Complaints Policy and Procedure

Introduction

1. The Leeds Diocesan Board of Finance (LDBF) takes all 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, 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.

7. Complaints about the actions and conduct of Bishops, Deans, Archdeacons or any other licensed member of clergy are subject to a different process which is detailed below at Annex A.

Aims of the complaint policy

8. To provide a fair complaints policy and procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.

9. To publicise the existence of our complaints policy and procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.

10. To make sure everyone who works for the LDBF knows what to do if a complaint is received.

11. To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a polite and timely way.

12. To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired and reconciliation explored.

13. To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

Definition of a Complaint

14. A complaint is a formal expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any area of the work delivered by the Diocesan Board of Finance or its employees.

Support and Guidance

15. Individuals are not expected to understand Diocesan and Church of England processes before raising a concern. If a complainant is uncertain about the appropriate complaint route to follow we will provide advice and guidance, as well as relevant contact details.

16. Where the complaint is about something which is not in the direct control of the Diocesan Board of Finance then other routes should be used. These are set out below and will be subject to the relevant policies and timescales for those policies.

17. If you are not clear which complaint route to follow or need further support in identifying the relevant contact details then please contact Enquiries@leeds.anglican.org and further support will be provided.

Complaint about	**Route**
Diocese employee	Leeds DBF Complaints Policy
Diocesan service	Leeds DBF Complaints Policy
Parish volunteer	Local Parochial Church Council
Churchwarden	Local Parochial Church Council / Archdeacon
Clergy conduct	Archdeacon / Diocesan Registrar
Area Bishop	Bishop of Leeds / Registrar
Bishop of Leeds	Diocesan Registrar
Safeguarding concerns	Diocesan Safeguarding Team / (Call 999 - Police if there is risk of immediate harm)
Staff grievance	Leeds DBF Grievance policy/HR team
School matter	School Complaints Procedure

Safeguarding

18. If you wish to make a safeguarding disclosure, raise a concern or make an allegation about the abuse of children or adults, this can be done via the diocesan safeguarding team, details are available here Safeguarding - Diocese of Leeds. If you believe there to be an immediate risk of harm to a child or adult, the police should be contacted on 999.

19. Where concerns/complaints have been raised with the safeguarding team but having been considered have been deemed not to be safeguarding, the complainant will be informed of this. The complaint should then be dealt with in relation to the processes set out in this policy.

20. If you have a complaint about the way a safeguarding process or report has been handled, please follow the complaints procedure outlined in this policy.

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, Chief Executive, 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 Chief Executive, it should be sent to the Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance: The Bishop of Leeds, Church House, 17-19 York Place, Leeds, LS1 2EX.

28. In the absence of the Chief Executive, the Director of People and Engagement, will deal with any complaints. Complaints may also be delegated to them where circumstances mean a speedy or more appropriate resolution can be achieved.

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 (the Bishop of Leeds). He may choose to deal with this himself or ask another Trustee to look into the matter.

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. If needed a copy of this complaints policy and procedure will be attached.

40. 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. The complaint will be looked into. This will 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. 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.

42. Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the complainant can expect to receive in the response:
    - A description of the action taken to look into the complaint.
    - The conclusions reached

- Whether any action has been taken (but **not** details of that action if it relates to any individuals) as a result of the complaint.

43. Where disciplinary action is deemed appropriate, the reply to the complainant will not state this or give details relating to individual employees' employment record.

44. 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.

Recording and Learning

45. The Diocese will maintain appropriate records of concerns and complaints received under this section in accordance with applicable data protection requirements.

46. Anonymised information regarding the number and nature of complaints, themes identified and lessons learned may be reported periodically to the appropriate diocesan body to support continuous improvement, accountability and good governance.

Complaining Externally

47. The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. 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

Conflict of interest

48. The LDBF may in certain circumstances vary this procedure in the interests of good governance or fairness. Where this is the case this will be set out clearly to the complainant along with the rationale for change. This is most likely to occur where there is a conflict of interest and our principle of fairness require a different approach.

