



# SAFEGUARDING COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

## CONTROLLED DOCUMENT

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| DOCUMENT VERSION | 2024   |
| AUTHORS          | Chapter Safeguarding Lead & Chief Operating Officer  |
| SCOPE            | Members of the Public & Organisations  |
| DESCRIPTION      | This document details the process for member of the public or organisations wishing to lodge a safeguarding related complaint or to communicate a concern. |
| CROSS REFERENCE  | The Exeter Cathedral's website / Safeguarding page, Complaints Policy  |
| ACTION REQUIRED  | Read alongside our Safeguarding Statement & Safeguarding Guide   |

## REVISION HISTORY

| Review Date | Summary of Changes | Chapter Approval Date |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| N/A         | New Document       |                       |
| Sept. 2025  |                    |                       |

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. Exeter Cathedral is fully committed to following government and the Church of England guidelines for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, and good working practice, including safer recruitment of volunteers and paid workers.
- 1.2. This procedure sets out the Chapter's commitment to safeguarding. It provides guidance for visitors, our staff, volunteers, contractors and our community.
- 1.3. This procedure is for any person having cause to complain to Exeter Cathedral about the manner in which any safeguarding issue has been dealt with by the Cathedral or to share any safeguarding concerns.
- 1.4. This Safeguarding Complaints procedure lies alongside the Cathedral's Complaints Policy which is available on our website or on request from the Cathedral. Our aims are to:
  - provide a fair procedure which is clear and easy to use
  - be open about how we will deal with complaints
  - ensure that all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
  - resolve complaints as near to the point of service delivery wherever possible
  - gather information in order to improve our service.
- 1.5. At Exeter Cathedral we take complaints about our work and quality of service in all aspects of safeguarding extremely seriously. We view complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve our practice as well as review the support that we offer to all who visit, volunteer and work at the cathedral. If you are not satisfied with the way in which a safeguarding issue relating to you has been handled, please follow the process below.

## **2. SAFEGUARDING COMPLAINT PROCEDURE**

- 2.1. This procedure is designed to be fair and open, easy to use and to ensure that all complaints raised are dealt with in a timely manner whilst also ensuring we have an opportunity to improve our safeguarding practices and procedures where necessary.
- 2.2. For the purpose of this procedure, a complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction about any aspect of safeguarding work undertaken by representatives of Exeter Cathedral. All information will be handled sensitively, sharing information on a 'need to know' basis and in accordance with appropriate data sharing and confidentiality procedures.

## **3. HOW TO LOG A SAFEGUARDING RELATED COMPLAINT / CONCERN?**

### **3.1. Verbally**

If possible, it is best to express safeguarding concerns in person at the time the incident occurred to any member of the cathedral's staff located in the cathedral or in the offices. Please ensure that you make it clear that your concerns are of a safeguarding nature.

### **3.2. In writing**

3.2.1. The easiest method is using our website <https://www.exeter-cathedral.org.uk/about-us/safeguarding>, where you will find a link to detail your concerns. Safeguarding

concerns or complaints are received via the website into a dedicated mailbox that has limited access including the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

3.2.2. Alternatively, you can send an email to [safeguarding@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)

3.2.3. Deliver a letter via the post to:

Safeguarding Complaints Administrator / 1 The Cloisters / Exeter / EX1 1HS

#### **4. SAFEGUARDING COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

4.1. In many cases, if you have a safeguarding complaint or concern, it is best to let us know as soon as you can, preferably in person. For example, if it is an issue that occurred in the Cathedral, this can be addressed by the Custos or one of the Virgers. Where the complaint or concern is in relation to another department, the Custos or one of the Virgers will arrange for you to speak to the relevant person.

4.2. The person receiving the verbal safeguarding complaint will take a note of your safeguarding concerns and record this in the safeguarding incident log. This will include the nature of the complaint and the steps taken to resolve this from the initial contact with the complainant to it being resolved. If a complaint is resolved at this stage, the nature of the complaint and result will be provided to the Chapter Safeguarding Lead (CSL) and / or the Chief Operating Officer to triage. Where the concern is a serious safeguarding concern, it will be immediately referred to the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser for investigation and case management.

