



**North England Conference**  
**Complaints Policy and Procedures**

**December 2022**

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## Introduction

The North England Conference is committed to providing a high-quality, transparent service to everyone we deal with. To do this, we need you to tell us if you have a concern about the organisation or our staff so that we can help resolve your complaint as quickly as possible in line with biblical principle.

We will listen to your complaints, treat them seriously, and learn from them so that we can continuously improve our ministry.

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## What this policy covers

This policy covers complaints about the standard of service you should expect from the North England Conference and the behaviour of our staff in delivering that service.

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## What is a complaint?

A complaint is defined as any expression of dissatisfaction, however, it is expressed. This would include complaints expressed face to face, via a phone call, in writing, via email or any other method. All North England Conference staff should have sufficient knowledge to be able to identify an “expression of dissatisfaction” even when the word “complain” or “complaint” is not used.

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## Responsibilities

The Executive Leadership Team of the North England Conference has overall responsibility for this policy. Directors, Pastors and the Administrative Team are responsible for making sure we implement and comply with it. We reserve the right to change the policy at any time.

The North England Conference responsibility will be to:

- listen to, and keep a record of formal complaints;
- acknowledge a formal complaint in writing;
- respond within a stated period of time;

- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint; and
- take action where appropriate to resolve the problem
- take steps to avoid a repeat occurrence where possible
- review complaints on an annual basis to ensure learning organisation

Executive Secretary is accountable to the Executive Leadership Team for handling complaints. All of our staff are responsible for identifying complaints and forwarding them and any other information needed to the Executive Secretary. We will record your complaints confidentially.

A complainant's responsibility is to:

- inform the Executive Secretary of the North England Conference of their complaint within 12 weeks of the issue arising;
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- allow the Executive Secretary a reasonable time to deal with the matter;
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond the North England Conference's control.

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## Confidentiality

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and North England Conference staff maintain confidentiality. However the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality (with each complaint assessed individually). Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

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## Reasonable adjustments and alternative formats

Our aim is to make our policy easy to use and accessible for everyone. We will take steps to make any reasonable adjustments needed to access this policy, or any requests to provide responses in other formats.

If you are unable to contact us in writing because of a disability and need a reasonable adjustment, please call us on: 0115 960 6312.

## Stage 1: Informal complaint

1. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual (2016)<sup>1</sup> states that ‘every effort should be made to settle differences among church members and contain controversy within the smallest sphere’. Therefore, where issues are simple we may not need a formal investigation. We can apologise for any mistakes and amend processes accordingly to prevent reoccurrence, provide an explanation for decisions taken, and ensure that we learn from the issues that have been raised.
2. Any member of staff can deal with a complaint informally (including the person being complained about) and offer an immediate response to resolve the situation.
3. If we address your concern on the phone or face-to-face, we will not usually provide a written response unless detail of the response is required to ensure that actions agreed and undertaken.
4. Where an informal written complaint has been received we will aim to respond in writing within **10 working days**.
5. If you are still not happy or we do not feel that the complaint is easily dealt with informally, you can make a formal complaint using stage 2 (see [Stage 2: Formal complaint](#)).

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<sup>1</sup> General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (2016) *Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual*; Review and Herald Publishing Association pg; 59

## Stage 2: Formal complaint

A complaint will be escalated to this stage when:

1. stage 1 was attempted but you remain dissatisfied
2. the issues are complex or require detailed investigation, or
3. the complaint relates to issues that have been identified as serious.

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### Making a formal complaint

You can make a formal complaint:

- **by phone:** 0115 960 6312
- **by email:** [hrteam@necadventist.org.uk](mailto:hrteam@necadventist.org.uk)
- **by post:**  
The Executive Secretary of the North England Conference  
22 Zulla Road  
Mapperley Park  
Nottingham  
NG3 5DB

1. When making your complaint please include:

- your name and address (an email address will do)
- what your complaint is about, and
- any other requirement (for example, if you need your response sent by post rather than email).

2. Please try to be as clear as possible and provide any supporting evidence if available. This will help us understand your complaint and respond to you promptly.

3. If a complaint is unclear, we may ask you for more information to help us to understand. If you do not provide the information we need when asked, we may not be able to help you.

