



COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

I have a complaint – what can I do?

While we hope you will never have to cause to complain, sadly, sometimes things do go wrong. The Diocese of Southwark views complaints as an opportunity to put things right, learn and to make improvements for the future.

Children or vulnerable adults

If your concern relates to or includes a concern that a child, or an adult who may be vulnerable, has been harmed or is at risk of harm, you must use our safeguarding procedures.

Safeguarding procedures

You will find our policies and procedures on our website link and should contact our local Safeguarding Officeror Diocese Safeguarding lead.....as soon as possible.

If your concern is not a safeguarding one, please keep reading.

What you should do and who you should contact, will depend upon the circumstances of your concern and who or what you want to complain about, we have provided a fair procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint. We will treat all complaints with utmost confidentiality, and we will,

- be open about how we will deal with complaints
- make sure that all complaints are responded to in a fair and timely manner
- treat information sensitively, telling only those who need to know
- resolve complaints wherever possible as near to the point of delivery as possible, and repair relationships
- review and learn from cases, so that we improve what we do

What is a complaint?

For the purpose of this policy and related procedures, a complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the conduct or behaviour of the clergy, lay ministers, church officers, Diocesan Support Services staff or other employees of the St Mary Newington Church of England.

The aim should be to resolve complaints or grievances where possible (excepting those related to the harm or abuse of children and vulnerable adults where the formal safeguarding procedures must be used) informally, locally, speedily and fairly by discussion, problem solving, mediation and negotiation.

Problems should therefore be brought directly to the person(s) deemed responsible for the area of dissatisfaction or disquiet, and will hopefully be resolved in this way.

If, however, after this problem-solving stage, resolution has not been reached, more formal action may be needed.

Where can complaints come from?

Complaints may come from any person or organisation which has a legitimate interest in the conduct of the person whose conduct is being complained about. Complaints are best made in writing.

Who or what do you want to complain about?

1. Complaints about Clergy or other Licensed Ministers

2. Problems with churchyards or monuments

3. Disagreements within the church or congregation about church life/worship

or Complaints about church officers, contracts or lettings

Contact details for officers is on our church website and our notice board in church.

Parish Churches within the Church of England are run as independent charities by the Vicar (or Rector, or Priest in Charge) and the PCC. As legal entities in their own right, they are independent of the Diocese, although the Bishop and Archdeacon oversee ministries, and aim to work in close partnership with the clergy and churchwardens.

Any concerns about the running of a church or its activities (worship, lettings, buildings, gardens, PCC contracts etc.) should therefore be addressed to the Vicar or PCC in the first instance. If further help is required, the Churchwardens or Archdeacon may then be able to assist.

Please note that

High standards of integrity and service are expected of our all our clergy and ministers, but sometimes they can fall short of what is expected.

In most cases it is best to share any disappointment with the member of clergy or other minister concerned, and to try and resolve it together.

If that proves insufficient, you may then wish to bring your concern:

- about clergy, to the attention of the Archdeacons.
- about a non-ordained/licensed lay minister, to their Vicar, or the Wardens.

Our procedure

Stage 1 - we will endeavour to resolve the complaint informally if this is what you wish.

Stage 2 – If you want to make an official complaint against a non-ordained/licensed lay minister, any concerns about the running of a church or its activities (worship, lettings, buildings, gardens, PCC contracts etc.), you can formally complete our complaint form which you can obtain from the office, the Vicar or his/her assigned officer will lead on this complaint outside of Safeguarding and will endeavour to respond to all complaints received within seven (7) days.

Stage 3 – Complaint against a clergy or licensed lay minister, you can complete a complaint form, which can be obtained from the Office or from the Church of England Website. If you are complaining about the Clergy, the complaint is made formally to the bishop, and then considered by his or her legal advisor, the Diocesan Registrar. If the content of your complaint is serious it may amount to misconduct warranting formal disciplinary action.

Anonymous complaints cannot be made. To make a complaint you must have a 'proper interest' and the concern itself must have 'sufficient substance'.