

## **1 COMPLAINTS POLICY STATEMENT**

Westminster Abbey is committed to providing a high standard of service to all who visit the Abbey, attend our services or otherwise participate in Abbey activities. We take feedback and complaints seriously and we endeavour to:

- listen carefully to complaints
- address and respond to complaints promptly
- handle complaints consistently and in accordance with our complaints procedure
- train our staff and volunteers so they can advise on our complaints procedure
- handle complaints in line with our Privacy Policy and relevant data protection legislation
- keep a record of all formal complaints to assist with the monitoring of our service.

## **2 COMPLAINTS POLICY & PROCEDURES OBJECTIVES**

- Enable complainants to know how to make a complaint and how a complaint will be handled
- Deal with complaints consistently, fairly and sensitively and in a timely way
- Monitor the handling of complaints in order to review and improve our services

## **3 TYPES OF COMPLAINT**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction or disappointment, whether justified or not, about any aspect of Westminster Abbey.

Types of complaint covered by this policy include, but are not limited to:

- Dissatisfaction with the service received upon visiting the Abbey during regular opening hours or attending a service of worship
- Dissatisfaction with events organised by the Abbey that do not reach a satisfactory standard
- Dissatisfaction with a decision made by the Abbey
- Issues with a product or service purchased through the Abbey's shops or online shop
- Concerns or dissatisfaction with information provided on the Abbey's website and social media channels

## **4 EXCEPTIONS**

This policy does not cover:

- Complaints from staff, who should use the Abbey's internal grievance procedure (it does cover complaints from volunteers and contractors).
- Matters relating to Safeguarding, which should be referred to the Abbey's Safeguarding Officer; further information on how to raise a safeguarding concern can be found on our [website](#).
- Complaints about a service delivered by a third party within the Abbey precincts, such as catering or at an external event. The third party should be contacted directly in the first instance.

## 5 COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### Raising a complaint informally

5.1 A visitor to the Abbey may wish to raise a complaint informally in the first instance. This can be done in the following ways:

5.1.1 In person to a staff member. Within the Abbey this would most likely be to an Abbey Marshal (wearing red gown), a member of the Welcome Team (based at the North Door visitor entrance area), or a member of our Reception Team (based in the Chapter Office, 20 Dean's Yard).

5.1.2 By exit survey:

Adding complaint details to an automated visitor survey (terminals located in the Chapter House and the Cellarium).

5.2 Many complaints can best be dealt with quickly and informally by one of our staff members, through an explanation and/or apology. Complainants are asked to use these informal routes whenever appropriate.

### Raising a formal complaint

5.3 If a complainant wishes to make a formal complaint, or feels that their complaint has not been dealt with satisfactorily through routes 5.1.1 or 5.1.2, they should make their complaint in writing through the following channels:

5.3.1 By email:

To - [Complaints@westminster-abbey.org](mailto:Complaints@westminster-abbey.org)

5.3.2 By post:

Complaints  
Westminster Abbey  
Chapter Office  
20 Dean's Yard  
London SW1P 3PA

Formal complaints cannot be made by telephone or in person.

5.4 A complaint should include the following:

- Complainant's name and address (home and email address)
- Nature and date of the complaint/incident, including any names/details of staff members, volunteers or contractors involved
- What resolution is desired by the complainant.

5.5 Formal complaints will be acknowledged within three days (excluding weekends and Bank Holidays) and logged by the Governance Officer, who will then assign the complaint to the appropriate staff member for action.

5.6 The Abbey's target is that a written response to complaints will be provided within 10 working days of the complaint being formally acknowledged, wherever possible. In

circumstances when this is not possible, the complainant will be notified of an expected response timeframe.

5.7 For complaints considered to raise serious issues, the Receiver General can decide to instigate a review of the Abbey's initial response to a complaint, if the complainant remains dissatisfied. This might, for example, involve a review of the complaint and the initial response by a senior member of the Abbey staff.

5.8 Complaints received anonymously will be recorded and considered, but action may be limited if further information would be required to undertake a fair investigation.

## **6 DATA PROTECTION**

6.1 In dealing with any complaint, Westminster Abbey will hold personal data about the complainant. This data will be held in accordance with the Abbey's [Privacy Policy](#)

6.2 Complaint files will normally be destroyed in a secure manner six years after the complaint has been closed.

6.3 The Abbey seeks to comply with its obligations under data protection legislation.

## **7 MONITORING**

7.1 Complaints are an important tool which, alongside data provided by onsite visitor surveys and online feedback forums, allow the Abbey to learn about the services which it provides. They help the Abbey to understand about how individuals perceive its activities. To enable the Abbey to learn from complaints the following data will be collected:

- Name and address
- Name of person dealing with the complaint
- Date of complaint and response
- The text of the complaint and the response sent to it
- Action(s) taken/recommendations made in response to the complaint.

7.2 All complaints will be logged, and an overall report will be shared with the Abbey Board annually, to enable wider learning from complaints, monitoring of service standards and modification of policies and procedures where appropriate.

## **8 VARIATION**

The application of this external complaints procedure may be modified for good reason, for example to avoid a conflict of interest.

## **9 REVIEW**

This policy was approved was approved by the Abbey's Board on 22 February 2024, and will be reviewed every two years.