

Procedure for Investigation of Complaints

Purpose

This procedure is intended to provide advice when handling a complaint received against ELJC, its officers or members. The general principles apply when dealing with any type of complaint, including a Safeguarding complaint, albeit different types of complaint may necessitate different approaches. This procedure is not exhaustive in as much as the type of complaint may require actions not specifically documented, and equally not all the processes described may be required when investigating each type of complaint.

Overview

An investigation into a complaint will normally follow these steps

- When a complaint is received, as much information as possible is obtained
- If there are any Safeguarding or regulatory implications, the relevant authorities may need to be contacted
- One or more people are assigned to investigate the complaint
- The investigation takes place where information is gathered, people interviewed, and the details relating to the complaint are reviewed
- Following the investigation a decision is made on the complaint. This decision could be “justified/not justified” but it may be that such a decision on the complaint is not warranted or even possible but rather it is appropriate that e.g., actions are identified to improve future conduct within ELJC
- Any actions identified during the investigation are implemented / followed up. If identified, any sanctions are implemented or, most likely, reviewed by e.g., Council who will determine if sanctions should be imposed
- If required, there is ongoing review to ensure that actions identified are implemented on an ongoing basis
- Full documentation of the investigation is held / filed

Procedure

Receipt of Complaint

A complaint can be received in many ways, such as verbally, via email, by letter etc. While experience is that the person making the complaint identifies themselves, this doesn't have to be the case. On receipt of the complaint, the person receiving it should record as much information as possible. (While the most likely people to receive a complaint are the Chair, the Rabbi or the Safeguarding Lead, other members could receive the complaint.) While this is "easy" if the complaint is e.g., via email in as much as the information is all recorded in the email, if the complaint is made verbally, notes should ideally be made at the time the complaint is received. If this is not possible, notes should be made as soon as possible after receiving complaint. These notes should include when the complaint was made, who made it and as much detail about the complaint as possible.

It is very important that, throughout the investigation of a complaint, notes are kept of all information received, actions taken, people spoken to etc. This should still be done even if most of the investigation involves emails and written documentation.

Following receipt of a complaint, it is important to determine whether authorities, such as the police or Social Care, need to be informed immediately. It should usually be obvious if this is the case, for example where there has been an allegation of physical assault at a synagogue event. There will be cases where authorities need to be informed but not straight away and only after further investigation (see later), but if you aren't sure, it is nearly always best to speak with the authority concerned for further advice.

Investigation of the Complaint

Having received the complaint, and having got the initial details, the complaint needs to be investigated. The first step is to identify who will conduct the investigation. This could be an individual or group of people, and the nature of the complaint will determine who conducts the investigation. All other things being equal, the Safeguarding Lead will investigate a Safeguarding complaint and the Chair will investigate "general" complaints. However where there is a conflict of interest, for example there is a Safeguarding complaint against the Safeguarding Lead, then an alternate – in this case the Safeguarding Deputy – would conduct the investigation.

It is difficult to document all aspects of an investigation since the nature of the complaint will determine what is required. However, the following will typically be required:

- Speak with the person making the complaint
- Speak with the person against whom the complaint is made
- Speak with any others who may have been involved in or have knowledge of the complaint
- Review any documents, emails etc. relating to the complaint

During an investigation, as has already been noted, it is important that full documentation of the investigation is undertaken. This is particularly important as, during the investigation, a decision may need to be made as to whether any authorities need to be contacted. These include:

- The police – this will only be required in the most serious of cases
- Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) – OSCR does not need to be informed if ELJC receives a complaint, but if on investigation it is clear that there has been a serious breakdown of protocol, it is recommended that OSCR are contacted. OSCR contact details are: via their online contact form, which is their preferred method ([OSCR contact form](#)), email: info@oscr.org.uk, phone: 01382 220446
- Edinburgh Social Care department – where there is a Safeguarding complaint, the Social Care department may well need to be informed. Depending on the nature of the complaint, this may just be on a “for information” basis or it may be that the department wishes to take further action. The Social Care department’s contact details are: via their online form, which is their preferred method ([Edin. Social care online form](#)), email: socialcaredirect@edinburgh.gov.uk, phone: 0131 200 2324
- The Movement for Progressive Judaism (MPJ) – Typically MPJ are available to provide advice but there may be instances where they need to be informed on a more formal basis e.g., if the complaint could have implications for MPJ as well as ELJC. MPJ contact details are, email: hello@progressivejudaism.org.uk and phone: 020 8349 5640
- Our insurers – if our insurance policy is likely to be invoked, including the use of our PR advice, the insurers will need to be informed of the complaint. Our insurance has historically been arranged through the Church of Scotland Insurance Services, although as of November 2025 this service has been transferred to Howden, whose contact details are, phone: 020 7398 4888 and they can be contacted via the [contact page](#) on their website

At all times during the investigation process, the investigation must be conducted with integrity, balance and fairness. While it is stating the obvious, a person's standing in the community, be that positive or negative, and whether they made the complaint or are the subject of the complaint, should have no impact on how the investigation is undertaken. The investigation should also be undertaken, as far as is possible, in confidence. It could be the case that some complaints will be "public knowledge", but until the outcome of an investigation is conducted, the general principle should be that confidence is maintained.

Investigation Conclusion

Following the investigation, a formal report should be written, conclusions drawn and, in most cases, actions will be identified. The conclusions drawn could be that the complaint is or isn't justified, but this will not necessarily always be the case. For example it may not be possible to determine whether something did or did not take place. While it is always important to identify areas for improvement, in cases where a "this did happen / didn't happen" conclusion can't be reached, it is even more important that areas for improvement are identified.

Should actions be recommended to be taken against individual synagogue member(s), such actions should always be taken in accord with the constitution. Where a severe sanction such as removal of membership is recommended, this can only be taken at a General Meeting of ELJC.

Documentation

As noted, there are two types of documentation that should be made and kept during a complaint and its investigation. The first is all the information relating to the complaint – both the initial information and all subsequent information arising from the investigation. The second is the formal report. All this information should be retained securely and confidentially during and after the investigation is complete.

Where follow-up actions are identified, a record of what action is taken should also be kept.