



Southwell Cathedral

COMPLAINTS POLICY

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1. Introduction

The highest standards of conduct are expected from all Chapter members, cathedral clergy (including clergy with Permission to Officiate), licensed lay ministers (LLMs), employees, volunteers, choristers, members of the College of Canons, cathedral committees and advisory bodies. If standards are not met, the Cathedral wants to know, resolve the issue quickly, and put measures in place to prevent recurrence.

Complaints are seen as an opportunity to learn, improve, and put things right for the person or organisation making the complaint. This policy is published prominently on the Cathedral's website and a hard copy can be requested from the Minster Centre Office.

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about:

- the Cathedral, its operations, mission or ministry; or
- an action, or lack of action, by Chapter members, cathedral clergy (including clergy with Permission to Officiate), LLMs, employees, volunteers, contractors, members of the College of Canons, cathedral committees or advisory bodies that requires a formal response.

2. Scope

This policy applies to members of the congregation, visitors and members of the public who wish to make an official complaint about the Cathedral or people associated with the Cathedral. Employees or volunteers wishing to make a complaint should refer to Section 3 below.

3. Complaints not covered by this policy

This policy does not cover:

- **Complaints by employees:** Personal grievances (such as treatment at work) should be raised under the Employee Grievance Procedure or, where a complaint relates to how a safeguarding matter has been or is being dealt with at the Cathedral, the Whistleblowing Policy.
- **Complaints by volunteers:** Personal grievances should be raised under the Complaints Procedure for Volunteers or, where a complaint relates to how a safeguarding matter has been or is being dealt with at the Cathedral, the Whistleblowing Policy.
- **Processes for resolving safeguarding concerns or allegations:** If you are concerned about the safety of a child or adult, contact the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer at safeguarding@southwell.anglican.org or call 01636 817200. If someone is at immediate risk, call 999. More detail can be found in the Safeguarding Guide for Congregation & Community and Safeguarding Policy, Procedure & Guidance.
- **Complaints about how a safeguarding issue is being or has been dealt with at the Cathedral:** contact safeguarding@southwell.anglican.org or call 01636 817200.

Additionally, the Cathedral may not respond to complaints that:

- do not relate directly to Cathedral representatives;
- have already been addressed and reviewed under Section 8 below;
- are part of bulk mailings or sent to multiple organisations, where a response may be at the Cathedral's discretion.

4. How to make a complaint

Complaints can be made in any convenient way; we will respond via the same method unless instructed otherwise. Please contact the relevant person below.

Complaints should be sent to the **Chief Operating Officer**:

coo@southwellminster.org.uk

01636 812649

Southwell Minster, Church Street, Southwell, NG25 0HD

If your complaint is about the Chief Operating Officer or a member of clergy, contact the **Dean**:

dean@southwellminster.org.uk

01636 817282 (Dean's PA)

Southwell Minster, Church Street, Southwell, NG25 0HD

If your complaint is about the Dean, contact the **Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham**:

bishop@southwell.anglican.org

01636 812112 (Bishop's Office)

Jubilee House, Westgate, Southwell NG25 0JH

If sending a written complaint, please include your name, address and contact telephone number so that we can get in touch with you easily. Anonymous complaints cannot receive a direct response but will be investigated and used to improve in any way we can.

Incoherent or illegible complaints may require clarification; if a legible version is not provided, the complaint cannot progress.

Complaints received by telephone will be recorded in writing. The person who receives a telephone complaint will:

- Write down the facts of the complaint.
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number.
- Note 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.
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by email or post so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

5. What we will do when we receive a complaint

- We will acknowledge your complaint within **five working days**, stating who is handling it and when you can expect a response.
- We aim to provide a full response within **twenty working days**. Complex complaints may take longer, in which case a progress update will be sent within twenty working days.
- We will handle complaints sensitively and in accordance with data protection laws. Complaints involving children (under 18s) or vulnerable adults will be reviewed by the Cathedral Safeguarding Officer.
- If the Chief Operating Officer determines that a complaint is more appropriately addressed by other procedures, the complainant will be informed of this and advised of the next steps.
- The Cathedral reserves the right not to respond to a complainant, or to cease responding to a complainant, if the complainant is abusive, offensive or harassing.

6. How complaints are investigated and resolved

- Wherever possible, we will look to resolve your complaint amicably, with pastoral care and sensitivity.
- The Chief Operating Officer or Dean will assign an investigator (Senior Management Team member, Chapter member or external investigator) who was not involved in the complaint.
- 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, the subject of the complaint will be informed of the complaint made about them or actions for which they were responsible. The Cathedral has a duty of care to those complained about as well as to complainants, and so the investigator will 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.
- At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator will provide a written report to the Chief Operating Officer or Dean.

7. Outcome of complaints

- The Chief Operating Officer or Dean will respond to you in writing (Outcome Letter).
- If your complaint is upheld in whole or in part, the letter will include an apology, acknowledge errors, and explain actions to be taken.
- The Outcome Letter will explain how you can request a review if you are unhappy with how your complaint has been investigated or handled by the Cathedral.

8. Review process

- 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 letter.
- If you request a review within the timescales set out in your Outcome Letter, a Chapter member or Senior Management Team member not involved in the first stage will conduct a review (the reviewer).
- 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 or Dean and a Review Outcome Letter will be sent to you. Reviews will normally take up to **twenty-eight days** to complete.

9. Escalation to regulators

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

- **Church Commissioners:** cathedralregulation@churchofengland.org. Please name the cathedral, outline the details of the complaint, and explain why you are not satisfied with our response.
- **Charity Commission**, PO Box 211, Bootle L20 7YX. Please name the cathedral, outline the details of the complaint, and explain why you are not satisfied with our response. You can also complete an online concern form at <https://forms.charitycommission.gov.uk/Raising-Concerns>.

Before you write to the Charity Commission, you are advised to check whether your complaint is one which the 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.

10. Monitoring and learning from complaints

The Senior Management Team regularly reviews complaints and outcomes to identify trends and lessons learned.

The Chief Operating Officer reports regularly to the Chapter on the number and nature of complaints received and their outcomes, including whether they have led to a change in services, policies or procedures. The Chief Operating Officer keeps a secure record of all complaints, investigator reports and Outcome Letters.

Serious concerns will be escalated to the Chapter, Dean or Senior Non-Executive Member of Chapter without delay.

11. Retention of complaint records

We will retain a record of your complaint for six years after the last contact with you regarding the complaint. We will then destroy all records of the complaint securely.

More information on data handling and rights is in the Cathedral's [Privacy Policy](#).