

ReNew Complaints Procedure

1 Introduction

As a Christian organisation, we consider this to be a highly important procedure. However, we also hope it will seldom be required. The primary purpose of the ReNew complaints procedure is to provide a clear God-honouring process for dealing with complaints relating to decisions taken by its staff, trustees, committees or teams, including those who serve on a voluntary basis.

2 General Principles

Before raising a formal concern through this procedure, we would expect and encourage you to seek resolution informally. We are mindful that all people make mistakes and that a formal complaint should be a last resort. Therefore, in the first instance, please contact the staff member, trustee, planning team member, or regional leader of ReNew involved and provide them with the opportunity to resolve your concerns.

You may also wish to contact either Brian O'Donoghue, Pioneering & Operations Director of ReNew (brian@renewconference.org.uk) or the Chair of ReNew Trustees (chair@renewconference.org.uk) to explain your concerns before making a formal complaint.

We recognise that in some cases there will be no alternative but to make a formal complaint. This formal procedure should only be instigated when attempts to resolve the issue informally have failed or where, due to the nature of the complaint, it is not appropriate to address it with the person concerned.

3 Who can bring a complaint?

Anyone may make an informal or formal complaint against a member of ReNew staff or one of our volunteers. If we receive a number of inter-related complaints or a number of people make the same complaint, we may decide to consolidate the investigation or to deal with the earliest complaint first. The approach will depend on the nature of the complaints and the timing of receipt of the complaints.

4 What types of complaints will be considered?

ReNew will consider complaints about:

- i. The application of our procedures or decisions which directly relate to the complainant.
- ii. The conduct of ReNew staff.
- iii. The conduct of trustees and others who are appointed to serve on a voluntary basis on our teams, committees, or working groups [including as Regional Leaders of ReNew].

4.1 ReNew employs only a few staff through the charity, ReNew Conference (charity number 1174727), and also relies upon the work (paid or unpaid) of a number of others who serve as part of

the ReNew Planning Team, Regional Leaders, and as trustees of ReNew Conference (all of whom, together, are referred to in this policy as “ReNew staff”). ReNew is committed to conducting Christian ministry with honesty and integrity. We are therefore careful in our recruitment and training and expect all ReNew staff to maintain high standards. On very rare occasions, the conduct of ReNew staff may fall short of this expectation.

(a) In the first instance, and for less serious matters of misconduct, we would expect and encourage those adversely affected, to speak directly with the member of ReNew staff involved and they should be provided with the opportunity to resolve any concerns on an informal basis. Unresolved concerns may then be taken to the Operations Director (brian@renewconference.org.uk) or to the Chair of ReNew Trustees (chair@renewconference.org.uk) as preferred. In the vast majority of situations, we hope concerns will be fully resolved at this stage, perhaps by staff providing further clarification or explanation, or by apologising and making amends. Where concerns are satisfactorily dealt with by the ReNew staff involved, the following procedure will not usually be required.

(b) Where concerns are not dealt with satisfactorily by the ReNew staff involved, or are of such a serious nature that further contact with those staff would be inappropriate or potentially harmful, the following procedure should be followed.

4.2 This procedure may be used by anyone who wishes to complain about the conduct of any of the ReNew staff (as defined above).

4.3 This procedure should not be used by ReNew employees. If any ReNew employee wishes to complain about the conduct of another employee, they should use the Grievance Procedure as set out in the ReNew Staff Handbook.

4.4 This procedure should not be used where there is a safeguarding concern involving the ReNew staff. In such instances, the concerns should be reported in accordance with the ReNew Safeguarding Policy. If there is uncertainty as to whether something constitutes a safeguarding concern, Christian Safeguarding Services [<https://thecss.co.uk/get-in-touch/>] or the ReNew Safeguarding Officer should be contacted in the first instance: safeguarding@renewconference.org.uk.

4.5 Concerns should be reported as soon as possible so that they can be investigated promptly. We will always investigate such reports.

4.6 If you have any questions about this process please contact the Operations Director by email: brian@renewconference.org.uk.

5 What type of complaints will not be considered?

ReNew cannot consider:

- i. Complaints which are unrelated to the activities of ReNew itself.
- ii. Complaints about the conduct, performance, or behaviour of an accredited Minister or Church Worker or lay leader of a church that identifies as a ReNew Church or that otherwise attends ReNew events regionally and/or nationally. Whilst a church may be referred to as “a ReNew Church”, because in subscribing to ReNew’s statement of faith and pursuing the ReNew Agenda it wants to be part of our mission to England, they are all (legally speaking) independent churches, each governed by their own local leadership teams (PCCs and/or trustees), and each operating through their own legal entities or as part of established denominations. Whilst ReNew seeks to support and strengthen all of the churches within its

network, ReNew is a voluntary movement of local churches and, in principle and in practice, ReNew respects the autonomy of the local church and does not have, or seek to exercise or assume, any control over or legal responsibility for, any church in ReNew. Therefore, if you have any concerns or complaints relating to the staff or ministries of any of the ReNew Churches, you should not follow this Complaints procedure. Rather, you should follow the steps set out in the separate complaints policy (or, where appropriate, safeguarding policy) relating to the particular church involved. Each church, diocese and/or denomination ought to have an appropriate complaints procedure in place for such occasions, and **serious complaints against clergy can be referred to the official procedures of the relevant denominational group e.g. Church of England, Anglican Mission in England, or Free Church of England.** While we are always happy to hear from people in the churches which attend our conferences, it is not appropriate for us to handle complaints or safeguarding issues in individual parishes. ReNew has no legal basis to review any decisions made by any church in accordance with that church's complaints or safeguarding policy.

