

## Complaints Procedure

The Diocese of Leeds views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person who has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
- To make sure everyone who works for the Diocese knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a polite and timely way.
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired and reconciliation explored.
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

### Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any area of the work of the Diocese of Leeds.

### Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from:

- people who are dissatisfied with the service that they have received from an employee of the Diocese of Leeds.
- people who have concerns relating to policies for running the diocese or decisions taken.

A complaint can be received by email or in writing. It is our policy that we will not investigate anonymous complaints unless there is compelling evidence of a valid case and good reason to protect the identity of the complainant.

Anyone making a complaint by telephone or in person will be asked to submit their complaint in writing. If they have difficulty in doing so assistance will be made available to do so.

This policy does not cover:

- Complaints relating to diocesan church schools, where the individual school's complaints process should be used.
- Complaints relating to local church matters, where the complaint should be referred to the PCC.
- Complaints relating to the Cathedral, which should be referred to the Cathedral Chapter.
- Complaints regarding members of clergy, which should be referred to the relevant Archdeacon.
- Complaints from employees of the Diocese, who should use the grievance procedure of their employing body.
- Complaints from members of Clergy where the issue is a grievance relating to the exercise of the office held - the Archbishops' Council has set out a Code of Practice and supportive advice for dealing with such grievances.

### Safeguarding

If you have a complaint about any safeguarding process or procedure, please follow the complaints procedure below.

*It is important to note that disclosures, concerns or allegations about abuse of children or adults, should always be referred directly to the Police or Social Services, where there is immediate danger, and otherwise to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.*

## **Confidentiality**

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, shared only with those who need to know, and used and stored with due regard to any relevant data protection requirements.

## **Responsibility**

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation sits with the Diocesan Board of Finance.

## **Review**

This policy is reviewed annually and updated as required.

## **Complaints Procedure**

### **Publicised Contact Details for Complaints**

Written formal complaints should be sent to:

Mrs Debbie Child, Diocesan Secretary, Diocese of Leeds, Church House, 17-19 York House, Leeds, LS1 2EX, or by email to: [debbie.child@leeds.anglican.org](mailto:debbie.child@leeds.anglican.org)

If the complaint is about the Diocesan Secretary it should be sent to the Dean of Ripon, Director of the Diocesan Board of Finance: The Very Revd John Dobson, Minster House, Bedern Bank, Ripon HG4 1PE.

### **Receiving Complaints**

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

All formal written complaints received (whether by letter or e-mail) should be forwarded to the Diocesan Secretary (Debbie Child) as quickly as possible by e-mail, with the words 'Formal complaint' in the subject line. For speed any formal complaints received by letter should be scanned and forwarded as quickly as possible.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded. The employee or volunteer who receives a complaint made over the phone or in person should:

- Ask the complainant whether they have tried to resolve their complaint informally with the person responsible for the issue being complained about in the first instance.
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure and direct them to the website or offer to send a copy to them by e-mail or post.
- If they have tried informal resolution and now wish to take the matter further, ask the complainant to send a written account by letter or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

You should also:

- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number.
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to the diocese.
- Write down brief facts of the complaint.
- Forward these details to the Diocesan Secretary for information.

### **Resolving Complaints Informal Stage**

In most cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. If they are unclear they can discuss matters with the Diocesan Secretary. Most matters can and should be resolved informally and locally.

If, for example, somebody is dissatisfied with the service they have received, then in the first instance they should tell their immediate diocesan contact of their dissatisfaction. He or she should be willing to listen, to discuss the matter and seek to satisfy the concerns where justified. If a person remains unhappy, the employee will arrange for the concerns to be discussed with a more senior colleague.

If, following the informal process, the complainant remains dissatisfied or the informal route is inappropriate, then the formal procedure should be followed. Unless there are exceptional extenuating circumstances complaints must be raised within 3 months of the incident occurring.

## **Formal Stage**

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved during the informal process, they can escalate the complaint to the formal process. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Diocesan Secretary or, if they have already been involved, to the Dean of Ripon.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within a calendar week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

A suitably senior person may be appointed to investigate the facts of the case. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with anyone who may have been involved in dealing with the complaint at the informal stage.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given an opportunity to respond. The person who dealt with the original complaint at the informal stage should be kept informed of what is happening where appropriate.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 28 days. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and whether any action has been taken (but **not** details of that action) as a result of the complaint. Where disciplinary action is deemed appropriate, the reply to the complainant will **not** state this or give details relating to individual employees employment record.

It should be recognised that in some instances people will take positions where the matter cannot be resolved. However, the aim should be to ensure that the process respects those involved and is just in providing an active concern to those who are vulnerable, marginalised or oppressed.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Diocesan Board of Finance decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution. A log of the complaint will be kept.

## **External Stage**

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. The Commission's involvement in looking at complaints is limited to issues that pose a serious risk of significant harm to a charity's beneficiaries, assets, services or reputation. Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: [www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx)

## **Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Diocesan Board of Finance may vary this procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest for example.