

# Complaints Policy

## 1. Introduction

The key role of the Staff employed by the Southwell and Nottingham Board of Finance (SNDBF), is to support the Bishops, parishes and schools in their mission and ministry. In the provision of all our services and advice we aim to be efficient, accurate and timely and to treat everyone professionally, with dignity and respect.

However, we do recognise that sometimes things do go wrong and we provide a way in which people can complain and we will examine this with the aim of finding a resolution and learning and relevant lessons. .

Our policy aims:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To make accessing our complaints procedure easy by including it on our website
- To make sure that all SNDBF staff know what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To endeavour, wherever possible to resolve complaints satisfactorily to all parties and to restore relationships
- To use the lessons learnt from complaints 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 services provided SNDBF or the conduct of its employees

### Scope of this Policy

This policy covers the services, advice and support provided by the employees of SNDBF, its contractors or service providers. It does not include complaints about members of the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE), these should be directed to the Chair of the DBE.

Complaints will only be accepted where they relate to events no more than 6 months prior to the date of submitting the complaint (except where the events are linked and the last event is within this timescale).

Where a complaint relates to a member of clergy or other lay minister there are separate procedures and you should contact the relevant Archdeacon [Our Archdeacons - Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham \(anglican.org\)](https://www.anglican.org).

SNDBF employees who are also members of Clergy are included in the scope of this policy to the extent that the complaint relates to their role within SNDBF, if the complaint relates to their clerical role then this will be addressed under the relevant clerical procedures.

Complaints concerning individual churches should be directed to the Incumbent or Churchwardens, the Diocese cannot undertake any investigations concerning local Parish matters.

## 2. Procedure

### Informal

Where anyone has a dissatisfaction with a service or employee we would encourage this to be resolved informal with the Director of the service or the individual employee.

A complainant may raise their complaint either verbally or in writing to the person concerned and request a meeting or a conversation to try and resolve the matter. If it is possible to reach a mutually acceptable outcome then the matter can be closed.

### Stage 1 - Formal

Where an informal approach has not been successful or the complainant considers the matter sufficiently serious then a formal complaint may be made.

This complaint should be in writing containing sufficient information about the nature of the complaint with dates of relevant events and names of any possible witnesses. This should be sent to the Chief Executive [ce@southwell.anglican.org](mailto:ce@southwell.anglican.org). If the complaint is about the Chief Executive, it should be sent to the Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham who will determine how to deal with it.

If a complainant prefers to make a verbal complaint then they should contact the Chief Executive's PA to discuss how the complaint can be captured so that the formal process can continue.

On receipt of the complaint the Chief Executive will determine the best way to investigate the complaint and how to achieve a resolution. They may commission an internal investigation from someone independent from the service or person complained about avoiding any conflict of interest. If it is not possible to identify someone internally then they may commission an external investigator.

The investigator will report back to the Chief Executive who will inform the complainant of the outcome and make any proposals for resolution. They will be given a deadline for receipt of any Stage 2 – Formal Review request (normally 5 working days).

### Stage 2 – Formal Review

If the complainant is dis-satisfied with the outcome or proposals for resolution they may write to the Chief Executive within the stated deadline, to ask for a review of the investigation. The Chief Executive will consider a review on the following grounds:

- Further evidence is available to support the complaint
- The conclusions of the investigation are not supported by the evidence gathered
- There is evidence of bias or prejudice on behalf of the investigator

The Chief Executive will then determine how to review the complaint options include - but are not limited to:

- Commissioning a new investigation
- Asking the Investigator to review their findings
- Asking the Investigator to consider additional relevant information

- Reviewing the evidence gathered by the Investigator

Where a complaint at Stage 2 relates to services or advice received from the Safeguarding Team, the Chief Executive will consult with the Chair of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel on the most appropriate way to resolve the matter. The Chair of DSAP may wish to directly review the complaint and response before responding to the Chief Executive. The Chair may also make recommendations to the Chief Executive on an appropriate response or resolution.

The Chief Executive will then inform the complainant of the outcome of their review and any proposals for resolution.

This is the end of the formal complaints process.

### 3. Timescales

The formal process will be progressed as quickly as possible, but will depend on availability of investigators, witnesses and other evidence. The Chief Executive will keep the complainant informed of progress and anticipated timescales.

### 4. Links with other Procedures

Where the Chief Executive determines that a complaint is more appropriately addressed by other procedures, the complainant will be informed of this and advised of the next steps.

Where the nature of the complaint is inter-related to other matters that are being addressed through other procedures (whether SNDBF procedures or external), it may be appropriate for the investigation into the complaint to be suspended pending completion of these procedures. In these circumstances the Chief Executive will advise the complainant accordingly and confirm when the complaint investigation will commence.

### 5. Vexatious and Malicious Complaints

SNDBF is committed to thoroughly investigating any complaints that it receives. However where it is evident from the nature of the complaint, or previous relationships with the complainant, that the complaint has been submitted for vexatious or malicious reasons, SNDBF reserves the right not to progress with an investigation.

Complainants that could be considered vexatious include those who are persistent, who refuse to accept a decision of SNDBF, those whose demands are unrealistic etc.

The Chief Executive will consider whether any complaint or complainant is considered to be vexatious, taking into account all the circumstances of any complaint and will inform the complainant accordingly. The complaints process will terminate at that point.

Anonymous or evidently malicious complaints will not be investigated.