

Winchester Rugby Football Club
Complaints Handling Procedure

Published by RFC Committee 2018



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1) Club Statement and Policy Introduction

Winchester Rugby Football Club (WRFC) is committed to Best Practise and the delivery of high quality work always. We are committed to Equal Inclusion and Opportunities and aims to offer a safe and secure environment where Players, Parents, Coaches, Staff Volunteers and other Club Representatives cooperate in the shared goal of promoting the charter, ethics, ethos, attitude and skills of the game of rugby football and in accordance with RFU/IRB and the law.

As a Club that promotes openness and honesty, and that has a desire for continuous development and improve, we acknowledge that there may be occasions when our level of service falls short of that which can be reasonably expected by our members (as outlined in the Club Rules, Members Handbook/Code of Conduct and displayed in the club bar)

In this case there must be afforded to all member, affiliate or employee an avenue for opinions and complaints to be heard (however serious).and on these occasions, we would like to be informed as soon as possible so any grievance and complaints can be managed in a defined procedure that allows Members (including Players, Parents and Coaches), Spectators, volunteers or visitors to raise complaints about any perceived issue (example shown under Types of Complaints).

Welcoming Regular Communication

In many cases though, through regular communication, and all parties being encouraged to voice their opinion, then the need to complain officially may never arise.

Coaches, Coordinators and other Club Representatives can often be found in the bar after training sessions or matches as this is the usual venue to discuss matters involving their age group or your complaint in an informal manner.

They are all open and approachable, and all representatives shall treat any issue or complaint with the correct attitude and understanding that is expected of a Winchester RFC Coaches, Coordinators and other Club Representatives and as described in Winchester RFC codes of conduct.

Our Representatives will be happy to arrange one-to-one sessions to discuss issues outside of the match or training session times or in an environment outside of the Club premises. Your comments are always welcome, especially when made in a constructive manner away from the high emotions of the touchline.

2) Registering A Formal Complaint

This document tells you what you should do if you have a complaint about the behaviour of a member of WRFC or its staff. This procedure applies to complaints against members and both paid and voluntary staff. Any complaint will be taken seriously.

All players, parents, coaches and volunteers are subject to the Rules & Regulations of the RFU and Winchester Rugby Club, and a Code of conduct (A set of Club Rules is available on the club's website).

If you feel that you would like to follow up on your communication, then our Winchester RFC Coaches, Coordinators and other Club Representatives will be happy to inform you (without judgment or attitude) how to proceed to submit a complaint in writing via our website to the Safeguarding representative.

If you wish to submit the complaint anonymously to a special committee team for review without Informal Communication with coaches or committee members (as above) then please go directly to our website and submit a complaint form directly.

Categories of Complaints

To help the complaints process, a number of potential complaints / issues have been listed below. This list is by no means exhaustive, nor in order of seriousness, and does not mean to undermine or belittle a complaint if categorized in the "minor issue" section. It is meant to serve as a reference and to assist with how to raise an issue or to make a complaint. All Types of complaint will be taken seriously, however some may be more serious than others.

Minor Issues

- Differences of opinion
- Complaints over coaching style
- Poor communication from Coaches to other Coaches / Players / Parents
- Coaches failing to advise colleagues that he / she is unable to attend that week
- Parents failing to return to collect a player / child at a time (or in the younger age groups leaving a child at a session unattended)

Major Issues

- Breaking the Law (e.g. theft or damage to property)
- Matters of breach of contract (employment)
- Matter that breach the clubs charter
- Repeated Minor Issues
- The Safety of Club activities
- Discrimination, harassment or bullying
- Data Protection Policy
- Safeguarding Policy Complaints
- Child abuse and child welfare
- Poor standards of instructions or leadership (Coaching)
- Poor standard of equipment used for Club activities
- Poor Club administration
- Lack of suitable activities for their level of participation
- Behavior contrary to the Codes of Conduct
- Contracted Employee Complaints (This shall be handled by a different HR policy)
- Unreasonable Management Policies
- Working Conditions and Safety
- Repeated or Major Violations of Rules and Policies

Note: The Committee recommends that all issues should be addressed at the earliest possible opportunity so that they may be resolved as amicably as possible. It is important that all parties communicate regularly and honestly.

