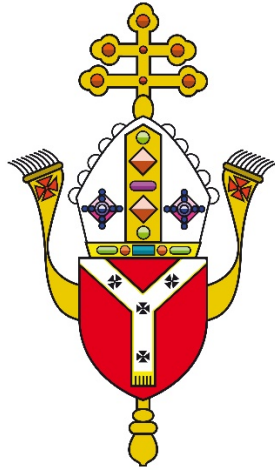


DIOCESE OF WESTMINSTER



EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

Policy prepared by:	Head of HR
Third Party Policy:	No
Approval of The Directors of the Trustee	tbc
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1. INTRODUCTION

The Diocese is committed to dealing with complaints fairly, promptly and respectfully. This policy explains how complaints made by members of the public concerning diocesan employees and volunteers will be managed and resolved.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to complaints made by members of the public against volunteers and employees of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster.

In the context of the Diocese, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about an action, decision, service or behaviour of the Diocese, its employees or volunteers, where the complainant expects a response or resolution.

Information relating to complaints will be handled sensitively and shared only with those who need access to it for the purpose of investigating and resolving the complaint. The Diocese will process personal data in accordance with its Data Protection Policy.

The Diocese will treat all complaints seriously and investigate them promptly, efficiently and in confidence.

This policy does not apply to:

- employee grievances;
- safeguarding concerns;
- subject access requests; or
- matters that are subject to legal proceedings.

Any complaint that raises a safeguarding concern will be referred immediately to the Diocesan Safeguarding Team and managed in accordance with the Diocese's safeguarding policies and procedures and any investigation under this policy may be suspended or adapted as appropriate.

For complaints made by employees against other employee(s), please see the Diocese's Grievance Procedure.

3. RECEIVING A COMPLAINT FROM A MEMBER OF THE PUBLIC

Any employee who receives a complaint must refer it to the appropriate department head or manager responsible for the area concerned. If the employee does not know who is the most appropriate department, they should contact the HR department for further guidance.

The complaint must be made in writing and be acknowledged as a matter of priority. In all cases, the person making the complaint must be informed that an initial response will be provided within 10 days. If it is not possible to resolve the complaint within this time frame the person must be informed of the reason for the delay and provided with an approximate time frame of when the complaint is likely to be resolved.

4. INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE

The department head or line manager assigned to deal with the complaint will investigate the complaint fully. This may include interviewing employees or volunteers involved in the subject matter of the complaint or obtaining written statements from them. It may also involve referring

the complaint to a higher level of management. Those required to contribute to the investigation will be expected to comply fully with the process.

Following the investigation, the manager will determine whether any further action is required and may refer matters to a more senior manager where appropriate.

This could include the commencement of the capability or disciplinary procedure in respect of one or more employees, or referring of the complaint to a higher level of management. The complainant must be informed of the outcome and notified of his or her right to a review of the decision.

5. REVIEW PROCESS

If the complainant requests a review of the findings within 10 days, the Diocese will undertake a review of the outcome. Wherever possible, the review will be conducted by a manager who has not previously been involved in the complaint.

The diocese will respond to the request for a review within 10 days, giving reasons why the decision has been reached. The diocese may take any action considered appropriate in light of new information. This may include cancelling any action(s) previously taken.

Requests for a review should normally be submitted within 10 days. Requests received after this period may be considered at the Diocese's discretion where there are exceptional circumstances.

A record of the complaint, investigation and outcome will be retained securely for a minimum of five years in accordance with the Diocese's Data Protection Policy.

6. RELATED POLICIES

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Data Protection Policy
- Dignity at Work Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Grievance Policy and Procedure
- Safeguarding Policies and Procedures
- Whistleblowing Policy