## Timescales

1. If you want to make a formal complaint, then you should do so within three months (12 weeks) of the matter you wish to complain about. Waiting longer could make it difficult to review your complaint effectively.
2. We may be able to consider a complaint outside this timeframe if there are exceptional circumstances. Examples of exceptional circumstances include:
  - you have only just found out about the problem
  - ill health, bereavement or other serious personal circumstance.
3. We aim to acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within **5 working days** and provide a full response within **20 working days** of receiving your complaint.
4. If we need to contact you for further clarification, the 20 working days will start from the date we get the information we need. If we are not able to meet this deadline, we will tell you and let you know when we are likely to be able to respond to your complaint.
5. If we are refusing to investigate further, we will explain this to you and signpost you to The Charity Commission complaints process.

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## Investigation

1. We will decide how to review your complaint in more detail. Your complaint will be handled fairly and you can expect to be treated with courtesy, respect and fairness. Where possible, the investigator will be someone who has not been involved in the issue you have raised.
2. The investigation may involve interviews with key individuals and/or review of any relevant documentation.

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## Outcome

1. We will give a fair, open and balanced description of our findings and what conclusions we have reached on your complaint. This will include any actions that will be taken and recommendations to ensure we have learned from any mistakes.

2. We will be clear with you in our response about what we could and could not investigate.

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## Reasons we may refuse your complaint

1. If your concern is about the actions or service of a different organisation and we have no involvement in the issue, we will refuse your request and signpost you to the other organisation to complain.

2. There are also situations where we may decide that we will not review your complaint further, these include:

- attempts to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given you our final decision
- where we have already looked into the matter for you under another process
- anonymous complaints
- where the time-limit for complaining has passed, and
- if we think the complaint is unreasonable

In each of the above instances we will inform you in writing that we will not be proceeding with your complaint.

## Stage 3: Complaints Appeal

1. There are occasions where you may not be satisfied with our response to your complaint. You do have a right to appeal, in writing to the British Union Conference. However, you may only appeal against the process in which your complaint was handled, not the outcome.

2. Send your appeal in writing to the Executive Secretary of the British Union Conference stating clearly that you are exercising your right to appeal. The British Union can be contacted by post:

The Executive Secretary of the British Union Conference  
Stanborough Park  
Watford  
WD25 9JZ

3. Your appeal will need to include sufficient information to highlight why the original investigation of your complaint did not follow the process outlined within this policy.

4. The Executive Secretary of the British Union Conference will respond to you in writing, within a reasonable time period, acknowledging receipt of your appeal and outlining what action will be taken. This action will depend on the nature of the

5. When the appeal investigation is completed the Executive Secretary of the British Union Conference will communicate the outcome to the appellant in writing.

5. Note that this stage of the complaints process is external to the North England Conference and we have no involvement in the process and outcome.

## Stage 4: The Charity Commission

1. If you have reached the end of our internal process and are still not happy with our response, or we have not replied to your complaint within this policy timeframe, you can ask to have your complaint reviewed by The Charity Commission.

2. The Charity Commission regulates charities in England and Wales making sure charities are accountable, well-run and meet their legal obligations. This includes intervening in matters where there is serious risk of harm to, or abuse of, charities, their beneficiaries or assets. The Charity Commission can be contacted by:

