

# Complaints

procedure



Our policy is:

The following is a guide to making a complaint about any area or aspect of the “Company” and should be read in conjunction with the full “Company” policies:

Complaints Policy

Safeguarding Children Policy

Safeguarding Adults Policy

Whistleblowing Policy

Safer Recruitment Policy

## **Policy Statement**

This document sets out to provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint.

For the purposes of this document Bristol City Football Club, Bristol City Academy, Bristol City Women’s Football Club, Bristol City Robins Foundation, Bristol Bears Rugby, Bristol Bears Women, Bristol Bears Academy, Bristol Bears Foundation, Bristol Flyers, Bristol Flyers Foundation, Bristol Sport Foundation, Ashton Gate and Bristol Sport are collectively referred to as “the Company”.

## **Principles**

The transparency of the Complaints procedure is to help anyone who wishes to make a complaint. It also ensures that everyone associated with the “Company” knows what to do if a complaint is received. It is to ensure that all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way and to make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired. In addition, the “Company” will use this procedure to gather information which will help to improve all areas of the business.

## **Definition of a complaint**

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of the “Company”.

## **Dealing with complaints**

Initial concerns (informal process) The “Company” takes informal concerns seriously with the hope that the concern does not develop into a formal complaint. However, formal complaints should always follow the complaints procedure.

In most cases the ‘Team or Department Manager’ or the individual delivering a coaching or teaching session, may receive the first approach. It would be helpful if staff were able to resolve issues on the spot. Recognising an error and apologising (without prejudice), where necessary, may result in a swift and satisfactory resolution.

Where a concern or complaint has been made a member of staff will follow this up, usually by telephone, in order to gain greater clarity. In some cases, it may be that a staff member or parent wishes to request a meeting with a senior member of staff. Any such request should be made to the appropriate Head of Department, Senior Manager or Academy Manager,

preferably in writing. The request will need to include sufficient details to allow that member of staff to decide whether a meeting is necessary, who should be asked to attend the meeting and to make any necessary preparations.

Any person, staff member, player or parent may make a formal safeguarding complaint at any time by putting the complaint in writing to the "Company". Safeguarding complaints should go to the Senior Safeguarding Officer (SSO) or the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) for that area of the "Company".

If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

The person handling the complaint should acknowledge the complaint **within one week** of receipt. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaints procedure should be attached. Ideally complainants should receive a reply within 7 days and a definitive reply within 4 weeks. If this is not possible, because for example an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

### **Dealing with safeguarding complaints**

Formal procedures: The formal procedures will need to be invoked when initial attempts to resolve the issue are unsuccessful and the person raising the concern remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the matter further. The request for a formal referral should be acknowledged within a week of receiving it. The acknowledgement should say who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply. An FA referral form should be sent to the complainant.

The complainant should be asked to clarify their complaint by putting it in writing and advised to clearly identify the nature of the complaint, including examples of poor practice; details of those involved; dates; times and venue where the incident(s) occurred if at all possible.

The Senior Safeguarding Officer (SSO) together with the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) is the member of staff that has responsibility for the management of the "Company's" safeguarding complaints procedure. The SSO may call together a panel of appropriate people to deal with any formal complaint, which is made. Dependent upon the nature of the complaint and who is involved, this may include The Head of Department, Academy Manager, Head of Welfare, HR. The Executive Board Safeguarding Manager (Doug Harman) would not be included at this stage as they may be required to have a role in any appeals procedure. Any member of staff or volunteer cited in a complaint must not be the person to whom a written complaint is passed to deal with.

### **Child protection within safeguarding**

The "Company" will refer any child protection concern, allegation or disclosure to the appropriate statutory agencies and governing authorities within the time scale of receipt of the information. Historical allegations of child abuse must also be referred to the police.

### **Resolving complaints**

The "Company" will keep in mind ways in which a complaint can be resolved. It might be sufficient to acknowledge that the complaint is valid in whole or in part. In addition, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of the following:

- An apology
- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have been handled differently
- An assurance that the event complained of will not happen again
- An explanation of the steps that have or are to be taken to ensure that it will not happen again
- An undertaking to review club policies in light of the complaint

**All resolutions MUST be recorded.**

### **Useful tips**

It is helpful if complainants are encouraged to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem at any stage. An admission that the club could have handled the situation better is not the same as an admission of negligence.

An effective procedure will identify areas of agreement between parties. It is also of equal importance to clarify any misunderstanding that might have occurred as this can create a positive atmosphere in which to discuss any outstanding issues. It is important to note however, that should a complainant raise an entirely new, separate complaint, it must be responded to in accordance with the Complaints procedure. All staff or senior officers involved in dealing with the complaints process should have received appropriate training for the role.

### **Selecting the most appropriate procedure**

Any initial approach may have the potential to develop into a complicated complaint. With that in mind it is very important to follow the appropriate procedure from the outset, so that the interests of the individuals may be safeguarded and in order to seek to identify a resolution as quickly as possible.

**All complaints or concerns and outcome must be recorded.**

The lead member of staff is responsible for informing the SSO/ DSO of any incidents as there may be a reoccurrence in the future.

### **Appeals**

The member of staff shall have a right to appeal to the Board against any disciplinary decision.

They should inform the board in writing of his/her wish to appeal within seven days of the date of notification to him/her.

The board will conduct an appeal hearing as soon as possible thereafter at which the member of staff will be given the opportunity to state his/her case either personally or with a representative.

The decision of the board will be notified to the member of staff in writing within seven days.

The above appeals section should follow the “Company” procedures for appeals and where appropriate the opportunity to go outside the club to the relevant professional authority should be provided.

Date reviewed	Position	Owner
August 2020	Executive Board	M.A. Martin
August 2021		

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