

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Introduction

The highest standards of conduct and behaviour are expected from all Chapter members, staff, volunteers and members of any Cathedral committees. We know there may be times when we do not meet our own high standards. Should this happen, Southwark Cathedral would like to hear about it, deal with the situation as quickly as possible and put measures in place to stop it happening again.

The Chapter 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.

This policy must be 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 should also be provided to any person on request at the Cathedral's office.

Summary

The Complaints Policy outlines the process for raising a complaint about any aspect of Southwark Cathedral. The policy also outlines the process for how Southwark Cathedral will respond to and handle complaints.

This policy does NOT relate to:

- (a) complaints from staff, who should refer to the relevant processes in the employee handbook;
- (b) complaints from volunteers, who should refer to the relevant process in the volunteer handbook; and
- (c) complaints relating to safeguarding¹ which should be referred directly to the Cathedral Safeguarding Officers or to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser

As a general rule, the Cathedral 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 the process in section 5 below;
- (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.

Definition of a complaint for the purpose 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,

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clergy, office holders, Chapter members, members of committees of Chapter, contractors or volunteers that requires a formal response.

If you have a complaint relating to safeguarding and/or the practice of the Cathedral Safeguarding Team you should follow the procedure set out in Section 6, page 5 of the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy [A Safe Church](#).

Safeguarding Contacts:

- Cathedral Safeguarding Officer:
Neil Morter: neil.morter@southwark.anglican.org / 020 7367 6720 or cathedralsafeguarding@southwark.anglican.org
- Cathedral Safeguarding Reps:
Cherry James: cherry.james@southwark.anglican.org
Jill Tilley: jill.tilley@southwark.anglican.org
Russell Silverwood: russell.silverwood@southwark.anglican.org

Who this policy applies to

The Complaints Policy applies to members of the Cathedral Chapter and Senior Leadership Team. The policy also applies to any persons wishing to make a complaint about the Cathedral.

Policy

1. [How to make a complaint](#)

- 1.1 You can contact us in whichever way is most convenient to you and we will respond to you via the same method unless instructed otherwise.
- 1.2 Written complaints should be sent by e-mail or letter to the Cathedral's COO at Cathedralgovernance@southwark.anglican.org or Southwark Cathedral, London Bridge, London, SE1 9DA.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 Where a complaint is incoherent or illegible a staff member will contact the complainant, where possible, to request that the complaint be provided in a legible format or to clarify the complaint. Where a legible or coherent version of the complaint is not provided, the complaint will not be able to be progressed.
- 1.5 Verbal complaints may be made by phone on 020 7367 6700 or in person to any of the Cathedral's staff at the Cathedral.

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1.6 Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded in writing. 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 Cathedral;
- tell the complainant that the Cathedral has a complaints policy and direct them to it;
- explain to the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take; and
- where appropriate, ask the complainant to send in a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

2. [What we will do when we receive a complaint](#)

2.1 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.

2.2 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.

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

2.4 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:

- is being deliberately abusive, prejudiced or offensive; and/or
 - is harassing a member of staff, volunteer or office holder at the Cathedral.
- Where the Chapter makes such a decision:
- where possible, the investigation into the complaint made should continue, in accordance with section 3 below; and
 - a letter must be sent to the complainant within 5 working days to inform them of the Chapter's decision and it should inform the complainant whether the complaint raised is being investigated by the Chapter.

3. [How complaints will be progressed and resolved](#)

3.1 Wherever possible, we will look to resolve your complaint amicably and with pastoral care and sensitivity.

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3.2 The COO (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 someone who is personally involved in the events complained about.

3.3 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.

3.4 At the conclusion of the investigation, the Investigator must provide a written report to the COO (or Dean, as the case may be).

4. [How we will inform you about the outcome of your complaint](#)

4.1 Once the COO (or Dean, as the case may be) receives the Investigator's report, he or she will respond to you in writing (the Outcome Letter).

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

4.3 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.

5. [What to do if you are unhappy with how your complaint has been investigated or handled by the Cathedral](#)

5.1 If, after receiving the Outcome Letter, you are unhappy with how your complaint has been investigated or handled by the Cathedral, you can refer your complaint for review in accordance with the process and timescales set out in the Outcome Letter.

5.2 If you request a review within the timescales set out in your Outcome Letter, the COO (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. The Reviewer will

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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 COO (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.

6. [What to do if you are still not happy with how your complaint has been investigated or handled by the Cathedral following a Review](#)

6.1 We hope we are able to resolve your complaint in an honest, open and satisfactory way. However, if you are still unhappy then you can write, either by letter or email, to either of our regulators:

- a. The Church Commissioners at: cathedralregulation@churchofengland.org
Please name the Cathedral, outline the details of the complaint and explain why you have not been satisfied with our response.
- b. The Charity Commission at:
The Charity Commission
PO Box 211
Bootle
L20 7YX

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>

6.2 Before you write to the Charity Commission, you should check your complaint is one which the Charity Commission will look into. As stated in the Charity Commission's guidance on complaints about charities, its involvement in relation to complaints about a charity is limited to issues that pose a serious risk of significant harm to that charity's beneficiaries, assets, services or reputation.

7. [How to Make a Data Protection Complaint](#)

7.1 If you are unhappy with how we handle your personal data, you have the right to raise a complaint with us.

You can contact us by:

- Email: dpo.cathedral@southwark.anglican.org
- Telephone: 0207 3676700
- Post: Southwark Cathedral, Montague Close, London Bridge, SE1 9DA

Please provide:

- Your name and contact details
- A clear description of your concern
- Any relevant dates or reference numbers

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7.2 After receiving your complaint:

- We will acknowledge your complaint within 30 days of receiving it.
- We will investigate your concerns.
- We may contact you if we need further information.
- We will respond as soon as possible and without undue delay.

7.3 Our response will explain what we have found, whether any action has been taken and what happens next.

7.4 If you remain unhappy with our response, you have the right to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):

Telephone: 0303 123 1113

Website: <https://ico.org.uk>

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

8. Monitoring and learning from complaints

7.1 The Senior Management Team should regularly review the complaints received by the Cathedral and their outcomes, to identify any trends or wider learning.

7.2 The COO should 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 COO should bring it to the Chapter's attention (or to the Dean and/or the Senior Non-Executive Member's attention, as appropriate) without delay.

7.3 The COO 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.

9. Records of your complaint

8.1 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.

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10. What happens if a complaint is made against you

- 9.1 If you find you are the subject of a complaint made by another person, we will ensure that no judgement is made about the validity or otherwise of the complaint until the investigation is complete. We will provide appropriate support for anyone who is the subject of a complaint, and keep them informed of progress during the investigation.
- 9.2 The result of the investigation will determine the outcome in line with the appropriate Cathedral policy. Where the subject of a complaint is an employee, or worker, this may lead to a separate investigation being carried out under the Cathedrals' Disciplinary Procedure for staff. We will ensure that those investigating the complaint are impartial and will conduct the investigation fairly and reasonably.
- 9.3 If you are unhappy with the outcome of an investigation you will have the opportunity either to raise a concern yourself under the terms of this policy. Employees who are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint raised under this procedure, and who are not subject to action being taken under the Disciplinary procedure, may use the Cathedral's Grievance Procedure.

Reviewed by:	Chapter
Last Review Date:	November 2025
Review Frequency:	3 years
Next Review Date:	November 2028

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