



The Parish of Yate

The Diocese of Bristol

*St. James' Church, Westerleigh,
St. Mary's Church, Church Road, Yate
St. Nicholas' Church, Abbotswood, Yate
St. Peter's Church, Wapley*

COMPLAINTS POLICY

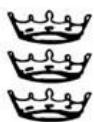
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Contents

1. Background	3
2. Definitions	3
3. Our Aim	3
4. Purpose	4
5. Monitoring and Reporting	4
6. Confidentiality	4



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The Parish of Yate



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

Complaints Handling Policy

1. Background

The PCC of the Parish of Yate is committed to providing an excellent service to the members of each of its churches, to the public who use its services and to other stakeholders, working in an open and accountable way that builds trust and respect. We have developed a Complaints Policy and Procedure that explains our approach to receiving complaints. We aspire to developing a culture which encourages dialogue and good communication where peoples comments and suggestions are heard without the need to escalate the issue into a formal complaint.

2. Definitions

- i. The Parish – refers to the Parish of Yate which incorporates St. Mary's Church, Yate, St. Nicholas' Church, Abbotswood, St. Peter's Church, Wapley and St James' Church, Westerleigh.
- ii. PCC – refers to the Parochial Church Council of the Parish of Yate, which acts as the Trustee body for the parish and therefore carries the legal responsibility for its activities
- iii. Complaint - A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction with the PCC, an individual Trustee, or member of staff or with the services we provide, whether justified or not, that:
 - the complainant identifies as a complaint under this policy and
 - which requires a formal response
- iv. Children - refers to any person under the age of 18 years
- v. Staff - refers to all those employed the Parish of Yate PCC or by the Diocese of Bristol and assigned to the Parish of Yate, other than external contractors engaged on a contract for the provision of services

3. Our Aim

The PCC aims to resolve complaints quickly, fairly and effectively. One of the ways in which we can continue to improve the services that we provide is by listening and responding to the views of our members, partners and stakeholders and in particular responding positively to complaints, and by putting mistakes right.

We aim to ensure that:

- making a complaint is as easy as possible;
- we treat a complaint as a clear expression of dissatisfaction with our service which calls for an immediate response;

- we deal with it promptly, politely and when appropriate confidentially;
- we respond in the correct way – for example, with an explanation, or an apology or information on any action taken;
- we learn from complaints and use them to improve the services that we offer;
- we review annually our complaints policy and procedures.

The PCC recognises that many concerns raised will be informal, and we aim to deal with these quickly. In the first instance we would expect any complaint to be raised directly with the PCC member, Ministry Team member, volunteer or staff member concerned. But if concerns cannot be satisfactorily resolved informally, then the formal complaints procedure should be followed.

4. Purpose

The PCC 's complaints procedure is intended to ensure that all complaints are handled fairly and consistently, and wherever possible resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

The PCC's responsibility is to:

- acknowledge the formal complaint in writing;
- respond within a stated period of time;
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint;
- take appropriate action if required.

The complainant's responsibility is to:

- raise their concerns promptly and directly with the person concerned and if their concerns cannot be resolved satisfactorily informally, then to follow the formal complaints procedure as detailed;
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible, including any action taken to date;
- allow the PCC a reasonable amount of time to deal with the matter as detailed in the formal complaints procedure;
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond the PCC's control.

5. Monitoring and Reporting

The PCC will receive regularly an anonymized report of complaints made and their resolution.

6. Confidentiality

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both the complainant and the PCC maintain confidentiality. However, the circumstances giving rise to the complaint may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality. Should this be the case, the situation will be explained to the complainant.

Appendix 1

Principles of the Complaints Policy

- The PCC's Complaints policy is based on the principle of a three-stage process (as detailed in the Complaints Procedure in Appendix 3).
- The Complaints Policy will apply to all the services that the PCC provides.
- If at any time during the investigation of a complaint matters arise that warrant investigation under disciplinary proceedings, or through a criminal investigation, the complaints procedure will be suspended until those investigations are concluded. Similarly, the complaints procedure should be suspended if a complainant is actively seeking legal redress.
- Where a complaint is against a member of staff they should be informed of the support services available to them.
- The PCC should be informed of the receipt of a Stage 1 formal complaint. A complete record of the entire process should be kept. A copy of all reports, transcripts of interviews and other relevant information should be forwarded to the Trustees for immediate review.
- The PCC may, at any stage of the formal complaints procedure, review a complaint and give a decision, without a formal investigation, where the members of the PCC acting together deem the complaint to be deliberately repetitive or vexatious. Examples of such complaints are unsubstantiated or repetitive complaints against an individual or service, or where a complaint has previously been investigated and appropriate action taken.
- When appealing against a previous decision, the complainant will be asked to state why they are dissatisfied with how their complaint was handled.

Appendix 2

Commitments by the PCC

Every complaint will be:

- dealt with as quickly as possible
- handled fairly and politely; and
- investigated fully

We wish to be as flexible as possible in receiving complaints. Complaints can be received:

- by letter
- by phone
- in person
- by email

Appendix 3

Complaints Procedure

Our complaints procedure has three stages:

STAGE 1: First Informal Complaint

A complainant should, in the first instance, make their concerns known to the person against whom they have the grievance or the person under whose control the issue lies. S/he will try to resolve the matter immediately and informally, but if this is not possible the complainant will be asked if they wish to make a formal complaint.

STAGE 2: Formal Complaint

If the complainant wishes to proceed, they will need to put their complaint in writing addressed to the Rector as Chair of the PCC. The complaint will be acknowledged in writing or by phone within 7 working days and we will aim to resolve the complaint within 10 working days. If this target of 10 days cannot be met, the complainant will be informed of the delay, the reason for the delay, and the new target for responding. If the complaint involves the Rector, the complaint may be addressed to the Vice-Chair of the PCC

STAGE 3: Complaint has been investigated, but complainant is still not satisfied

At this stage the complaint will be dealt with by the PCC acting together. They will appoint an independent trustee to carry out an investigation on their behalf and provide a response within 28 working days. Their findings will be presented to the trustee committee and their response will be final.