



THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH
BELL RINGERS
UK Registered Charity No. 270036

Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

Problem-solving Procedure

Effective 1st January, 2024

EDITION 2 – APPROVED BY THE COUNCIL’S EXECUTIVE

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Problem-solving Procedure

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1 Policy

- 1.1 The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (“CCCBR”) recognises the high standards of conduct expected of it by the ringing community and those who generously give their time or money to support its work. It is committed to being open, honest and accountable and encourages an open culture among those who act on its behalf. To this end, it recognises the need to provide a fair and effective way to resolve problems in the unlikely event that someone’s conduct puts these standards in doubt.

It is essential that anyone feels able to raise any concerns that they may have about the way in which CCCBR conducts itself.

- 1.2 In dealing with a complaint or concern CCCBR is committed to act fairly and reasonably, ensuring that:
- a) informal action is considered where appropriate, but not where it is inappropriate;
 - b) complaints or concerns are fully and promptly investigated;
 - c) anyone faced with a complaint has the opportunity, as far as reasonably possible, to understand the complaint against them, its supporting evidence, and to respond;
 - d) an appeals process is provided.

2 Definitions

- 2.1 In this document:
- a) “Complaint” means a complaint, concern or disclosure raised about a CCCBR volunteer, Officer or an action taken on behalf of CCCBR.
 - b) “Concern” means the conduct which gave rise to the Complaint or is connected with it;
 - c) “Subject” means a CCCBR volunteer or Officer who is the subject of a Complaint;
 - d) “Complainant” means the person raising a Complaint; and
 - e) other capitalised words which are not defined in this Policy refer to terms which are defined in CCCBR’s Rules or its Standing Orders.

3 What is covered

- 3.1 This Procedure covers all situations where it is suspected that someone’s action (or neglect to act) on behalf of CCCBR has resulted or could reasonably result in:
- a) harm (to someone or something), a criminal offence or breach of any legal obligation;
 - b) damage to CCCBR’s reputation or its ability to achieve its charitable objects;
 - c) a material breach of CCCBR’s policies or ethical code which has gone unresolved;
 - d) concealment of any of the above;
- 3.2 It is intended to cover **grievances, whistleblowing, or suspected misconduct**.
- 3.3 It is not necessary to have proof that a Concern exists. A reasonable belief is sufficient.

4 Making a complaint

- 4.1 Anyone wishing to make a Complaint should put it in writing to the Secretary at secretary@cccbr.org.uk, or to the President at president@cccbr.org.uk setting out as clearly as possible the Concern and indicating that they would like it investigated in accordance with this Policy. Where the complainant considers the Concern relates to **Gross Misconduct** or falls under the heading of **Whistleblowing** they should indicate so.
- 4.2 The Secretary or President will ensure that a copy of any such communication is circulated to all Trustees to the extent that it is reasonable and lawful to do so.
- 4.3 Where a Concern relates to **Gross Misconduct** or involves **Whistleblowing** the procedure below headed “Gross Misconduct and Whistleblowing” should always be followed.
- 4.4 In other cases, where the Complainant is **not** a volunteer or Officer of CCCBR, the procedure below headed “Formal Complaint” should be followed. Complaints from external sources should never be handled informally.
- 4.5 Otherwise, the Trustees may determine which of the procedures outlined below is followed, based on the circumstances of the Concern.
- 4.6 In all cases, the President or Secretary will, within five working days of receipt confirm in writing to the Complainant:
- a) that their Complaint has been received;
 - b) how it will be dealt with and how long this can be expected to take; and
 - c) what further communications the Complainant can expect to receive from CCCBR in relation to their Complaint.

5 Informal Process

- 5.1 In some cases an informal discussion with the Subject of a Complaint may be sufficient to explain the problem, offer support and agree follow-up action.
- 5.2 Following an informal discussion, written confirmation should be sent to the Subject setting out:
- a) the nature of the Complaint;
 - b) what about the Complaint has been agreed and what (if anything) is in dispute;
 - c) any changes required, on the part of the Subject and/or other CCCBR volunteers or officers.
 - d) the timescale required; and
 - e) what action the Subject should take if they feel these conclusions are unfair.

6 Formal Complaint

Investigation

- 6.1 The Trustees will appoint one or more people with appropriate experience and no prior involvement in the Complaint, who will:
- a) conduct a fair and impartial investigation;
 - b) where possible, promptly arrange one or more fact-finding meetings with the Complainant and, at their discretion, meetings with others who may have knowledge of the circumstances of the Complaint; and
 - c) discuss and agree with the Complainant how best to resolve the matter.
- 6.2 If the Complaint warrants and the Subject is known, one or more Problem-solving Meetings will be held with the Subject, who will be provided with all relevant evidence which may be taken into account to the extent that it is reasonable and lawful to do so.
- 6.3 Each Problem-solving Meeting should give the Subject reasonable opportunity to ask questions, present any evidence and call their own witnesses.

Report

- 6.4 The outcome any investigation will be considered by the Trustees, who will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that any Subject understands the Complaint made against them and has the opportunity to state their case and ask questions.
- 6.5 Where a Subject is known, the Secretary, on behalf of the Trustees will communicate to the Subject in writing and without undue delay, setting out:
- a) the nature of the Complaint and the investigation's principal findings;
 - b) the Trustees' conclusions; and
 - c) the actions agreed by the Trustees, or if no action is to be taken the reasons.
 - d) what action the Subject should take if they feel these conclusions are unfair.
- 6.6 A copy of the investigation report will be provided at their request to the Complainant, except that this may be redacted where reasonably necessary to preserve confidentiality.

