TWO SAMPLE COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR VOLUNTEERS

**SAMPLE ONE**

**Introduction and purpose of the policy**

The Charity Commission report ‘Cause for Complaint’ published in 2006 states: ‘an effective complaints management system is a proven way of maintaining and building relationships with the people on whom the charity depends.’ Handling complaints well:

* Demonstrates your commitment to your volunteers and other stakeholders.
* Demonstrates your commitment to providing the best possible service.
* Helps you to find out about things that have gone wrong so you can fix them.
* Helps you to prevent things going wrong again in future.

A complaint can be seen as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint. See Appendix 2 for the definition of a complaint.

The aim of this policy is:

* To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
* To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint.
* To make sure everyone knows what to do if a complaint is received.
* To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
* To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired.
* To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

Cathedrals have an ethos of inclusion, transparency and openness which is communicated to volunteers, staff and Chapter. All complaints are taken seriously and dealt with in a fair, consistent and confidential manner.

The complaints procedure is communicated to staff and volunteers during induction and through the Safeguarding Policy. If required one-to-one explanations can be provided.

**Where Complaints Come From**

Complaints may come from anyone who uses or visits the Cathedral including staff, other volunteers, members of the congregation, tourists and visitors, donors, event attendees; indeed any person or organisation who has had some form of interaction with Durham Cathedral. A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

**Confidentiality**

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, involving only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

**Responsibility**

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Volunteers Manager who may, if necessary, also involve any other relevant members of staff and Chapter.

**How to make a complaint**

Complaints must be made in writing and sent to the Volunteers Manager.

**Receiving Complaints**

All written complaints received should be recorded. Where a verbal complaint is received, this should, where possible, be agreed to be an accurate account in writing with the complainant before further action is taken.

The person who receives a complaint should:

* Write down the facts of the complaint, which should include the date, time, location and nature of the complaint as well as the name and details of anyone else involved in the complaint.
* Take the complainant's name and contact details including email address, home address and telephone number.
* Ask what action *they* think should be taken to encourage resolution.
* Note down the relationship of the complainant to the Cathedral.
* Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure.
* Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it is likely to take.

**Resolving Complaints - The Procedure**

**Stage One**

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.

Whether or not the complaint has been resolved, the complaint information should be passed to the Volunteers Manager within 72 hours so that it can be logged centrally.

On receiving the complaint, the Volunteers Manager records it in the complaints book and, If it has not already been resolved, the Volunteers Manager may investigate or delegate an appropriate person to investigate further. Where applicable, the volunteer(s) involved in the complaint will be given a copy of the Problem Solving Policy and Procedures for Volunteers.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed of the nature of the complaint and given a fair opportunity to respond. Discretion should be exercised in releasing details of the complainant as necessary.

Complaints should be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within one week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. 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 justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe any investigation, conclusions and any action taken as a result.

**Stage Two**

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed.

The request for a review should be acknowledged within one week of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply. The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

Depending on the severity or complexity of the complaint, an Appeals Committee may be convened to investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so. This may involve reviewing the nature and findings of the initial investigations of the case and speaking with the person who dealt with the complaint at Stage One.

Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed or the Appeals Committee do not meet within this timeframe, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, conclusions from the investigation and any action taken as a result.

The decision taken at this stage is final, unless the Appeals Committee decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance to obtain a solution.

**External Stage**

If the complainant wishes they may contact the Charity Commission:

* 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).

**Variation of the Complaints Procedure**

The Volunteers Manager may vary the procedure for good any reasonable reason; for instance to avoid a conflict of interest.

**Monitoring and Learning from Complaints**

Complaints should be reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

**Appendix 1 Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints**

* Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation.
* Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to ‘let off steam’.
* Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry.
* Show an interest in what is being said but refrain from personal opinion / agreement / disagreement.
* Ask for clarification wherever necessary.
* Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down.
* Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation, e.g. "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you".
* If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise.
* Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue.
* Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
* Do not promise things you or the organisation cannot deliver.
* Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met.
* Make sure that the person understands what they have been told.
* If appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal.

**Appendix 2 Definitions**

**Definition of a Complaint for the purposes of this volunteer policy**

A *complaint* is any expression of dissatisfaction, about any aspect of the Cathedral and which includes at least one volunteer or an aspect of volunteering, made by a person outside the Cathedral about the behaviour of the organisation, or an individual staff member or volunteer within it.

An expression of dissatisfaction made by a staff member or volunteer about the behaviour of the organisation, or an individual staff member or volunteer, is called a *grievance*. A grievance is an issue, complaint, dispute, concern or problem, which does not involve alleged serious misconduct. This is the focus of the **Grievance Policy and Procedures for Volunteers**.

Allegations of *serious misconduct* or *behaviour* and *performance* related issues should be resolved by reference to the Volunteers Manager or a member of Chapter.

Where a staff member or volunteer has serious concerns about the illegal or abusive conduct of the organisation or an individual staff member or volunteer within it, but is unable to use the grievance procedure because the person they should report to is implicated in the malpractice, then they have recourse to the **Whistleblowing** **Policy**.

SAMPLE TWO

1. INTRODUCTION

The Cathedral aims to foster an environment, which is a caring, supporting community in accord with our Christian principles. We value the contribution that volunteers make to the work of the Cathedral and seek to provide appropriate opportunities for volunteers to develop their role and have access to appropriate training. As valued members of our community, we believe that all of our volunteers should be treated with respect at all times.

This procedure will be followed in cases where a volunteer has issues and concerns about any aspect of their volunteering experience.

1. PROCEDURE

Informal Resolution

If you have any concerns, you should first talk to your staff key contact in an attempt to resolve the matter. Your staff key contact will explain how to deal with your concerns, which may include investigating the matter, and when you can expect a response. When your Supervisor has had the opportunity to consider fully your concerns you will be provided with a written response.

Formal Meeting

If you are not satisfied with the response to your concerns, you may request a meeting with your Head of Department. At this meeting, your Head of Department and your staff key contact will give you another opportunity to explain your concerns and why you were not satisfied with the response you were given. Your Head of Department will review the matter and explain to you any further action the Cathedral may take to attempt to resolve the matter. This will also be confirmed to you in writing.

Review

If you remain dissatisfied at the conclusion of the formal stage, you can request a meeting with either the Canon Steward or Cathedral Administrator. At this meeting your concerns will be listened to and the action taken by your head of department will be reviewed. A member of the Human Resources Department may be asked to attend the meeting. The decision made by the Canon Steward or Receiver Cathedral Administrator will be final.

Exceptions to this Procedure

The Dean and Chapter acknowledge that all circumstances will be individual and different and reserves the right to vary this procedure if the need arises.

If your Head of Department is your Supervisor, then he/she will ask another Head of Department to conduct the formal stage of the procedure.

*If you have any questions about the operation of this procedure please consult a member of the Human Resources Department, which is located in the Chapter Office.*