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# **Complaints Policy and Procedures**

**Society of the Divine Word (SVD)**  
**- IBP British District**

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## **Policy Purpose**

The Society of the Divine Word (SVD) – IBP British District views complaints as an opportunity to learn, improve practice, and put things right where possible. We are committed to responding to complaints in a fair, transparent, timely, and respectful manner.

The aims of this policy are:

- To provide a fair and accessible complaints procedure
- To publicise how complaints may be made
- To ensure that all members, staff, and Trustees know how to respond to complaints
- To ensure complaints are handled consistently, fairly, and without delay
- To resolve complaints wherever possible and repair relationships
- To identify learning that supports continuous improvement

## **Definition of a Complaint**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the work, administration, services, systems, processes, or conduct of the SVD IBP British District, including its Religious members, employees, or governance arrangements.

A complaint may arise where an individual believes the SVD IBP British District has:

- Failed to provide a service or provided an unacceptable standard of service
- Made an error or acted unfairly
- Failed to act appropriately or responsibly

This policy does not apply to staff employment matters, which should be addressed through the Grievance Policy.

## **Concern or Complaint**

We distinguish between:

- Concerns: issues raised informally, often capable of early resolution
- Complaints: formal expressions of dissatisfaction requiring investigation

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Concerns should be raised as early as possible with a member of staff or leadership. If a concern is not resolved, or if the individual wishes to make a formal complaint, this procedure should be followed.

## **Safeguarding Matters**

- Safeguarding concerns or allegations must be reported and managed under the Safeguarding Policy.
- This Complaints Policy does apply where an individual believes that a safeguarding concern was not handled appropriately, fairly, or in accordance with policy.

## **Confidentiality**

All complaints will be handled sensitively and confidentially. Information will only be shared with those who need to know and will be processed in line with data protection legislation.

## **Complaints Procedure**

### **How to Make a Complaint**

Complaints may be made in the following ways:

1. By telephone  
+44 7483 154202 (UK)  
+353 (01) 6680904 (Ireland)
2. By email  
svdibp@svdibp.org  
provincial@svdireland.com
3. In writing  
Fr Timothy Lehane SVD  
Provincial  
Divine Word Missionaries  
1 Pembroke Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4  
Ireland

All complaints will be acknowledged within two working days.

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# Handling Complaints

The person receiving the complaint will:

- Record full details of the complaint
- Enter it into the Complaints Register
- Note the relationship of the complainant to the SVD IBP British District (e.g. Religious member, employee, parishioner, survivor)
- Take appropriate steps to investigate
- Provide an initial response or progress update within 15 working days

Complaints are overseen by the District Superior and his council and may be escalated to the Provincial and his Council depending on seriousness or complexity.

## Stages of the Complaints Procedure

### Stage 1 – Investigation

- The complaint will be investigated by an appropriate person appointed by the District Superior.
- Where the complaint concerns an individual, they will be informed and given an opportunity to respond.
- A written response outlining findings and actions will normally be provided within 15 working days.

### Stage 2 – Provincial and His Council Review

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 1 outcome, they may request a review by the Provincial and his Council.

- The request will be acknowledged within five working days
- The Council may review the investigation or appoint a senior independent reviewer
- A written outcome will normally be provided within one month

The Stage 2 decision is final within the SVD IBP British District.

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## **Stage 3 – External Review (Safeguarding-Related Complaints)**

Where a complaint relates to safeguarding, and both Stage 1 and Stage 2 have been exhausted without satisfactory resolution, the complainant may refer the matter to:

### **Catholic Safeguarding Standards Agency (CSSA)**

as the final external stage for unresolved safeguarding-related complaints about how the matter was handled.

This does not replace statutory reporting routes, which may be accessed at any stage if appropriate.

## **Other External Bodies (Non-Safeguarding)**

For non-safeguarding complaints, individuals may seek independent advice from:

- A solicitor - [Home | The Law Society](#)
- Citizens Advice Bureau - [Citizens Advice](#)
- The Charity Commission - <https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-charity>

## **Withdrawal of a Complaint**

A complaint may be withdrawn at any time by written notice. However, the SVD IBP British District may continue to act if failure to do so could result in harm to an individual or the organisation.

## **Confidentiality and Whistleblowing**

Where complaints overlap with whistleblowing, confidentiality will be respected as far as possible. Disclosure may be required where legally necessary, including to statutory authorities or safeguarding bodies.

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## Data Protection

Personal data will be stored securely and used only for the purpose of handling the complaint, in line with the SVD IBP British District's data retention policies.

## Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed by the Provincial and His Council / The District Superior and his Council / Safeguarding Lead and his team every three years.

All complaints and learning outcomes will be reviewed to support continuous improvement.

<b>Date of Document Implementation:</b>	<b>20 January 2026</b>
<b>Date Review Due:</b>	<b>20 January 2029</b>