



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND

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DIOCESE OF HEREFORD

## Safeguarding Complaints Procedure

### *Important Note*

The safeguarding complaints procedure cannot be used to make a safeguarding referral. If you consider a child or vulnerable adult *may* be at risk of harm you should contact the person to whom you are responsible or the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser on **07875757396**. In an emergency, if you consider a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of *immediate* harm call the police on 999 or Adult or Children's Services. You should also contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser within 24 hours.

### Introduction

This formal complaints procedure is for the use of those wishing to complain about how a safeguarding issue has been handled in the Diocese of Hereford.

The Bishop wants to support people who feel genuinely aggrieved to make a complaint, and will ensure that all complaints are taken seriously and are handled fairly and promptly. All information about a complaint will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Complaints which fall under this procedure will generally refer to the response made to the different parties involved in a safeguarding referral - the child or vulnerable adult, the parent or carer of the child or vulnerable adult, or the alleged perpetrator. Complaints should relate to the process followed, not to the original incident which gave rise to the allegation.

Every effort will be made to resolve your complaint informally. The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser will be pleased to meet you to discuss your concerns. If however it is not possible to resolve the complaint informally, you may make use of this formal complaints procedure.

Your complaint must state how you consider there has been a failure to comply with 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.

A complaint is a verbal or written expression of dissatisfaction. A complaint is not:

- A request for or the submission of information;
- A question about a policy or procedure;
- A report about an incident; or
- Other similar circumstances.

They are concerns rather than complaints. The Bishop recognises that you may simply have a concern about something rather than a complaint. Such concerns equally require attention so that they may be effectively dealt with and not escalate into complaints. Please raise a concern with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser, it will be dealt with informally and not through the stages of the complaints procedure. The Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser may ask another diocesan officer to deal with such a matter.

## Making a complaint

Complaints should be made:

- in writing, or by e-mail, marked “confidential” to: The Bishop’s Chaplain, The Bishop’s Office, The Palace, Palace Yard, Hereford, HR4 9BL [b.chave@hereford.anglican.org.uk](mailto:b.chave@hereford.anglican.org.uk) , or;
- by phone to: The Bishop’s Chaplain on 01432 271355

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, you should complain within 3 months of the event or outcome that you are complaining about. The complaint must include / cover:

- your full name, postal address and contact details
- what you think went wrong and how it has affected you, including details of your specific complaint(s)
- the outcomes you are seeking from your complaint(s) i.e. what you think the Bishop should do to put matters right.

If you make a complaint in person or by phone the Bishop’s Chaplain will make a note of that conversation and send you a copy to ensure it has been correctly understood. If necessary the Bishop’s Chaplain could arrange to meet with you at that stage purely for the purpose of preparing a note of your complaint. Such notes of a phone call or meeting will be simply a record of your complaint without any comment by the Bishop’s Chaplain on its merits or otherwise.

You may ask someone to complain on your behalf, and to attend meetings with you at any stage, but in these circumstances the complaint(s) must be accompanied by a signed written confirmation from you saying that you agree for that person to act for you.

The Bishop's Chaplain will immediately record receipt of a complaint in a log.

If your complaint refers to a member of clergy, including the Bishop of Hereford or the Bishop of Ludlow, the Church of England's Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 rather than this procedure will apply. Information about the Clergy Discipline process is available [here](#).

## How your complaint will be dealt with

You will receive an acknowledgement by letter or e-mail, to confirm receipt of your complaint, usually within five working days of it being received.

As a first step, the Bishop's Chaplain will refer your complaint to the Bishop of Hereford. If the Bishop has already had an involvement in (rather than simply knowledge of) the matter, the Bishop will ask the Bishop of Ludlow or another bishop to deal with your complaint through all stages of the procedure.

The Bishop will assess whether or not your complaint relates to a safeguarding matter. The Bishop will wish to ascertain the main facts before coming to a decision and may ask the Bishop's Chaplain to be in touch with you if necessary.

If the Bishop agrees that your complaint falls within this procedure, it will be considered thoroughly and objectively by a person who will have no previous knowledge of, or involvement with, the matter. Exceptionally, a second person may be appointed to assist. Such persons will have substantial experience and knowledge of safeguarding.

The appointed person(s) will read any files and will meet you to ascertain full details of your complaint. You may ask a friend or supporter (but not a solicitor) to attend this meeting with you. The meeting shall be as informal as possible and the person appointed by the Bishop will explain the purpose of the meeting, introduce all persons present and emphasise confidentiality. Proceedings will be minuted by the appointed person who will also establish with you the extent and manner of updating you if necessary on progress. You will be sent a copy of the minutes of the meeting.

The appointed person(s) will look fairly into your complaint including seeking the views on the matter from any person to whom your complaint refers. The appointed person(s) may seek advice from others, and will complete a report, which will be sent to the Bishop dealing with it. The Bishop will review the report and may seek additional advice to assist in coming to a decision.

The Bishop will then write to you, summarising the findings and recommendations of the report and outlining the actions which the Bishop proposes to take to address your complaint, which may include, where appropriate, an apology and an explanation of any changes to be made in policies and procedures. The Bishop will aim to respond to you in this way as soon as possible and no later than 6 weeks after receipt of your complaint. (Exceptionally, if it is not possible to adhere to this timescale you would be informed in writing of the reason, for instance if it became identified as a matter regarding the involvement of statutory agencies.)

The Bishop's letter will be the final response to your complaint.

If, despite all stages of the procedures having been followed, you remain dissatisfied and try to reopen the same issue, the Bishop's Chaplain will inform you in writing that (in the absence of any new evidence or other compelling reason which has not previously been considered) the procedure has been duly exhausted and that the matter is now closed. If you continue to pursue the same issue then the correspondence may be recognised as vexatious and there will be no obligation on the Bishop or the Bishop Chaplain to respond.

## Recording of Complaints

A record will be maintained of safeguarding complaints received by the Bishop's Chaplain, to include the following information:

- date complaint(s) received
- name and status of complainant
- brief description of complaint(s)
- details of the person(s) appointed by the Bishop to assist in dealing with complaint(s)
- summary of the outcome of the complaint(s), and how/when communicated to complainant
- any verbal/written response to the outcome received from complainant
- any action to be taken by the Bishop

The Bishop's Chaplain will report annually to the Diocesan Safeguarding Group with a summary of all complaints based on this record but in a way that preserves the anonymity of all persons involved. The Diocesan Safeguarding Group will use this overview to consider whether policies and procedures require changes or development.

## Whistleblowing

If you consider a child or vulnerable adult *may* be at risk of harm you should contact the person to whom you are responsible or the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser on **07875757396**. In an emergency, if you consider a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of *immediate* harm call the police on 999 or Adult or Children's Services. You should also

contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser within 24 hours. (For more information please see safeguarding children or safeguarding vulnerable adults )

If you have a complaint about the response made to the different parties involved in a safeguarding referral (the child or vulnerable adult, the parent or carer of the child or vulnerable adult, or the alleged perpetrator) please refer to this [Diocesan Safeguarding Complaints Procedure](#).

Otherwise, if you have concerns that proper safeguarding practice is not being followed with regard to the activities of the Church of England in this diocese please

- contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer / Representative for the church concerned (details will be on a notice board at the church), or;
- if that does not resolve the matter, or you are unable to contact the Parish Safeguarding Officer / Representative, then contact the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser ([m.mcphee@hereford.anglican.org](mailto:m.mcphee@hereford.anglican.org))
- if the matter still remains unresolved contact the Police on 101.
- If you are appointed by your Parochial Church Council (PCC) you should follow your PCC's whistleblowing policy if it has one.