staff and volunteers as they see appropriate.
- 2.5** Oral complainants must be informed that certain aspects of oral complaints will be recorded (either at the time or later) including but not limited to:
- The name and contact details of the complainant;
  - The date and time that the complaint was received;
  - The substance of the complaint;

- Any formal relationship that the complainant has with ACAT.

**2.6** Oral complainants must be informed that although complaints will be handled confidentially, the nominated director may share these with other directors, staff or volunteers in accordance with this policy.

**2.7** All complaints, together with any actions undertaken, will be recorded in a complaints log which will be reviewed by the directors on a regular basis. Any conclusions and further action required as a result of this review will be formally recorded in the minutes of a directors meeting.

**2.8** Where the complaint relates to a specific person, the nominated director may choose to inform that person of the nature of the complaint and to receive a formal response from them. The name and any other sensitive information provided by the complainant will not be shared with the subject of the complaint.

### **3. Resolving complaints**

**3.1** Complaints will be acknowledged by the nominated director within one week of being received and will include details of who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect to have a response. Any first response should include a copy of this policy if not already provided.

**3.2** The nominated director will use best endeavours to provide a definitive response within two weeks of receiving the complaint. If, because of ongoing investigations or for other reasons this is not possible, a progress update will be provided to the complainant within two weeks of receiving the complaint.

**3.3** A definitive response will include:

- Actions taken to investigate the complaint;
- Conclusions drawn from the investigation;
- Actions taken as a result of the investigation.

### **4. Appeals and escalation**

**4.1** Where the complainant is not satisfied with the response, they should inform the nominated director of this dissatisfaction in writing within three months of receiving the response.

**4.2** Due to the size of ACAT it is likely that the same group of directors that dealt with the original complaint will be responsible for reviewing the appeal. Wherever possible a different director will take the lead in investigating the appeal.

**4.3** As long as this notice of dissatisfaction is received within the timeframe set out in 4.1, the directors will acknowledge this correspondence within one week and will use best endeavours to provide a definitive response within one month. Notices of dissatisfaction that are received outside of that timeframe will be considered at the discretion of the directors.

**4.4** This appeal decision will be considered final. At any time, the complainant can complain directly to the Charity Commission or any other appropriate regulating authority. The

information about the types of complaints that the Commission can become involved with are set out on [their website](#).

## **5. Adoption of this policy**

**5.1** The directors of the Corporate Trustee of the Association of Church Accountants and Treasurers (ACAT) formally accepted this policy at the board meeting held on 24 February 2025.

**5.2** Approved for publication at the Board meeting of 15 September 2025

Livia Velicu

Chair