

### Complaints / Discipline Procedure

The club will adhere to all disciplinary procedures set by the relevant county associations and leagues to which the club belongs.

From time to time, we will be asked to investigate and mediate internal disputes between members such as parents, players and coaches over issues ranging from behaviour to disputes over playing time. This internal complaints procedure is to enable us to ensure these matters are dealt with in a fair and transparent manner.

Specific reference should be made to the following codes of conduct when considering the grounds for any complaint:-

- o Club Constitution
- o Club Ethos
- o Coach / Managers Code of Conduct / Pledge.
- o Parents / Spectators Code of Conduct / Pledge.
- o Players Code of Conduct / Pledge.
- o Club Discrimination Policy.
- o Social Media Policy.

In the event that any member feels that he or she has suffered discrimination in any way, or that the Club Policies, Rules or Codes of Conduct have been broken, they should follow the procedures below:-

- 1) Report the matter to the Chair, Club Secretary or Welfare Officer in writing within three (3) days of the incident. This can be submitted directly or c/o another club official not involved in the incident.

*NB: The club provides a standard document for the submission of complaints which is available from any committee member or team manager but its' use is not mandatory. It does however provide an acknowledgement slip for the complainant to retain to enable traceability of submitted complaints.*

- 2) Written complaints will be accepted providing they include the following details:-
  - o The name of the complaint originator.
  - o Details of what, when, and where the incident took place.
  - o Names of any witnesses (if known / applicable).
  - o Names of any others who have been treated in a similar way (if known / applicable).
  - o Details of any former complaints made about the incident; date, when and to whom made. (if applicable).
  - o A preference for a solution to the incident.
- 3) The individual accepting the complaint should acknowledge receipt, requesting any additional information as may be required to make an informed assessment as to its validity.

Initial assessment will consider if the complaint is dissatisfaction (poor practice) or a breach of our policies.

Dissatisfaction (poor practice) e.g limited game time , personality clash can be dealt with informally through discussion by the chairman or CWO with the individual.

For a potential breach of policies a formal investigation will be carried out. The Club Chair or another committee member not involved in the incident will appoint a Disciplinary Committee (DC) to investigate the complaint as they see appropriate within three (3) days of accepting the complaint.

The DC will consist of three (3) people, at least one of whom will be a Club Committee member (normally the Child Welfare Officer) and at least one whom is not on the Club Committee and will have a nominated Chairperson.

The DC must not have any conflict of interest or prior involvement in the case. The purpose of the role is to objectively establish the facts of the matter and collect evidence in order to achieve a complete view of the matter.

- 4) The DC will review the complaint and send written acknowledgement for being in receipt of the complaint to the complainant within 7 days of the complaint being accepted by the club confirming names and club positions of the DC members.
- 5) The DC will decide initially on whether there is a case to answer, and if so, whether the potential breach is deemed to be "moderate" or "major" or alternatively if the complaint relates to an example of poor practice that may require a change of policy and communication to volunteers. The aim is to determine this ASAP to avoid unnecessary delay or distress to all involved.

During the investigative process questions should be as open as possible to allow the interviewee to provide an unfiltered account. Useful open questions to use could be, 'Please take me through the events in your own words giving as much detail as possible'; 'Why did you do/say that?'; 'Were there any witnesses to what happened?'

Leading questions (e.g. 'would you agree that...?') should be avoided unless there is no other way or finding an answer to the question.

- 6) A "major" breach would involve an act that is deemed by the DC to be likely to bring the Club into disrepute or liable. This includes but is not limited to the following:-
  - o Acts of violence.
  - o Extreme aggression.
  - o Serious abuse (verbal or physical) of referees, match officials, spectators, club members, players of either side or opposition team officials.
  - o With-holding or mis-appropriation of club funds.
  - o Organizing events under the banner of the club's name without prior consent from the Club committee.

