



DIOCESE of OXFORD

A Christ-like Church for the sake of God's world

'I have a complaint about an employee of Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance (ODBF) or Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE) – what can I do?'

We expect a high standard of integrity and service from all our employees. Mostly that standard is met, but occasionally individual employees fall short of what is expected of them. When this happens, there are different ways to respond.

We would like to reassure you that ODBF/ ODBE takes all legitimate complaints seriously and seeks to deal with all complaints promptly, fairly and effectively to resolve any issues and, where possible, prevent such issues from reoccurring. Wherever possible, we will endeavour to resolve issues informally, either through a telephone conversation or through a face-to-face conversation without recourse to a formal procedure.

Individuals who wish to raise a complaint against the ODBF/ ODBE and its employees should use this procedure. This might include members of our congregations, PCC members, applicants for jobs, visitors, agency workers or contractors, external organisations working in partnership with us, or members of the public.

This procedure should not be used by ODBF/ ODBE employees, or by or against members of the Bishop's Council or Synod (for ODBF); Executive Committee or The Board (for ODBE). Instead, the following routes should be followed:

- Employee complaints should be raised with the line manager informally in the first instance and, if a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached, the individual employee will have recourse to the Grievance Procedure. A copy can be found in the relevant Staff Handbook within MS Teams > HR > Staff Handbooks.
- Complaints made by or against members of the Bishop's Council or Synod should be reported directly to the Clerk to the Board (the Governance Officer), whose details can be [found here](#).
- Complaints made against a member of the clergy in the Diocese should be raised in line with the Clergy 'Handling Complaints' procedure which can be [found here](#).

How to complain

Stage 1

We suggest that you firstly discuss your concern/s with the person. We usually try to respond to oral complaints informally, either by telephone or a face-to-face conversation.

If you think you would want to complain in writing, a complaint may be sent to complaints@oxford.anglican.org or posted to: FAO: Complaints Manager, Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance, Church House Oxford, Langford Locks, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 1GF.

It will help us to deal quickly and fully with your complaint if you can state that you are making a complaint and set out your concern in writing as clearly as possible including any dates, witnesses and evidence.

We will send an acknowledgement of your complaint. Our aim is to do this within five working days. Your complaint will then normally be passed to an appropriate person who is in a position to consider it in the light of relevant experience. For example, if your complaint is about a member of staff the matter will normally be raised with the relevant Head of Department.

We will endeavour to resolve your complaint as promptly as we can, but if it gives rise to serious issues we may need to take time in order to investigate it properly. We will aim to respond as soon as possible, normally within one calendar month. If we cannot provide a final response within that time, we will contact you to provide an update, an explanation of the delay, and an indication of when a final response can be expected.

If appropriate, we will seek to resolve complaints informally in the first instance. If it is not possible to resolve the matter informally, or informal action is not appropriate in the circumstances, we will consider whether to refer the complaint to a formal internal procedure e.g. the Disciplinary Procedure, Recruitment and Selection Policy, Safeguarding Policy, etc.

If, following an initial assessment of the relevant facts, a decision is taken to refer the matter to another procedure; you will be advised of this as part of our response to your complaint. If your complaint is about a member of staff, we may not be able to inform you of any subsequent action taken because we will owe a duty of confidentiality to that individual. For example, we may as part of our response to your complaint inform you that we have decided to consider the complaint under the disciplinary (or other) procedure, but you will not be entitled to know the outcome of those proceedings.

Stage 2

We expect most complaints to be resolved at stage one. However, if you consider that the response you have received is not fair and appropriate, you may request a review of your complaint by a more senior person. You should do this within 10 working days of receiving a stage one response. We will aim to respond as soon as possible, and normally within one calendar month. If we cannot provide a final response within that time, we will contact you to provide an update and an indication of when a final response can be expected.

Confidentiality and anonymity

If you want to raise your concern confidentially, we will make every effort to keep your identity secret and only reveal it where necessary to those involved in investigating your

concern. If it is necessary for anyone investigating your concern to know your identity, we will discuss this with you. However, if your complaint concerns an individual e.g. an ODBF/ ODBE employee, it will be necessary for them to know who has made the complaint and the names of any witnesses, unless there are compelling reasons why you or any witnesses wish to conceal your identity.

We do not encourage anonymous complaints. Proper investigation may be more difficult or impossible if we cannot obtain further information from you. It is also more difficult to establish whether the complaint is credible. We hope that individuals will feel able to voice concerns openly under this policy.

Time limit for making a complaint

If you would like to make a complaint, you should do this as quickly as possible. Usually, we would consider complaints that are made within 12 months of the event. Only, if there are good reasons why you could not complain sooner, then we will do our best to look into your complaint if we think it is possible to properly investigate.

Malicious or vexatious complaints

We are under no obligation to respond to complaints which have an improper purpose or effect, such as harassment of staff, or to repeated submissions of a complaint to which a final response has been provided as described in this procedure. Before refusing to correspond further in respect of a complaint considered to be vexatious, we will give due warning to the complainant.

If it is proven that a complaint has been made against an employee of the Board maliciously or in bad faith, we may take any action we consider to be appropriate. Support /counselling will also be offered to the employee.

Records and monitoring

All complaints received will be recorded for monitoring purposes and so that we can review the outcomes of cases to check that the proper procedures have been followed, to identify any points that can be learned from those cases and implement any necessary changes to prevent a reoccurrence.

A copy of all correspondence and other documents will be retained in accordance with the applicable internal procedure and in compliance with our data protection policies and practices.

Please be assured that your complaint will be taken seriously and that we will keep you informed about what is happening.

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