49. Where a complaint concerns an individual who would ordinarily be involved in the process the matter will be referred to an alternative person with sufficient authority and independence to oversee the handling of the concern. Anyone with a personal involvement in the matter complained of will take no part in determining the outcome. This is to ensure fairness, impartiality and confidence in the process.

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND
Diocese of Leeds

Annex A

Complaints Concerning Clergy and Bishops

Purpose

1. The Diocese of Leeds is committed to taking all concerns and complaints seriously and responding to them fairly, proportionately and pastorally. Complaints concerning clergy and bishops are subject to specific Church of England procedures and cannot always be dealt with under this Complaints Policy. The Diocese will, however, ensure that concerns are acknowledged, considered and directed to the most appropriate process.

What This Section Covers

2. This section applies to concerns or complaints regarding:
   - Licensed clergy, including priests and deacons.
   - House for Duty, Self-Supporting and retired clergy exercising ministry.
   - Archdeacons.
   - Area Bishops.
   - The Bishop of Leeds.

3. Concerns may include:
   - Conduct, behaviour or professional relationships.
   - Communication and pastoral care.
   - Alleged misconduct.
   - Bullying, harassment or inappropriate behaviour.
   - Failure to follow Church policies or procedures.
   - Concerns regarding the exercise of ecclesiastical office.

4. Safeguarding concerns are not dealt with under this section and must be referred immediately through diocesan safeguarding procedures and, where appropriate, statutory agencies.

Principles

5. In responding to concerns about clergy and bishops, the Diocese will seek to:
   - Treat all parties with dignity, fairness and respect.
   - Ensure concerns are considered impartially and without pre-judgement.
   - Promote reconciliation and informal resolution where appropriate.
   - Ensure that allegations of misconduct are referred to the appropriate Church of England disciplinary process.
   - Provide clear guidance to individuals who are unsure which process applies.

Informal Resolution

6. Many concerns do not involve misconduct and may be resolved through informal discussion, mediation, pastoral support or facilitated conversation.
7. Where appropriate, the Diocese may seek to resolve concerns through:

- Discussion with the relevant priest, deacon or bishop.
- Intervention by an Archdeacon or Bishop.
- Mediation or facilitated conversation.
- Pastoral support for those involved.

8. Informal resolution will not be appropriate where there are safeguarding concerns, allegations of serious misconduct, or where a formal process is required by law or Church regulations.

Formal Complaints and Allegations of Misconduct

9. Where a concern may amount to misconduct, it will be referred for consideration under the relevant Church of England procedures, including the Clergy Discipline Measure or any successor process.

10. The Diocese cannot determine in advance whether a concern amounts to misconduct. This assessment will be made by those responsible for the relevant procedure.

11. Anyone wishing to raise concerns about the conduct of a member of clergy may initially contact the relevant Archdeacon or the Diocesan Registrar, who will provide information about the available processes and the appropriate route for the concern raised.

12. Further guidance can be found here: Clergy Discipline Measure - Diocese of Leeds

Complaints About Specific Office Holders

Complaints About Clergy

13. Concerns regarding a member of clergy should normally be directed to the relevant Archdeacon. The Archdeacon may consult with the Diocesan Registrar and other appropriate officers to determine the most appropriate process.

Complaints About an Archdeacon

14. Concerns regarding an Archdeacon should be directed to the relevant Area Bishop or to the Bishop of Leeds.

Complaints About an Area Bishop

15. Concerns regarding an Area Bishop should be directed to the Bishop of Leeds or the Diocesan Registrar.

Complaints About the Bishop of Leeds

16. Concerns regarding the Bishop of Leeds should be directed to the Diocesan Registrar, who will advise on the appropriate process and any applicable national Church of England procedures.

17. No complaint will be investigated by the person who is the subject of that complaint.

18. Relevant contact details can be obtained from enquiries@leeds.anglican.org if required. If any support is required please contact us on the above email and we will provide any guidance needed.