

# Complaints Handling Policy

(previously Grievances & Dispute Resolution Policy)

## INTRODUCTION

Open communication and feedback are regarded as essential elements of a satisfying and productive work environment. St Anne's Seaford Parish encourages its parishioners, employees and volunteers to resolve any issues or concerns that they may have at the earliest opportunity with each other or, failing that, their immediate supervisor. The preferred process involves parishioners, employees and volunteers resolving issues to their satisfaction internally, without feeling they have to refer to external organisations or to authorities for assistance.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to provide an avenue through which parishioners, employees and volunteers, and their managers, can resolve work-related complaints as they arise.

## POLICY

St Anne's Seaford Parish will establish mechanisms to promote fast and efficient resolution of workplace issues. Employees and volunteers should feel comfortable discussing issues with their manager or supervisor in accordance with the procedures outlined below. All formal avenues for handling of grievances will be fully documented and the employee/volunteer's wishes will be taken into account in determining the appropriate steps and actions. No employee will be intimidated or unfairly treated in any respect if they utilise this Policy to resolve an issue. This Policy applies to permanent and part-time paid employees and to volunteer workers.

## AUTHORISATION

Parish Secretary

Date:

St Anne's Seaford Parish

## RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of **Managers and Supervisors** to ensure that:

- They identify, prevent and address potential problems before they become formal grievances;
- They are aware of, and are committed to the principles of communicating and information sharing with their employees and volunteers;
- All decisions relating to employment practices are made with consideration given to the ramifications for the individual, as well as the organisation in general;
- Any grievance is handled in the most appropriate manner at the earliest opportunity;
- All employees and volunteers are treated fairly and without fear of intimidation.

It is the responsibility of **Employees (including Volunteers)** to ensure that:

- They attempt to resolve any issues through their immediate supervisor and through internal processes at the earliest opportunity.

It is the responsibility of the **Human Resources Department** to ensure that:

- All managers, supervisors, employees and volunteers are aware of their obligations and responsibilities in relation to communication and information sharing with their employees;
- Ongoing support and guidance is provided to all employees in relation to employment and communication issues;
- All managers, supervisors, employees and volunteers are aware of their obligations and responsibilities in relation to handling grievances;
- Any grievance that comes to the attention of managers or supervisors is handled in the most appropriate manner at the earliest opportunity.

## PROCEDURES

### Employment Practices

All managers and supervisors should be aware of the possible ramifications of their actions when dealing with employee/volunteer issues. They must ensure that all employees and volunteers are treated with fairness, equality and respect.

If there are any doubts or queries in relation to how to deal with a particular set of circumstances, managers or supervisors should contact the Human Resources Department for advice at the earliest opportunity.

Where a grievance or dispute has been brought to a Manager's attention, they should assess whether the employee involved is covered by an Award or Agreement, and if so should refer to that document for grievance procedures. If the employee or volunteer involved is not covered by such a document, the guidelines below should be followed.

## Grievances and Dispute Resolution

An employee or volunteer who considers that they have a dispute or grievance should raise the matter with their immediate supervisor as a first step towards resolution. The two parties should discuss the matter openly and work together to achieve a desired outcome.

The Manager or Supervisor should check for clarification of the issue to ensure they fully understand the complainant's concern. Managers should follow the standard procedure of offering the employee or volunteer the opportunity to have an independent witness at the discussion, ensuring they follow the steps outlined below:

- If more than one person is present, establish the role of each person.
- Outline the process that is to be followed.
- Inform the parties that any information obtained in the conduct of the review is confidential.
- Listen to the complainant and diagnose the problem.
- Take accurate and detailed notes of all conversations (including dates, people involved) and attach any supporting documentation.
- If deemed necessary, provide the employee/volunteers with a written summary of the meeting and clarification of the next steps to be taken.

The Manager must ensure that the manner in which the meeting is conducted will be conducive to maintaining positive working relationships, and will provide a fair, objective and independent analysis of the situation.

All parties are to maintain complete confidentiality at all times.

If the matter is not resolved and the employee or volunteer wishes to pursue it, the issue should be discussed with a Human Resources Officer, then, if necessary, the CEO. Again, the matter is to be discussed openly and objectively with management to ensure it is fully understood.

If the grievance/dispute is one of a confidential or serious nature involving the employee or volunteer's Manager, the complainant may discuss the issue directly with the Human Resources Department or the Parish Priest.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

- Bullying Policy
- Anti-Discrimination Policy

## AUTHORISATION

## PARISH PRIEST