

**DIOCESE OF ARMAGH
MULLAGLASS PARISH
DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**



Mullaglass Parish is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of all members. We also try to ensure that children have a positive and enjoyable experience when participating in Mullaglass Parish activities.

This complaints procedure aims to cover any situation which may arise, when children or their parents/guardians are not happy with the way children were treated while they were at an activity run by Mullaglass Parish.

The following are examples of the types of complaints that may arise:

- An alleged breach of the code of behaviour by a clergy / staff member or volunteer (see Part 4 of Safeguarding Trust).
- A particular practice issue.
- Perceived poor attitude of a clergy / staff member or volunteer.
- A child feeling unhappy about an incident or an event.
- A parent/guardian feeling unhappy about an incident or event involving their child.
- Dissatisfaction in relation to an aspect of the service being provided.

What Complaints are accepted?

- 1) Complaints involving child protection concerns must be dealt with in accordance with reporting procedures as set out in Safeguarding Trust and not through this Complaints procedure.
- 2) The Complaints procedure below should not be used to disagree with a policy set by the Mullaglass Parish.

There are basic rules for the acceptance of complaints:

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- Complaints must be raised within three months of you knowing the facts as Mullaglass Parish will not deal with complaints that are outside of this time limit).
- Mullaglass Parish will investigate anonymous complaints but this may prove more difficult and despite due diligence may remain unresolved.
- Complaints that are substantively the same as a previous Complaint will not be accepted.
- Mullaglass Parish will refuse any Complaints which are believed to be vexatious or malicious.

Who can make a complaint?

Complaints can be made by:

- Children who are members of children's activities at Mullaglass Parish.
- Their parents/guardians.
- Clergy, staff members or volunteers in Mullaglass Parish.
- Other advocates on behalf of children.

How to make a complaint

1. If the complaint is in relation to the safety and welfare of children, the complaints should be made to the Panel.
2. Other complaints should be made to the clergy / staff member or volunteer in charge of the group which the child is a member, with whom you should raise the concern orally.
3. If the complainant does not want to discuss the matter with the staff member or volunteer in charge of the group, if the staff member/volunteer cannot answer the complainant's concern, the complainant is dissatisfied with the initial response of the staff member/volunteer to a complaint, or if the complaint is more serious, the complaint can be made in writing to the Panel.

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Information the Complainant needs to provide

Complaints should be made, in the first instance, orally to the clergy / staff member/volunteer in charge of the group and provide them with the following information to allow them to investigate the complaint:

- Name of child affected and the group or event they were involved in
- If the complaint is being made by a parent or guardian, the name and address of the parent/guardian
- Exactly what the complainant is dissatisfied with
- The name of the clergy / staff member/volunteer who dealt with the matter the complainant is dissatisfied with.

Complaints made in writing should be made on the Complaints form (see appendix) and give as much factual details as possible to allow the matter to be investigated.

If I make a Complaint how will my Complaint be dealt with?

Your complaint will be dealt with fairly and objectively. Mullaglass Parish's policy is to deal with any valid Complaints in a positive and pro-active manner and expect resolutions and outcomes to contribute to a process of continuous improvement.

It may take time to process a complaint; however, you will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint with an acknowledgement of a formal complaint within seven days and response to the complaint within four weeks. Where it is not possible to respond to the complaint within four weeks, you will be provided with an update within that period and the matter resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

The clergy/staff member/volunteer or Panel member may need to speak to you and a number of other people to fully understand your complaint and the circumstances surrounding it.

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Ultimately the clergy/staff member/volunteer or Panel member will decide about the Complaint and will inform you whether your complaint is upheld or not and the actions that will be taken as a result.

Actions that may be taken in response to the investigation of a complaint:

Responses to a complaint might include:

- An apology (either verbal or written) to the complainant and/or the member.
- An explanation provided to the complainant and/or member, e.g., as to why something happened.
- A review of a decision made.
- An assurance that any poor practice identified in the investigation will be addressed at future activities.
- A meeting with the staff member/volunteer (who is the subject of the complaint) and the complainant in order to resolve the situation.
- Compulsory attendance by staff member/volunteer at specific training event.
- A period of supervision of staff member/volunteer by other staff/volunteers.
- In the case of a serious incident the suspension or dismissal of staff volunteer (in line with disciplinary procedures – see below).

What if I am not satisfied with the outcome of my Complaint?

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your Complaint or the way in which it was handled, then you may appeal. You must appeal within 21 days of being given the decision and outcomes of your Complaint.

Your appeal must be formally lodged in writing to the Panel. In your appeal, you must clearly explain the basis on which you are making the appeal and your preferred outcome to resolve the issue.

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The Panel will consider the process undertaken to handle the original complaint and the outcome of the original Complaint. You will be kept informed of the progress of your appeal with an acknowledgement of your appeal within seven days and a response within four weeks. Where it is not possible to complete the appeal within four weeks, you will be provided with an update within that period and the matter resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Panel may need to speak to you and a number of other people to fully understand your appeal and the circumstances surrounding the investigation of your Complaint.

The Panel will make a decision about the appeal and will inform you whether your appeal is upheld or not and the actions that will be taken as a result.

Disciplinary procedures volunteer is found in breach of Code of Behaviour

Each breach of the Code of Behaviour will be assessed in line with the Complaints procedure above. If a volunteer is deemed to be in breach of the Code of Behaviour the leader in charge or panel *member* will speak to the individual volunteer. *The* leader in charge or panel member will determine whether the volunteer should be given a warning on that occasion but will remind the volunteer of the standards expected of Mullaglass Parish volunteers.

If there are further breaches of the Code of Behaviour by the volunteer following a warning, the Panel will meet with the volunteer and the Panel will ask the volunteer to resign from their position.

If a serious allegation of abuse is made against a volunteer, the Panel and Internal Review Group will follow the procedures for dealing with an allegation against a volunteer as contained in Safeguarding Trust.

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Disciplinary procedures if a staff member is found in breach of the Code of Behaviour

Each breach of the Code of Behaviour will be assessed in line with the complaint's procedure outline above. If a staff member is deemed to be in breach of the Code of Behaviour the disciplinary procedures in the staff member's contract or staff handbook shall be followed where it is a serious incident and it warrants suspension or dismissal of the staff member. If a cleric is deemed to be in breach of the Code of Behaviour the disciplinary procedures set out in Chapter 8 of the Constitution of the Church of Ireland shall be followed where it is a serious incident and it warrants the suspension or dismissal of the cleric.