

Complaints Procedure

Policy and Procedures

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1.0 Policy Statement

A complaint is defined as raising a concern about issues or breaches of Codes of Behaviour, excluding allegations or suspicions of abuse. Allegations or suspicions of abuse should always be dealt with in accordance with the Reporting procedure.

A complaint can be made about any action or inaction that it is claimed, does not accord with fair or sound practice, and adversely affects the person by whom or on whose behalf, the complaint is made.

At the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee we are committed to providing a high quality service to all in the Diocese of Killaloe. When something goes wrong in relation to how we respond, we need you to tell us about it. We will use this information, wherever possible, to help maintain and improve our service.

We encourage and welcome all comments and views, both positive and negative.

This policy is designed to establish a clear mechanism for the resolution of complaints which can be verbal, written, taped or E-mailed. Our comments / complaints policy is outlined below.

2.0 Purpose of Policy

Our Complaints Procedure aims to:

- Provide an efficient and thorough system through which complaints are effectively addressed.
- Facilitate the Office in providing the best possible service for its users and the local community.
- Provide a simple, speedy and accessible service that respects confidentiality.
- Be courteous and respectful.
- Address issues arising from complaints in a fair and honest manner within the timescales set out.
- Treat individuals and groups with openness, equality and inclusiveness.
- Keep people informed of progress and the final outcome of the issues raised.
- Be simple, easily accessible and easy to use.

In addition, where it becomes evident at an early stage that the nature of your complaint may give rise to future disciplinary action, these procedures will be set aside in favour of other established Disciplinary Procedures.

3.0 Scope of Policy

This policy is addressed to all members of the public or to anyone using our service. We are not able to deal with anonymous complaints and therefore these procedures do not provide for a resolution of anonymous complaints except for the referral of child protection concerns to the appropriate Child Protection Procedures and Guidelines.

4.0 Your rights as a person making a complaint

In dealing with your complaint we will ensure that you receive:

- Fair treatment.
- Courtesy.
- A timely response
- Accurate advice.
- Respect for your privacy – concerns will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility that we may have to consult with other appropriate Agencies about your complaint.
- Reasons for our decisions.

Where there are grounds to your complaint we will acknowledge this and address the issues you have raised. Similarly, we will ensure that you are clearly advised where we believe that there are no grounds to your complaint.

5.0 Your Responsibilities as a person making a complaint

In raising an issue we would expect that you:

- Raise issues in a timely manner.
- Treat our staff as professionals, in a non-threatening manner and with respect and courtesy.
- Provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issue you raise.
- Use these procedures fully and to engage in them at the appropriate levels.

In addition, we would expect that you have reasonable grounds for making a complaint and are not seeking to invoke these or other procedures as a means of dealing with issues that are more appropriately dealt with in other ways.

6.0 Making a Complaint

6.1 Stage 1 - Informal - Speaking with the Member of staff concerned

In the first instance a complaint or concern should normally be referred verbally to the member of staff/volunteer concerned, so that they may be allowed an opportunity to address the issue, as in many instances, these can arise through a simple misunderstanding.

This approach would not prevent you from choosing to enter the process at a later stage, if you believe that to be an appropriate course of action.

6.2 Stage 2 - Informal - Speaking with the Director of Safeguarding

If your complaint remains unresolved you should arrange a meeting with the Director to discuss the issue. You should let the Director know in advance the nature of your concerns so that Director can prepare for the meeting.

If you have concerns relating to the Director, you should arrange a meeting with the Director to discuss the issues as at Stage 1. In some circumstances the Director will not be able to deal effectively with your concerns immediately and will require some time over which to investigate and prepare a proper response. If further time is required you will be told of this.

6.3 Stage 3 – Formal - Writing to the Director of Safeguarding

Sometimes it will not be possible for you to have your complaint resolved at source through the informal routes proposed at Stages 1 and 2 or indeed it might be more appropriate to initiate the procedures at this stage. Your written complaint should be as concise as possible and address specifically the issue or issues that are of immediate concern to you.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received, and either;

- Provide a response to the issues you raised; **or**,
- Indicate that your concerns are being fully investigated and the timeframe - a maximum of 20 working days from the date on which your letter was received - against which you can expect a response to be issued.

