

THE CONGREGATION OF THE SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY, MOTHER OF CHRIST (IHM)
Complaints Policy and Procedures

Policy Purpose

The Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure that complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

Definition of a complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ. This could include administration, a staff member, process or service – resulting from the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ 's failure to meet the individual's expectations.

An individual may make a complaint if they feel the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ has:

- Failed to provide a service or an unacceptable standard of service, made a mistake in the way the service was provided or provided an unfair service
- Failed to act in a proper way.

This policy does not cover complaints from Volunteers or lay , who should refer to the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ's Grievance Policy.

Concern or Complaint

It is important to establish the difference between a concern and a complaint. Taking informal concerns seriously at the earliest stage will reduce the likelihood of their developing into formal complaints.

If you have any concerns about our work, please tell a staff member or their manager as soon as possible, so they can quickly understand your concerns and try to put things right.

If you are not happy with the response to your concern and/or you want to make a formal complaint, please follow the procedure below.

This policy only covers complaints about the administration, staff, systems, processes or service of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ. If your complaint is about another organisation that works with the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ your complaint will have to be directed to them and we can help you do this.

This policy does not cover safeguarding concerns. Any safeguarding concerns raised will be covered by our Safeguarding Policy. You do not have to do this, we will arrange this internally via our policy. This policy does however cover the event of you thinking your concern was not handled in a satisfactory way.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Complaints Procedure

We want to make it easy for you to contact us and to provide feedback or make a complaint. These are the ways you can get in touch with us:

1. You can call us on 07756066023/07898815633 and your complaint will be documented.

2. You can email us on ihmenglandsafeguarding@gmail.com

3. You can write to us at our Head Office [195 Church Road, Manor Park, London. E12 6HB]

In all instances where a complaint is made using the above means, we will contact you within 2 working days of receiving the complaint. If you provide us with a telephone number and/or email address we will contact you by either of those means to discuss the matter further and to officially record all necessary details. Hopefully, we can resolve the matter immediately. However, if the issue is more complex and an investigation is required, we will do the following:

- The person who receives the complaint will:
  - Record full details of your complaint
  - Record the complaint in our Complaints Register
  - Note down the relationship of the complainant to RLG, e.g., Religious, safeguarding lead, Survivor etc.
  - Take all necessary steps to investigate the matter
  - Contact you again within 15 working days of receiving the complaint to advise you of our findings or to give you an update on progress
  - Continue to keep you informed until the matter is resolved to your satisfaction or until all appropriate steps (in the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ' reasonable opinion) to resolve the matter have been taken
- The Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ s Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will handle all complaints and if necessary, will escalate them to the Trustee Board, depending on the complexity or seriousness of the issue

Resolving Complaints

Our commitment to you is to address each complaint in a sensitive, fair, transparent, equitable, professional and unbiased manner, through our complaints-handling process.

We will operate at all times from the premise that any person is entitled to express their views on our services and that those views should be taken seriously and investigated when needed.

There are three stages to the RLG complaint's procedure:

- Stage One – the complaint/investigation
- Stage Two – appeal
- Stage Three – External

Stage 1

In many cases a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the SLT within five working days.

On receiving the complaint, if not already resolved, the SLT will delegate an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within five working days. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 15 working days. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent to the complainant with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage 2

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 1, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Trustee Board level.

At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Trustee Board. The request for Board level review should be acknowledged within five working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The Board may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person within the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage 1. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage 1 should be kept informed of what is happening.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any

action taken as a result of the complaint. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

External Assistance

If both stages have been exhausted but a satisfactory resolution hasn't been reached, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ may decide to seek external assistance. However, the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ will only take this step if appropriate to do so, for example the complaint is of a serious nature or there is a valid conflict of interest.

Withdrawal of the Complaint

At any time during the process, a complainant may withdraw a complaint, by notice in writing to the responsible person handling their complaint. Upon such withdrawal, consideration of the complaint will normally be discontinued, unless the consequences of not following the procedure may result in harm to the individual or the organisation.

Confidentiality and Whistleblowing

To enable a full investigation to take place, it will be necessary for complainants to provide their name and contact details. However, in some instances, a complainant may wish to remain anonymous.

We always aim to keep a whistle blower's identity confidential where asked to do so, although this cannot be guaranteed. There may be situations where we have a duty to disclose identity for example to:

• The police, fraud prevention agencies, or other law enforcement agencies (to investigate or prevent crime, including fraud)

• The courts (court proceedings)

• Relevant authorities where there are safeguarding concerns

• RLGs part of any investigations into issues around qualification delivery

• Other third parties, e.g., Regulators

Data Protection

To process a complaint, the RLG will hold personal data about the complainant, which the individual provides and which other people give in response to the complaint. We will hold this data securely in line with our current retention policy and only use it to address the complaint. The identity of the person making the complaint will only be known to those who need to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to other people or made public.

However, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation is applied, or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third parties.

How to Contact the Regulators

If after the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ has been through both stages and the complainant is still not satisfied with the result, they should be advised that there is no further right of appeal with the Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ but they can approach any of the following agencies for advice:

- A solicitor - Home | The Law Society
- Citizens Advice Bureau - Citizens Advice
- The Charity Commission - https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity

This should be done within one month of receiving the outcome from the appeal.

Review of this Policy and Complaints Received

This policy will be reviewed by the Trustee Board annually and all complaints received (and compliments) will be brought before the Board for review at our regular Board meetings. Through this process of regular review we aim to improve our services to you and to ensure that any lessons learned are implemented, within our Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother of Christ.

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chair should not also have the Chair and/or Trustee involved as a person leading a Stage 2 review.

Date of Document Implementation:	**October 7th 2026**
Date Review Due:	**October 7th 2027**