

Peterchurch PCC/The Hub at St Peter's

Complaints policy

The PCC recognises that from time-to-time complaints may arise. Our aim is to have a process that is simple to use and understand.

In addition to this general policy, there is a policy specifically relating to safeguarding complaints. If you are concerned about a Safeguarding matter, then please contact Simon Lockett on 01981 250245. If you feel concerned about someone and do not want to raise it with Simon you should contact Herefordshire Council's Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub:

Children: 01432 260800

Adult: 01432 260715 (week day/office hours)

Emergency Duty Team: 0330 123 9309 (after 5pm, weekends and public holidays)

If you feel that an individual is in immediate danger – you should call 999.

This policy ensures that we:

- Provide a fair complaints procedure, which is clear and easy to use;
- Make a copy of our complaints procedure available via The Hub's website so that people can contact us to make a complaint;
- Ensure that all PCC/Hub staff know what to do if they receive a complaint;
- Make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way;
- Make sure that complaints are resolved and that relationships are where possible restored;
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

This policy relates to the work of the PCC in managing The Hub and to The Hub itself. It does **not** cover:

- Complaints relating to individual church matters, where the matter should be referred to the Parochial Church Council (PCC);
- Complaints from PCC or Hub staff, who should use the PCC's grievance procedure;
- Matters relating to safeguarding which should be referred to the PCC's designated safeguarding lead (Simon Lockett).

Definition of a complaint:

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the PCC's management of The Hub or The Hub itself.

Where complaints can come from:

- A person who is dissatisfied with the service that they have received from a member of Hub staff;
- A concern relating to the policies and processes used by the PCC to run The Hub;
- An allegation of an instance or instances of inappropriate behaviour or misconduct relating to a member of the PCC or Hub staff.

Contact details for complaints:

In the first instance complaints should be raised with the person providing the service to see if they can be resolved informally.

We recognise that those wishing to make a complaint may make contact in the first instance by phone or in a face-to-face conversation, to establish the process. However all complaints must be made in writing, either by email or letter. A record will be made of a phone or face to face conversation but in order for the complaint to be investigated it will need to be made in writing by letter or email (see below).

Written complaints about The Hub, its management, members of The Hub staff or its volunteers should be sent to the PCC, c/o The PCC Secretary, 92 Crossways, Peterchurch, HR2 0TQ (email to mclabrooke@aol.com) or to Simon Lockett, c/o The Vicarage, Madley, HR2 9LP (email simon2020@zohomail.com).

Written complaints about the PCC should be sent to the Diocesan Secretary, Hereford Diocese, The Diocesan Office, The Palace, Hereford, HR4 9BL.

Confidentiality

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

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy lies with the PCC and its implementation is the responsibility of the PCC.

Guidance for members of staff who may receive complaints

Complaints may arrive via email, phone conversation, face to face meeting or by post.

If a member of staff receives a complaint in person, by email, or during a telephone call then it must be recorded. The person who receives the complaint should:

- Write down all of the details reported by the complainant;
- Take down the complainant's name and contact details;
- Note down the relationship between the complainant and the PCC/The Hub;
- Inform the complainant that we have a complaints procedure, refer them where possible to the details online, and inform them that although this conversation has been noted a formal complaint must be made in writing;
- If there is any concern that the complaint relates, or might relate, to a safeguarding matter then the PCC's Designated Safeguarding Lead, Simon Lockett, should be consulted. If the complaint concerns Simon, then the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, Mandy McPhee, should be contacted. If it is deemed that the matter does involve safeguarding then it will be dealt with under the separate safeguarding policy. If the DSO deems that the complaint does not contain any safeguarding matters then she will refer it back to be dealt with under this policy.

Resolving complaints

Informal approach

In many cases a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue the complaint relates to. Most matters can and should be resolved informally and locally.

If for example a person is dissatisfied with the service they have received, then in the first instance they should tell that person of their dissatisfaction. He or she should be willing to listen, to discuss the matter and seek to satisfy the concerns, where justified. If the complainant remains dissatisfied after this process, the member of staff will arrange for the concerns to be discussed with their line manager or the PCC.

If for any reason (learning disability, vulnerability, or other reason) the complainant is not able to write their complaint themselves then they may either be supported by a family member or friend, or the PCC may provide someone to accompany/assist the complainant.

Notes should be made of the complaint, the complainant, the respondent, the meeting(s) held to resolve the matter informally at a local level, and agreed by all parties.

An informal complaint should be resolved within one month of receipt.

In some cases, the informal route may be inappropriate, so the formal procedure should be followed straight away.

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 written complaint will be passed to the PCC. Should the nature of the complaint make this inappropriate, then the complaint may be passed to the Hereford Diocesan Board of Finance (HDBF) or to an independent consultant. A suitably senior person will therefore be appointed to investigate the facts of the case. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with anyone who may have been involved in dealing with the complaint at the informal stage.

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 complainant can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, that person should be informed and given an opportunity to respond. The person who dealt with the original complaint at the informal stage, if different from the specific person it relates to, should also be kept informed of what is happening where appropriate.

If for any reason (learning disability, vulnerability, or other reason) the complainant is not able to write their complaint themselves then they may either be supported by a family member or friend, or HDBF/the independent consultant may provide someone to accompany/assist the complainant.

The respondent is also entitled to be assisted or supported by a suitable adult.

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 as a result of the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken as a result of the complaint. Where disciplinary action is deemed appropriate, the reply to the complainant will not include details relating to the individual staff member's employment record.

Appeal

If the complainant feels as though the complaint hasn't been properly resolved then they do have a right of appeal. This should be in writing to the Chair of the Board of Finance at Hereford Diocese with 28 days of receiving the original decision. The appeal should state clearly the reasons why they wish to make an appeal and set out the outcomes that they want.

The Chair of the Board will review the paperwork received and decide whether to review the complaint themselves or appoint an independent consultant to do so. The Chair/consultant will initially assess whether the complaints process has been followed correctly. After this he or she will consider the information contained in the appeal and make a final decision.

It should be recognised that in some instances people will take positions where the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily. 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 Chair/consultant decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution. A log of the complaint will be kept.

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.

Variation of the complaints procedure

The PCC may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest: for example, a complaint about Simon Lockett as The Hub's Project Director should not also have Simon as a member of the PCC leading the formal process.

Record keeping

An outline of all complaints (Hub staff members and Hub volunteers) will be shared internally with the PCC who will keep a record of formal complaints, any learnings and their outcomes. These will be reported to the Board at Hereford Diocese to ensure that they are aware of the volume and severity of complaints.