



BRISTOL ROVERS
FOOTBALL CLUB

☎ 0117 909 66 48
🌐 bristolrovers.co.uk

COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Our Policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at the Club knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

Definition of a Complaint

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

Dealing with complaints – initial concerns (informal process)

The Club takes informal concerns seriously with the hope of the concern not developing into a formal complaint. However, formal complaints should always follow the complaints procedure.

Recognising an error and apologising (without prejudice) where necessary may result in a swift and satisfactory resolution.

If a concern or complaint has been made, a member of staff will contact the complainant as soon as possible to gain greater clarification of the situation or in some cases it may be that the complainant wishes to request a meeting with a senior member of staff. Any such request should be made via the relevant Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), preferably in writing. The request will need to include sufficient details to allow the DSO to decide whether a meeting is necessary, who should be asked to attend the meeting and to make any necessary preparations.

Any person, player or parent may make a formal safeguarding complaint at any time by putting the complaint in writing to the Club. A concern would be classed as “safeguarding” when it relates to either:

- a child or adult at risk identified as suffering or likely to suffer from significant harm; or
- a concern in relation to a member of Club staff abusing or causing harm, either physically or emotionally, to a child/adult at risk within their care.

Complaints should go to either the Senior Safeguarding Manager or DSO. If the complaint relates to a specific person working at the Club, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

The person handling the complaint within a week (where possible) should acknowledge complaints. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this complaint’s procedure should be attached.

Ideally complainants should receive a reply within a week and a definitive reply within a month. If this is not possible because for example, if an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report, or update, should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will likely 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.

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 DSO is the member of staff that has responsibility for the management of the Club's safeguarding complaints procedure. The DSO may call together a panel of appropriate people to deal with any formal complaint which is made. The Senior Safeguarding Manager would not normally 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 Club will refer to the appropriate statutory agencies and football authorities any child protection concern, allegation, or disclosure, regardless of the timescale of receipt of the information. Historical allegations of child abuse must be referred to the Police.

Resolving Complaints

The Club 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 the above **MUST** be recorded. 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 this complaint's procedure. The Club will ensure that those staff or senior officers involved in dealing with the complaints process 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. For that reason, 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 will be recorded. All staff should inform the DSO of any incidents as there may be a reoccurrence in the future and it is helpful for the DSO to have background information. The Club may reject a complaint at any time if, in the reviewer's opinion, the complaint is considered vexatious.

Appeals

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response to their complaint, then the matter should be forwarded to Senior Safeguarding Manager who will respond within three weeks (where possible). The decision of the Senior Safeguarding Manager. Safeguarding Manager is final.

The above appeals section should follow any Club procedures for appeals. The complainant should be given the opportunity to go outside the Club to the EFL if they so wish. In some circumstances it may be appropriate for a complainant to report their concerns to an external body, such as the EFL. If the complaints procedure does not result in satisfactory resolution, the complaint should be submitted to the EFL.

In the event of a complaint the Club's DSO's can be contacted using the details below:

Senior Safeguarding Manager (Club)

Louise Smith
Safeguarding@bristolrovers.co.uk
Tel: 07766022731

Designated Safeguarding Officer (Club)

Nikki Parker
Safeguarding@bristolrovers.co.uk

EFL Safeguarding Department (EFL)

Alex Richards
01772 325940
safeguarding@efl.com

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Board	1	18.1.2022	18.01.23	Louise Smith