

Manchester Buddhist Centre

Protocol for dealing with formal complaints against members of the local sangha

It is in everyone's interest that Manchester Buddhist Centre (MBC) has a clear and transparent procedure to be followed if or when a formal complaint is made against a member of the local sangha.

The following procedure will be followed when a formal complaint is made that **does not** involve a breaking of the law.

Please note that if the law has been broken complainants will be supported to report the matter to the police. The MBC's **Safeguarding Policy** will be followed in all instances where matters relating to safeguarding are raised.

The implementation of the process outlined below is an attempt to work towards a satisfactory resolution of the complaint, prevent gossip and, where necessary / possible, restore harmony in the sangha. The process is exploratory and investigative in nature. Please note that the implementation of the policy does not automatically imply fault or wrongdoing by those against whom a complaint has been made.

1. Anyone who wishes to make a complaint against a member of the sangha should, in the first instance (wherever possible), seek to resolve it directly with the individual concerned.
2. If the issue cannot be resolved directly then it should be brought to the attention of the MBC Chair or an MBC Trustee.
Experience has shown that it is extremely important to share information **only** with those who need to know. Much disquiet and harm may result if information circulates before the complaint is investigated and the facts are independently established.
3. Once a complaint has been made the Chair or Trustee will bring the matter to the next scheduled Trustees' Meeting. The Trustees will collectively agree a named person (Trustee or other independent Order Member) to investigate and address the complaint on their behalf. This named person may wish to establish a small working group whose membership will also be agreed by the Trustees.
4. If / when action is deemed urgent the Chair or Trustee will progress the matter as soon as possible in consultation with two other Trustees. They will report the issue and any actions taken at the next scheduled Trustees' Meeting or sooner if this is deemed necessary.

The Chair and Trustees will collectively decide with whom to share the information and will make every effort to keep this to a minimum.

5. If the Chair or any other Trustee is implicated in the complaint they will be absented from the process / discussion(s) noted above.
6. The person(s) charged with addressing the complaint will explore it with those against whom the complaint has been made, as well as any relevant others, to ascertain the truth (as far as this is possible).
7. The person(s) charged with addressing the complaint will maintain a written record of actions taken and the content of any relevant conversations. Efforts will be made to ensure that written records of conversations are agreed as accurate by those involved.
8. Where the complaint is found to be valid, efforts will be made to resolve it to the satisfaction of the complainant and the Trustees. Efforts will also be made to ensure that the complaint leads to individual and collective learning that minimises the possibility of similar mistakes or harmful behaviours being repeated in the future.
9. Individuals in conflict within the local sangha will, where appropriate, be encouraged to engage in mediation. (Where required the MBC will offer support to source and arrange independent mediation. The MBC will also consider funding this service where one or both parties experience financial hardship.)
10. If the above measures do not satisfactorily resolve the complaint the complainant is advised to approach the MBC President whose contact details are available on the MBC website.
11. As far as possible the investigation and resolution process will be undertaken in a manner that is ethical (in accordance with the five precepts). Every effort will be taken to treat **all** those involved (irrespective of whether they are the complainant or a person against whom a complaint is being made) fairly and respectfully.