- iii. Complaints about our decisions or actions which do not relate directly to the complainant.

6 How to make a complaint

6.1 Complaints regarding application of procedures or decisions made

A complaint must be made in writing (by post or email, to the details found in 6.4 below) and must set out as much as possible of the following information¹:

- i. The nature of your complaint;
- ii. Who is concerned and their relationship to ReNew;
- iii. When the procedure or decision took place;
- iv. Why you think the actions are wrong;
- v. Details of what you have done to try and resolve your concerns;
- vi. What you consider would resolve your concerns;
- vii. Details of who else you have reported the matter to and what, if any, action was taken;
- viii. Any additional information;
- ix. Confirmation that you are happy for detail of your complaint and the supporting documentation to be provided to those who have made the decisions in question.
- x. Any supporting documentation that exists should also be enclosed.

6.2 Complaints regarding ReNew staff, trustees and other volunteers serving on our committees, teams, or working groups

This procedure should be used to report complaints about any of the ReNew staff. We take all complaints extremely seriously. Examples (not exhaustive) of where it would be appropriate to use this procedure are: bullying behaviour, coercion, manipulation, dishonesty, inappropriate sexual behaviour, criminal activity, and bribery. A complaint must be made in writing (by post or email to the details in 6.4 below) and you should clearly state that you want your complaint handled under the Complaints Procedure.

¹ A form to capture this information is available from the ReNew website.

Your complaint must set out as much as possible of the following information²:

- i. Your name and contact details. All complaints submitted under this procedure will be handled sensitively. We hope that you will feel able to voice concerns openly under this policy. Completely anonymous disclosures are difficult to investigate. If you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating your concern. Please notify us if you wish your concerns to be investigated confidentially in this way.
- ii. Details of your involvement with ReNew, its work, and/or its events.
- iii. A brief description of the nature of your complaint including the name of the person you are complaining about, the actions and behaviour which have given rise to your complaint and how this relates to ReNew, details of when and where the actions/behaviour took place and details of any witnesses to such actions/behaviour. In some situations, you may be asked to provide further information.
- vii. Details of what you have done to try and resolve your concerns.
- viii. What you consider would resolve your concerns.
- ix. Details of who else you have reported the matter to and what, if any, action taken.
- x. Any additional information.
- xi. Confirmation that you are happy for detail of your complaint and the supporting documentation to be provided to the person complained about should it be necessary to do so.
- xii. Any supporting documentation that exists should also be enclosed.

6.3 In all cases

Your complaint will not be dealt with unless you provide all of the information set out above. **Please note that we strongly advise against the use of public forums and social media for making complaints and comments about the matter you are complaining about, particularly before and during the complaints procedure. Any such public statements or interactions may be taken into account during the complaints procedure.**

6.4 Where to send a complaint

The complaint should be clearly marked "Formal Complaint" and sent to the Administrator by email (admin@renewconference.org.uk) or post (ReNew Conference, C/O St John's Church Walthamstow, 18 Brookcroft Road, London, E17 4LH), who will forward it to the appropriate person to be handled. If the complaint relates to actions of the Administrator, it should be sent to the Chair of the ReNew Trustees (chair@renewconference.org.uk), who will take the appropriate actions.

7 Handling the complaint

7.1 Initial response

² A form to capture this information is available from the ReNew website.

The complaint will be acknowledged in writing or by email within 5 working days of receiving the complaint. The Chair of the Trustees³ will appoint an investigator to look into your complaint. Depending on the nature and scope of the complaint this might be someone from within ReNew or from an independent external body. You will be told who will be appointed to investigate. The complaint will then be reviewed by the investigator.

The person investigating will seek to:

1. Establish what has happened and when it happened and who else was involved;
2. Meet with the Complainant or contact them if there is a need for clarification regarding the complaint or further information is required;
3. Following the initial information and any discussions with the Complainant, unless prevented by law or because it would prejudice any further investigation, those complained about will be informed of the nature of any allegations, regardless of whether any further action or investigation is required;
4. Interview those involved and those complained about, where necessary to understand their account of events; and
5. Keep notes of all investigatory interviews.

7.2 Complaints regarding application of procedures or decisions made

Once the investigation is concluded the investigator will update the complainant on the outcome and any potential actions to be taken to resolve the matter. The details and records of any complaint will be securely held by ReNew for a period of 10 years after its conclusion.

7.3 Complaints regarding ReNew staff conduct

If the investigator concludes that the evidence suggests that conduct worthy of disciplinary action may have taken place, the issue will be dealt with under the Staff disciplinary processes.

