

Chapter of York

COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. Purpose of this policy

- 1.1 The highest standards of conduct and behaviour are expected from all Chapter members, staff, volunteers and members of any cathedral committees [and advisory bodies]. 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.

2. Making this policy publicly available

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.

3. 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, Chapter members, members of Chapter committees [and advisory bodies], contractors or volunteers that requires a formal response.

4. What complaints are not included in this policy?

4.1 This policy does not relate to:

- (a) complaints from staff, who should refer to the relevant processes in the staff handbook¹;
- (b) complaints from volunteers, who should refer to the relevant process in the volunteer handbook²; and
- (c) complaints relating to safeguarding³, which should be referred directly to the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer at deec@yorkminster.org

¹ Chapter of York Staff Policies, available in hard copy and via the policies folder on the P Drive.

² Chapter of York Volunteering Handbook.

³ <https://yorkminster.org/about-us/safeguarding/>

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 decided not to do or to be involved in;
- (b) when the complaint has already been responded to and has been reviewed through the process in section 9 below⁴;
- (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.

5. How to make a complaint

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 Written complaints should be sent by e-mail or letter to the cathedral's Chapter Office at feedback@yorkminster.org or at Chapter Offices, 8 Minster Yard, York YO1 7HH.
- 5.3 Should your complaint involve the Chief Operating Officer/Chapter Steward then the complaint should be directed in writing to the Dean at the above address or by email at: dean@yorkminster.org
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 Where a complaint is incoherent or illegible a staff member will contact the complainant, where possible, to request that the complaint is provided in a legible format to clarify the complaint. We cannot progress illegible or incoherent complaints.
- 5.6 Verbal complaints may be made by phone on 01904 557200 or in person to any of the cathedral's staff at the cathedral.
- 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
 - (f) 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.

⁴ See section 10 of this policy.

6. What we will do when we receive a complaint

- 6.1 We will acknowledge your complaint within 5 working days of receiving it. The acknowledgement will explain whether your complaint is something that we are able to investigate, who is dealing with it and when you can expect a response.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 We will handle any complaints received with sensitivity and in compliance with the Chapter's data protection 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 (either via email/hard copy) 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.

7. How will complaints be progressed and resolved?

- 7.1 The Chief Operating Officer/Chapter Steward (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.
- 7.2 The Investigator will make all necessary and appropriate enquiries to establish the relevant facts and 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.
- 7.3 At the conclusion of the investigation, the Investigator must provide a written report to the Chief Operating Officer/Chapter Steward (or Dean, as the case may be).

8. How will we inform you about the outcome of your complaint?

- 8.1 Once the Chief Operating Officer/Chapter Steward (or Dean, as the case may be) receives the Investigator's report, he or she will respond to you in writing (the Outcome Letter).
- 8.2 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.
- 8.3 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.

9. What if you are unhappy with how your complaint has been investigated or handled by the cathedral?

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 If you request a review within the timescales set out in your Outcome Letter, the Chief Operating Officer/Chapter Steward (or Dean, as the case may be) will appoint a Chapter member or 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 your complaint has been properly investigated and handled by the cathedral. The Reviewer will provide a written report to the Chief Operating Officer/Chapter Steward (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.

10. What if you are still not happy with how your complaint has been investigated or handled by the cathedral following a Review?

- 10.1 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>

10.2 Before you write to the Charity Commission, you should check your complaint is one which the Charity Commission will look into⁵. 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 Executive Team 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/Chapter Steward 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/Chapter Steward 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/Chapter Steward 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

We will retain a record of your complaint for 10 years after the last contact with you about the complaint. We will then destroy all records of the complaint securely⁶. 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 at

<https://yorkminster.org/privacy-notice/>

13. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed as part of Chapter's programme of policy review.

Date adopted by Chapter: 25 January 2024

⁵ [Complaints about charities - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/charity-commission)

⁶ As per the Chapter of York Retention Guidelines