**Diocese of Middlesbrough**

**Complaints Policy**

**Dated 19 July 2017**

1. **Complaints Policy Statement**

Our policy is:

* To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint;
* To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint;
* To make sure everyone at the diocese knows what to do if a complaint is received;
* To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way;
* To make sure that all complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired and reconciliation explored; and
* To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

1. **Definition of a Complaint**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the Diocese of Middlesbrough.

A formal complaint can be received by email or in writing. It is our policy that we will not investigate anonymous complaints.

This policy does not cover:

* Complaints relating to diocesan schools, where the individual school’s complaints process should be used;
* Complaints from staff, who should use the staff grievance procedure;
* Matters relating to safeguarding which should be referred directly to the Diocesan Safeguarding Co-ordinator.

1. **Confidentiality**

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

1. **Responsibility**

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation is with the Trustee Board of the Diocese of Middlesbrough.

1. **Review**

This policy will be reviewed annually and updated as required.

1. **Complaints Procedure of the Diocese of Middlesbrough**
   1. Publicised contact details for complaints: Bishop’s Office, Diocese of Middlesbrough, Curial Office, 50a The Avenue, Linthorpe, Middlesbrough  
      TS5 6QT or email [bishopsecretary@dioceseofmiddlesbrough.co.uk](mailto:bishopsecretary@dioceseofmiddlesbrough.co.uk).

**6.2 Receiving Complaints**

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded. The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:

* Write down the facts of the complaint;
* Take the complainant’s name, address and telephone number;
* Note down the relationship of the complainant to the Diocese;
* Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure;
* Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take;
* Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant’s own words.

**6.3 Resolving Complaints**

**Informal Approach**

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. Most matters can and should be resolved informally and locally.

If following the informal process the complainant remains dissatisfied or the informal route is inappropriate, then the formal procedure should be followed.

**Formal Stage**

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved during the informal process, they can escalate the complaint to the formal process. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Vicar General or, if they have already been involved, the Company Secretary.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within a week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within 28 days. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

It should be recognised that in some instances people will take positions where the matter cannot be resolved. However, the aim should be to ensure that the process respects those involved and is just in providing an active concern to those who are vulnerable, marginalised or oppressed.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Trustee Board decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution.

**External Stage**

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. The Commission’s involvement in looking at complaints is limited to issues that pose a serious risk of significant harm to a charity’s beneficiaries, assets, services or reputation. Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: [www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx).

1. **Record of Complaints**

A log of the complaint will be kept. Once a complaint has been resolved and a decision taken, the outcome should be sent in writing to the Bishop’s Office, where it will be recorded with a copy of the original complaint.

This policy was approved by the Diocesan Trustees on 19 July 2017

The next review is due on or before 19 July 2018