Achonry Diocesan Committee

COMPLAINTS POLICY

1. STATEMENT OF POLICY

The Diocese of Achonry aims to provide as responsive a service as is possible to parishioners. The Complaints and Feedback Procedure is designed to enable those who use our Services to bring to our attention any comments that they may have. We welcome all feedback, both positive and constructive, as a chance for us to improve the quality of our services and to learn lessons from any mistakes made. In some instances our ability to respond to needs will be constrained by resources. We will endeavour to respond promptly and to seek other ways of addressing/resolving the issues where possible. We are committed to keeping private and confidential any information that is given when making a complaint. All our staff are responsible for ensuring that privacy and confidentiality is maintained.

2. COMPLAINTS/FEEDBACK –General Information

(a) Comments/compliments

In order to learn more about improving our services, it is important to be aware of what we are doing well and what works for our parishioners. In recognition of this, we will record any positive feedback or comments and acknowledge the good practice of staff teams, across the Diocese.

(b) What is a complaint and what can a complaint be about?

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction which needs a response. A complaint can be made about any action of the Services of the Diocese that the complainant considers to be unfair and that negatively affects the complainant or has affected the complainant in the past. This could mean any action that is:

- taken without proper authority,
- taken on irrelevant grounds,
- the result of negligence or carelessness,
- based on erroneous or incomplete information,
- improperly discriminatory
- based on undesirable administrative practice, or
- In any other respect, against fair or sound administration.

(c) Who can make a complaint?

Any person who has received, is currently receiving, or seeking a service from Achonry Diocese can make a complaint under this procedure. A complaint can also be made on someone's behalf by a family member, legal representative or advocate.

(d) Anonymous Complaints.

To enable us to examine complaints, we encourage every person offering feedback to give their name and contact details. All anonymous complaints will be examined by the relevant parish priest and will be treated initially as an informal complaint.

(e) How can a complaint be made?

A complaint can be made:
- in person,
- by phone,
- by letter,
- by email or
- by completing a complaints form. (Appendix 1).

All complaints received by email will be treated as informal complaints unless the sender clearly states that it is a formal complaint or wishes it to be treated as a formal complaint. All written complaints should include:
- Who was involved
- What happened and when
- What you are concerned about
- Have you done anything else to resolve this matter
- What do you want to happen now

It will also assist the Parish priest / Bishop if any extra information and/or copies of other relevant documents are attached to your written complaint.

(f) Concerns –v- Complaints

Concerns can be raised with the relevant parish priest. He has the responsibility to listen carefully to concerns and to respond in an appropriate manner. All concerns will be logged. The priest will ask if the person wishes to make a complaint about the matter. A clear desire to make a complaint must be indicated in order for something to be classed as a complaint. Where the situation is uncertain the question "**Do you wish to make a complaint?"** should be asked and the priest should support the complainant to make an informal or formal written complaint if they wish.

3. HOW DO WE HANDLE COMPLAINTS (Complaints Procedure)

1. Acknowledgements/Logging Process

(a**)** Once a complaint is received the priest will acknowledge it in the same format in which it is received i.e. verbal, email, letter, phone call, etc. The complaint will be logged in the local complaints log. Should a complaint become a formal written complaint, the priest will normally acknowledge the complaint in writing within five working days of receiving it. If a complaint is received directly by the Bishop, he will acknowledge it in the same format in which it is received i.e. verbal, email, letter, phone call, etc. and advise the parish priest of the complaint requesting that it is logged in the local Log.

(b**)** The Bishop will review the complaints log regularly to ensure that all complaints are appropriately responded to and the parishioner is not adversely affected by reason of the complaint being made.

(c) Records are retained for a period of not less than 7 years after the complaint has been examined.

2. Informal Resolution:-

Complaints will be responded to promptly and, wherever possible, will be resolved locally and quickly by the relevant parish priest. An immediate response to all complaints may not always be possible, as some will require careful consideration. If a complaint cannot be resolved locally by the priest or if the complainant is not satisfied with the informal response, the parish priest will support the complainant to make a formal complaint in writing.

3. Nature of the complaint:-

The priest , with the consent of the people involved, may consider if an informal resolution might be appropriate. As part of the informal resolution the Parish priest may arrange a meeting between the parties concerned. If informal resolution is not appropriate or is unsuccessful, the priest will start a formal investigation of the complaint. In doing so the said complaint will be passed by the relevant priest to the Bishop for his attention.

4. Formal Resolution:

All formal complaints are dealt with by the relevant parish priest initially however if there is no resolution the matter is passed to the Bishop. The priest will acknowledge receipt of the formal complaint normally within five working days. Where there is a complaint about the Parish priest the complainant is requested to send the complaint directly to the Bishop and he in turn may refer to the College of Consultors and / or an Independent Mediator.

5. Timeframe for the Investigation of the Complaint:

The Priest / Bishop will ensure a complaint is investigated within 30 working days of acknowledging the complaint. If the complaint cannot be investigated within 30 working days of the acknowledgment of the complaint, the Priest / Bishop will tell the complainant this before this timeframe passes. They will also outline the estimated timeframe it will take to complete the investigation and update the complainant every 20 working days until the matter is resolved. Investigations into complaints will be completed within six months of receipt of the complaint. If this deadline cannot be met, the Priest / Bishop must inform the complainant that the investigation is taking longer than six months, why it is delayed and outline the plan of action for the complaint.

6. Report of Findings and Recommendations;
A copy of the report will be issued to the complainant. The Priest / Bishop will be available to clarify any queries on the report. If the complainant advises that they are requesting an appeal, the Services may need to defer the implementation of recommendations and will advise the complainant accordingly.

7. Appeal Process:
On issuing the Report by the Priest/ Bishop, the complainant will be advised of the appeals process – i.e. his/her right to a an external Review of the entire complaint and how it has been handled. The complainant must request a Review of the complaint within 30 days of the investigation report being issued. If the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the Review or response, the complainant has a right to request a further Review of the complaint.

8. Implementation of the Recommendations of the Investigation Report:
Within 30 working days of receiving the report from the Priest / Bishop , an action plan must be put in place to implement the recommendations identified in the report. The action plan will outline who will be responsible for implementing the recommendations and the timelines. If for any reason these recommendations cannot be implemented, the reasons must be outlined to the complainant by the Priest / Bishop.

Note: All investigations are governed by the Code of Canon law.

COMPLAINTS FORM

DIOCESE OF ACHONRY

Diocese of Achonry (For complaints which cannot resolve locally)

To be completed at local level:

Ref No _____

DETAILS OF PERSON MAKING COMPLAINT

Name:

Contact address/s:

Contact Details: Home_____ Mobile: _____ Connection with the Service, (e.g. parent, staff, advocate, volunteer, friend):

_____

_____

THE COMPLAINT (Details overleaf)

Date Received: _____

Has the complaint been previously discussed with any staff member at Diocese of Achonry?: **YES / NO** .

Has any prior attempt at informal resolution been made? **YES / NO** If **YES** please give details of:

Date:

Time:

Name of Staff member:

Method of Communication _____

FORM COMPLETED BY: Name:_____
Date_____

Signature _____

Please tick as appropriate: I am the person making the complaint [ ] I am completing the form on behalf of the complainant [ ]

COMPLAINT DETAILS

Details of complaint (please ensure that you include details of all relevant dates/times/locations/correspondence/ names). Use additional sheets if required.