



COMPLAINTS POLICY

INTRODUCTION

The Spanish and Portuguese Jews' Synagogue, also known as The S&P Sephardi Community ("the Community") is committed to addressing all complaints from its members. It is expected that the majority of complaints will be resolved at an early stage with a satisfactory outcome.

It is in everyone's interest that complaints are resolved at the earliest possible stage. The experience of the first contact between the complainant and the Community can be crucial in determining whether a complaint will escalate.

This document sets out the procedures to deal with complaints relating to the Community. In compliance with the law this procedure is to be well-publicised and made publicly available.

Certain formal complaints fall outside the scope of this document such as staff grievances or disciplinary procedures.

The goals of the formal complaints procedure

Our Formal Complaints procedure is designed to:

- Be easily accessible, widely-circulated and well-publicised;
- Be simple to understand and use;
- Be impartial;
- Be non-adversarial;
- Allow swift handling for action and keep the parties involved well-informed of developments and progress made;
- Ensure a full and fair investigation by an independent person where necessary;
- Respect confidentiality;
- Address all the points at issue and provide an effective response and appropriate redress, where necessary;
- Provide information to the Community's senior leadership team so that services provided can be improved where necessary.

MANAGEMENT OF A COMPLAINT

The Community encourages resolution of problems by informal means wherever possible. It is a precondition of the complaints procedure that reasonable attempts should be made to resolve issues on an informal basis (at stage 1) and the Chair of Trustees shall have the discretion, to be exercised reasonably, not to allow a complaint to be pursued where this precondition has not been met.



Equally, formal procedures may be invoked when all attempts to resolve a concern informally prove unsuccessful, and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further.

Stage 1: Local Resolution (the Informal Stage)

1. If members have a complaint, they should contact their Rabbi or the Parnas of the local synagogue, or member of the office staff in the first instance. If the Rabbi, the Parnas or member of staff cannot resolve the matter alone it may be necessary for him/her to consult a member of the Executive Team.

If the complaint is from a non-member this should be addressed in the first instance to the community at info@sephardi.org.uk.

2. Complaints made to the CEO will usually be referred to the relevant member of staff unless the CEO deems it appropriate to deal with the matter personally.

3. Should the matter not be resolved within 7 working days or in the event that the Rabbi, the Parnas of the local synagogue or member of staff dealing with the complaint and the member fail to reach a satisfactory resolution, the member will be advised to proceed with their complaint in accordance with stage 2 of this procedure.

Stage 2: CEO Resolution (the Formal Stage)

1. If the member wishes to take the matter further, they should put their complaint in writing addressed to the CEO. The date of receipt of the letter will be noted on the complaint and be considered the date at which the complaint is established. The CEO will acknowledge in writing receipt of the complaint within 3 working days of the date of receipt.

2. The CEO will investigate the complaint. This will usually involve a meeting with the member and relevant members of staff which will take place within 7 working days of receiving the complaint where reasonably possible. Written records of all meetings and interviews held in relation to the complaint will be kept.

3. The CEO will inform the member of the decision in writing, giving reasons for this decision.

4. Where the complaint is about the CEO, the complaint should be addressed to the Chair of Trustees. The Chair of Trustees will ask for a report from the CEO and for all the relevant documents. The Chair of Trustees may also call for a briefing from members of staff, and will in most cases, speak to or meet with the member to discuss the matter further. Once the Chair of Trustees is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, the member will be informed of the decision in writing. The Chair of Trustees will give reasons for their decision.



5. If the member is still not satisfied with the decision, they should proceed to Stage 3 of this procedure.

Stage 3: The Board of Trustees Complaints Panel

1. A complainant dissatisfied with the response at Stage 3 may make a written request to the Chief Operating Officer ("COO") that the matter be referred to the Complaints Panel ("the Panel") of the Board of Trustees. This request must be made in writing within 10 working days of notification of the CEO or Chair of the Board of Trustees' decision at previous stages and must include a statement specifying reasons for the review request and any perceived failures arising from the investigation process followed. The COO will acknowledge the request in writing within 5 working days.

2. The COO will invite the Board of Trustees to put in writing its response to the complainant's reasons. The Board of Trustees will do this within 15 working days and at the end of that period (whether or not the Board of Trustees has responded) the COO will convene a meeting of the Complaints Panel of the Board of Trustees. That meeting will be held as quickly as practicable given the need to find a date that is reasonably convenient for the complainant and the members of the Panel. Whenever possible, the meeting will be held within 15 working days of the end of the Community's response time. At any meeting, the complainant will be entitled to be accompanied by a friend but legal representation will not be allowed.

3. The Panel will consist of a minimum of three persons of whom one will be independent of the management and running of the Community. None of the Panel will have been previously involved in the complaint process.

4. The Panel hearing is not a court case and will be as informal as circumstances allow. The complainant will have the opportunity to put her/his reasons for dissatisfaction and to enlarge on them but may not introduce reasons that were not previously put in writing. The Community will have the opportunity to put its side of things and each side, as well as the Panel members, will be able to ask questions. The complainant will have the opportunity to make final comments to the Panel.

5. The Panel may make findings and recommendations and a copy of those findings and recommendations will be sent by electronic mail or otherwise given to the complainant and, where relevant, the person complained about.

6. The Panel will formulate its response as quickly as reasonably possible, aiming to do so within 10 working days, and the COO will notify all concerned.

Record Keeping

Written records of all complaints that reach the formal stage will be kept. Details to be recorded will include the point at which the complaint was resolved, and the action taken by the Community as the result of the complaint.



Confidentiality

All complaints and written correspondence pertaining to the complaint will remain confidential.

Vexatious complaints

If properly followed, a good complaints procedure will limit the number of complaints that become protracted and which do not arrive at an outcome which is satisfactory to all parties involved. However, there will be occasions when, despite properly following all stages of the procedure, the complainant remains dissatisfied.

If a complainant seeks to reopen an issue which has gone through all available stages, including the Board of Trustees complaints panel, the Chair of Trustees may then inform the complainant in writing that the process has been exhausted and that the matter is now considered closed.

Behaviour of complainant

The Community recognises that all its members of staff are dedicated professionals who are committed to delivering high standards. We expect all complainants to respect this and to raise any issues in a polite and calm manner to reflect this.

If a complainant fails to deal with any member of staff in a proper and polite manner, the CEO may write to the complainant stating that if they fail to improve their conduct the Community will cease to deal with the complainant or the complaint until the complainant has apologised to the relevant member of staff and improved their behaviour.

If a complainant, despite receiving the above letter, fails to improve his/her conduct then the Chair of the Board of Trustees is entitled to write to the complainant stating that their behaviour will no longer be tolerated by the Community and that, as a result, the Community will now cease to deal with the complainant or the complaint until the complainant has apologised to the relevant member of staff and improved their behaviour.