# Portsmouth Diocesan Board of Finance Complaints Policy and Procedure

As the Portsmouth Diocesan Board of Finance (PDBF) we are committed to the continuous improvement of our work and to listening to the views of those we work alongside in our parishes and schools. Enabling individuals to make complaints or voice concerns when necessary is part of this listening and learning process and will enable us to continuously improve.

It is our desire and intention that any matters causing concern for our partners or giving rise to complaint, are dealt with promptly and amicably. It is also preferable for any such issues to be dealt with informally through conversation but in cases where this is not possible, then this policy and procedure sets out how we expect complaints to be handled.

A complaint can be made known to us in writing or via email to the appropriate person specified below. We are unable to investigate anonymous complaints.

## Definitions

**Complainant:** Anyone who has a reasonable interest in making a complaint against a PDBF employee. (This could include a member of clergy, parish volunteers, teachers or governors in one of our church schools, colleagues in other Dioceses or in organisations with whom PDBF employees work alongside).

**Complaint:** A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction where it is clearly stated that a complaint is being made.

**Respondent:** The employee of the PDBF to whom the complaint relates.

**Informal Complaint:** Complaints that are resolved with the Respondent either directly or indirectly without the need for a formal investigation.

**Informal Resolution**: An early resolution which might include (not an exhaustive list):-

* An apology from the Respondent;
* An agreed timeframe for the completion of a piece of work, where the complaint relates to a delay;
* An explanation of why advice was given for a particular course of action or agreeing an alternative course of action if deemed appropriate by the Diocesan Secretary.

**Formal Complaint:**

* Where it has not been possible to resolve the matter informally;
* A complaint of a serious nature including but not limited to significant failures of duty, allegations of bullying, discrimination or harassment.

**Investigating Officer:** A person appointed by the Diocesan Secretary to investigate formal complaints. Who the Investigating Officer is, will depend on the position of the Respondent:-

* The relevant Head of Department will be appointed where the complaint relates to a member of their team;
* A member of Bishop’s Council as the PDBF where the complaint relates to a Head of Department;
* Where the complaint relates to the Diocesan Secretary the Bishop of Portsmouth will decide whether to act as Investigating Officer or to appoint a member of Bishop’s Council (or another appropriate person), as the PDBF to act in that capacity on behalf of the Bishop.

## Policy

In the event of dissatisfaction with the work of a PDBF employee, where the employee is made aware of this, they should firstly attempt to resolve the dissatisfaction informally and where this is unsuccessful, they should ensure that the Complainant is directed to this policy so they know how to complain and to whom. The employee should also make their manager aware of the complaint.

This policy applies to complaints against:-

* Any lay employee of the PDBF;
* Any member of clergy who is employed by the Diocesan Board of Finance where the complaint relates to work undertaken in the furtherance of that duty.

This policy does NOT apply to complaints against:

* Any member of clergy in authorised or licensed parish ministry. Where you have concerns in these circumstances then you should make them known through the office of the Bishop of Portsmouth.

Complaints should be addressed to:-

* The Diocesan Secretary where the complaint relates to a PDBF employee.
* The Bishop of Portsmouth where the complaint relates to any member of clergy in authorised or licensed parish ministry.
* The Bishop of Portsmouth where the complaint relates to the Diocesan Secretary.

If a Complainant requires assistance in determining whether the complaint should be handled under this policy or through the office of the Bishop of Portsmouth, guidance should be sought from the Diocesan Secretary in the first instance.

## Procedure

1. Except in exceptional circumstances, all complaints must be submitted in writing by the Complainant within 2 months of the issue arising and addressed to the Diocesan Secretary or the Bishop of Portsmouth, as outlined above.

2. On receipt of the complaint, the Diocesan Secretary (or where appropriate the Bishop of Portsmouth) will determine whether the complaint is an informal complaint or a formal complaint.

3. If the complaint refers to any alleged criminal activity it will be referred to the relevant statutory authority and will be treated as a formal complaint.

### Informal Complaint

4. The Diocesan Secretary (or the Bishop of Portsmouth where appropriate) will, where possible, contact the Complainant within **5 working days** of receipt of the complaint and discuss possible informal resolution(s) with the Complainant and the Respondent. This could involve a face-to-face meeting with the Complainant and the Respondent, chaired by the Diocesan Secretary (or the Bishop of Portsmouth where appropriate) in the first instance.

5. Once an informal resolution is agreed, this will be confirmed in writing by the Diocesan Secretary (or the Bishop of Portsmouth where appropriate) within **7 working days** of the informal resolution being reached.

### Formal Complaint

6. If a complaint was not resolved informally and was therefore deemed to be a formal complaint, it shall be handled as follows:-

a. An Investigating Officer will be appointed as defined above.

b. Formal complaints will normally be acknowledged within **10 working days** of receipt.

c. Where possible, a response will normally be provided within **28 days.**

d.If this timescale cannot be met for any reason, the Complainant shall be informed of the revised timetable.

7. During the investigation of a formal complaint:

a. The Complainant has the right to be accompanied by an appropriate person at all formal meetings during the process;

b. The Respondent will be kept informed of the progress of an investigation;

c. The Respondent shall have the right to be accompanied by a colleague at all stages of the investigation;

d. No parties shall be entitled to legal representation under this procedure;

e. Care must be taken to ensure compliance with current Data Protection legislation, for any information submitted or reviewed by the Investigating Officer;

8. Once the investigation has been concluded, a report shall be submitted to the Diocesan Secretary for a decision and the outcome will be confirmed in writing by the Diocesan Secretary (or Bishop of Portsmouth where appropriate) to the Respondent and the Complainant.

9. It will not be permitted to make a complaint about the Diocesan Secretary on the basis of the decision as outlined in section 8 above.

10. In the event of a formal complaint against an employee being upheld, the disciplinary procedure may be applied as appropriate.

## Appeals

11. Where a Complainant responds within 10 working days from the date of the outcome letter then they shall have a right of appeal where they believe the decision was unfair or unjust, or where they do not believe that a thorough investigation was carried out.

12. The Investigating Officer hearing the appeal will review the report and where necessary, conduct further investigations and speak with the Complainant and the Respondent prior to a decision being made.

13. There will be no further right of appeal.

September 2019