

Safeguarding Complaints Procedure

This procedure is for use by anyone wishing to complain about how a safeguarding issue has been handled. **It is not the procedure for making a safeguarding referral.** If you think a child or vulnerable adult may be at risk of harm you should contact the person to whom you are responsible, or else the diocesan safeguarding team on 01733 887040. **If you consider a child or vulnerable adult to be at risk of *immediate* harm, you should contact the Police on 999 or Adult or Children's Services without delay.** You should also contact the diocesan safeguarding team within 24 hours.

Introduction

Complaints under this procedure will generally concern the handling of a safeguarding case by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA) or the Assistant DSA. If your complaint relates to a member of the clergy, including the Bishop of Peterborough or the Bishop of Brixworth, the procedure under the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 will apply instead.

Complaints may be brought by or on behalf of any of the parties involved in a case, for example a child or vulnerable adult, a parent or carer, or an alleged perpetrator. If a complaint is brought on behalf of someone else, it must be accompanied by a signed statement from that person confirming that he or she has agreed to this.

If you have a complaint

In the first instance you are encouraged to contact the DSA or Assistant DSA about the substance of your complaint, either of whom will be pleased to meet to discuss your concerns. This formal procedure is for use if informal efforts to resolve your complaint have failed. All complaints will be taken seriously and responded to fairly and promptly, and all information about a complaint will be treated in the strictest confidence.

Making a complaint

A complaint made under this procedure should set out how national or diocesan safeguarding policy or guidance has not been followed. Disagreement with the professional decisions which have been made in a case is not in itself grounds for a complaint. Unless there are exceptional factors, you should complain within three months of the grounds for your complaint arising.

Your complaint must include:

- your full name, postal address and contact details;
- what you think went wrong and how it has affected you;
- the outcome you are seeking, i.e. what you think should be done to put matters right.

Complaints may be made by email or in writing, marked 'confidential', and should be sent by email to steve.benoy@peterborough-diocese.org.uk or by post to the Bishop's Chaplain, Bishops' Office, The Palace, Peterborough PE1 1YA. Receipt of your complaint will be acknowledged within five working days.

How your complaint will be dealt with

A record of your complaint will be made immediately on receipt, and the Bishop's Chaplain will refer it to the Bishop of Peterborough. If the Bishop has already had direct involvement in the case, the Bishop of Brixworth or another bishop will be asked to deal with the matter.

If there is any doubt about the main facts of the complaint, the Bishop's Chaplain may be in touch for clarification. The bishop dealing with your complaint will then assess whether or not it relates to a safeguarding matter. If it does, an independent person with substantial

experience and knowledge of safeguarding will be appointed by the bishop to investigate the circumstances of your complaint. This person will have had no prior knowledge of, or involvement with, the case. Exceptionally, a second person may be appointed to assist.

The investigation

The person appointed to deal with your complaint will read any related files and will arrange a meeting with you to ascertain the full details. You may ask a friend or supporter (but not a legal adviser) to attend this meeting with you. The meeting will be as informal as possible. The person appointed by the bishop will explain its purpose, introduce anyone else present and emphasise confidentiality. Proceedings will be minuted by the appointed person, who will also agree with you how you will be updated on progress. You will be sent a copy of the minutes of the meeting.

The appointed person will investigate your complaint thoroughly and objectively, including asking for the views of any person to whom your complaint relates, and seeking advice and information from others as appropriate. A written report will be compiled, which will be sent to the bishop dealing with your complaint. The bishop will review this report and may seek additional advice before coming to a decision.

The bishop's decision

The bishop dealing with your complaint will write to you, summarising the report's findings and recommendations and outlining the actions he or she proposes to take to address the substance of your complaint. This may include, where appropriate, an apology and an explanation of any changes to be made in diocesan policies and procedures.

The bishop will aim to respond to you in this way as soon as possible, and not later than six weeks after first receipt of your complaint. If for whatever reason it is not possible to adhere to this timescale, for instance if the matter requires the involvement of statutory agencies, you will be informed in writing immediately.

Appeals

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you have the right to appeal. In that event, you should advise the Bishop's Chaplain of your wish to appeal the bishop's decision, and the procedure and actions undertaken up to that point will be independently reviewed by an independent assessor, selected by the National Safeguarding Team. The person conducting the review may choose to talk to or meet with any of the parties concerned to gain clarification of the issues. It is expected that a final decision, and any action deemed necessary, will be communicated to the complainant and to the Diocese within six working weeks of the appointment of an independent assessor.

Recording of complaints

The Bishop's Chaplain will maintain a record of every safeguarding complaint received, to include the following information:

- date of receipt of complaint;
- name and status of complainant;
- a brief description of the complaint;
- details of the person(s) appointed to investigate the complaint;
- a summary of the outcome, including how and when this was communicated to the complainant;
- any action taken by the bishop dealing with the complaint;
- any verbal or written response to the outcome received from the complainant.

The Bishop's Chaplain will report annually to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel with a summary of all complaints, in such a way as to preserve the anonymity of all those involved. On the basis of this report, the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisory Panel will consider whether any changes are required to diocesan policies or procedures.