Data Protection Complaints Policy

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Change log

Version	Who	Date	Change	Reason

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Complaint handling policy

This Data Protection Complaints Policy (**Policy**) is effective from 19th June 2026.

Owner:

The Methodist Church in Great Britain ('MCGB'), registered charity number 1132208. Questions about this Policy should be directed to the Data Protection Officer.

1. Purpose and scope

MCGB has legal complaint handing obligations under the UK GDPR and the Data (Use & Access) Act 2025. If an individual considers that we have breached data protection laws, they have the right to make a complaint directly to us, to the Information Commissioner's Office (**ICO**) or to pursue legal action.

These complaints must relate to data protection, but the legislation does not specifically define a data protection complaint. The scope of complaints is therefore wide and could relate to the way we collect or use someone's personal information, their data protection rights (such as the right of access, correction or erasure), our privacy notices and policies, how long we keep their information and security.

This Policy outlines our approach to handling data protection complaints. It applies to all employees, workers, contractors and third parties acting on behalf of MCGB. It covers complaints from any data subject or their authorised representative.

2. Guiding principles

MCGB is committed to handling data protection complaints in line with our legal obligations and in an accessible, fair, transparent and timely manner. We will handle complaints confidentially and only share information where appropriate to investigate and resolve the complaint, as required or authorised by law or otherwise in accordance with our privacy notice Privacy Notice - The Methodist Church. We will aim to avoid conflicts of interest.

3. Roles and responsibilities

Our Data Protection Officer is responsible for co-ordinating how we handle Data Protection complaints. They will involve relevant departments such as, but not limited to, HR and IT as needed.

All staff are responsible for recognising complaints and referring them to the Data Protection Officer promptly as well as for providing supporting information and responding to requests from the Data Protection Officer when asked.

The Data Protection Officer is responsible for ensuring staff are aware of and trained sufficiently to deal with data protection complaints.

MCGB will provide information about how to submit a Data Protection complaint. We will make this obvious and easily accessible to individuals, including in our privacy notices, via our website, in person and, where relevant, through internal channels. Using plain and clear language, we will explain:

- Our Data Protection complaints process.
- How individuals can make a Data Protection complaint.
- How we will respond if we consider the complaint is not a Data Protection matter.
- The available complaint channels.
- The information we require to investigate a complaint such as any supporting documentation including, contact details, and matter reference numbers.
- What we do with that information and why (for example, investigations, establishing the facts, complaint resolution).
- How we handle complaints which might be sensitive in nature.
- What individuals can expect from the process.
- When individuals can expect to hear from us, including status update communications such as acknowledgements, progress updates and outcomes.
- Any reasonable support we provide to help individuals make complaints such as alternative formats or language options.

4. Non-data protection complaints

Some complaints will include both data protection and non-data protection issues; we will handle the data protection aspects under this Policy. Non-data protection issues will be addressed under our HR, Safeguarding or Part 11 Complaints processes.

Where we receive a complaint that does not relate to MCGB data, this will be referred immediately to Trustees for Methodist Church Purposes (TMCP), who

will deal with the complaint under their Data Protection Complaints Policy and as the appropriate data controller.

5. Complaint channels

People may submit a Data Protection complaint to MCGB by email to the Data Protection Mailbox: dataprotection@methodistchurch.org.uk

By post to DATA PROTECTION OFFICER, Methodist Church in Great Britain. Methodist Church House, 25 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SF

6. Requesting additional information

Some complaints may be easy to resolve; others may require further investigation. Where reasonably necessary to investigate a complaint, MCGB may ask the complainant for additional information, including information to verify their identity or to clarify the scope of the complaint. MCGB will only request information that is reasonable and proportionate in the circumstances and will not request more information than we require to identify the complainant or their representative.

Where a complaint is made on behalf of another individual, MCGB may require evidence such as a power of attorney or signed letter of authority indicating that their representative is authorised to act on their behalf. We cannot progress complaints unless adequate proof of authority is provided. Where this is the case, we will explain it to the person who submitted the complaint.

7. Record keeping

We will keep appropriate records about each Data Protection complaint on our in-house system for complaints. Records include:

- The date of complaint
- The date of receipt.
- The date of acknowledgement.
- The outcome of the complaint, including escalation, and any actions taken in response.
- The date of formal response

These records will be used to demonstrate compliance, for audit and monitoring purposes, training, to support consistent handling and to identify recurring issues, trends or areas for organisational improvements or remediation.

We will not retain personal data relating to complaints for longer than is necessary and will handle such records in accordance with our Retention Schedule and data protection policies.

8. Acknowledgement and timeframes

We will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within 30 days of receipt. However, we will aim to acknowledge receipt within five working days.

We will aim to:

- Request any further information including for clarification or identification purposes within ten working days.
- Provide updates at least every 30 days.
- Reach an outcome within 60 working days.

For ongoing investigations, we will communicate this to individuals with an indication of our initial, anticipated timescales for resolving the complaint. We will continue to keep the complainant informed of our progress, including, where appropriate, the next steps, any further information required, and any expected timeframe for the next update, or outcome.

9. Investigations

We will take reasonable and proportionate steps necessary to investigate complaints fairly and in a timely manner.

We have processes in place to classify and escalate complaints that are time-sensitive, more serious or sensitive in nature. However, it may take us longer to investigate and resolve complaints which are complex, serious or which relate to multiple data protection issues.

10. Outcomes and escalation

We will communicate the outcome of the complaint to the complainant without undue delay, explaining our findings, whether the complaint is upheld (in whole or in part), any action taken or proposed, and, where no action is taken, the reasons for that decision.

If the complainant objects to our handling of their complaint or disputes the outcome or any aspect of our response, they have the right to lodge a complaint with the ICO at:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Tel: 0303 123 1113 or via their website: Contact us | ICO

A complainant also has the right to complain to the ICO at any time and to lodge a claim before a competent court, irrespective of whether they have lodged a complaint with us using our data protection or any other complaints processes.

11. Monitoring and audits

We will routinely monitor and audit our data protection complaint handling to ensure we can maintain performance levels in line with our legal obligations, our own performance targets and to demonstrate our compliance.