

**DIOCESE OF SHEFFIELD**  
**COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE**

**Policy**

Sheffield Diocesan Board of Finance (SDBF) views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use by anyone who wishes to make a complaint
- To make people aware of the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone who is working as an office holder or employee for the Diocese of Sheffield knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.
- To deal with any complaint in a manner that respects both the complainant and those complained against.

**Definition of a Complaint**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about the service received from any employee or volunteer that is not covered by any other policy or procedure.

**Where Complaints Come From**

Complaints may come from any person or organisation that has a legitimate interest in the Diocese of Sheffield. A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

This policy does not cover

- Complaints about parish clergy which should be referred to the Archdeacons in the first instance
- Complaints from staff which are covered by the Grievance or Whistleblowing policies.
- Safeguarding concerns which should be raised with the Safeguarding Officer in the first instance.

**Confidentiality**

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

**Responsibility**

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Diocesan Secretary on behalf on the SDBF.

**Review**

This policy is reviewed annually and updated as required.

Adopted on:.....[date]

Last reviewed:.....

Signed by incumbent .....

**Procedure**

**1. Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:**

- 1.1 Written complaints may be sent to Sheffield Diocesan Board of Finance (SDBF) at Sheffield Diocesan Church House, 95-99 Effingham Street, Rotherham or by e-mail to [elizabeth.lunt@sheffield.anglican.org](mailto:elizabeth.lunt@sheffield.anglican.org)
- 1.2 Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 01709 309100 or in person to any of the SDBF’s employees at the above address.

## **2. Receiving Complaints**

- 2.1 Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.
- 2.2 The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
  - Write down the facts of the complaint and if the complaint is about a member of parish clergy refer it to the Archdeacon and take no further action under this policy.
  - Note down the relationship of the complainant to SDBF Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
  - Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
  - Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

## **3. Resolving Complaints**

### **Stage One**

- 3.1 In many 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.
- 3.2 Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the Executive Assistant within two working days. In the case of the complaint being about the Executive Assistant it should be passed to the Diocesan Secretary. If the complaint is about the Diocesan Secretary, it should be passed to the Chair of the DBF.
- 3.3 On receiving the complaint, the Executive Assistant records it in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, the Executive Assistant acknowledges it within two working days and they forward it to an appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action.
- 3.4 The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.
- 3.5 If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

- 3.6 If the complaint is about an employee who holds the Bishop's licence then the Bishop should be made aware that a complaint has been received.
- 3.7 Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. 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.
- 3.8 Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

## **Stage Two**

### **4. Appeal**

- 4.1 If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at a more senior level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Diocesan Secretary and should be acknowledged within one week of receipt. If the complaint is about the Diocesan Secretary the appeal should be sent to the Chair of the DBF in the first instance.
- 4.2 The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.
- 4.3 The Diocesan Secretary may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.
- 4.4 If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.
- 4.5 The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.
- 4.6 Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. 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.
- 4.7 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 any action taken as a result of the complaint.

4.8 The decision taken at this stage is final.

## **5. Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Diocesan Secretary would not have the Diocesan Secretary as the person leading a Stage Two review.

## **6. Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

Complaints are reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.