Overview

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Purpose
This policy sets out the LDF guidelines for handling external complaints.

Scope
This policy applies to all internal and external stakeholders of the London Diocesan Fund, including employees, volunteers, contractors, clients.

This policy does not cover complaints relating to:

- London Diocesan church schools, where the individual school’s complaints process should be applied
- London Diocesan Board for Schools, where the LDBS complaint process should be applied
- Local church matters and employed members of PCCs, where the complaint should be referred to the PCC
- St Paul’s Cathedral, which should be referred to the Cathedral Chapter
- Westminster Abbey, which should be referred to the Abbey Chapter
- Complaints from members of Clergy where the issue is a grievance relating to the exercise of the office held - the Archbishops’ Council has set out a Code of Practice and supportive advice for dealing with such grievances
- Disclosures, concerns, or allegations about abuse of children or vulnerable adults, which should always be referred directly to the police or Social Services where there is immediate danger and otherwise to the Diocesan
Safeguarding Adviser. (Please note that complaints about safeguarding procedures and processes do come under this complaints policy.)

- Complaints regarding members of clergy which are subject to their own complaints procedure (CDM). Further details can be found on the Diocese of London website (https://www.london.anglican.org/kb/complaints-process/)

**Effective Date**

July 2023
The LDF Complaints Policy

Introduction
The LDF receives all complaints seriously and views each complaint as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future. The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- Ensure all LDF team members know what to do if a complaint is received
- Ensure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- Ensure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired, and reconciliation explored
- Gather information which can allow the LDF to improve workplace practices

Scope
A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the LDF. Complaints may come from:

- People who are dissatisfied with the service that they have received from a member of staff, or clergy, employed by the LDF
- People who have concerns relating to policies concerning the LDF, or decisions taken by the directors

A complaint can be received by email or in writing. The LDF may not be able to investigate an anonymous complaint. Where a complaint is made verbally the complainant will be asked to follow up with a written complaint if it is to be considered under the formal process.

Depending on the nature of the complaint and the information provided, the LDF will investigate as far as possible.

To ensure a thorough investigation can be executed and an appropriate outcome is reached, we encourage all complainants to disclose their identity.

Receiving Complaints
Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be documented. The member of staff or volunteer who receives a complaint made over the phone or in person 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 LDF
- Direct the complainant to the LDF Complaints Policy
• Outline next steps pf the complaints process to the complainant
• Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant’s own words

Written complaints may be sent to the General Secretary, 36 Causton Street, London, SW1P 4AU, or by email to pa.generalsecretary@london.anglican.org. The complaint will then be triaged to the relevant senior leader to investigate and action as appropriate.

If the complaint is about the General Secretary, it may be sent to the Director of People, 36 Causton Street, London, SW1P 4AU, or by email to humanresources@london.anglican.org.

Informal Resolution

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible and appropriate. Most matters can and should be resolved informally and locally.

If, for example, a person is dissatisfied with the service provided by the LDF, then in the first instance the person should raise their complaint to the LDF contact most relevant to the matter of their dissatisfaction who should be willing to listen, to discuss the matter, and seek resolution where justified.

If a person remains unhappy, the member of staff will arrange for the concerns to be discussed with a more senior member of staff.

If, following the informal process, the complainant remains dissatisfied or the informal route is inappropriate, then the formal procedure should be followed.

Formal Resolution

Should, after all reasonable efforts have been made to informally resolve a complaint, the complainant feel the problem has not been satisfactorily remedied, they can escalate the complaint to the formal process.

At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the General Secretary who will triage to the relevant Director for investigation and ensure:

• The complaint is acknowledged within 10 working days, confirming who is dealing with the complaint, when the complainant should expect a reply and provide a copy of the LDF Complaints Policy
• The facts of the case are investigated, which may require appointment of an additional, independent, senior manager. 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
• If the complaint relates to a specific person, that person will be informed and given an opportunity to respond.
• The person who dealt with the original complaint is kept informed of what is happening where appropriate.
• Complainants 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, a reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and 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 individual staff member’s employment record.

