

Berks & Bucks FA

Complaints Procedure



Our aim is to support your journey in football, whether this is as a player, volunteer, official, coach or as a spectator. Occasionally, things do not go to plan and you may have a complaint that you would like us to investigate. This document sets out what you can expect from the Berks & Bucks FA, including what types of complaints can be considered, the complaints process from submission to outcomes and how to escalate the matter further, should you wish to.

General Provisions

The Berks & Bucks FA adheres to the following principals regarding complaints submitted against our Members:

- 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. We can only review whether such a decision has been made in a fair and appropriate manner.
- Complaints should only be escalated to the County FA when the parties involved have failed to resolve the matter internally and there are no FA regulations in place for redress.
- The Complaints Procedure is in place to allow a review of how the body being complained about have responded to an incident; it is not a re-investigation of the initial case.

We will ensure that:

- It is clear how and where complaints can be submitted, who will consider the complaint and what the potential outcomes will be.
- Complaints are resolved as quickly and effectively as possible.
- The member of staff considering a complaint has the appropriate knowledge and experience to effectively advise on the matter.
- Complainants are aware of their options following the resolution of their complaint if they are not satisfied with the outcome.

Prior to Submitting a complaint

Before a complaint is submitted to the Berks & Bucks FA, it is essential that every effort has been made to resolve the matter internally. Each club or League should have a constitution or membership document outlining their internal complaints procedure. Failing this The FA's Standard Code of Rules or Standard Club Rules should be followed.

If you are not satisfied with the initial attempts to resolve the matter and the issue has become "deadlocked" with no prospect of resolution, you are entitled to submit a complaint to the County FA.

If you have submitted a complaint to your Club or League and they have failed to acknowledge or progress your complaint within one calendar month, you can escalate the complaint to the County FA.

Where the Berks & Bucks FA receives a complaint which does not meet the criteria above, the matter will be referred back to the Club or League for initial resolution.

Where a complaint can be resolved through the application of FA Regulations (for example disciplinary procedures, League Appeals, or Football Debt Recovery), you will be advised of the relevant procedure/s.

Submitting a Complaint against a Member Club/League

Complaints should be submitted in writing to our Business Support Administrator, Kim Wise, via email at Kim.Wise@Berks-BucksFA.com or by post to Berks & Bucks FA, First Floor Stratton Court, Kimber Road, Abingdon, OX14 1SG. If there is a conflict of interest (perceived or otherwise) the complaint should be submitted directly to the Chief Executive, Liz Verrall, via Liz.Verrall@Berks-BucksFA.com, or another senior member of staff as appropriate.

When submitting a complaint, please include all details of your concerns, your desired outcome, and any material evidence to support your complaint, including correspondence relating to internal attempts to resolve the matter. It is not the role of the Berks & Bucks FA to re-investigate an incident which has already been considered by one of our members. As such, it is only in exceptionally rare incidents that we will contact third parties for information. Any evidence or statements you wish to be considered should therefore be included as part of your initial complaint.

The Berks & Bucks FA will acknowledge your case within 48 hours and confirm if we are able to consider your complaint. A complaint may not be accepted if one or more of the following applies:

- The complaint falls outside our remit (e.g. refereeing decisions);
- Appropriate attempts to resolve the matter internally have not been made;
- The complaint is deemed to be frivolous or vexatious;
- The complaint is subject to current legal action.

Please note that we will not accept or acknowledge a complaint submitted via Social Media. We monitor our social media accounts constantly and where possible we will seek to address comments submitted in this manner either privately over social media, or by signposting individuals to the formal Complaints Procedure.

The Complaints Process

Where the Berks & Bucks FA is able to accept your complaint, the matter will be passed to the Head of the relevant department who will assign the complaint to a member of staff with the relevant experience and knowledge to consider the matter. The member of staff will adopt procedures they deem appropriate for the resolution of the complaint. This may include creating an internal working group or delegating responsibility as required.

The Investigating Officer will contact the complainant within seven days of the complaint being received to acknowledge receipt and request any additional information they may require. The Investigating Officer will also request observations and evidence from the body being complained against in response to the complaint. In order to adequately investigate the complaint, we may need to share some of the initial correspondence with the party being complained against. This will only be released on a need-to-know basis at the Investigating Officer's discretion.

The Berks & Bucks FA aims to resolve all complaints within one calendar month of receipt; however it should be noted that this is not always feasible depending on the complexity of the complaint or the level of investigation required. We also acknowledge that the vast majority of those involved in grassroots football are volunteers, and we will therefore work with all parties to provide them with as much opportunity as is deemed appropriate to represent themselves adequately.

You are entitled to withdraw your complaint at any time.

Outcomes of a Complaint

After considering all available evidence, the Investigating Officer will provide their observations on the complaint with one of the following resolutions:

1. Rejection of the complaint with no further action to be taken, either because the case has no merit, the matter has been withdrawn or both parties have reached a mutual resolution;
2. Formal disciplinary action under FA Regulations if appropriate;
3. Upholding of the complaint (either in full or in part) with detailed recommended actions. This may include the body being complained against re-investigating an incident or re-considering a decision.

Please note that our recommendations are non-binding; however, under normal circumstance we would expect our members to implement them. If a member Club or League is not able or prepared to implement our recommendations they are expected to provide written reasons as to why not, and provide a proposed alternative resolution to the complainant and County FA.

Escalation of a Complaint

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint, the matter can be referred to the Chief Executive Officer via email at Liz.Verrall@Berks-BucksFA.com for review. No new evidence can be entered at this stage. If the complaint is accepted by the Chief Executive, a Grievance Panel consisting of members of the Berks & Bucks FA Council may be convened to consider the complaint. This is the final stage of review within the Berks & Bucks FA, and will be considered our final position.

If you are still not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint following a review by the Chief Executive and/or Grievance Panel, you can refer your complaint to The FA via:

Customer Relations
The Football Association
Wembley Stadium
PO Box 1966
London
SW1P 9EQ

Monitoring of the Complaints Process

Each complaint will be logged by the Berks & Bucks FA, allocated a reference number, and the outcome recorded to ensure consistency. An annual report will be submitted to the Berks & Bucks FA Board of Directors detailing the number of complaints, general nature of the problems and recommended actions.

Any personal data will be handled in accordance with our Information Handling Policy.

The Berks & Bucks FA reserve the right to review and vary the Complaints Procedure as deemed appropriate.