



## POLICY DOCUMENT

# EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

### CONTROLLED DOCUMENT

<b>Document Name:</b>	External Complaints Policy
<b>Document Version Number:</b>	V2
<b>Owner (responsibility):</b>	Chapter Clerk
<b>Agreed by Policy and Procedure Team:</b>	
<b>Approved by The Chapter:</b>	
<b>Review Schedule:</b>	Three years
<b>Next Review due:</b>	2025

### REVISION HISTORY

Revision date	Summary of Changes	Other Comments

### IMPLEMENTATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Implementation is immediate (unless otherwise specified in the Policy) and this Policy shall stay in force until any alterations are formally agreed. The Policy will be reviewed in accordance with the Review Schedule above, sooner if legislation, best practice or other circumstances indicate this is necessary.

## **EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS POLICY**

### **Contents**

---

- 1 Purpose**
- 2 Availability of this policy**
- 3 Complaints covered by this policy**
- 4 Complaints excluded from this policy**
- 5 Complaint procedure**
- 6 Actions taken on receipt of a complaint**
- 7 Procedure for resolving a complaint**
- 8 Communicating with the complainant**
- 9 Reviewing a complaint outcome**
- 10 Further redress**
- 11 Monitoring complaints**
- 12 Record keeping**
- 13 Policy review**

## EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS POLICY

### 1 Scope and Purpose

---

- 1.1 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 we want to hear about it, deal with the situation as quickly as possible and put measures in place to stop it happening again.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 Lincoln Cathedral will always intend that a complaint can be dealt with instantly and effectively by a member of the Cathedral team, and the issue rectified immediately. If that is not possible, the process set out in this policy should be followed.

### 2 Making this policy publicly available

---

- 2.1 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 Chapter Office.

### 3 Definition: What a complaint is for the purposes of this policy

---

- 3.1 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, clergy, Chapter members, members of committees of Chapter, contractors or volunteers that the complainant believes requires a formal response.

### 4 Exclusion: What complaints are not covered by this policy

---

- 4.1 This policy **does not** relate to:
  - (a) complaints from staff, who should refer to the relevant processes in the staff handbook
  - (b) complaints from volunteers, who should refer to the relevant process in the volunteer handbook; and
  - (c) complaints about clergy which reach the threshold for management through the process set out in the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003 (though complaints submitted through in accordance with this policy may be referred to the process as set out in the Clergy Discipline Measure 2003).
  - (d) complaints relating to safeguarding, which should be referred directly to the Cathedral Safeguarding Adviser at [safeguarding@lincolncathedral.com](mailto:safeguarding@lincolncathedral.com) or to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser at [safeguarding@lincoln.anglican.org](mailto:safeguarding@lincoln.anglican.org)
- 4.2 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 in which it have been involved;

- (b) when the complaint has already been responded to and has been reviewed through the process in section 9 below;
- (c) when a complaint has clearly been sent to us and numerous other organisations as part of a bulk mailing or e-mail. In this instance we can choose whether or not it is necessary for us to reply

## **5 How to make a complaint**

---

- 5.1 A complainant can contact Lincoln Cathedral in whichever way is most convenient and the cathedral will respond via the same method unless instructed otherwise
- 5.2 Written complaints should be sent by e-mail or letter to the cathedral's Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk at **chapterclerk@lincolncathedral.com** or **The Chapter Office, 28 Eastgate, Lincoln LN2 4AA**
- 5.3 Should the complaint be about the Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk then the complaint should be directed in writing to the Dean at the above address or by e-mail at: **dean@lincolncathedral.com**
- 5.4 Should the complaint be about the Dean, the complaint should be directed in writing to the Senior Non-Executive Member of Chapter at the above address or by e-mail at: **snem@lincolncathedral.com**
- 5.5 Complainants should include their name, address and contact telephone number in their e-mail or letter so that the cathedral can respond easily. The cathedral cannot respond to complaints made anonymously, but will investigate anonymous complaints and use the information provided to improve in any way possible.
- 5.5 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.
- 5.6 Verbal complaints may be made by phone on 01522 561600 or in person to any of the cathedral's staff at the cathedral, who may be identified by uniform or by their staff lanyard and identity card.
- 5.7 Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded in writing. The person who receives a phone or in person complaint should:
  - (a) write down the facts of the complaint;
  - (b) take the complainant's name, address and telephone number;
  - (c) note down the relationship of the complainant to the cathedral;
  - (d) tell the complainant that the cathedral has a complaints policy and direct them to it;
  - (e) 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 e-mail so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

