



## DURHAM COUNTY FA COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### INTRODUCTION

Durham County FA are committed to managing any complaints in a fair, prompt and effective way. This policy has been developed to provide comprehensive and transparent guidance for how complaints will be managed, and will be issued to any individuals or organisations making a complaint. Individuals are encouraged to raise their concerns and those making complaints will not be discriminated against, and will be supported by the County throughout.

For the purpose of this policy, a complaint can be defined as a statement of dissatisfaction, provided in writing, from a person or company, about the provision of, or failure to provide a service. For the avoidance of doubt, this policy does not extend to complaints related to disciplinary sanctions which are addressed in line with FA regulations.

Initially, the member of staff with who the concern or dissatisfaction is raised with may be able to offer a resolution. If the individual or organisation with the concern is not satisfied by the response received by the member of staff, or if they are unwilling to report the concern to that member of staff initially, they should request that the matter is referred to the Head of Department. If the individual or organisation is not satisfied with how the Head of Department has managed or resolved the concern, they have the option of making a formal complaint to take the matter further.

### PROCESS

#### *Stage 1*

Formal complaints should be sent in writing to the Company Secretary. The nature of the complaint should be detailed along with examples of perceived poor practice and any specific incidents, along with supporting evidence such as email conversations or letters.

On receipt of the Complaint, the Company Secretary will acknowledge the complaint and state that it will be investigated, providing a copy of this policy. Durham County FA aims to offer a resolution to all complaints within fourteen working days. However, if a resolution is not possible within this time frame, an update will be provided on the fourteenth working day and then on a weekly basis as to the status of the investigation until a resolution is possible.

The Company Secretary will manage the complaint going forward and liaise with both the complainant and the relevant department(s) to clarify the complaint, identify areas of agreement between parties, clarify any misunderstandings, and encourage complainants to state what actions they feel might resolve the problem. This may happen over email, by telephone, or by arranging a meeting. Should a meeting be arranged, minutes will be taken by the Company Secretary and later circulated to all those present as a record of the discussions and outcomes of that meeting. Requests for reasonable amendments will be accepted.



If the Company Secretary is unavailable, or should the complaint involve them, the complaint will be managed and investigated by the Association's President.

Once the investigation has been completed, the County will send an outcome letter to the complainant. This response will acknowledge the complaint and state the outcomes of the investigation. If the investigation highlights poor practice by the County or a member of County staff, the complainant may be offered some or all the following:

- An apology
- An explanation
- An admission that the situation could have or should have been handled differently
- An explanation of steps that have been taken or will be taken to ensure it does not reoccur again
- An undertaking to review County policies and staff training as a result of the complaint.

All correspondence related to the complaint will be retained securely, and all complaints and the handling of them are reviewed. This is in order to ascertain that the complaint was handled in the most appropriate way, and whether there are any learning points from the complaint which could aid the organisation to improve policies and procedures going forward.

### *Stage 2*

In the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the way the Company Secretary has handled or resolved their complaint as detailed in the final outcome letter, they have the right to appeal within ten working days of their receipt of the letter.

Appeals should be sent in writing to the Associations President. The President will acknowledge the complaint, assess all the information, and ascertain whether the subsequent investigation and complaint outcome was fair, prompt, and effective.

The President will aim within fourteen working days to either confirm in writing that the handling of the complaint and actions taken were in line with the County's policies and procedures, or whether further actions are to be taken. In the event that this cannot be concluded in this timeframe, an update will be provided while the investigation is ongoing.

In the event that a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome letter from the President of the Association then they should contact the Football Association at [customer.relations@thefa.com](mailto:customer.relations@thefa.com)

## **SAFEGUARDING COMPLAINTS**

If the complaint is related to a safeguarding concern, the County's policy for managing safeguarding concerns will also be followed and the Designated Safeguarding Officer will investigate the complaint alongside the Company Secretary.

