
Complaints policy and process

I Introduction

- I.1 This policy sets out the various ways in which complaints to the central diocesan offices (the Bishop's Office, Church House, No 4 and the Resources Centre) will be responded to and to ensure people working in these offices know what to do when a complaint is received.
- I.2 The overriding principles are that all complaints will be:
- Normally in writing, anonymous complaints will rarely be followed up. If telephone or email complaints are raised these will be followed up so that clear information is received/agreed with the complainant (eg telephone notes that are taken).
 - Responded to promptly and with confidentiality so that only those needing to know or be involved are included and in line with data protection rules.
 - Investigated fairly and with pastoral care and sensitivity.
 - Resolved as amicably as is possible in any situation with complainants asked where appropriate about how they would like their complaint resolved; but understanding how the decision making processes work.
 - Reviewed by appropriate Diocesan senior staff (ordained and lay).
 - Reviewed at the end point to ensure learning takes place at organisation and other appropriate levels.
- I.3 Complaints therefore can be made about issues of policy, action, or individual service/action by a member of staff or a Trustee/Committee member.
- I.4 Complaints cannot be made about decisions or actions that have been taken following legal church national processes protocols, due process, and appeal processes.
- I.5 Under no circumstances will the diocese accept vexatious, threatening or intimidating complaints made about any individual. These may be referred to the statutory authorities as appropriate.

2 Who can make a complaint and where should it be directed?

- 2.1 For complaints about a member of staff employed by the Diocese of Gloucester:
- these should be directed to the appropriate departmental senior manager, the Head of HR and Safeguarding, or the Diocesan Secretary. These will be followed up appropriately through the normal policies such as capability, and/or disciplinary.
- 2.2 For complaints about a member of clergy;
- these should be directed to the relevant Archdeacon or the Bishop who will follow them up within the frameworks of national and diocesan protocols and policies.
- 2.3 For complaints about decisions taken by Directors, Boards or Committees within the synodical context of the diocese:
- these should be directed to the Chair of that particular Board or Committee (information about them is available on the diocesan website or through Reception at Church House).
- 2.4 For internal complaints from and about diocesan employed staff; these should be taken up using the staff employment handbook's grievance and whistleblowing policies.
- 2.5 For complaints about the action of an individual member of a Board or Committee; these should be directed to the Chair of that Board/Committee so that appropriate follow up can take place.
- 2.6 For complaints from diocesan clergy; these should be taken up using the grievance procedures afforded by the Ecclesiastical (Terms of Service) Measure as set out by the Archbishop's Council's code of practice; available through the national Church of England websites; and the diocesan copy policy of this available through the diocesan website. <https://www.churchofengland.org/about-us/structure/churchlawlegis/clergydiscipline.aspx>
- 2.7 For complaints about any diocesan safeguarding decision; these should be directed to the Chair of the Safeguarding Board, Simon Atkinson. Please refer to the Safeguarding Complaints process by referring to this link: <https://www.gloucester.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Safeguarding-Complaints-Procedure.pdf>
- 2.8 For concerns relating to local parochial issues or concerns: these should be directed to the incumbent or PCC.
- 2.9 For concerns relating to a church school: these should be directed to the school's Chair of Governors so that the school's own complaints policy can be followed.

3 What will happen if a complaint is received?

- 3.1 A complaint received by email/letter will be acknowledged within 48hrs of receipt. The acknowledgement will state what further steps will be taken, and what the complainant can expect will happen next. (Complaints could be so varied, so it is important that each is dealt with according to issue, need, level of seriousness, further information needed, etc.)

- 3.2 Where a complaint is taken by telephone, the details will be confirmed including name, address, contact details, nature of complaint – and this will be passed on to the appropriate senior manager/Chair to call back to confirm the details and seek any clarification or further information that would be needed to progress the complaint.
- 3.3 Paperwork relating to all complaints received, actions taken, etc will be recorded and stored within data protection provisions. These will be held by the HR and Safeguarding Department in a locked cabinet.

4 How will complaints be progressed and resolved?

- 4.1 Wherever possible complaints will be resolved amicably, professionally and with pastoral care and sensitivity.
- 4.2 Individuals making complaints will be dealt with courteously and professionally. Information will be clarified and any further information sought.
- 4.3 Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant will set out how the complaint was progressed and conclusions and set out how a referral can be made (see section 5 below).
- 4.4 As appropriate where actions/decisions are taken in relation to a complaint these will be shared with the complainant. This will not include personal employment information about any member of staff.
- 4.5 Each senior manager progressing a complaint will keep clear notes, and copies of any correspondence related to it (kept and stored within data protection provisions).

5 What happens if a complainant is unhappy with the outcome of their complaint?

- 5.1 If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at the first stages set out in 4 above they are able to refer their complaint to the Diocesan Secretary or if they have already been involved the Chair of the Resources Committee (previously known as the *Board of Finance). Either may appoint an independent Board or Committee member, or fellow member of senior staff who has not been involved at this stage to investigate what has occurred, review any paperwork, and report back to them.
- 5.2 Referrals may take up to 28 days to complete (and practical extensions may be required) – however the complainant will be kept informed about progress from the Diocesan Secretary/Chair of the Board of the *Resources Committee.

6 What is the role of the Charity Commission?

- 6.1 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

7 Complaints involving others

- 7.1 As an employer the Diocesan Board of Finance * has a duty of care to ensure that all staff are treated with respect and dignity at work and managers take up this day to day responsibility.
- 7.2 On occasions concerns and complaints may be raised against members of the public, contractors and others where their inappropriate use of language in diocesan work related emails, phone calls and meetings has caused offence to members of diocesan staff.
- 7.3 All concerns should be raised with the immediate senior manager so that appropriate follow up actions can be taken, and the Diocesan Secretary and Deputy Diocesan Secretary can provide further advice and guidance.

8. Making a complaint

- 8.1 Written complaints may be sent to the Diocesan Secretary/Deputy Diocesan Secretary or the Chair of the *Resources Committee, or appropriate senior manager and addressed to: Church House, College Green, Gloucester, GL1 2LY.
- 8.2 Telephoned complaints to Reception: 01452 410022

9. Reviewing this policy

- 9.1 The Diocesan Secretary and Head of HR and Safeguarding are responsible for ensuring this policy is shared across the management structures of the central diocesan offices, and with key staff.
- 9.2 The Resources Committee may review this policy annually or at any time it sees fit. The date of the policy/policy version will be indicated at the beginning of this policy.

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