

# Bath Abbey- Visitor Complaint Handling Policy

## Complaints 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.

## Where Complaints Come From

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.

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

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:

1. Complaints from staff of volunteers, who should use the Abbeys grievance procedure;
2. 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;
3. Matters relating to Safeguarding which should be referred to the Abbeys Safeguarding Officer or to the Diocese of Bath & Wells;
4. 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 Chapter on behalf of the Diocese of Bath & Wells

### **Review**

This policy is to be reviewed regularly and updated as required

## **Complaints Procedure of Bath Abbey**

### **Publicised Contact Details for Complaints**

Written complaints may be sent to The Visitor Services Manager at Bath Abbey, 11a York Street, Bath, BA1 1NG or email [SPreece@bathabbey.org](mailto:SPreece@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:

Write down the facts of the complaint

Take down the complainant's name, address and contact numbers

Note down the relationship of the complainant to the Abbey

Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure

Tell the complainant what will happen next and how long it will take to respond

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 <sup>[FM1]</sup><sub>[FM2]</sub> 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 Visitor Services Manager or if they have already been involved, to the Executive Director.

Complaints will be acknowledged by the person handling the complaint within a week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person can expect to receive a reply. A copy of this complaints 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 Chapter decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance with resolution. A log of the complaint will be kept in the Abbeys 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 Chapter 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 Chapter should not have the Chapter member as the person involved in the investigation / formal process.

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## **Complaints - Other Relevant Processes and Procedures**

The Visitor Services Manager and Executive Director will be tasked with ensuring that all visitor complaints are dealt with on a prompt basis and adhere to our complaints policy. Additionally they will look to review complaints on a monthly and annual basis to ensure that Bath Abbey is continually improving its visitor experience.

The Executive Director will prepare a review of complaints on an annual basis and will share this review with Chapter.

Our Bath Abbey Visitor Complaints policy and procedures will be published on our website and kept updated by our Communications Team

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