



## COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURE: DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING ADVISER & TRAINER

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### CONTEXT

The key role of Carlisle Diocesan Board of Finance (CDBF) staff is to support the Bishops and the parishes in their mission and ministry. The primary aims of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team (DST) are to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm, promote their welfare, minimise risk wherever possible by raising awareness, and provide a robust structure whereby any concerns can be reported and receive a prompt and efficient response.

Everyone who has contact with the DST should be treated with courtesy and their enquiries/needs dealt with efficiently and effectively. High standards are expected of Staff and those who feel that they have not been treated fairly, or that the service/advice they have been offered is not adequate, have the right to make a complaint.

Any complaint should relate to the process followed in dealing with a safeguarding matter, not to the original incident which gave rise to an allegation.

This policy and procedure covers members of the DST and other employees of the CDBF, including the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and Safeguarding Trainer(s).

*The Safeguarding Complaints Procedure should not be confused with the right of anyone to raise historic safeguarding concerns about the conduct of an individual or an agency. In these cases, the diocese's safeguarding procedures should be followed.*

### PRINCIPLES

CDBF's safeguarding complaints policy and procedure is based on the following principles:

- Open and easy access to the process
- The timely resolution of complaints wherever possible
- Respect for complainants and for their voices to be listened to
- Positive action by the diocese in response to complaints which are upheld
- The impartial review of complaints
- For all information regarding a complaint to be treated in strictest confidence
- A commitment to ensuring that wherever possible, complaints are resolved and the relationships are repaired and reconciliation explored
- Identifying learning that will improve the service provided by the DST

*in responding to complaints the welfare of children and the interests of vulnerable adults will always be paramount.*

## HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

This complaints procedure is to be used where it has not been possible for you to resolve your complaint by other means. In many cases, a complaint is best resolved directly by the person responsible for the issue that is being complained about (in which is termed 'The Informal Stage'). The Diocesan Safeguarding Officer would be pleased to meet with you to discuss your concerns to help achieve this. If it is not possible to resolve the complaint in this way, you may use this complaints procedure.

Your complaint must state how you consider there has been a failure to comply with proper procedures. If possible, it will be helpful to refer to national or diocesan safeguarding policy and guidance. It is not enough to say that you disagree with the professional decisions which have been made in your case.

The complainant must be the person directly affected by the issue. You may ask someone – for example a close relative - to complain on your behalf, but in these circumstances the complaint must be accompanied by a signed written confirmation from you saying that you agree to that person acting for you.

Your complaint should be:

made in writing marked 'confidential' by post to the Diocesan Secretary, Church House 19-24 Friargate, Penrith CA11 7XR; or email to [diocesan.secretary@carlisle-diocese.org.uk](mailto:diocesan.secretary@carlisle-diocese.org.uk)

- if the complaint is about the Diocesan Secretary, it should be made in writing marked 'confidential' to the Head of Governance and Deputy Diocesan Secretary, Church House 19-24 Friargate, Penrith CA11 7XR or by email to [ali.ng@carlisle-diocese.org.uk](mailto:ali.ng@carlisle-diocese.org.uk)

You should make your complaint within twelve months of the event or outcome that you are complaining about. In exceptional circumstances this time limit may be waived. If the Diocesan Secretary decides that a complaint cannot be considered out of time, this will be communicated to the complainant, with reasons, along with the steps to be taken to deal with the issues raised.

If the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer or Trainer receives a complaint about a member of clergy this will be referred to the Bishop's Chaplain. Any details of the complaint given will remain strictly confidential unless they concern the welfare of children, young people or vulnerable adults, when the Safeguarding Officer may have a legal duty to inform a statutory agency.

Your complaint must include:

- Your full name, postal address and contact details
- Details of your specific complaint including what you think went wrong.

If necessary, the Diocesan Secretary will arrange to meet with you for the purpose of clarifying the details of your complaint. A note of that meeting will be made and a copy will be sent to you to ensure that the complaint has been correctly understood.

All information will be handled sensitively, sharing information on a 'need to know' basis. Any personal data collected during this process will be processed in accordance with the Diocesan data protection policy.

## **HOW WE WILL DEAL WITH YOUR COMPLAINT**

You will receive an acknowledgement by letter or email, to confirm receipt of your complaint, usually within five working days of it being received. At this stage, CDBF will also make it clear when a full response to your complaint can be expected. The aim will be for a definitive reply to be sent to you within four working weeks of you making the complaint. If it has not been possible to meet this deadline because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a further communication will be sent explaining the reasons for the delay and indicating when a full response will be given.

The Diocesan Secretary will assess whether or not your complaint relates to a safeguarding matter in consultation as appropriate, and if necessary, with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and the Independent Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel (DSAP).

The Diocesan Secretary may appoint a person to investigate your complaint objectively (The Investigating Officer {IO}). The IO will be a suitably experienced and qualified person with no previous knowledge of, or involvement in, the matter.

The IO may meet with you to ascertain the full details of your complaint and also read any relevant documentation. You may ask a friend or supporter to attend this meeting with you. The IO will look objectively into your complaint. This will include seeking the views of any person who is the subject of your complaint. They may also seek advice from others.

The IO will complete a report which will be sent to the Diocesan Secretary. Their report will state whether the complaint has been upheld. The Diocesan Secretary will review the report and may seek additional advice to assist in coming to a decision.

The Diocesan Secretary will then write to you, stating whether the complaint has been upheld, summarising the findings and recommendations of the report and outlining any actions they propose to take in response.

If disciplinary action is deemed to be appropriate, the reply to the complainant will not state this or give details relating to an individual employee's employment record as this information is confidential to the employer and the employee.

## **APPEALS**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint you have the right to appeal to the Independent Chair of the DSAP. You should write to the Diocesan Secretary stating your request within two working weeks (i.e. 10 working days) of the date of the Diocesan Secretaries' letter to you notifying the outcome of the complaint.

The Diocesan Secretary will ask the Chair of DSAP to consider the Appeal. The Chair of DSAP will acknowledge the request for appeal within two working weeks (i.e. 10 working days).

The process undertaken will be reviewed and the Chair of DSAP may choose to talk to / meet with the parties concerned to gain clarification on the issues.

A final decision and any suggested action will be communicated to the complainant and the Diocese within six working weeks (i.e. 30 working days) of the Appeal being brought.

The letter setting out the outcome of the Appeal will be the final response to your complaint unless new evidence or another compelling reason which has not previously been considered emerges.

## **MONITORING COMPLAINTS**

The number and outcome of any complaints will be reported at least twice each year to the DSAP to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

## **SUMMARY OF THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS**

1. Informal stage (where appropriate): attempts to achieve informal resolution if possible
2. Complaint (Diocesan Secretary)
  - acknowledgement of complaint within one week (five working days)
  - appointment of Investigating Officer if required
  - decision, where possible, within four weeks (20 working days)
3. Appeal (Chair of Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel)
  - if complainant not satisfied with outcome, request for Appeal to be received by Diocesan Secretary within two weeks (10 working days)
  - DSAP Chair communicates decision in writing within six weeks (30 working days)

November 2024

Review November 2027

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