

# Complaints Policy

## Purpose of this policy

The highest standards of conduct and behaviour are expected from all Chapter members, staff, clergy, volunteers and members of any Chapter committees and advisory bodies, consistent with Wells Cathedral's ("the Cathedral's") values. We know there may be times when we do not meet our own high standards. Should this happen we want to hear about it, deal with the situation as quickly as possible, extract the learning from any mistakes made, and put measures in place to stop it happening again.

The Chapter believes that everyone comes to work to do the best job possible, that we are all fallible and it is human to make mistakes. It views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or the organisation making the complaint.

## Who does this policy apply to?

This policy is made available to members of the public - including, but not limited to, members of the congregation and visitors – to raise complaints. It is advertised in a prominent place on the Cathedral's website, so members of the public can find it easily should they wish to make a complaint. A hard copy is also be provided to any person on request at the Cathedral's Offices, 1st & 2<sup>nd</sup> Floors, 16 Market Place, Wells BA5 2RB.

## What is a complaint for the purposes of this policy?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of the Cathedral, its operations and its mission and ministry or about an action, or lack of action, by the staff, lay Chapter members, members of committees of Chapter and advisory bodies, contractors or volunteers, that requires resolution.

## What complaints are not included in this policy?

This policy does not cover:

- (a) complaints from staff and clergy, who should refer to other relevant processes, including the grievance and whistleblowing policies;
- (b) complaints from volunteers, who should refer to the Wells Cathedral volunteer handbook;
- (c) complaints relating to safeguarding, which should be referred directly to the Diocesan Safeguarding Manager (details below); or
- (d) complaints relating to an individual clergy member, which should be addressed under the *Procedure for the management of complaints and grievances against clergy*

As a general rule, we will not respond:

- (a) to complaints that do not relate directly to something that the Cathedral has done or been involved in;
- (b) when the complaint has already been responded to and has been reviewed through this policy; or
- (c) when a complaint has clearly been sent to us and numerous other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or email. In this instance we can choose whether it is necessary for us to reply or not.

## Informal resolution

We seek to resolve any complaint as quickly as possible through informal resolution. In the first instance, a complaint may be raised verbally in person to any of the Cathedral's staff or clergy or made by phone on (01749) 674483. The member of staff or clergy will attempt to resolve the issue for you on the spot. If a complaint is received that members of staff are unable to resolve immediately, they will take details

of the complaint and your contact details and pass this to their line manager as soon as possible. If their line manager is not available for any reason, a manager will contact you within 24 hours of your complaint to discuss how it can be resolved.

### **How to make a formal complaint**

If we have been unable to resolve your informal complaint to your satisfaction in a timely manner, then you may wish to make a formal complaint.

A formal complaint must be made in writing and be sent by email or letter to the Cathedral's Chief Operating Officer at the Cathedral Offices, 1st & 2<sup>nd</sup> Floors, 16 Market Place, Wells BA5 2RB or by email (see below).

Should your complaint be about the Chief Operating Officer or a lay Non-Executive Member of Chapter then the complaint should be directed in writing to the Dean at the above address or by email (see below).

Please include your name, address and contact telephone number in your email or letter so that we can get back in touch with you easily. The Cathedral cannot respond to complaints made anonymously, but we will investigate anonymous complaints and use the information provided to improve in any way we can.

Where further information or clarification is required in order to assess and respond to the complaint, a staff member will contact you to request this. If further information or clarification is not provided, the complaint may be unable to be progressed.

### **What we will do when we receive a complaint**

We will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement will explain who is dealing with your complaint and when you can expect a response.

We will do our best to investigate and respond fully and conclusively to all complaints within twenty working days of a complaint being received. Sometimes a complaint is more complex and so it will take us longer to investigate it. Where this happens, we will send you a progress report and let you know when you can expect to receive a final response.

We will handle any complaints received with sensitivity and in compliance with the Chapter's data protection policy, privacy notice and the law.

### **How will complaints be progressed and resolved?**

We will look to resolve your complaint amicably and with pastoral care and sensitivity.

The Chief Operating Officer (or Dean, as the case may be) will assign a senior employee or a member of the Chapter, as appropriate, to investigate any complaint received (the Investigator). The Investigator must not be personally involved in the events complained about and if it not possible to identify an internal Investigator without personal involvement, an external Investigator with appropriate experience will be appointed.

The Investigator will make all necessary and appropriate enquiries to establish the substance of the complaint and note any attempts already made to resolve the matter informally. Where possible, members of staff will be informed of a complaint made about them or any actions for which they were responsible. The Chapter has a duty of care to staff complained about as well as to complainants and so the Investigator should ensure, where possible, that the person about whom a complaint has been made has an opportunity to respond to the concerns raised by the complainant and is supported appropriately through the complaints policy.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Investigator must provide a written report to the Chief Operating Officer (or Dean, as the case may be) for their consideration. Any report about the Chief Operating Officer or a lay Non-Executive Member of Chapter must be considered by the Dean and one Non-Executive Member of Chapter.

