

The Religious Sisters of Charity

Complaints Policy

Approved: May 2025

Next Review: May 2026

1. Introduction

In alignment with the Catholic Church and the Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA), our religious community is committed to fostering an environment where concerns and complaints are addressed with transparency, fairness, and respect. A comprehensive complaints policy ensures accountability and continuous improvement within our ministries and congregations. This policy is accessible to all individuals engaged in our community, including clergy, staff, volunteers, and congregants.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Provide a clear and accessible process for raising complaints.
- Ensure complaints are handled impartially, promptly, and confidentially.
- Align our procedures with ministry standards, CSSA standards and legal obligations.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all complaints related to the activities of our religious community, including those concerning clergy, employees, volunteers, and any services provided. It excludes safeguarding complaints, which are addressed under separate safeguarding policies.

4. Principles

- **Accessibility:** The complaints process is straightforward and accessible to everyone in our community.
- **Transparency:** Complainants are informed about the process and progress of their complaints. [catholicsafeguarding.org.uk](https://www.catholicsafeguarding.org.uk)
- **Fairness:** All complaints are handled impartially, respecting all parties involved.
- **Confidentiality:** Information related to complaints is kept confidential, sharing only when necessary for investigation or legal compliance.

5. Procedure

5.1 Informal Resolution

We encourage resolving minor concerns informally by discussing them directly with the person involved. This approach often leads to quick and effective resolutions.

5.2 Formal Complaint

If an informal resolution is not possible or appropriate, a formal complaint can be made.

Submission

- How to Submit: Complaints should be submitted in writing, either by letter or email, detailing the nature of the complaint, relevant dates, and any supporting evidence.
- Where to Submit: Complaints should be directed to the Parish Priest or designated Complaints Officer. If the complaint involves those in ministry, it should be directed to the Diocesan Complaints Officer.

Acknowledgment

- The complaint will be acknowledged within five working days of receipt.
rcdow.org.uk

Investigation

- Process: An impartial investigator will be appointed to examine the complaint. This may involve interviews and reviewing relevant documents by the nominated complaints officer.
- Timeframe: The investigation will be completed within 30 working days of acknowledgement.

Outcome

A written response outlining the findings and any actions to be taken will be provided within 10 working days of the investigation's conclusion.

Appeal

If dissatisfied with the outcome, the complainant may appeal in writing within 15 working days. An independent reviewer will reassess the complaint, and a final decision will be communicated within 20 working days of the appeal.

5.4 External Review

If the complainant remains dissatisfied after the appeal, they may refer the matter to the CSSA for an independent review, provided the internal complaints process has been exhausted. catholicsafeguarding.org.uk

6. Record Keeping

All complaints and related documents will be securely stored for at least **6 years**. These records assist in monitoring the effectiveness of our complaints process and ensuring compliance with CSSA standards.

7. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and alignment with current guidelines and legislation. Feedback from complaints will improve our services and prevent future issues.

8. Accessibility

This policy is publicly available on our community's website and in printed form at our premises. Alternative formats are available upon request to accommodate all individuals.

9. Contact Information

- Religious Leader - Sr Mary Teresa Clarke
- DSL - Barbara Veeramallay - Permaul

10. Version Control

Version: 1.0

Effective Date: May 2025

Review Date: May 2026

Approved by: Sr Mary Teresa Clarke