



**DIGNITY**  
IN CHURCH LIFE

# Clergy Grievance Procedure



# Clergy Grievance Procedure

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## 1. Our Policy

The Church of Ireland recognises that grievances may occur within the Church as in any organisation. The aims of this policy are:

- to promote good working relationships and to respond to grievances of the clergy as expeditiously as possible, taking into account the legitimate interests of all concerned and
- to ensure that no-one is disadvantaged by raising a grievance.

In keeping with Gospel values and as articulated in the Dignity in Church Life Charter, the Church of Ireland recognises that grievances should be treated seriously due to the significance to the person concerned and the damage which may be caused to day-to-day relationships. It is a fundamental principle that all parties to the grievance should be reconciled if at all possible. The focus should at all times be on the issues giving rise to the grievance and not on the personalities involved. The option of resolving the grievance through mediation should be considered at every stage.

## 2. Policy Application

This policy is available to all members of the clergy except those employed under a Contract of Employment or Contract for Services. Where such Contracts exist, the grievance procedure under that Contract shall apply. In circumstances where there is no grievance procedure associated with the contract, then the grievance procedure as outlined in this policy may be adopted, subject to the agreement of all parties to that Contract.

## 3. Scope of the Policy

A grievance procedure should be used where a member of the clergy has a grievance arising from his or her conditions of service within the Church. There may be situations where it is more appropriate to deal with the grievance under another policy, for example, under a disciplinary procedure or under an anti-bullying and harassment policy. The Church therefore reserves the right to deal with the grievance under another policy as the circumstances may dictate. The following are examples of grievances and are illustrative and not exhaustive:

- Issues arising from an increase/decrease of duties, or a change in status
- Personal financial matters
- Access to opportunities within the Church
- Relationship issues with fellow members of the clergy
- Unfair treatment
- Conditions of housing
- Health and safety concerns.

## 4. Handling of Grievances

It is important for grievances to be dealt with in a timely manner as failure to do so may result in a minor grievance escalating. It is also preferable to respond to grievances as locally as possible as this is more likely to resolve grievances expeditiously and be more effective in terms of preserving relationships.

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## Our procedure

The Church shall endeavour to deal with grievances in a sensitive manner and as expeditiously as possible. Grievances relating to parish matters should, in most cases, be dealt with at parish level. Grievances relating to duties of office should, in most cases, be dealt with at diocesan level.

The aggrieved member of the clergy, the parish or the diocese may at all times seek the guidance and advice of Central HR who has been appointed centrally within the Church to act as advisor in the implementation of this policy. The contact details for Central HR are set out at the end of this policy.

## Informal

Every effort should be made to resolve a grievance through the informal process initially. A member of the clergy who has a grievance should, in the first instance, discuss the grievance directly with the person with whom the member of the clergy is aggrieved. More often than not, the grievance can be resolved directly between the parties to the grievance.

If the grievance concerns a parish matter, a parish sub-group (the "Parish Sub-Group") of three members of the select vestry will be appointed by the select vestry to deal with the grievance informally where possible. In the event the Parish Sub-Group considers the issues are such that it should be dealt with at diocesan level, the Parish Sub-Group may refer the issue to the diocese. In that event, a sub-group consisting of (i) the archdeacon or other senior member of the clergy and (ii) two members of the diocesan council (the "Diocesan Sub-Group") shall be appointed by the bishop and the diocesan honorary secretaries to deal with the matter informally where possible.

Up to two people from outside the select vestry or the Diocesan Council who have relevant expertise may be co-opted on to either sub-group but the sub-group shall not exceed three people at any time.

## Stage 1 - Formal

The formal procedure should be used if efforts to resolve the issue through the informal procedure have not resolved the matter or if the person raising the grievance chooses to use it in preference to the informal procedure. The formal process will involve detailing the grievance in writing to a member of the select vestry, the archdeacon or Central HR as appropriate. A Parish Sub-Group will be appointed by the select vestry to deal with the grievance in the first instance. In some cases, the Parish Sub-Group may decide that the grievance shall be dealt with at diocesan level. In that event, a Diocesan Sub-Group shall be appointed by the diocese to deal with the grievance.

The sub-group responsible for handling the grievance will arrange a meeting with the aggrieved member of the clergy to discuss the issues and will meet with any other party involved in the grievance. They may also convene a meeting with both parties, where relevant, to try to resolve the grievance.

## Stage 2 - Formal Appeal

If the member of the clergy is unhappy with the outcome of Stage 1, he or she may appeal the outcome. If the appeal is against a decision made by a Parish Sub-Group in the first instance, an appeal may be made to the diocese and the diocese will appoint



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a Diocesan Sub-Group to deal with the appeal. If the appeal is against a decision made by a Diocesan Sub-Group in the first instance, an appeal may be made to a central sub-group (the "Central Sub-Group") of three members consisting of a bishop or archbishop as appropriate, an honorary secretary of General Synod and the Chief Officer and Secretary of the Representative Body to deal with the appeal and whose decision shall be final. Such a referral must be made in writing within twenty days of receiving the decision of the Parish Sub-Group/Diocesan Sub-Group, as appropriate, and must state the reasons for the continued grievance. The Central Sub-Group may convene a meeting to resolve the grievance.

Fair procedures will apply which include maintaining a written record of the grievance and allowing members of the clergy raising a grievance or against whom a grievance has been raised to bring a lay or ordained colleague to any meeting. All those involved in the process should respect the confidentiality of the process. Discussions should not be entered into relating to the grievance with any person or group outside the framework of the meetings arranged in accordance with this policy.

### Resolution

Any agreed resolution of a grievance will be clearly set out and the sub-group responsible for handling the grievance shall be responsible for ensuring agreed actions are implemented. They shall also be responsible for ensuring, insofar as is possible, that the matter has been resolved to the reasonable satisfaction of all parties.

### 5. Mediation

Mediation is an extremely useful method for resolving grievances. The process can lessen feelings of conflict and stress and it can help to maintain the relationship between two people or groups. Mediation can be attempted at any point in the procedure to deal with a grievance.

### 6. Normal Ministry

It is important, if possible, that ministry continues as normal while the grievance is being processed.

### 7. Useful Contacts

For further explanation on the implementation of this policy, see 'Guidelines on Clergy Grievance Procedure'.

If you have any queries regarding the implementation of this policy please contact Central HR as outlined below.

**Telephone: +353 (1) 4125 655**

**Email: [hr@ireland.anglican.org](mailto:hr@ireland.anglican.org)**

*This policy will be subject to review on a regular basis.*