### **How will we inform you about the outcome of your complaint?**

Once the Chief Operating Officer (or Dean/SNEM and other Non-Executive Member of Chapter) receives the Investigator's report, he or she will respond to you in writing (the Outcome Letter).

If your complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the Outcome Letter may include an apology, acknowledge where things have gone wrong and explain whether any actions will be taken because of the investigation into your complaint. However, the Outcome Letter will not include personal information about any member of staff, Chapter member, committee member or any volunteer.

The Outcome Letter will also include information on how you can seek a review if you are unhappy with how your complaint has been investigated or handled by the Cathedral.

### **What if you are unhappy with how your complaint has been investigated or handled by the Cathedral?**

If, after receiving the Outcome Letter, you are unhappy with how your complaint has been investigated or handled, you can refer your complaint for review within ten working days in accordance with the process set out in the Outcome Letter stating your grounds and the outcome you are seeking. For the avoidance of doubt, disagreement with the decision reached is not considered grounds to request a review.

If you request a review within the timescales set out in your Outcome Letter, the Chief Operating Officer (or Dean, as the case may be) will appoint an independent Chapter member or fellow member of the senior staff team (as appropriate) who has not been involved in the first stage (the Reviewer) to conduct a review. A review following a report about the Chief Operating Officer or a lay Non-Executive Member of Chapter must be considered by two Non-Executive Members of Chapter.

The Reviewer may speak to you and will consider any paperwork relating to the complaint and its investigation, as well as the Investigator's report and the Outcome Letter and consider whether your complaint has been properly investigated and handled by the Cathedral. The Reviewer will provide a written report to the Chief Operating Officer (or Dean, as the case may be) and a Review Outcome Letter will be sent to you. Reviews will normally take up to 28 days to complete.

### **Vexatious complaints**

The Chapter may decide not to respond to a complainant, or to cease to respond to a complainant, where it is considered appropriate and proportionate to do so on the basis that a complainant:

- (a) is being deliberately abusive, prejudiced, or offensive; and/or
- (b) is harassing a member of staff, volunteer, or office holder at the Cathedral.

Where the Chapter makes such a decision:

- (a) where possible, the investigation into the complaint made should continue; and
- (b) a letter must be sent to the complainant within 5 working days to inform them of the Chapter's decision as to whether the complaint raised is being investigated.

### **Monitoring and learning from complaints**

The Chapter will regularly review complaints received by the Cathedral and their outcomes, to identify any trends or wider learning.

The Chief Operating Officer will report to the Chapter at each meeting after any complaints have been received on the number and nature of any complaints received and the outcome of those complaints, including whether they have led to a change in services, policies, or procedures. If a complaint raises serious concerns, the Chief Operating Officer should bring it to the Chapter's attention (or to the Dean's attention, as appropriate) without delay.

The Chief Operating Officer must keep a secure record of the complaints received, the report of the Investigator setting out the reasons for their decisions, and copies of Outcome Letters.

## Records of your complaint

We will retain a record of your complaint for 6 years after the last contact with you about the complaint. We will then destroy all records of the complaint securely. You can read more about how we look after your records and your rights as a data subject in our Privacy Notice, which is available on our website.

## Confidentiality

We process personal data collected during the process set out in this policy in accordance with our data protection policy. Data is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of responding to concerns raised under this policy. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with our data protection policy immediately.

As well as the technical provisions of data protection legislation we also want to ensure that confidentiality is maintained by stating very clearly that anyone that is either raising a concern or is potentially the subject of a complaint and any person involved in the resolution of the matter is expected to keep all information confidential and not to speak to anyone, not even friends or family, unless agreed otherwise for pastoral care reasons.

Failure to respect confidentiality may constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under our disciplinary policy.

## Policy review

This policy will be reviewed every three years by the Cathedral Leadership Team and reported to Chapter.

## Contact details

Title	Name	Contact details
Diocesan Safeguarding Manager	Ben Goodhind	<a href="mailto:Ben.goodhind@bathwells.anglican.org">Ben.goodhind@bathwells.anglican.org</a> or 01749 588917
Chief Operating Officer	Nerys Watts	<a href="mailto:nerys.watts@wellscathedral.org.uk">nerys.watts@wellscathedral.org.uk</a>
Dean	Toby Wright	<a href="mailto:dean@wellscathedral.org.uk">dean@wellscathedral.org.uk</a>

Policy owner	Chief Operating Officer
Approved by	Chapter
Approval date	Oct 2025
Review date	Oct 2028