

SPS Complaints Policy

WE WELCOME FEEDBACK



1. Why we need to have this policy

Southgate Progressive Synagogue (hereafter SPS) strives to be an inclusive, accountable, and transparent religious organisation.

We are committed to being a learning organisation and welcome feedback.

2. What are complaints?

Please note:

- This policy refers to complaints that relate to the actions of an employee or volunteer, including trustees, vice-presidents, and Rabbinic team.
- When considering a complaint reference should be made to the SPS Constitution, the governing document of SPS.
- Typically, a complaint should be about something ‘not right’ or unsatisfactory, in contravention of the SPS Constitution, **not** a disagreement with the agreed policies of SPS Council.
- There is a difference between a complaint in which you consider something has gone wrong and something that is a notification, opinion, or an issue arising from a committee decision.
- Complaints will be dealt with according to the nature and severity of the complaint.
- Safeguarding issues should be reported according to the SPS Safeguarding Policy which can be found at <https://sps.uk.com/home/governance/safeguarding/> for more information. (To refer, please email: safeguarding@sps.uk.com).
- *Opinions relating to committee decisions should be made to the chair of the relevant committee (see back of monthly ‘The Bulletin’) and are not covered by this policy.*
- *Issues relating to the site (buildings, etc.) should be reported to: site@sps.uk.com and any relating to security to: security@sps.uk.com*

3. Regarding Complaints

- We recognise that complaints raise issues of concern, and we will seek to address these in an appropriate timescale (see point 4.1.), with consideration and, where possible, confidentiality.
- SPS will seek to deal with complaints fairly and aim to make it as easy as possible to make a complaint.
- SPS is committed to finding an appropriate resolution and to learning from complaints wherever we can.

4. Three Stages of a Complaint - Complaints Process overview

Stage 1. Raising the complaint.

Stage 2. Investigation and initial resolution: This is to understand the issue and to see if a resolution can be reached.

Stage 3. Appeals: If the complainant is not happy then they can appeal. This is the final part of the process.

4.1. Raising a complaint:

Any complaint should be made in writing (by post or email) and addressed to the SPS Honorary Secretary (honsecretary@sps.uk.com) who will acknowledge it in writing within five working days, confirming if the complaint falls under this policy. The complaint will be treated as confidential.

If the complaint is about the Honorary Secretary, it should be addressed to the SPS Assistant Honorary Secretary.

The SPS Chair will function as the adjudicator of the complaint but has the right to refer it to another appropriate person if circumstances necessitate this.

If the complaint is about the Chair, then the SPS Vice-Chair or another executive officer will adjudicate.

The Chair (or appropriate person investigating the matter) will -

- Identify what has happened so far and who has been involved.
- Examine the complaint and decide the appropriate procedure to be followed, which will usually include a meeting or meetings with each party, or together as appropriate.
- Seek clarification to ensure that they understand fully the nature of the complaint, contacting the complainant if necessary to ensure that they understand their perspective and how they would like the complaint to be resolved.
- Seek advice, as appropriate and as necessary. from relevant expert(s).

The complaint will be dealt with within a reasonable time period, not exceeding 31 days from acknowledgement of its receipt by the Honorary Secretary.

In the event of a complaint being about the SPS Chair, or involving a member of the Rabbinic team, or of an occurrence which poses significant risk to the organisation's reputation, a complaints panel - consisting of four people: a member of the SPS Executive, an SPS President or Vice-President, an SPS lay member and the SPS Governance Officer - may be appointed and the initial resolution stage bypassed.

4.2. Investigation and initial resolution

If the Chair (or person investigating) needs to interview anyone to seek clarification, it should be at a time and place that is suitable for the interviewee.

The interviewee can bring someone with them for support (if this is an employment issue then there are specifics on this) and a full record of the interview will be made. This should be checked for accuracy by the interviewee and agreed by both parties before any action is taken.

The Chair (or person investigating) will then make a recommendation about how this matter should be resolved.

If it is possible to resolve the issue at this initial stage, this should be supported.

The resolution of the complaint could require any of the following:

- An apology
- An explanation of what happened and why decisions were made as they were
- An acknowledgement of how things could be done differently, if relevant
- An assurance that what happened will not recur
- An explanation of the steps that will be taken to make the changes needed so that a similar occurrence will not be repeated
- A commitment to amend policies and processes to enable the prevention of a similar occurrence
- Any recommendations for further action

Any recommendations or action should be shared with SPS Executive with clear deadlines for completion and allocation of responsibility for steps needed.

A record of the complaint, investigation, and resolutions agreed should be forwarded to the SPS Governance Officer (governance@sps.uk.com) to be recorded and filed confidentially.

It is anticipated that the majority of complaints can be resolved informally but if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they should write to the SPS Chair (or SPS Vice Chair if the Chair is the subject of the complaint) explaining why they are not satisfied and request that it is passed on to a complaints panel to review the complaint and outcome.

The complainant should let the SPS Honorary Secretary know that they wish to escalate this matter within 10 working days of receipt of the initial stage resolution.

4.3. SPS employees and volunteers

If the complainant is an SPS employee or volunteer it may be necessary to ask them to stay at home (on paid leave if a staff member) while investigations are being conducted and the matter being dealt with through appropriate procedures. This is a neutral act and may particularly be necessary in cases of alleged harassment. [For further details please see the SPS Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities Policy.]

4.4. Complaints appeals

If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they have the right to appeal the decision within 31 days to the CEO of Liberal Judaism (montagu@liberaljudaism.org).

This is the final stage of the process.

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**Date:** 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2023

**Review Date:** March 2026

**Signature:** *Mark Howard Shaw*

**Printed Name:** Mark H Shaw

SPS Chair on behalf of SPS Executive and Council