In some instances, the LDF may take the position that the matter cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant. However, the aim should be to ensure the process respects those involved and highlights any opportunity for future improvement.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the LDF decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution. A log of the complaint will be kept.

**Delayed and Unreasonable Complaints**

Investigation of a complaints may be terminated for the following reasons:

• The complaint relates to an incident or event which occurred more than six months before the complaint is made (or, where the complaint relates to a series of incidents or events, if more than six months have elapsed from the date of the latest incident or complaint),
• The complaint is unreasonable, vexatious, frivolous, a repeat of a previously resolved complaint.

The complainant must be notified in writing of the termination of investigation within 10 working days of the complaint being received.

The person who received the complaint must arrange for this to be recorded in the complaints log.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the decision not to investigate the complaint, they may write to or email the General Secretary asking for the decision to be reviewed.

The General Secretary will be provided with all documentation relating to the complaint, including the letter notifying the decision not to investigate, and will review the decision made.
The General Secretary must write to the complainant and the decision-maker within 10 working days of receipt of the request for a review. If they conclude the complaint should be investigated, they must nominate a person to respond to the complaint, who should not be the person who decided not to investigate it.

Should the complainant continue to submit unreasonable complaints, the General Secretary must write to the complainant to explain their behaviour is unreasonable and ask them to cease the behaviour. For complainants who excessively contact the LDF, causing significant levels of disruption, specific methods of communication, including limitations on the number of future contacts, may be outlined. This will usually be reviewed after 6 months.

If a complaint involves the General Secretary, in the first instance it will be directed to the Director of People.

In response to any serious incident of aggression or violence, the concerns and actions taken will be put in writing immediately and the police informed.

**External Escalation**

The complainant feels their complaint has not been satisfactorily resolved, and the issues of concern pose a risk of significant harm to the beneficiaries, assets, or reputation of the Diocese of London or the London Diocesan Fund, it may be referred to the Charity Commission.

Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at: [www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx).

**Related Policy**

**Whistleblowing**

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work, e.g., an officer of the diocese or employee of the London Diocesan Fund breaking or proposing to break the law, acting dishonestly in any way, or otherwise seeking to cover up any wrongdoing.

Such matters should be reported to the General Secretary or the Director of HR and Safeguarding and will be dealt with under the Diocesan Whistleblowing Policy.

**Bullying and harassment**

Team members who believe that they have been discriminated against for any reason and feel that it amounts to bullying and harassment, should access the LDF Discrimination, Bullying and Harassment Policy. to bullying and harassment.

**Grievances**

Where an LDF employee is concerned about a breach of their own contract of employment, they should access the LDF Grievance Procedure.
Further information relating to the above LDF Policy can be located on the LDF Intranet.

**Variation of Policy**

The LDF reserves the right to vary the application of this policy. Reasons to vary may include a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the General Secretary should not also have the General Secretary as the person leading the formal process.

**Monitoring Complaints**

The General Secretaries Personal Assistant will ensure that a log is kept of all complaints received, the timescale of resolution, and the lessons learnt.

The number, nature, and outcome of complaints will be reported once a year to the Senior Staff so that any trends or further actions deemed necessary can be considered.

**Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion**

All matters relating to complaints must be handled in a manner that upholds the LDF Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion policy.

To ensure fair and safe practice is upheld, all complaints potentially relating to actual or perceived protected attributes must be escalated to the Human Resources Department for further support and guidance.

For further information, please refer to the LDF Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy located on the LDF Intranet.

**Data Protection**

When managing all matters relating to complaints, the LDF processes personal data collected in accordance with its data protection/processing special categories of personal data policies.

Data collected relating to complaints is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of managing the investigation.

Inappropriate access or disclosure of data constitutes a data breach and must be reported in accordance with the Dioceses’ data protection policy immediately. A data breach may warrant disciplinary action which will be managed in accordance with the LDF Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
Authority, Related Documents & Document Information

Related controlled documents
The London Diocesan Fund Code of Conduct
The London Diocesan Fund Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion
The London Diocesan Fund Discrimination Bullying and Harassment Policy
The London Diocesan Fund Whistleblowing Policy
The London Diocesan Fund Disciplinary Policy

Related legislation

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