

EDBF Complaints Policy

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

In addition to this general policy, there is a companion policy relating specifically to safeguarding complaints, available on the diocesan website.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure, including via the diocesan website, so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure that all EDBF staff know 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 and reconciliation explored
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the work of the EDBF.

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from a person who:

- is dissatisfied with the service that they have received from a member of staff employed by the EDBF or a volunteer working on its behalf
- has a concern relating to EDBF policies or to decisions taken by the Directors of EDBF

A formal complaint can be received by in person, by e-mail or in writing. It is our policy that we will not investigate anonymous complaints.

This policy does not cover:

- Complaints relating to diocesan church schools, where the individual school's complaints process should be used.
- Complaints relating to local parochial matters, where the matter should be referred to the 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 directly to the Director of Human Resources.

- Complaints regarding members of clergy, where the matter should be referred to the appropriate Archdeacon (please see note below).

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 Standing Committee of the EDBF and its implementation is the responsibility of the Senior Management Team.

Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Complaints about clergy (beneficed, licensed or with permission to officiate)

Unless otherwise professionally employed in an alternative capacity, clergy are not employees of the EDBF. Many are ecclesiastical office holders to whom alternative legislation applies and there are local and national procedures laid down for dealing with complaints, discipline and grievances relating to clergy. This EDBF policy does not apply to such beneficed or licensed clergy or those with permission to officiate. However, there is a close relationship between such clergy and the EDBF and from the perspective of the public or an individual complainant, it may be difficult to perceive the distinction. In addition, a single complaint relating to a member of the clergy may have more than one element to it, some of which could properly be a matter of concern for the EDBF.

By whatever means a complaint relating to a member of the clergy is received (including via a member of EDBF staff), it is to be referred on to the appropriate archdeacon in the first instance. If the complaint also touches on EDBF responsibilities, it will also be forwarded to the relevant head of department, who will need to co-ordinate their response with that of the archdeacon. Such issues may not result in, or warrant, any sort of formal process; but it is important that each is followed up appropriately, and that all parties are afforded the opportunity to share or report their concerns. EDBF staff will participate in such processes as needed, helping to ensure that time is set aside to gain a clearer picture of all the issues raised, that individuals have opportunities to put their views, that where it is possible reconciliation is achieved, and that decisions about any further actions are made only when there is clarity of objective information/evidence. If other complaints processes apply, for example bullying and harassment or allegations of serious misconduct that may be considered under the Clergy Discipline Measure, the person complaining will be directed and helped to access them.

Complaints Procedure of the Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Written complaints may be sent to the Diocesan Secretary at the Exeter Diocesan Board of Finance, The Old Deanery, Exeter EX1 1HS.

Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have. Staff receiving a complaint should report the matter to the Diocesan Secretary in the first instance.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded as contemporaneously as possible. The person who receives a complaint by phone or in person should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to the person complained about or the EDBF more generally
- 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.

Resolving Complaints

Informal Approach

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. 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 a person remains unhappy, the member of staff will arrange for the concerns to be discussed with a more senior member of staff.

Broadly speaking, it is intended that 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 complaint will be passed to the Diocesan Secretary or if they have already been involved the Chair of the Board of 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 person complaining 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 should 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 to investigate 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 individual staff member's employment record.

It should be recognised that in some instances people will take positions where the matter cannot be resolved. 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 at:

www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx

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.