



A THRIVING LOCAL GAME

SUFFOLK COUNTY
FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

SUFFOLK COUNTY FA COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Suffolk 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 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 or safeguarding complaints which are dealt with in accordance with the Association's Safeguarding Policy.**

Stage 1

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 respective 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.

Stage 2

Formal complaints should be sent in writing to the Chief Executive Officer. 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.

Suffolk FA reserve the right to reject the complaint on the grounds the complaint should be dealt with by a different organization, for example another County FA or a club. Or should it be deemed more appropriate, Suffolk FA may ask the relevant department at The FA to conduct the investigation.

On receipt of the Complaint, the Chief Executive Officer will acknowledge the complaint and state that it will be investigated, providing a copy of this policy. Suffolk 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 Chief Executive Officer will manage the complaint and liaise with both the complainant and the relevant department(s)/individual(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 Chief Executive Officer and later

circulated to all those present as a record of the discussions and outcomes of that meeting. Requests for reasonable amendments will be considered.

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 in the future.

If the Chief Executive Officer is unavailable, or should the complaint involve them, the complaint should be raised with the Association's Chair. If the Chair is unavailable, or should the complaint involve them, the complaint should be raised to the Vice Chair or another Director of the Association. In such instances and if the complainant remains dissatisfied, the complainant may by-pass stage 3.

Stage 3

In the event that the complainant is not satisfied with the way the Chief Executive Officer 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 Association's Chair, Vice Chair or another Director of the Association. The recipient will acknowledge the complaint, assess all the information, and ascertain whether the subsequent investigation and complaint outcome was fair, prompt, and effective.

Within fourteen days the recipient will 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.

Stage 4

In the event that a complainant is not satisfied with the outcome letter from the Chair, Vice Chair or another Director of the Association then they should contact the Football Association at customer.relations@thefa.com.

Stage 5

The final option is for the complainant to refer their complaint to the Independent Football Ombudsman, which has a remit to receive and adjudicate on complaints from football supporters and participants which have not been resolved by the football authorities.
Tel: 0800 588 4066 / Email: contact@TheIFO.co.uk



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