Major incidents follow a full investigation to best of efforts of the club and if individuals found guilty shall be subject to disciplinary measures

Who Can Allegable to make a Complaint?

Anyone associated with the Club (whether a member or visitor) can make a complaint. In the event that a Member (including Players, Parents, Coaches or other Club Representative), spectator or visitor feels that he or she has suffered abuse or discrimination in any way, or that the Club Policies, Rules or Codes of Conduct have been broken, or are not happy with coaching methods etc. should follow the procedure below.

Treatment of Delay or Historical Complaints

All complaints should be reported at the time of the issue arising. Complaints or a Major incident under UK Law, safeguarding or financial regulation shall be accepted without consideration of when the incident occurred.

For all other complaints (excusing acceptance of the above paragraph) that are made verbally and not followed up formally in writing within 14 days shall only be investigated as with best efforts, and any ruling shall be taken as lessons learnt.

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3) How to Submit a Complaint to the Club

The complaint can be either a verbal complaint or a written complaint dependent upon if the complainant is a minor or major. If the complaint is a Major complaint a formal letter should be accompany and verbal within 14 days notification. All serious issues or for repetition of minor issues after a Verbal Complaint has not rectified the matter. A serious complaint can still be made verbally to the relevant Club Representative, which in turn would trigger a written report.

Verbal Complaint

The complaint should be reported to the Head Coach of that group or a club committee member responsible for that group e.g. dir of rugby. If the complaint is about the Head Coach and you feel that you cannot approach the Head Coach, then the complaint should be made to the Section Development Coordinator or Club Safeguarding Officer, with details of what, when and where the occurrence took place. Please include names and contact details of any witnesses.

If a grievance is not resolved to their satisfaction they can, through the Committee's Chairman, seek resolution from the Committee and should submit a formal written complaint.

Written Complaint

A written complaint should be submitted to FAO INSERT COMMITTEE OFFICER NAME e.g. Safeguarding, with details of what, when and where the occurrence took place. Please include names and contact details of any witnesses.

If the complaint is about the Committee member please submit to the WRFC Committee Hon Sec, or Chair.

Note: Any issues or complaints regarding Child Protection, Bullying or Neglect etc. should be immediately reported to the Club Safeguarding Officer, if the allegations are about the Club Safeguarding Officer then report the matter immediately to the Club Chairman. The player/parents'/members grievance should be put in writing/email for the attention of the Committee's Chairman.

When making a complaint please try to be as specific as possible and give as much detail as possible.

You will need to tell us:

- **Your name**
- **The name of your age group/section**
- **The name of the person about whom you are complaining**
- **The date that the behaviour occurred that has resulted in your complaint**
- **The details of what occurred**

The player/parents'/member issue will be raised at one of the monthly Committee meetings and a resolution agreed.

The Chairman will then communicate this back to the player/parent/member.

Complaint Cool off period

A cool off period will start from the time the letter is acknowledged by the club for 2 weeks if a Minor complaint, and 1 week if a Major Complaint. Note no such period will be applied if child safety, welfare or a matter of breach of law has occurred.

4) Club Response to a Complaint

Any player, parent or member that has a grievance should initially approach the Lead Coach for their player's age group/section or a committee member if they do not belong to a specific age group/section or come direct to the safeguarding officer

Minor Incident

Verbal Complaint to Head Coach or Safeguarding Officer

Depending on the nature of the complaint (e.g. a difference of opinion on coaching or team selection) it may be possible to resolve these issues without needing to escalate matters. A brief report from the Head Coach should be sent to the Safeguarding Officer and relevant Chairman.

- If a grievance is not resolved to your satisfaction then you can approach through the Committee's Chairman to seek resolution from the Committee.

