

Prepared: June 2015



The Octagon Parish Complaints Policy

The Octagon 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.

Our policy is:

- **To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint**
- **To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint To make sure everyone at The Octagon knows what to do if a complaint is received**
- **To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way**
- **To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired**
- **To gather information which helps us to improve what we do**

Definition

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction or grievance, whether justified or not, about any aspect of The Octagon Parish.

Complaints may come from any person who has a legitimate interest in The Octagon Parish or its churches

A complaint can be received verbally, by phone, by email or in writing.

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the trustees of the Parochial Church Council of The Octagon Parish and with the Church Wardens.

Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Complaints Procedure of The Octagon Parish

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

Complaints against **The Incumbent** may be addressed to:

The Church Wardens of The Octagon Parish

Mr Patrick Balfour

Email: pbalfour@theoctagonparish.org.uk

Mrs Sarah Lawton

Email: slawton@theoctagonparish.org.uk

Complaints against **The Octagon Parochial Church Council and The Octagon Parish** may be addressed to:

The Octagon Administrator

The Vicarage

Compton, Chichester

PO18 9HD

Email: admin@theoctagonparish.org.uk

Tel: 02392 631252

Complaints against the **individual churches** that make up The Octagon Parish should be addressed to the Churchwardens of the Octagon parish

Receiving Complaints

Complaints may arrive through channels publicised for that purpose or through any other contact details or opportunities the complainant may have.

Complaints received by telephone or in person need to be recorded. The person who receives a phone call or an in person complaint should:

- Write down the facts of the complaint
- Take the complainant's name, address and telephone number
- Note down the relationship of the complainant to The Octagon Parish (for example: parishioner)
- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account by post or by email so that the complaint is recorded in the complainant's own words.

*For further guidelines about handling verbal complaints, see **Appendix 1 Practical Advice***

Stage One

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. Therefore if the complaint relates to a specific

person, and if appropriate, they are to be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

An acknowledgement of receipt of a complaint will be sent to the complainant and they will be informed of when they can expect a reply. Ideally complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

The reply will describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation and any action taken as a result of the complaint.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the complaint is reviewed at Diocesan level. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the Diocese of Chichester.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a further opportunity to respond.

The person who dealt with the original complaint at Stage One should be kept informed of what is happening.

The applicant should submit the appeal or complaint in writing, stating their name and address, the nature of the complaint or appeal.

External Stage

The complainant can also complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. Information about the kind of complaints the Commission can involve itself in can be found on their website at:

www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The PCC of The Octagon Parish may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about the Chairman should not also have the Chairman as the person leading a review.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints are reviewed annually in September to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.

Appendix 1 - Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation

Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words.
Sometimes a person just wants to "let off steam"

Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry Show an interest in what is being said

Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details

Ask for clarification wherever necessary

Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down

Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation
e.g "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you"

If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise

Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue

Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.

Don't promise things you can't deliver

Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met

Make sure that the person understands what they have been told

Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal