

East Dorset Dockers RFC Complaints Procedure

1. Introduction and Commitment

East Dorset Dockers RFC is committed to maintaining a positive, transparent, and fair environment for all its members, visitors, and stakeholders. This procedure provides a clear, confidential, and effective process for addressing and resolving formal complaints relating to the club, its facilities, or its personnel.

2. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all formal complaints made by:

- Registered Club Members (Players, Coaches, Officials, Volunteers).
- Parents/Guardians of Junior Members.
- Visitors and Spectators.
- Opposing Teams and Match Officials.

Complaints covered by this procedure generally relate to:

- Club administration or procedural failures (e.g., poor communication, incorrect application of rules).
- Behavior or actions of Club Officials, Coaches, or Volunteers.
- Issues related to facilities or health and safety (that are not immediate emergencies).

Note: Complaints regarding on-field foul play should follow the Disciplinary Procedure. Complaints regarding bullying should follow the Anti-Bullying Policy.

3. Submitting a Formal Complaint

3.1. Informal Resolution (Encouraged)

In the first instance, the complainant is encouraged to attempt to resolve the issue informally with the individual or club section concerned, provided it is appropriate and safe to do so.

3.2. Formal Reporting Steps

If informal resolution is unsuccessful or inappropriate, the complainant must submit a formal written complaint:

1. **Written Submission:** The complaint must be submitted in writing (email is acceptable) to the **Club Secretary**. If the complaint concerns the Club Secretary, it should be addressed to the **Club Chairman**.
2. **Required Information:** The submission must include:

- Full name and contact details of the complainant.
 - The date(s), time(s), and location(s) of the incident(s).
 - The name(s) of the person(s) or area(s) the complaint is directed against.
 - A factual and detailed description of the complaint.
 - Any suggested witnesses or supporting documentation.
3. **Acknowledgement:** The Club Secretary will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 7 days.

4. Investigation Process

4.1. Appointing the Panel

Upon receipt, the Club Secretary (or Chairman) will convene a neutral Complaints Panel, typically consisting of two or three Committee members who are not directly involved in the complaint.

4.2. Investigation

The Panel will:

- Review the written complaint and all supporting documentation.
- Interview the complainant, the person(s) complained against, and any witnesses.
- Maintain detailed and confidential records of the entire process.

4.3. Timeframe

The Panel will aim to complete the investigation and communicate a decision within 21 days of receiving the formal written complaint. If more time is required, the complainant will be informed of the reason and the new expected date.

5. Decision and Resolution

5.1. Finding

The Panel will determine whether the complaint is:

- **Upheld:** The complaint is found to be valid.
- **Partially Upheld:** Only certain elements of the complaint are found to be valid.
- **Not Upheld:** The complaint is not found to be valid.

5.2. Remedial Action

If the complaint is upheld or partially upheld, the Panel will recommend and implement appropriate corrective actions. These actions may include:

- A formal apology from the club or an individual.
- A change in club policy or procedure.
- Disciplinary action against an individual, in line with the Club's Disciplinary Policy.

5.3. Communication

The Panel will communicate its findings and any resulting actions to the complainant and the party complained against in writing.

6. Right of Appeal

If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they may appeal the decision to the Club Chairman within 7 days of receiving the formal finding.

- The appeal must be submitted in writing and clearly state the grounds for the appeal (e.g., the procedure was not followed correctly, or new evidence has emerged).
- The Chairman will review the appeal with two other senior, uninvolved Club Officers, and the decision of this Appeal Panel is final.

7. Confidentiality and Vexatious Complaints

- **Confidentiality:** All details relating to the complaint will be handled with the highest level of confidentiality. Information will only be shared on a need-to-know basis to facilitate a fair investigation.
- **Vexatious or Malicious Complaints:** If a complaint is found to be deliberately false, malicious, or vexatious, the club reserves the right to take disciplinary action against the complainant.

