

# When Things Go Wrong: Safeguarding complaints policy and procedure



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

We are committed to doing all that we reasonably can to promote and maintain a safer Church by following safer practices and embedding an open and transparent culture within our diocese. Safeguarding is everybody's business, and we work alongside our parishes to ensure that safer recruitment practices are in place and everyone is aware of their responsibilities. We offer regular training for church officers, area meetings with Parish Safeguarding Officers and a wide range of awareness-raising, monitoring and peer learning activities.

We are committed to responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation, ensuring that the needs of the victims and survivors of abuse are at the core of our response. Those who are the subject of safeguarding concerns are treated with dignity and respect. Providing pastoral care and support and communicating regularly with all involved is a crucial component of our approach. A detailed risk assessment process is in place for those who may pose a present risk to others.

Things can go wrong, despite our best efforts. This leaflet sets out the process to follow if you are not satisfied with the service you have received. Please note that the complaints procedure only relates to the service you have received; it is not the route for raising a safeguarding concern or allegation.

In the event of a new safeguarding concern or allegation, please report this to your vicar, Area Dean, Archdeacon, Bishop, Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) or another appropriate person. They will refer your concern/s to the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA) within 24 hours, in line with the House of Bishops' Practice Guidance. The back page of this leaflet includes contact details.

We are keen to resolve all concerns that are raised with us quickly and effectively.

To find out more about national legislation and all Church of England Safeguarding Practice Guidance, visit [churchofengland.org/safeguarding](https://churchofengland.org/safeguarding)



Poli Shajko, Director of  
HR and Safeguarding



Mark Humphriss,  
Diocesan Secretary

# COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

If all reasonable efforts have been made to solve your concern swiftly and informally but you have been unable to find a resolution, the following process should be used.

## Stage 1

In the first instance, a complaint about the handling of a safeguarding matter should be made to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (DSA).

If your complaint concerns the actions of the DSA, then you should contact the Director of Human Resources and Safeguarding (who is also the Complaints Manager for the diocese). All conversations will be recorded in writing and shared with the complainant to ensure accuracy.

The DSA or Director of Human Resources and Safeguarding will confirm receipt of your complaint and will respond fully within two working weeks, within which time they will:

- make all necessary and appropriate enquiries to establish the details of your complaint and any attempts already made to resolve the matter informally;

- initiate further discussions or meetings with you, to fully understand the issue, seek clarity and be clear on what would constitute a resolution for you;
- speak with any other parties in order to ensure that they have the necessary information available to respond to your complaint.

If it is not possible to respond to your concerns within two working weeks, they will advise you when a response can be expected. If necessary, they will determine subsequent actions and where necessary, arrange mediation between the parties concerned.

It is hoped that an acceptable resolution will be found, and that the complaint can be resolved to your satisfaction. However, if you are not happy with the proposed resolution follow Step 2 of the complaint procedure.

RESOLUTION

NO RESOLUTION

## Stage 2

Within two weeks of being notified of the proposed resolution you must inform the Director of Human Resources and Safeguarding (when Director of Human Resources and Safeguarding has been involved in stage one, you must inform the Diocesan Secretary) of your decision to initiate stage two.

The Director of HR and Safeguarding (or the Diocesan Secretary when relevant) will:

- acknowledge receipt of the stage two complaint and confirm when a response can be expected;
- review all documentation and actions taken. Discuss the situation with you and work to understand why resolution could not be reached. All conversations will be recorded in writing and shared with you for accuracy;

- discuss with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser and the diocesan safeguarding team (where appropriate) and consider what an appropriate response and resolution might be, including the appointment of an independent investigator to review the complaint;
- where necessary, take advice from the Diocesan Registrar and other legal and other professional advice such as may be required.

You should receive a reply within four weeks, where possible, and will be informed of any action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any further action to be taken as a result of the complaint.

This will be the **final** stage.

## GLOSSARY

**Complaint** – for the purpose of this procedure, a complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or concern about the way a safeguarding matter has been dealt with by a church officer in the diocese. The complainant must be the person directly affected by the issue or an interested party to the person affected (e.g. a close relative) and not an unrelated third party or wider observer.

**Whistleblowing** – is the disclosure of information which relates to suspected wrongdoing or dangers at work, e.g. an officer of the diocese, breaking or proposing to break the law, acting dishonestly in any way, or otherwise seeking to cover up any wrongdoing. Such matters should be reported to the Diocesan Secretary or Director of HR and Safeguarding and will be dealt with under the Whistleblowing Policy. There is a separate policy for clergy and employees of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance. To view this policy, visit [oxford.anglican.org/complaints-whistle-blowing](https://oxford.anglican.org/complaints-whistle-blowing)

**Diocesan Registrar** - The Diocesan Registrar is the legal officer of the diocese and provides legal advice to the Bishop of Oxford and the diocese more widely. [oxford.anglican.org/legal-diocesan-registry](https://oxford.anglican.org/legal-diocesan-registry)

## KEY CONTACTS

- For urgent safeguarding concerns, call **01865 208 295** or email [safeguardingreferrals@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:safeguardingreferrals@oxford.anglican.org)  
Email and phone lines are open Monday- Thursday, 9am – 5pm and Friday 9am – 4.30pm
- Poli Shajko, Director of HR and Safeguarding, **01865 208 770**, [poli.shajko@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:poli.shajko@oxford.anglican.org)
- Mark Humphriss, Diocesan Secretary, **01865 208 202**, [diocesan.secretary@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:diocesan.secretary@oxford.anglican.org)
- Louise Whitehead, Head of Safeguarding, **07391 868 478**, [louise.whitehead@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:louise.whitehead@oxford.anglican.org)
- National Safeguarding Team at Church House Westminster, [safeguarding@churchofengland.org](mailto:safeguarding@churchofengland.org)
- Visit [oxford.anglican.org/parish-safeguarding-officers](https://oxford.anglican.org/parish-safeguarding-officers) to find out who your parish safeguarding officer is.

### If you are affected

If you or anyone you are in contact with has been affected by the themes in this publication and want to talk to someone independently, please call the **Safe Spaces helpline** on **0300 303 1056** or email [safespaces@victimsupport.org.uk](mailto:safespaces@victimsupport.org.uk)

[safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk](https://safespacesenglandandwales.org.uk)



[oxford.anglican.org/safeguarding](https://oxford.anglican.org/safeguarding)