



# Complaints Policy and Procedures

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## 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

### 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
- 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 Designated Safeguarding Officer. 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 complaints 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 an 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.

### Formal Procedure

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 the 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 for 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 complaints 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 outcomes will be recorded. All staff should inform the DSO of any incidents as there may be re-occurrence 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 the Senior Safeguarding Manager who will respond within three weeks (where possible). The decision of the Senior 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 DSOs can be contacted using the details below:

### **Designated Safeguarding Officer (Club)**

Nicola Dartnall-Smith

Email: [NicolaDartnall-Smith@bristolrovers.co.uk](mailto:NicolaDartnall-Smith@bristolrovers.co.uk)

Phone: 07715 255299

### **Senior Safeguarding Manager (Club)**

Louise Smith

Email: [louisesmith@bristolrovers.co.uk](mailto:louisesmith@bristolrovers.co.uk)

Phone: 07766 022731

### **EFL Safeguarding Department (EFL)**

Alex Richards

Email: [safeguarding@efl.com](mailto:safeguarding@efl.com)

Phone: 01772 325940