

Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

1. The Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance (LDBF) takes all legitimate complaints seriously and seeks to deal with all complaints promptly, fairly and effectively to resolve any issues and, where possible, prevent such issues from reoccurring. Wherever possible, we will endeavour to resolve issues informally, either through a telephone conversation or through a face-to-face conversation without recourse to a formal procedure.
2. We expect a high standard of integrity and service from all of our employees. Mostly that standard is met, but occasionally individual employees fall short of what is expected of them. When this happens, the LDBF will respond swiftly and appropriately.
3. We view 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.

Scope

4. This policy and procedure is for all individuals who wish to raise a complaint against the LDBF and its employees.
5. This could include dissatisfaction with the service that they have received from an employee of the LDBF and having concerns relating to policies for running the Diocese or decisions taken.
6. Complainants could include members of our congregations, PCC members, applicants for jobs, visitors, agency workers or contractors, external organisations working in partnership with us, or members of the public.

Aims

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

Definition of a Complaint

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

This policy does not cover:

13. Complaints relating to diocesan church schools, where the individual school's complaints process should be used.
14. Complaints relating to local church matters or employees, where the complaint should be referred to the PCC of the relevant parish.
15. Complaints relating to diocesan cathedrals, which should be referred to the appropriate Cathedral Chapter.
16. Complaints regarding clergy, which should be referred to the relevant Archdeacon and the Diocesan Registrar.
17. Complaints from employees of the Diocese, who should use the grievance procedure of their employing body.
18. Complaints from 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

19. If you have a complaint about any safeguarding process or procedure, please follow the complaints procedure below.
20. *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 a Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.*

Receiving a complaint

21. 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.
22. 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.

Confidentiality

23. 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

24. Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation sits with the LDBF.

Review

25. This policy is reviewed annually and updated as required.

Complaints Procedure

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints

26. Written formal complaints should be sent to: Jonathan Wood, Diocesan Secretary, Diocese of Leeds, Church House, 17-19 York House, Leeds, LS1 2EX, or by email to: jonathan.wood@leeds.anglican.org
27. If the complaint is about the Diocesan Secretary, it should be sent to the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance: The Rt Revd Toby Howarth, Diocese of Leeds, Church House, 17-19 York Place, Leeds, LS1 2EX.
28. In the absence of Jonathan Wood, Anna Earnshaw, Director of People and Engagement, will deal with any formal complaints.

Receiving Complaints

29. Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.
30. All formal written complaints received (whether by letter or email) will be forwarded to the Diocesan Secretary (Jonathan Wood) as quickly as possible by email, with the words 'Formal Complaint' in the subject line. For speed, any formal complaints received by letter will be scanned and forwarded as quickly as possible.
31. Complaints received by telephone or in person by an employee or volunteer at the LDBF will be recorded. The complainant will be:
- Asked whether they have tried to resolve their complaint informally with the person responsible for the issue being complained about in the first instance.
 - Informed of this complaints policy and procedure and directed to the relevant information on the website, or arrangements will be made to send them a copy by email or post.
 - Asked, if they have tried informal resolution and now wish to take the matter further, to send a written account by letter or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.
32. The following information will be noted upon receiving a complaint:
- The complainant's name, address, and telephone number.
 - The complainant's relationship with the Diocese of Leeds.
 - The brief facts of the complaint.
33. The above details will be forwarded to the Diocesan Secretary for information.

Resolving Complaints – Informal Stage

34. 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 will do so if possible and appropriate. They may also discuss matters with the Diocesan Secretary. Most matters can and should be resolved informally and locally.

35. If, for example, an individual is dissatisfied with the service they have received, then in the first instance they should tell their immediate diocesan contact of their dissatisfaction. They will listen, discuss the matter, and seek to satisfy the concerns where justified. If the complainant remains unhappy, the employee will arrange for the concerns to be discussed with a more senior colleague.
36. 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.

Resolving Complaints – Formal Stage

37. 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. The following steps will be taken.
38. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Diocesan Secretary or, if they have already been involved, to the Chair of the Board of Finance, Bishop Toby Howarth.
39. Complaints will be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within one calendar week. The acknowledgement will state who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints policy and procedure will be attached.
40. 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.
41. If the complaint relates to a specific individual, they will 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.
42. We aim to respond fully to complaints within 28 days. If this is not possible due to the work required, the complainant will be updated and informed when a full response will be given.
43. Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the complainant can expect to receive in the response:
 - A description of the action taken to investigate the complaint.
 - The conclusions from the investigation.
 - Whether any action has been taken (but **not** details of that action) as a result of the complaint.

44. Where disciplinary action is deemed appropriate, the reply to the complainant will not state this or give details relating to individual employees' employment record.
45. The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the LDBF decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with the resolution. A log of the complaint will be kept.

Complaining Externally

46. 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

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

47. The LDBF may vary this procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Diocesan Secretary should not also have the Diocesan Secretary as the person leading the formal process.