



SAFEGUARDING COMPLAINTS

Policy and Procedure

Introduction

The Church of England is committed to safeguarding as an integral part of the life and ministry of the Church. At the Diocese of York, we work hard to ensure that our churches are places of welcome - as well as places which are safe, including for children and vulnerable adults.

We aim to provide high quality services, but we understand that we don't always get things right. We are open to opportunities to learn and improve. If you have any concerns about our safeguarding practices as a Diocese and wish to make a complaint, you can do so following the procedure below.

Scope

For the purposes of this policy, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of the safeguarding service provided to you at a diocesan level.

The policy and procedure here is specifically intended for handling complaints about our safeguarding practices. For any other complaints relating to the Diocese of York, please see our general Complaints Policy and Procedure, which can be found on our website.

Policy

We take complaints about our work and the quality of our service in all aspects of safeguarding seriously. We view complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve the support that we offer.

In dealing with complaints about safeguarding, we aim to:

- Provide a fair procedure which is clear and easy to use.
- Be open about how we will deal with complaints.
- Treat those who complain with courtesy.
- Ensure that all complaints are investigated fairly.
- Resolve complaints in a timely and proportionate way.
- Gather information in order to improve our service.

We will handle all information collected as part of our complaints procedure sensitively, sharing information on a 'need to know' basis and in accordance with the diocesan data sharing and confidentiality policy and procedure.

Procedure

Practical Considerations

If you are dissatisfied with an aspect of the safeguarding service provided to you at a diocesan level, please let us know. It helps us to engage constructively with your complaint if you can be specific about the issue.

You must be the person affected by the issue, or an interested party (eg a close relative) – not an unrelated third party or wider observer.

Please provide contact details so that we can get back to you – note that we do not respond to anonymous complaints. We also reserve the right not to engage with complaints which we deem to be malicious.

Informal Resolution

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue that is being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, we expect that all reasonable efforts will have been made to resolve it swiftly if possible and appropriate.

We appreciate that it is not always possible or appropriate to resolve things informally, or that an informal approach may not lead to a satisfactory outcome. We have a three-step process for dealing with formal complaints.

Stage One

Initially, formal complaints should be directed to the Human Resources Manager. This can be by telephone (01904 699500), by email (hr@yorkdiocese.org) or by post (Diocese of York, Amy Johnson Way, York YO30 4XT). Note that a written record of telephone conversations will be taken and shared the complainant to ensure accuracy and transparency.

The complaint will be acknowledged and responded to within two working weeks (ie 10 working days) and a copy of this complaints procedure will be supplied.

Within this timescale, the Human Resources Manager will do the following:

- Make necessary and appropriate enquiries to establish the substance of the complaint and any attempts already made to resolve the matter informally.
- Form a view and decide who the best person to respond to the complaint would be.
- Initiate discussions with the complainant to fully understand their issue, seek clarity and be clear on what would constitute a resolution for them.

- Arrange any necessary mediation between the parties and any necessary, subsequent action(s).

Hopefully an acceptable resolution can be found and the complaint will have led to a satisfactory conclusion. However if this is not the case, the complainant may escalate the matter to Stage Two by informing the Human Resources Manager of this decision within two working weeks (ie 10 working days) of receiving the Stage One outcome.

Stage Two

At stage two, the details of the complaint and actions taken at stage one will be passed to the Independent Chair of the Diocesan Strategic Group (DSG).

The Independent Chair will:

- Acknowledge receipt of the stage two complaint and that they are reviewing details within two working weeks (ie ten working days).
- Make it clear when a response can be expected. The aim will be for complainants to receive a definitive reply within four working weeks (ie 20 working days). If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a further communication will be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
- Review all documentation and the actions taken so far and discuss with the complainant the situation from their perspective and why resolution could not be reached. All conversations will be recorded in writing and shared with the complainant for accuracy and transparency.
- Discuss the same with the Manager of Human Resources and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (where appropriate) and consider what, within the framework of diocesan policy and if necessary, the law, could be a way forward to resolve the issue at hand.
- Where necessary, take advice from the Diocesan Secretary and the Human Resources Manager in order to formulate a response for the complainant and any necessary action.

The reply (within 20 working days where possible) to the complainant will inform them of the action(s) taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Again, hopefully the complaint can be satisfactorily resolved at this level. If not, the complainant can escalate the matter to Stage Three, the final stage, by informing the Independent Chair of the DSG of this decision within two working weeks (ie 10 working days).

Stage Three

If the complainant is unsatisfied with the outcome of a complaint at Stage Two, they have the right to appeal. The Diocese of York has an arrangement with Thirtyone:eight, a specialist safeguarding advisory service, to provide an external, independent point of appeal.

Once the Independent Chair of the DSG has notified Thirtyone:eight of the need for Stage Three to be initiated, that body will acknowledge the request for appeal within two working weeks (ie 10 working days). The process undertaken at Stage One and Stage Two will be reviewed, and the appeal chair may choose to talk to the parties concerned to further clarify the issues.

A final decision and any action deemed necessary will be communicated to the complainant and the Diocese within six working weeks (ie 30 working days).

Further Information

Monitoring and learning from complaints

The number and outcome of any complaints will be reported at least twice each year to the Diocesan Safeguarding Group to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Responsibility for this policy and procedure

Overall responsibility for this procedure and its implementation lies with the Diocese of York through the Diocesan Strategic Group. This policy will be reviewed periodically as required.

Effective: November 2019