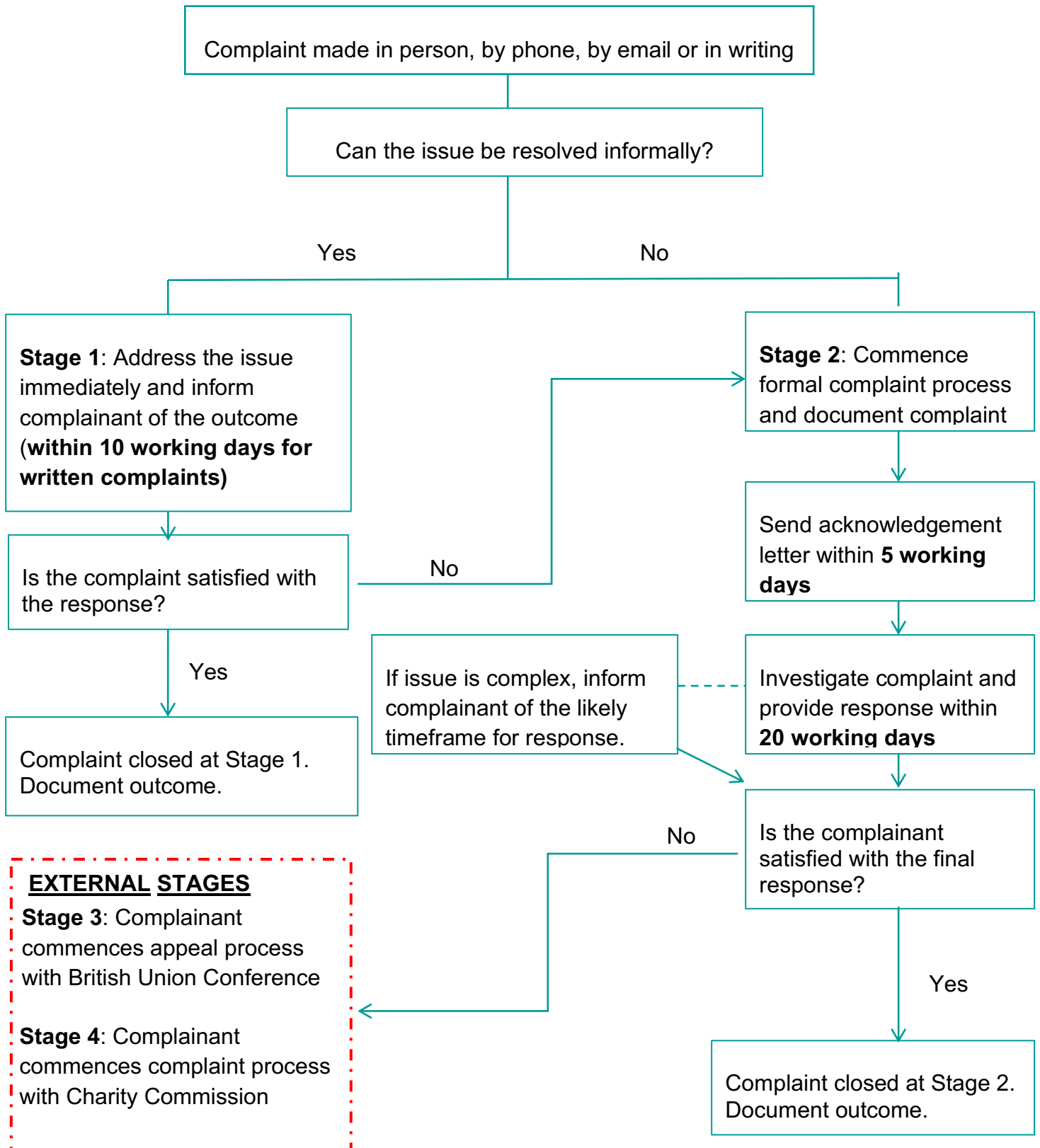
**Telephone:** 0845 3000 218

**Post:** The Charity Commission, PO Box 1227, Liverpool, L69 3UG

You can find more information on how to complain online about a charity to The Charity Commission [here](#) .

3. Note that this stage of the complaints process is external to the North England Conference and we have no involvement in the process and outcome.

# Complaints Process Flow Chart



# Complaints Form

You may use this form to make a complaint about officers of The North England Conference or the Organisation. Please to return this form as soon as possible.

**Your Name** .....

**Address** .....

.....

**Telephone** .....

**Email** .....

**Date of incident :**

**Time of incident:**

**Incident/Complaint:**

**What action would you like to be taken?**

# Draft Acknowledgement Letter

Dear

Complaint Ref No:

I am writing to inform you that I have received your (written/verbal) complaint dated [date] and will be arranging for the issues you have mentioned to be investigated by [Investigating officer/team].

We will aim to complete our investigation by (date – 20 working days from complaint receipt)

If we are unable to respond by this date, I will write to you outlining the reasons for any delay and what will happen next.

Yours sincerely

**Pastor Emmanuel Bran**

**Executive Secretary – North England Conference**