

# Complaints policy

This policy applies to all employees of the Diocese of Sheffield, including full-time, part-time and temporary employees. It does not apply to members of the Clergy, casual workers, self-employed contractors, and volunteers.

This policy does not confer any contractual rights and can be amended at any time.

Last review

Dec 2024

Next review

Jan 2026

## 1. Introduction

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 aims are:

- to provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use;
- 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 and processes improved;
- to deal with any complaint in a manner that respects both the complainant and those complained against.

## 2. What is 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.

## 3. Who can make a complaint?

Complaints can be brought by any person or organisation about the conduct, operations or services received from an employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Sheffield. A complaint can be received by email or in writing, or alternatively verbally, or by phone.

This policy cannot be used for the following:

- Complaints about parish clergy, which should be referred to the Archdeacons in the first instance:
  - Archdeacon of Sheffield and Rotherham  
([pa.archdeacon.sheff.roth@Sheffield.anglican.org](mailto:pa.archdeacon.sheff.roth@Sheffield.anglican.org)).

- Archdeacon of Doncaster  
([pa.archdeacon.doncaster@Sheffield.anglican.org](mailto:pa.archdeacon.doncaster@Sheffield.anglican.org)).
- A formal allegation against clergy can be brought under the [Clergy Discipline Measure 2003](#) and also go through the Bishop's office as well as through Archdeacons (which may be needed if the complaint is against one of the Archdeacons).
- Complaints from staff which are covered by the Grievance or [Whistleblowing](#) policies. Instead contact [hr@sheffield.anglican.org](mailto:hr@sheffield.anglican.org).
- Safeguarding concerns which should be raised with the Safeguarding Officer in the first instance at [safeguarding@sheffield.anglican.org](mailto:safeguarding@sheffield.anglican.org)

## 4. Procedure

### 4.1 Contact Details for Complaints:

- 4.1.1 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 the Executive Assistant labelled 'Complaint' at [complaints@sheffield.anglican.org](mailto:complaints@sheffield.anglican.org)
- 4.1.2 Verbal complaints may be made by phone to 01709 309100 where a form will be filled in and logged with the Executive Assistant at the email address above.

### 4.2 Receiving Complaints

- 4.2.1 Complaints must arrive through channels publicised above.
- 4.2.2 Any person who receives a complaint, whether in writing or verbally, should ensure that they have collected the following information:
- 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.
  - The outcome the complainant is seeking i.e. what they think should be done to put the matter right.

## 5 Resolving Complaints

### Stage One – Informal Resolution

- 5.1 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. Consideration should be given to whether this person is appropriate and consider any connections to the complainant.
- 5.2 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 Chief Executive Officer (CEO). If the complaint is about the CEO, it should be passed to the Chair of the DBF.
- 5.3 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 in stage two.

### Stage Two

- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 During investigations it may be appropriate to speak to individuals involved, in accordance with HR policies (where that person is an employee).
- 5.6 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.
- 5.7 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, an update should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.
- 5.8 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. The [person in charge] will do the following:
  - Initiate discussions with the complainant to fully understand their issue, seek clarity and be clear on what would constitute a resolution for them
  - Speak with other individuals who may be involved or have witnessed an issue.

- Review other relevant policies and liaise where necessary with HR (or any other necessary managers/leadership e.g. Bishop's office)
- Make a decision as to the appropriate action and communicate this to all parties
- When communicating a decision, the complainant must be given information on how to appeal.

The outcome will include one of the following:

- The complaint is not upheld – on the basis that the grounds and evidence do not justify the complaint. In either case, the decision will be final.
- An explanation, with reasons, that there was insufficient evidence to reach a conclusion, with the result that the complaint has not been upheld.
- An acknowledgement that the complaint was substantiated in part, with a brief description of the remedial and preventative action being taken and reasons why the remainder of the complaint was not substantiated.
- An acknowledgement that the complaint was substantiated in full, with a brief description of the remedial and preventative action being taken.

## **Stage Three**

### **6 Appeal**

- 6.1 If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage Two, they can request that the complaint is reviewed. Appeals must be made within four weeks of the Stage Two final outcome. Appeals should be made to either the person handling it at stage two, the Executive Assistant or the Chief Executive Officer. At this stage, the appeal will be passed to the Chief Executive Officer and should be acknowledged within one week of receipt. If the original complaint is about the Chief Executive Officer the appeal should be sent to the Chair of the SDBF in the first instance.
- 6.2 The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.
- 6.3 The Chief Executive Officer 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 Two.
- 6.4 If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond if appropriate.
- 6.5 The person carrying out the appeal may wish to communicate with the person who dealt with the original complaint who will be informed of the outcome at the end of the appeals process.

- 6.6 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.
- 6.7 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.
- 6.8 The decision taken at this stage is final.
- 6.9 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](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx)

## **7 Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Board may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest.

## **8 Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

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

## **9 Confidentiality**

All complaint information will be handled sensitively and shared only with those who in the Diocese of Sheffield's reasonable opinion need to know.

## **10 Responsibility**

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Chief Executive Officer on behalf on the SDBF.