

## Complaint Handling Policy

Bath Abbey views visitors' complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person 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 that everyone at the Abbey knows what to do if a complaint is received.

To make sure that all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way.

To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired and reconciliation explored.

To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

### Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Bath Abbey.

### Complaints may come from

A person who is dissatisfied with the service that they have received from a member of staff employed by Bath Abbey or a Bath Abbey volunteer.

Concern relating to policies for running the Abbey or decisions taken by its staff, managers, volunteers or the Abbey Leadership Team.

A formal complaint can be received by email or in writing. It is our policy that we will not investigate anonymous complaints.

### This policy does not cover:

- a) Complaints from staff or volunteers, who should use the Abbey's grievance procedure.
- b) Complaints from members of Clergy where it is a grievance relating to the exercise of the office held – the Archbishops Council has set out a code of Practice and supportive advice for dealing with grievances.
- c) Matters relating to Safeguarding which should be referred to the Abbey's Safeguarding Officer or to the Diocese of Bath & Wells.

- d) Complaints about a member of clergy, these should be referred to the Diocese of Bath & Wells via the Archdeacon of Bath.

## Confidentiality

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

## Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation is with the Abbey Leadership Team on behalf of the PCC

## Review

This policy is to be reviewed regularly and updated as required.

## Complaints Procedures

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints:

**Written complaints may be sent to Beth Carter, Visitor Experience Manager, Bath Abbey Office, 9 Kingston Buildings, Bath, BA1 1LT or email [BCarter@bathabbey.org](mailto:BCarter@bathabbey.org)**

## 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 in person complaint should:

- a) Write down the facts of the complaint
- b) Take down the complainant's name, address and contact numbers
- c) Note down the relationship of the complainant to the Abbey
- d) Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure
- e) Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take to respond
- f) Where appropriate, if at all possible, 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

## Resolving Complaints

### Informal Approach

In many cases, a complaint is best resolved by the person responsible for the issue being complained about. If the complaint has been received by that person, they may be able to resolve it swiftly and should do so if possible. Most matters can and should be resolved informally and locally.

If for example a person is dissatisfied with the service they have received, then in the first instance they should tell that person of their dissatisfaction. He or she should be willing to listen, to discuss the matter and seek to satisfy the concerns where justified. If a person remains unhappy, the member of staff will arrange for the concerns to be discussed with a more senior member of staff who will then review and respond to the complainant.

If following the informal process, the complainant remains dissatisfied or the informal route is inappropriate, then the formal procedure should be followed.

## Formal Stage

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved during the informal process, they can escalate the complaint to the formal process. At this stage, the complaint will be passed to the responsible manager or if they have already been involved, the responsible head of department.

Written complaints should receive a written response within 36 hours. If this is not possible a written acknowledgment will be sent. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person can expect to receive a reply. A copy of this complaint's procedure should be attached.

A suitably senior person will be appointed to investigate the facts of the case. This may involve reviewing the paperwork of the case and speaking with anyone who may have been involved in dealing with the complaint at the informal stage.

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given the opportunity to respond. The person who dealt with the original complaint at the informal stage should be kept informed of what is happening where appropriate.

Ideally complaints should receive a definitive reply within 28 days. If this is not possible because of for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be issued with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant will describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action

taken as a result of the complaint. Where disciplinary action is deemed appropriate, the reply to the complainant will not include details relating to individual staff member`s employment record.

It should be recognised that in some instances people will take positions where the matter cannot be resolved. However, the aim should be to ensure that the process respects those involved and is just in providing an active concern to those who are vulnerable, marginalised or oppressed.

The decision taken at this stage is final unless the Abbey leadership Team decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution. A log of the complaint will be kept in the Abbays records by the Executive Director.

## External Stage

The complainant can complain to the Charity Commission at any stage. The commission`s involvement in looking at complaints is limited to issues that pose a serious risk of significant harm to a charity`s assets, services or reputation. 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](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/publications/cc47.aspx)

## Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The Abbey Leadership Team may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest, for example, a complaint about a member of the Leadership Team should not have the Leadership Team member as the person involved in the investigation / formal process.

## Complaints - Other Relevant Processes and Procedures

We encourage all volunteers to resolve verbal complaints in the first instance themselves however if the volunteer cannot resolve the complaint, they should contact a member of the Visitor Experience Management Team.

With regards to complaints from staff and volunteers Bath Abbey has also a Whistleblowing Policy and Safeguarding Policy and procedures as well as Grievance procedures the details of which are contained in the Staff Handbook and Volunteer Handbook.

All written complaints and the more common / key verbal complaints from visitors will be advised to the Executive Director. Both letters / emails received and responses. On a monthly basis the volume, themes and trends will be reviewed.