For a potential "major" breach, the accused party will be instantly suspended from all club duties without prejudice pending an investigation by the DC to be completed within 14 days of receiving the complaint and if the complaint is upheld by the DC will lead to suspension or expulsion from the club.

- 7) All other breaches of our codes of conduct would be considered "moderate".



- 8) The DC may choose to conduct 1-2-1 interviews, gather information / statements by email (where the parties are over 18 years of age) or conduct a formal hearing to which all parties would be invited. If one of the parties is a child then they must be accompanied by an adult.
- 9) The manager of the team to which the member belongs maybe invited to the hearing and will be allowed to speak at it but will not be party to the decision process.
- 10) Where the potential breach involves a member of the Committee. The DC will be chaired by someone not on the Club Committee.
- 11) The DC will have the power to:
  - o Verbally warn as to future conduct (to remain active for 6 months).
  - o Issue a written warning as to future conduct (to remain active for 12 months).
  - o Recommend to the Club Chair, suspension from membership.
  - o Recommend to the Club Chair, permanent exclusion from membership.

For a "moderate" breach, the likely outcome would be a verbal or written warning to the member as to future conduct and will be recorded by the club.

Where the decision is for "no case to answer" or "poor practice", the offended party and the person(s) accused of the breach will be informed of the decision and reasons why. Any lessons learnt will be shared where it is felt appropriate.

**Members of the Clubs Management Committee have the powers to instantly dismiss any member or club official from the club should they witness a major breach.**

## **Appeal**

Any individual who has action taken against them has the right of appeal to the Club Chairman. The Chair or if the chair has a link to the case a nominated member of the senior committee (Chair, Secretary, Treasurer or CWO) will review all information and will be the sole decision maker for any appeal.

Any appeal will only be accepted if made within 7 days of being notified of the decision.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the way the Club has dealt with their complaint they can refer the matter to the County FA, however, the County FA's Complaints Procedure is in place to allow a review of how the Club have responded to an incident; it is not a re-investigation of the initial case. Clubs and Leagues are independent membership bodies governed by their own internal policies and procedures. It is not the County FA's role to determine who should or should not be granted membership or appointed to a role. They can only review whether such a decision has been made in a fair and appropriate manner and only when the parties involved have failed to resolve the matter internally and there are no FA regulations in place for redress

## **Specific Playing Issues**

The following apply specifically to incidents occurring as part of a football match where a Caution or Dismissal is issued.

- 1) Yellow and Red cards (cautions and dismissals) – It is the team manager's duty to report all yellow and red cards to the club secretary within 5 days of the event. This may be by phone, letter or email. The report should include the match date, venue, opposition, name of player, type of card and offence, name of referee and whether the referee was qualified.
- 2) Any player receiving a caution or sending off has the right of appeal with the LFA. The club secretary must be made aware of this with 48 hours of receiving the caution / sending off in writing fully detailing the grounds of appeal and will start the appeal process with the LFA. Fees for any appeal will not be covered by the club if the appeal is lost and any increase in the fine levied will not be met by the club.
- 3) If a player, or the club, is fined by the league or county association for a Yellow or Red card, the club will pay the fine but request players consider making a donation to the club to cover costs.
- 4) Red Cards – The club will follow appropriate FA guidelines applicable at the time according to the nature of the red card
- 5) The club will monitor for repeat offenders and may request managers talk directly to players and parents regarding conduct. The club will consider suspension or expulsion if it deems the level is bringing the clubs name into disrepute.





# Complaints Form

Originator of Complaint

Date of incident

Time of incident (approx)

Place

Suspected Breach of:

Coach/Managers Code of Conduct

Players Code of Conduct

Parents / Spectators Code of Conduct

Club Pledge

Club Discrimination Policy

Other

Level of breach

Major

Moderate

Minor

Brief Details

Have there been any similar incidents in past ? (outline details)

Names of Witnesses to this incident

Personal Preference For Resolution

Tear off slip

Acknowledgement of Complaint from

Incident Date

Received by

Date