7 Gross Misconduct and Whistleblowing

Definition

- 7.1 **Gross misconduct** involves behaviour which is unlawful or materially prejudices CCCBR's ability to achieve its charitable objects, including:
- a) theft or fraud;
 - b) bullying, harassment, abuse, neglect or unlawful discrimination;
 - c) misuse of CCCBR's property or name;
 - d) intentionally or carelessly frustrating the work of CCCBR or other CCCBR Volunteers;
 - e) conduct which brings CCCBR into disrepute;
 - f) a material breach of CCCBR's Safeguarding, Health & Safety policies which places others at risk, including acting on behalf of CCCBR when under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs;

- g) deliberate and unauthorised disclosure of confidential information;
- h) persistent failure over a period of time to support repeated and reasonable requests made in connection with this procedure.
- i) victimisation of someone for raising a Complaint;
- j) maliciously making a false allegation; or
- k) asking someone to cover up wrongdoing.

7.2 **Whistleblowing** is defined by the [Equality and Human Rights Commission](#).

Handling of Concerns relating to Gross Misconduct or Whistleblowing

- 7.3 Gross misconduct or Whistleblowing warrant immediate action and any such Complaints are therefore subject to the procedure set out below.
- 7.4 The Subject of a Complaint relating to Gross Misconduct as defined in this Procedure may be required at any time to temporarily relinquish their volunteering or Officer role within CCCBR for a reasonable period while the Complaint is investigated.
- 7.5 Depending on the severity of the Complaint the matter will either be subject to an investigation under the terms of this Policy, or may be referred to the Police, local authority or another statutory body as defined by law, or both may occur.
- 7.6 Any investigation will be performed by at least two people:
- a) with appropriate experience and no prior involvement in its subject matter;
 - b) who did not have any part any previous investigation on the same matter; and
 - c) at least one of whom is of independent standing, meaning they are not an Officer or Council Member of CCCBR.
- 7.7 In other respects any investigation will follow the procedure for Formal Complaints set out above.
- 7.8 Following an investigation a report will be considered by the Trustees, following the procedure for Formal Complaints set out above.
- 7.9 If at any time before, during or after an investigation the Trustees in their absolute discretion determine that a reasonable person would conclude that Gross Misconduct has taken place they may at any time require a Subject to relinquish any volunteering role or Office with CCCBR with or without prior notice.

8 Appeals

- 8.1 A Subject or Complainant who is unhappy with the outcome of any decision made in connection with this Procedure should appeal in writing to the Secretary at secretary@cccbr.org.uk, or the President at president@cccbr.org.uk providing:
- a) the details of the concern or grievance;
 - b) any additional information which they feel has been overlooked; and
 - c) an explanation why they feel previous decisions have been unsatisfactory.

- 8.2 The fact that a dispute exists does not in itself change the effect of any decision which has been issued.
- 8.3 The Trustees will commission a review of the matter by at least two people:
- a) with appropriate experience and no prior involvement in its subject matter;
 - b) who did not have any part any previous investigation of the same matter; and
 - c) at least one of whom is of independent standing, meaning they are not an Officer or Council Member of CCCBR.
- 8.4 In making any appointment under paragraph 8.3 above the Trustees will make all reasonable efforts to consult the person making the appeal and ensure that those appointed have their agreement.
- 8.5 The review will otherwise follow the procedure for investigations set out under Formal Complaints above.
- 8.6 Following the review, the reviewers will submit a report to the Trustees, whose decision will be communicated to the person making the appeal in writing; stating:
- a) the review's principal findings;
 - b) the Trustees' conclusions; and
 - c) the actions agreed by the Trustees, or if no action is to be taken the reasons.
- 8.7 The Trustees' decision will be final.

9 Disputes

- 9.1 If, following the decision on an **appeal** made under this procedure, the person making the appeal reasonably believes appropriate action has not been taken and that the law has been broken, they should report the matter to the relevant statutory body. This may include:
- a) HM Revenue & Customs
 - b) The Health and Safety Executive
 - c) The Environment Agency
 - d) The Serious Fraud Office
 - e) The Charity Commission
 - f) The Information Commissioner; or
 - g) The police.

10 Confidentiality

- 10.1 Confidentiality is vital to the effective handling of a Complaint and everyone involved in the operation of this Policy is responsible for observing the high level of confidentiality that is required. In particular:
- a) details of any investigation must only be disclosed where genuinely necessary to pursue the investigation and for no other purpose; and
 - b) the Complainant's identity will only be disclosed to others with their written consent, except where to withhold this information would be unlawful. It should be understood

that where someone seeks anonymity this may circumscribe the effectiveness of any investigation.

11 Chaperones and Colleagues

- 11.1 Any person who raises a Complaint, or against whom a Complaint is made, may be accompanied by a colleague or chaperone at any meeting arranged under the terms of this procedure, provided that:
- a) such a request is made reasonably and in good time before the meeting concerned;
 - b) the colleague or chaperone does not actively intervene in the meeting except when requested by the person who invited them to speak on their behalf; and
 - c) the behaviour or availability of the chaperone or colleague does not otherwise interfere with the conduct of the meeting or hinder the timely investigation of the Complaint.

12 Review

- 12.1 This policy is effective from 1st January, 2024 and will be reviewed every three years.

13 Version Control

Version	Date	Description
1.6 (Edition 1)	26.08.23	First approved by the Executive as an internal policy.
1.7	23.09.23	Re-dated and resubmitted for approval as a Rule 10.4 policy.
2.0 (Edition 2)	27.09.23	As version 1.7, incorporating additional amendments recommended by Executive members.