

Blackburn Cathedral Complaints Policy



**BLACKBURN
CATHEDRAL**

1. Introduction

The Charity Commission report 'Cause for complaint' states: *'an effective complaints management system is a proven way of maintaining and building relationships with the people on whom the charity depends.'*

Blackburn Cathedral views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.
- Ensure everyone at Blackburn Cathedral knows what to do if a complaint is received.
- Make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.
- Ensure complaints are resolved and that relationships are repaired and reconciled.
- Gather information which helps to improve what we do.

2. Definition of a complaint

A complaint is defined as *'any matter about which a visitor, guest or member of the congregation is unhappy and seeks action from the Cathedral.'* Complaints can fall into a number of categories. Some examples include:

- Complaints about operational or administrative matters.
- Liturgical matters.
- Behaviour of staff or volunteers.
- Buildings and facilities.

3. Procedure

The guiding principle is that all complaints, either verbal or written, should be dealt with promptly, thoroughly and professionally. All complaints will normally be acknowledged within 48 hours and with the assurance of an effective enquiry and action if appropriate.

A copy of this policy should be made available to the complainant.

3.1. Stage 1 – Informal Complaint

It is hoped that most complaints will be resolved quickly and informally and normally within five working days. Complaints can be received at the Cathedral Office by telephone, in writing or in person using the following address details:

Blackburn Cathedral
Cathedral Office
Blackburn BB15AA
01254 277430

info@blackburncathedral.com

The Cathedral administrator will make a record of all complaints and the date on which they were received. The person identified to respond to the complaint will do so within five working days, where possible. The response can be proportionate to the informal nature of the

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complaint: a telephone call or email will often resolve the issue. The outcome of the complaint will be registered.

3.2 Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

If the complaint cannot be resolved on an informal basis, then a formal complaint should be raised in writing to The Dean at the Cathedral office address. In most cases a meeting will be arranged within seven working days to discuss the matter. Further investigation of the matter may be required and all findings will be recorded. Once The Dean is satisfied that, so far as is practicable, all of the relevant facts have been established, a decision will be made and the complainant will be informed in writing. The complainant will be requested to acknowledge receipt and acceptance of The Dean's decision.

3.3 Stage 3 – Panel Hearing

If the complainant does not accept the outcome of Stage 2, there are two grounds for appeal:

(I) Substance: This applies if it can be proved that not all factors were taken into account when making a decision for Stage II. For example, if new and substantive information has since come to light.

(II) Process: This applies if the complainant believes the Cathedral has not followed its own policy and procedure and, as a result, the outcome has been prejudiced.

If the complaint meets the criteria for an appeal, The Dean will acknowledge the request and, within 10 working days, ask Chapter to form a panel of three people to conduct a hearing within 20 working days. The Dean will chair the panel. The complainant may attend the hearing and be accompanied by one other person. Legal representation will not be required and is not appropriate under this process. Should the complainant not wish to attend, the panel will still convene. The Dean will inform the complainant of the outcome of the panel hearing, in writing and within seven working days. The decision of the panel will be final.

4. Exclusions

If repeated attempts are made to raise the same, or effectively the same, complaint after it has been considered at all three stages, then the complainant will be regarded as vexatious and outside the scope of this policy. This policy does not cover safeguarding concerns. Any safeguarding concern should be raised with the Cathedral's safeguarding officers or the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer. Contact details are available in the Safeguarding policy. This policy does not cover complaints from Cathedral staff. Staff should consult the Employee Handbook for guidance on how to make a complaint.

5. Records

Records of complaints will be kept in line with the Cathedral's privacy policy and data storage policy.

6. Awareness

This policy and procedure is published on the cathedral's website and is available from the Cathedral office. All stakeholders and regular users of the Cathedral should be made aware of the policy. All appropriate staff and volunteers will be informed about the correct use of the policy.