6.4 Stage 4 – Formal - In writing to Sub-Committee of the Diocesan Safeguarding

If you still believe that your complaint has not been dealt with in a satisfactory manner, or in a case where you decide to raise an issue at this level, you may write to the Chairperson of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee. The Chairperson will be responsible for bringing your complaint to a Sub-Committee which will investigate and respond to your complaint. Your written complaint should be as concise as possible and address specifically the issue or issues that are of immediate concern to you.

However, where it is evident that the nature of your complaint may give rise to future disciplinary action, these procedures will be set aside in favour of other established Disciplinary Procedures which may subsequently involve Committee members at another level.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within 10 working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received, **and**

- Provide a response to the issues you raised; **or**
- Indicate that your concerns are being fully investigated and the timeframe - a maximum of twenty five working days from the date on which your written complaint was received – against which you can expect a response to be issued; **or**
- Indicate a date, time and place for you to attend a meeting at which your concerns will be fully discussed. You should expect a written response within a further ten working days.

6.5 Appeals Process – Full Safeguarding Committee

Finally, if you still believe that your complaint has not been addressed you may write to the Chairperson of the Diocesan Safeguarding Committee requesting that you be allowed to meet with the full Safeguarding Committee to appeal the outcomes. The Chairperson will be responsible for ensuring that you are invited to the next suitable scheduled meeting of the Committee where your appeal will be heard. Your written request should be as concise as possible and set out specifically the grounds for your appeal.

You will receive a written acknowledgement of your letter within ten working days. This will confirm that your letter has been received and provide you with a date and time of the meeting

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 at which you will have an opportunity to discuss your concerns. Since this process is consultative in nature and not adversarial, a complainant will not have the right to be accompanied or represented by any other person, unless it is deemed appropriate by the

Safeguarding Committee. Legal representation is not permitted. This meeting will normally take place within 30 working days of your Appeal request having been received.

Following this meeting, and within 10 working days of that meeting, you should expect a final written response. This will indicate the Committees’ findings, their recommendations and the reasons supporting their decisions. The decision of the Committee would be final.

7.0 Record Keeping

The Director shall maintain a record of all correspondence, conversations and meetings concerning your complaint. These records shall be held confidentially in the Safeguarding Office. All such records will be destroyed five years after the date of the last correspondence on the issue.

If you do not respond within a reasonable time to the outcome of an investigation into your comment/ complaint we will assume that you are satisfied and do not require us to take further action.

This procedure does not provide a role for any other statutory or non-statutory body.

8.0 Contact Details

Position	Name	Tel. No.	E-mail
<i>Director of Safeguarding</i>	<i>Ms Cleo Yates</i>	<i>086 8096027</i>	<i>c.yates@killaloedioceses.ie</i>
<i>Designated Liaison Person</i>	<i>Ms Cleo Yates</i>	<i>086 8096027</i>	<i>c.yates@killaloedioceses.ie</i>
<i>Designated Liaison Person</i>	<i>Fr Pat Malone</i>	<i>086 8572023</i>	<i>fr.pat.malone@gmail.com</i>
<i>Chairperson of Safeguarding Committee</i>	<i>Mr Pat Grace</i>	<i>087 9036802</i>	
<i>Diocesan Office Westbourne Ennis Co. Clare</i>	<i>T: +353 65 682 8638 F: +353 65 684 2538</i>		<i>office@killaloediocese.ie</i>

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FLOW CHART

Stage	Actions	
Informal Stage 1 Comment / Complaint made to appropriate member of staff (verbally)	→	Discuss the issues Implement any agreements No further action
↓		
Informal Stage 2 Comment / Complaint made to Director (verbally)	→	Schedule meeting Discuss issues Implement any agreements No further action
↓		
Formal Stage 3 Formal written comments / complaints to the Director	→	Acknowledge receipt (within 10 working days) Investigate the complaint Implement any agreements Confirm outcomes in writing (within 20 working days) No further action
↓		
Formal Stage 4 Formal written comments / complaints made to the Chairperson of the Safeguarding Committee and referred to sub-committee	→	Acknowledge receipt (within 10 working days) Investigate the issues / meet with complainant Implement any agreements / changes Confirm outcomes in writing (within 25 working days) No further action
↓		
Appeals Process Written request to have case heard by full Safeguarding Committee	→	Acknowledge receipt (within 10 working days) Meet with complainant (within 30 working days) Consider issues Implement any agreements / changes Confirm outcomes in writing (by the 40th. working day)