4.3. The complainant must be a person directly affected by the safeguarding issue and not a third party, but a complaint on behalf of a child may be made by a parent of the child or their legal guardian.

4.4. We appreciate that it is not always possible or appropriate to resolve a complaint at this stage and therefore have the following process in place in order to deal with all complaints not resolved as described above. We will–

4.4.1. acknowledge and respond to your complaint in writing as soon as is practicable and supply you with a copy of this procedure;

4.4.2. make it clear when a response can realistically be expected. and if this is not possible, all interested parties will be kept apprised of realistic timescales;

4.4.3. review all documentation and the actions taken so far, and

4.4.4. engage with the complainant and establish the circumstances from their perspective.

4.5. The Safeguarding Team comprising of the Chief Operating Officer, the Chapter Safeguarding Lead and Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser together will appoint an appropriate person to investigate the complaint and update the complainant with these details. The person appointed will then do the following:

4.5.1. Make all necessary and appropriate enquiries to establish the substance of the complaint and any attempts already made to resolve the matter informally.

4.5.2. Initiate discussions or meetings with the complainant to fully understand the issues raised, seek clarity and be clear on what would constitute a resolution for them.

- 4.5.3. Where necessary, take advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team to formulate a response for the complainant.
  - 4.5.4. There may be instances where a referral to a third-party agency for assistance is required.
  - 4.5.5. We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and normally expect to deal with them within 20 working days.
  - 4.5.6. If your complaint is more complex, we will:
    - 4.5.6.1. let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
    - 4.5.6.2. inform you how long we expect it to take
    - 4.5.6.3. let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and give you regular updates, including letting you know whether or not any developments might change our original estimate.
  - 4.5.7. Where the concern is of a serious safeguarding nature, the Diocesan Safeguarding Team will carry out the above actions, including providing any required support to the complainant or any other persons as they deem fit. This also includes any allegations against any Church Officer (including, clergy, paid staff and volunteers).
  - 4.5.8. The Diocesan Safeguarding Team also has its own guidelines for investigating and managing serious safeguarding complaints/ concerns. Please refer to their website for further details.
  - 4.5.9. The complainant will be informed of the outcome of their complaint whilst maintaining confidentiality.
- 4.6. Exeter Cathedral aims to resolve the complaint at the earliest opportunity. If the complainant is not satisfied that the complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily, they can in the first instance complain to the Dean – the Very Revd Jonathan Greener.  
Tel: 01392255573. Email: [jonathan.greener@exeter-cathedral.org.uk](mailto:jonathan.greener@exeter-cathedral.org.uk)

## **5. MONITORING AND LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS**

- 5.1. Exeter Cathedral is committed to “getting it right” when it comes to safeguarding, and when a cause for complaint is identified, we are determined to identify any failings or lessons to be learned.
- 5.2. We are confident our complaints procedure is robust and transparent, with necessary checks and balances to ensure complaints are heard, investigated and responded to proportionately.
- 5.3. Full details of all complaints are passed to the Strategic Safeguarding Committee and a report provided covering the nature of the complaint, details of the investigation, the outcome of the complaint and any lessons learned from the complaint.
- 5.4. The Strategic Safeguarding Committee is responsible for implementing and reviewing any changes to our practices and procedures to prevent this happening again.

Membership of the Strategic Safeguarding Committee includes members of the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

- 5.5. All complaints received are analysed to identify any emerging trends and root causes on a quarterly basis with a report provided to the Safeguarding Committees, the Health and Safety Committee, and the Chapter, which may indicate a need to take further action such as amendment to policy and procedures.
- 5.6. Reports are also provided to the Chapter by the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser as well as from the Chapter Safeguarding Lead, who chairs the Strategic Safeguarding Committee.