



## Safeguarding complaints policy and procedure

The Diocese of Exeter takes complaints about our work and quality of service in all aspects of safeguarding seriously. We view complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve the support that we offer to parishes. If you are not satisfied with the safeguarding service provided to you directly by employees or volunteers of the Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance Ltd (EDBF), please follow the procedure below.

This safeguarding complaints policy and procedure lies alongside the EDBF's general complaints policy and procedure which is available on the Diocese of Exeter website or on request from the Diocesan Board of Finance. Our aims are:

- to provide a fair procedure which is clear and easy to use
- to be open about how we will deal with complaints
- to ensure that all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- to resolve complaints as near to the point of service delivery wherever possible
- to gather information in order to improve our service.

### **What is a complaint?**

For the purpose of these procedures, a complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of the safeguarding service provided to you at a diocesan level. A complaint will only be considered if made by someone who is a direct recipient of the Diocese of Exeter's safeguarding service or authorised advocate\*.

*\* An authorised advocate would be a person who with the consent of the individual affected, represents or advocates on their behalf, or any person who holds a position of legal responsibility for the person affected.*

**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 the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.**

### **Confidentiality**

All information will be handled sensitively, sharing information on a 'need to know' basis and in line with data protection legislation requirements.

Overall responsibility for this procedure and its implementation lies with the EDBF through the Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group (DSMG).

## **Complaints procedure**

### **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 be made to resolve it swiftly if possible and appropriate (informal resolution). However we appreciate that an informal resolution of the complaint isn't always possible or appropriate and therefore have the following three step process in order to deal with all formal complaints raised.

#### **Stage One**

Initially, the complaint should be made to the Secretary of the Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance. This can be in writing, e-mail or by telephone. All telephone conversations will be recorded in writing and shared with the complainant to ensure accuracy and transparency. The complaint will be acknowledged and responded to within two working weeks (i.e. 10 working days) and a copy of this complaints procedure will be supplied.

Within this timescale, the Diocesan Director of Human Resources will do the following:

- make all 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 or meetings 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).

It is hoped that an acceptable resolution can be found and the complaint can be concluded to the complainant's satisfaction at this level. However if this is not the case, the complainant must inform the Diocesan Director of Human Resources within two working weeks (i.e. 10 working days) of their decision to initiate stage two, which will be progressed as follows:

#### **Stage Two**

At stage two, the details of the complaint and actions taken at stage one will be passed to the Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Management Group (DSMG).

The Chair will:

- acknowledge receipt of the stage two complaint and that they are reviewing details within two working weeks (i.e. 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 (i.e. 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 Diocesan Secretary 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.

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 resolved at this level, but if not then the complainant must notify the Chair of the DSMG within two working weeks (i.e. 10 working days) of the decision to move to stage three, which will be progressed as follows.

### **Stage Three - external**

Appeal if the complainant remains unsatisfied after the stage two process has been completed, they have the right to 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](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx)

A final decision and any action deemed necessary will be communicated to the complainant and the Diocese within ten working weeks (i.e. 50 working days).

### **Monitoring and learning from complaints**

The number and outcome of any complaints will be reported to the DSMG to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action. NB The complainant must be the person directly affected by the issue and not a third party.

### **Complaints Process - timescale**

- Informal stage (where appropriate)
- Stage One (Secretary of the Diocese of Exeter Board of Finance) - Initial response within one week (five working days) - Decision within two weeks (10 working days) - If complainant not satisfied, request for Stage Two to be received by Chair of the DSMG within two weeks (10 working days)
- Stage Two (Chair of DSMG) - Initial response within one week (five working days) - Decision within four weeks (within 20 working days) - If complainant not satisfied, request for Stage Three to be received by Independent Chair of DSMG within two weeks (10 working days)

- Stage Three (external complaint to the Charities Commission) - Initial response within two weeks (10 working days) - Decision within ten weeks (50 working days).

V1 - Adopted on: 04/10/17 at Diocesan Board of Finance SMT.		
Amendment	Date	Amendment approved by: