

Manchester Buddhist Centre

Protocol for dealing with complaints and allegations against local sangha members

It is in everyone's interest that we have a clear and transparent procedure to be followed if or when a formal complaint or an allegation is made against a member of the local sangha in the context of their role and/or position at the Manchester Buddhist Centre.

The following procedure will be followed in all instances when a complaint or allegation does not involve a breaking of the law or a serious breach of the Buddhist precepts.

The implementation of this process does not in any way suggest suspicion of fault/guilt. Rather, it is an attempt to establish the truth, work towards a satisfactory resolution of the complaint/allegation and, where necessary, prevent gossip and restore harmony in the sangha.

1. Anyone who wishes to make a complaint or allegation against a member of the sangha should, in the first instance, seek to resolve it themselves.
2. If the issue cannot be resolved directly then it should be brought to the attention of the Chair or a Trustee.
3. 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 facts are investigated and established.
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.
5. Once a complaint/allegation has been made the Chair or Trustee will bring the matter to the next scheduled Trustees' Meeting. The Trustees will collectively agree someone (Trustee or other independent Order Member) to investigate and address the complaint/allegation on their behalf. This named person may wish to establish a small working group whose membership will also be agreed by the Trustees.
6. The Chair and Trustees will collectively decide with whom to share the information further.

7. If the Chair or any other Trustee is implicated in the complaint or allegation she/he/they will be absented from the discussion/s noted in paragraphs 4 and 5 above.
8. Taking great care over confidentiality, the Chair may wish to consult their Area Council, where there is one, or the European Chairs' Assembly Development Team, in case the same issue has been encountered elsewhere.
9. The person/s charged with addressing the complaint or allegation will explore it with those against whom the complaint or allegation has been made, as well as any others involved, to ascertain the truth.
10. The person/s charged with addressing the complaint or allegation will maintain a written record of actions taken and the content of an relevant conversations. Efforts will be made to ensure that written records of conversations are agreed as accurate by those involved.
11. Where the complaint or allegation 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 or allegation leads to learning that, as far as possible, minimises the possibility of mistakes or harmful behaviours being repeated in the future.
12. Individuals in conflict within the local sangha will, where appropriate, be encouraged to engage in mediation. The MBC will source and pay for this.
13. If the above measures do not satisfactorily resolve the complaint or allegation the complainant is advised to approach the MBC President, a senior order member who is independent of the local sangha, directly. The MBC President's contact details are available on the MBC website.
14. 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 or allegation is being made) fairly and respectfully.