

Complaints policy

Hereford Diocese (The Hereford Diocesan Board of Finance (HDBF)) recognises that from time to time complaints may arise. Our aim is to have a process that is simple to use and understand.

In addition to this general policy, there is a policy specifically relating to safeguarding complaints.

If you are concerned about a Safeguarding matter, then please contact the diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, Mandy McPhee on m.mcphee@hereford.anglican.org or on 07875757396.

Our policy ensures that we:

- Provide a fair complaints procedure, which is clear and easy to use.
- Publish our complaints procedure on our diocesan website, so that people can contact us to make a complaint.
- Ensure that all HDBF staff know what to do if they receive a complaint.
- Make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- Make sure that complaints are resolved and that relationships are where possible restored.
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

This policy relates to the work of the Hereford Diocesan Board of Finance and its members of staff. It does not cover:

- Complaints relating to diocesan church schools or academies, where the individual school's complaints process should be used.
- Complaints relating to individual church matters, where the matter should be referred to the Parochial Church Council (PCC)
- Complaints from staff, who should use the Board of Finance's grievance procedure.
- Complaints from members of clergy where it is a grievance relating to the exercise of the office held. The Archbishop's Council has set out a Code of Practice and supportive advice for dealing with grievances.
- Matters relating to safeguarding which should be referred to the diocesan safeguarding adviser.
- Complaints regarding a member of clergy, which should be referred to the respective Archdeacon (Hereford or Ludlow), or to the Bishop's Office.

Definition of a complaint:

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Hereford Diocese.

Where complaints can come from:

- A person who is dissatisfied with the service that they have received from a member of staff employed by the diocese.
- A concern relating to policies for running the diocese or decisions taken by the directors.

Contact details for complaints:

In the first instance complaints should be raised with the person providing the service to see if they can be resolved informally.

Written complaints may be sent to the Diocesan Secretary, Hereford Diocese, The Diocesan Office, The Palace, Hereford, HR4 9BL.

HDBF are not able to accept anonymous complaints and so all formal complaints must be made in writing, either by email or letter.

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 lies with the Hereford Diocesan Board of Finance and its implementation is the responsibility of the senior management team.

Guidance for members of staff who may receive complaints

Complaints may arrive via email, phone conversation, face to face meeting or by post.

If a member of staff receives a complaint in person, by email, or during a telephone call then it must be recorded. The person who receives the complaint should:

- Write down all of the details reported by the complainant.
- Take down the complainant's name and contact details.
- Note down the relationship between the complainant and the diocese.
- Inform the complainant that we have a complaints procedure, refer them where possible to the details online, and inform them that although this conversation has been noted a formal complaint must be made in writing.

Resolving complaints

Informal approach

In many cases a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue the complaint relates to. Most matters can and should be resolved informally and locally.

If for example a person is dissatisfied with the service they have received, then in the first instance they should tell that person of their dissatisfaction. He or she should be willing to listen, to discuss the matter and seek to satisfy the concerns, where justified. If the complainant remains unhappy, the member of staff will arrange for the concerns to be discussed with a more senior member of staff.

An informal complaint should be resolved within one month of receipt.

If following the informal process, the complainant remains dissatisfied or the informal route is inappropriate, then the formal procedure should be followed.

Formal stage

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. At this stage, the written complaint will be passed to the Diocesan Secretary or, if they have already been involved, the Chair of the Board Finance.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within a week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the complainant can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

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.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given an opportunity to respond. The person who dealt with the original complaint at the informal stage, if different from the specific person it relates to should also be kept informed of what is happening where appropriate.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 28 days. 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.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken as a result of the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. Where disciplinary action is deemed appropriate,

the reply to the complainant will not include details relating to the individual staff member's employment record.

Appeal

If the complainant feels as though the complaint hasn't been properly resolved, then they do have a right of appeal. This should be in writing to the Chair of the board of finance or, if they are already involved / implicated, then the Diocesan Bishop with 28 days of receiving the original decision. The appeal should clearly state the reasons why they wish to make an appeal and set out the outcomes that they wanted.

The Chair of the Board / Bishop they will review the paperwork received and initially assess whether the complaints process has been followed correctly. After this he or she will consider the information contained in the appeal and make a final decision.

It should be recognised that in some instances people will take positions where the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily. However, the aim should be to ensure that the process respects those involved and is just in providing an active concern to those who are vulnerable, marginalised or oppressed.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution. A log of the complaint will be kept.

External stage

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.

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 Chair should not also have the Chair as the person leading the formal process.

Record keeping

A record of formal complaints and their outcomes will be held by the Diocese. These will be reported to trustees to ensure that they are aware of the volume and severity of complaints. Trustees should also ensure that organisational learning is taking place.