7.4 Complaints regarding ReNew trustees and others who are appointed to serve in a voluntary capacity on the Planning Team, as a Regional Leader, or at one of our events

If the person investigating concludes that the evidence suggests that misconduct may have taken place, the issue will be referred to a panel of three trustees unconnected with the matter under investigation to consider the evidence and to come to a decision, within 30 days.

If it would be impossible for three trustees to reasonably be considered independent one or more of them could be replaced with suitable members from within ReNew, or from an independent, external body. This may change the timescale for coming to a decision.

The panel may choose to invite the complainant or the person complained about to address the panel, but are not required to do so. Such a decision will be communicated to the complainant and to the person complained about within 5 days of the panel's decision. The panel will also inform the Charities Commission if circumstances require.

³ If the complaint is against the Chair of Trustees, the Trustees will appoint an investigator. If it is against both the Chair of Trustees and any other Trustee(s), the ReNew Planning Team will appoint, or direct someone to appoint, an investigator.

Where the person complained about is a member of the clergy, they may also be referred to parish or diocesan procedures. The complainant will be informed if the matter is being dealt with in this way.

8 Timescales

Following receipt of the complaint the Chair of Trustees⁴ will, within 21 days, give the Complainant an estimate of their expected timescale for dealing with the complaint. Where, as the investigation proceeds, it is not possible to meet those timescales, an updated timeline for dealing with the complaint will be provided. The more complex the complaint, the longer the timescale is likely to be. In some cases, it may take several months to properly investigate and respond to a complaint.

If the subject matter of the complaint has also been referred to the Police, it may be that our investigation into the complaint cannot commence or be completed until the Police have completed their investigations and either decided not to proceed or a Court decision has been taken. Our approach in these cases will depend on the particular circumstances of the case. Similarly, if complaints have also been made to parish or diocesan safeguarding or complaints procedures, it may be inappropriate for us to investigate separately. The complainant will be informed if we consider this to be the case.

9 What if you are unhappy with the outcome of the investigation?

9.1 Complaints regarding application of procedures or decisions made

You will have the right to appeal any decision on a complaint on these issues. Written notice of intention to appeal should be made within 14 days of the date the outcome of your complaint was sent to you. The appeal itself should be made within a further 14 days. The appeal should be in writing and must be sent to the person outlined in 6.4, above, who will arrange for your appeal to be considered by someone other than the person who took the initial decision (where possible).

The appeal must set out:

- i. Your grounds of appeal; and
- ii. What you consider would resolve your concerns.

Please note that we strongly advise against the use of public forums and social media for making complaints and comments about the matter you are complaining about, particularly before and during the complaints procedure and any appeal. Any such public statements or interactions may be taken into account during the complaints procedure.

9.2 Complaints regarding the conduct of staff, trustees, and those in voluntary appointments

There is no right for Complainants to appeal against the outcome of the investigations into ReNew staff, trustee, and volunteer conduct. This is because we believe that individuals in these groups who

⁴ Or the person acting in their place.

are under investigation need certainty that if an investigation has concluded it will conclude the matter.

If new evidence comes to light that has not previously been submitted that should be provided to the original panel, who will determine whether further investigation is necessary in light of that evidence.

10 Vexatious Complaints

If the panel concludes that a complaint has been made vexatiously or in bad faith, ReNew reserves the right to take the following actions:

- In all cases: to inform the complainant that this is how the complaints are being seen, the reasons why, and the consequences of this.
- In the case of ReNew church members who have made complaints: to report to ReNew Regional Leaders that the member has been found to have made a vexatious complaint, or has made a complaint in bad faith, and that they may wish to consider suspending or removing the member from their Regional Group because of this.

11 Contact by complainant

Once a formal complaint has been made, you should avoid any ongoing discussion or correspondence with the person you have complained about relating to your complaints without the consent of the investigator. **Please note that we strongly advise against the use of public forums and social media for making complaints and comments about the things or people you have complained to us about, even after the conclusion of the complaints' procedure.**

12 Confidentiality

The fact of and content of your complaint will be kept confidential save in so far as is necessary in order for us to properly investigate the complaint and reach a decision relating to it, unless we are aware that you have not treated the fact or content of your complaints as confidential. Please note that we expect you to maintain reasonable confidentiality as to the nature and content of your complaint so that the investigator is able to work without obstruction.

If you, or others, make public statements, contact the press, or use social media forums to complain about the situation or our handling of it under these processes, we reserve the right to respond publicly to any allegations or statements.

13 Further Complaints

As a registered charity, ReNew is accountable to the Charity Commission for England and Wales. Serious complaints can therefore be made to the Charity Commission⁵ where appropriate.

⁵ <https://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/raising-concerns/>

The Police can also be contacted about allegations of harm and abuse. **In serious cases where vulnerable adults or children are involved, the Police ought to be contacted first before any complaint is made to us.**

This Complaints Procedure should be taken alongside other relevant ReNew policies including the Safeguarding Policy, the Code of Practice for Trustees and other officers, and the Social Media policy. All these policies are available at: <https://www.renewconference.org.uk/policies/>

Policies are agreed by the ReNew Trustees and are reviewed every three years.