## **6 How the complaint will be dealt with on receipt**

---

- 6.1 The cathedral will acknowledge your complaint within five working days of receipt. The acknowledgement will explain who is dealing with the complaint and when a response can be expected.

- 6.2 The cathedral will do its utmost 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 may take longer to investigate. Where this happens, a progress report will be sent, and the complainant informed of when to expect to receive a final response.
- 6.3 The cathedral will handle any complaints received with sensitivity and in compliance with the Chapter's Data Policy, privacy notice and the law.
- 6.4 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:
- (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:

- (c) where possible, the investigation into the complaint made should continue, in accordance with section 7 below; and
- (d) a letter must be sent to the complainant within five working days to inform them of the Chapter's decision and it should inform the complainant whether or not the complaint raised is being investigated by the Chapter.

## **7 How the complaint will be resolved**

---

- 7.1 Wherever possible, the cathedral will seek to resolve a complaint amicably and with pastoral care and sensitivity.
- 7.2 The Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk, (or the 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.
- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 At the conclusion of the investigation, the Investigator must provide a written report to the Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk (or Dean, as the case may be).

## **8 How the cathedral will inform the complainant of the outcome of their complaint**

---

- 8.1 Once the Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk (or Dean, as the case may be) receives the Investigator's report, he or she will respond to the complainant in writing (the Outcome Letter).
- 8.2 If the 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.

- 8.3 The Outcome Letter will also include information on how the complainant can seek a review if he or she is unhappy with how the complaint has been investigated or handled by the cathedral.

## **9 Procedure if the complainant is unhappy with how the complaint was investigated or handled**

---

- 9.1 If, after receiving the Outcome Letter, the complainant is unhappy with how the complaint has been investigated or handled by the cathedral, he or she can refer the complaint for review in accordance with the process and timescales set out in the Outcome Letter.
- 9.2 If the complainant requests a review within the timescales set out in the Outcome Letter, the Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk (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 consider any paperwork relating to the complaint and its investigation, as well as the Investigator's report and the Outcome Letter and consider whether the complaint has been properly investigated and handled by the cathedral. The Reviewer will provide a written report to the Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk (or Dean, as the case may be) and a Review Outcome Letter will be sent to the complainant. Reviews will normally take up to 28 days to complete.

## **10 Procedure if the complainant is unhappy with how the complaint was investigated or handled following a review**

---

- 10.1 Lincoln Cathedral hopes to be able to resolve all complaints in an honest, open and satisfactory way. However, if a complainant is still unhappy then he or she can write, either by letter or email, to either of the cathedral's regulators:
- (a) The Church Commissioners at: [cathedralregulation@churchofengland.org](mailto:cathedralregulation@churchofengland.org)
- The complainant should name the cathedral, outline the details of the complaint and explain why he or she has not been satisfied with the cathedral's response.
- (b) The Charity Commission at:
- The Charity Commission  
PO Box 211  
Bootle  
L20 7YX  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission>
- 10.2 Before writing to the Charity Commission, the complainant should check that the 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.

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

---

- 11.1 The Senior Leadership Group should regularly review the complaints received by the cathedral and their outcomes, to identify any trends or wider learning.
- 11.2 The Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk 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 Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk 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.
- 11.3 The Chief Operating Officer and Chapter Clerk 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.

## **12 Records of your complaint**

---

- 12.1 Lincoln Cathedral will retain a record of any complaint for six years after the last contact with you about the complaint. The cathedral will then destroy all records of the complaint securely. More can be read about how we look after personal records and the rights of a data subject in the Privacy Notice, which is available on the cathedral website.

## **13 Policy review**

---

- 13.1 This policy should be reviewed every three years and updated as required.