

Parish of St Peter & St James, Belfast



Complaints Procedures Policy For children and parents

Our parish is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of all members. We also try to ensure that children have a positive and enjoyable experience when participating in activities.

This complaints procedure aims to cover any situation which may arise, when children or their parents/guardians are not happy with the way children were treated while they were at an activity run by us.

The following are examples of the types of complaints that may arise:

- An alleged breach of the Safeguarding code of behaviour by a clergy / staff member or volunteer.
- A child feeling unhappy about an incident or an event;
- A parent/guardian feeling unhappy about an incident or event involving their child;
- Dissatisfaction in relation to an aspect of the service being provided.

What Complaints are accepted?

- 1) Complaints involving child protection concerns must be dealt with in accordance with reporting procedures as set out in Safeguarding Trust and **not** through this Complaints procedure.
- 2) The Complaints procedure below should not be used to disagree with a policy set by this parish.

There are basic rules for the acceptance of complaints:

- Complaints must be raised within three months of you knowing the facts as we will not deal with complaints that are older.
- We will not generally investigate anonymous complaints.
- Complaints that are broadly or substantively the same as a previous complaint will not be accepted.
- [We] will refuse any Complaints which are believed to be vexatious or malicious.

Who can make a complaint?

Complaints can be made by:

- Children who are members of children's activities at our parish.
- Clergy, staff members or volunteers in the parish.
- Other advocates on behalf of children.

How to make a complaint

1. If the complaint is in relation to the safety and welfare of children, the complaints should be made to the Parish Panel.
2. Other complaints should be made to the clergy / staff member or volunteer in charge of the group which the child is a member, with whom you should raise the concern verbally.
3. If the complainant does not want to discuss the matter with the staff member or volunteer in charge of the group, if the staff member/volunteer cannot answer the complainant's concern, the complainant is dissatisfied with the initial response of the staff member/volunteer to a complaint, or if the complaint is more serious, the complaint can be made in writing to the Panel.

Information the Complainant needs to provide

Complaints should be made, in the first instance, verbally to the clergy/staff member/volunteer in charge of the group and provide them with the following information to allow them to investigate the complaint:

- Name of child affected and the group or event they were involved in.
- If the complaint is being made by a parent or guardian, the name and address of the parent/guardian.
- Exactly what the complainant is dissatisfied with.
- The name of the clergy/staff member/volunteer who dealt with the matter the complainant is dissatisfied with.

Complaints made in writing should be made on the Complaints form (attached) and give as much factual details as possible to allow the matter to be investigated.

If I make a Complaint how will my Complaint be dealt with?

Your complaint will be dealt with fairly and objectively. Our policy is to deal with any valid Complaints in a positive and pro-active manner and expect resolutions and outcomes to contribute to a process of continuous improvement.

It may take time to process a complaint; however, you will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint with an acknowledgement of a formal complaint within seven days and response to the complaint within four weeks. Where it is not possible to respond to the complaint within four weeks, you will be provided with an update within that period and the matter resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

The clergy/staff member/volunteer or Panel member may need to speak to you and a number of other people to fully understand your complaint and the circumstances surrounding it.

Ultimately the clergy/staff member/volunteer or Panel member will decide about the Complaint and will inform you whether your complaint is upheld or not and the actions that will be taken as a result.

What if I am not satisfied with the outcome of my Complaint?

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your Complaint or the way in which it was handled, then you may appeal. You must appeal within 21 days of being given the decision and outcomes of your Complaint.

Your appeal must be formally lodged in writing to the Panel. In your appeal, you must clearly explain the basis on which you are making the appeal and your preferred outcome to resolve the issue.

The Panel will consider the process undertaken to handle the original complaint and the outcome of the original Complaint. You will be kept informed of the progress of your appeal with an acknowledgement of your appeal within seven days and a response within four weeks. Where it is not possible to complete the appeal within four weeks, you will be provided with an update within that period and the matter resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Panel may need to speak to you and a number of other people to fully understand your appeal and the circumstances surrounding the investigation of your Complaint.

The Panel will make a decision about the appeal and will inform you whether your appeal is upheld or not and the actions that will be taken as a result.

Adopted by the Select Vestry on 16th September 2024.

Parish of St Peter & St James, Belfast



COMPLAINTS FORM

(PLEASE USE BLOCK CAPITALS)

YOUR NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CONTACT TELEPHONE: _____ E-MAIL: _____

DATE ON WHICH THE INCIDENT HAPPENED: _____

LOCATION OF ALLEGED INCIDENT: _____

NATURE OF COMPLAINT: _____

NAME OF PARTY OR PARTIES INVOLVED:

GIVE A DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE ALLEGED INCIDENT:

General Data Protection regulations: We are committed to protecting your personal information. By completing and signing this form you are confirming that you are consenting to the parish holding and processing your personal data for the purpose of contacting you by post, phone or electronically with regard to this matter. If you have any questions about how we process your personal data contact the church leader.

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

PLEASE NOTE THAT A COPY OF THIS FORM WILL BE FORWARDED TO ALL RELEVANT PERSONS INVOLVED.

Received By: _____ Date: _____