

Parish Safeguarding Complaints Procedure

What are safeguarding complaints?

A complaint can be made, verbally or in writing, when someone feels the safeguarding policies and procedures of the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Laurence Church, Northfield have not been followed correctly or they have been implemented unfairly. Disagreement with the professional decisions taken by those appointed by the PCC is NOT by itself grounds for a complaint.

If someone who is employed by the PCC as a volunteer or paid worker wishes to make a complaint against the way the PCC's safeguarding policies and procedures have been followed they should follow the PCC's grievance procedure, rather than this complaints procedure.

This complaints procedure MUST NOT be used when someone is being harmed:

when there is a concern or an allegation that a child or adult who may be vulnerable has been harmed or is being harmed or is at risk of harm
and/or

when there is a concern or an allegation that an adult or a child may have caused harm to another child or adult who may be vulnerable

this must be reported in accordance with the parish's safeguarding policy and procedures. Report abuse to your Parish Safeguarding Co-ordinator or the Bishop's Safeguarding Adviser, (online at <https://www.cofebirmingham.com/safeguarding/> or telephone 07342 993 844) or in an emergency the police on 101 or 999.

Complaints against ministers

This complaints procedure cannot be used for complaints against ministers. A complaint against a member of clergy should be addressed to the archdeacon or the Bishop of Birmingham. A complaint against a Reader or Lay Minister must initially be addressed to the incumbent.

Managing complaints

Complaints will be dealt with by the church wardens who will:

- respond promptly to the person raising the matter,
- listen carefully to the issues of concern,
- impartially examine the issues to ensure fairness to all,
- rigorously explore ways the issues can be resolved,
- accurately and sensitively feed back to the person who raised the issues.

A person who wishes to make a complaint should...

Firstly...

... talk to the person or group concerned, whenever possible, explaining what the issues are and what they would like to see happen to resolve them. This should be done at the earliest opportunity.

Then....

... if the complaint can't be resolved through discussion with the person or group concerned, they should speak or write to a church warden. This must be done within a reasonable period of time of the issue arising.

The church warden will have a conversation with the person and listen to their concerns and what they would like to happen to resolve the issue.

The church warden will then speak to the person or group the complaint is about, (and anyone else who may have information to help them consider the complaint), and listen to their response.

Within a reasonable period of time, after considering all the information, the church warden will make a decision and inform both the person who has made the complaint and the person or group against whom the complaint has been made.

If this decision does not resolve the issue

... within a reasonable period of time, the person bringing the complaint can ask for their concerns to be reviewed by another church warden (who has not been involved with the process so far) together with two other PCC members.

The church warden and two PCC members will consider all the information gathered so far. They may also have conversations with any of the persons involved in the complaint, and any other person who may have information relevant to the concerns, where this would assist them in reaching a decision.

Within a reasonable period of time, after considering all the information, the church warden and two PCC members will make a decision and inform the person who has made the complaint and the person or group against whom the complaint has been made. Their decision will be final.

External

If, despite all stages of this procedure having been followed, the person making the complaint remains dissatisfied, they may choose to escalate their concerns to an archdeacon or an independent or statutory agency, as appropriate.

If the complaint refers to a breach of the PCCs responsibilities as Charity Trustees, they may refer their concerns to the Charity Commission.

If they believe that the PCC or any of the paid or voluntary workers they have appointed has committed a criminal offence they should report this to the police.

Agreed by Parochial Church Council 14th June 2023