Major Incident

Should the matter be more serious, then a brief report (by the Head Coach or Club Safeguarding Officer) should be sent to the Executive Committee of Winchester RFC Mini and Junior Section ("the Committee") and maybe the RFU Child Protection Officer and the Police.

Written Complaint to Head Coach or Club Safeguarding Officer

Depending on the nature of the complaint (e.g. repeated minor issues) then a brief report (by the Head Coach or Club Safeguarding Officer) should be sent to the Committee for in-house resolution.

Should the matter be more serious, then a brief report (by the Head Coach or Club Safeguarding Officer) should be sent to the Committee and maybe the RFU Child Protection Officer and the Police.

Other Major: Working Conditions and Safety.

5) Process of Complaint Investigation

A coach, referee, player or parent of the Club may invoke a disciplinary procedure. Another Club may also be given notice to the Club of issues that may result in a disciplinary procedure being invoked.

Winchester Rugby Football Club is run by a Committee as voted for by the membership and those co-opted. The WRFC Committee shall be responsible for the handling of any complaints, categorising them based upon seriousness (based on criteria above) communication and disciplinary matters relating to the club.

Upon a grievance being submitted the Committee will form a three-person disciplinary panel that will be responsible for to investigate the complaint

They shall have the sole responsibility to:

- Gathering the necessary information regarding the case.
- Planning and communicating a hearing date
- Take into account the child's age and ensure a parent or guardian is present if required.
- Ensure representation of a peer/member is present if elected by either party
- Hear the evidence from each party in an even-handed manner.
- Communicate their findings and recommendations to the committee.
- To co-operate with any authorities doing likewise.
- Share evidences anonymously (removed names) with the committee where required to do so.

6) Automatic Disciplinary Trigger

In all of the following situations there will be an automatic disciplinary procedure:

- If any player is sent off during a match or competition be that match at home or away.
- If any person is alleged to have bullied or attacked any other person on Club property or whilst representing Winchester Rugby Football Club.
- If any person is reported to be damaging Club property.

In extreme situations a person may be suspended from attending or participating in any of WRFC's training and matches prior to their disciplinary hearing.

Those situations include, but are not limited to:

- Abuse, either racial or sexual.
- Assault on any Club official or representative.
- Any situation resulting in Police attendance.

In such cases the disciplinary hearing will be convened as quickly as possible and their temporary suspension will be taken into account of the disciplinary committee's findings.

7) Disciplinary Consideration and Taking Action

If the Committee considers the complaint to be unjustified then no further action will be taken. In such circumstances the Committee will consider how lessons can be learnt so similar situations or misunderstandings might be avoided in the future.

The aim is that all parties to be informed of the outcome in writing within 30 days.

If the Committee considers the complaint to be justified then it will decide on the appropriate action to be taken. In doing so they will take account of past records, relevant disciplinary policies of the Club as outlined in the club's code of conduct, and if necessary the RFU or magistrates court.

In such circumstances the Committee will consider how similar situations or misunderstandings might be avoided in the future.

All parties are to be informed of the outcome in writing, however the time taken to respond will depend on the nature of the complaint and the investigations processes followed.

Note: The person to whom the complaint refers (until the complaint is proved or remedied) may, at the discretion of the Committee, be suspended (pending further investigations). This is not an admission of guilt or a fait accompli; it would just be served to protect all parties during the investigations.

8) Written Response to a Complaint

Should the Committee decide that a written response is necessary and appropriate, a written response will be made after the Committee has heard from all parties. The written response will include the Committee's decision and any action to be taken.

9) Appeals Process

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint you can appeal.

In the event of either party not being satisfied with the Committee's response, an appeal may be made in writing to Winchester RFC Executive Committee or the RFU. If the player or parent or guardian or any other officiating body objects to the disciplinary panel's judgement, the matter can be appealed to the Club's committee and then the RFU.

Whilst this document has endeavoured to address the majority of issues that WRFC might face, it is impossible to cover them all but the club will put the welfare of a child first and use common sense to determine the best course of action.