



Lea Rowing Club

Complaints Policy and Procedure

1. Purpose and Introduction

This document outlines the policy and procedures for responding to and managing complaints at Lea Rowing Club. This policy ensures that complaints are handled fairly, consistently, and effectively. Dealing with complaints at the appropriate level will give the best chance of a successful resolution for all parties concerned. The Club welcomes feedback of all kinds and sees complaints as a useful and important aspect of ensuring the safety and well being of those engaged with the club

2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints brought by:

- Members of the club (including Junior members)
- Volunteers
- Parents and guardians
- Members of the public
- Any other stakeholders involved with the club

Complaints can be brought about any matter relating to the Club's services, functions or the conduct of its members, officials or employees. However, the following matters fall outside the scope of this policy:

- Employment-related grievances from club employees (these are handled under separate procedures)
- Matters relating to the conduct of elections or other proceedings at General Meetings – these must be resolved by the Chair of the meeting in question at that time

3. Key Principles

In handling complaints, Lea Rowing Club aims to:

- treat all parties equally and without bias
- deal with complaints at an appropriate level
- limit knowledge of complaints to those who need to know
- communicate procedures and outcomes clearly
- resolve grievances promptly and efficiently

4. Making a complaint

Lea Rowing Club has a two stage procedure for responding to and resolving complaints.

4.1 Stage One

The first stage of the complaints procedure provides the opportunity for any issues or concerns to be resolved at more immediate and informal level. Complaints managed at this level are treated with the same rigour and attention but can be dealt with more directly and speedily.

4.2 Formal Complaints

If your complaint cannot be resolved satisfactorily at stage one, then you can request for your complaint to move to Stage 2 as set out below.

If your complaint involves gross misconduct, it will automatically be investigated at Stage 2. This includes:

- Violence or clear threat of violence against someone else
- Any illegal behaviour
- Damage to club property (does not include equipment damage incurred while rowing)
- Serious breach of safeguarding protocols (this complaints policy and procedure does not preclude or replace any action under an existing safeguarding policy)
- Harassment or discriminatory behaviour
- Serious negligence or reckless behaviour
- Other serious behaviour that would bring the club into disrepute or is a serious breach of the Club's Code of Conduct

The club is not able to accept anonymous complaints at stage two as it is necessary to be able to undertake investigations, verify facts, manage conflicts of interest effectively and ensure complaints are brought in good faith.

Complaints at both Stages will be kept confidential to a limited number of people who need to be involved in order to effectively resolve the complaint. It is likely that where the complaint is in relation to an individual, that the subject of the complaint will need to be informed to provide an opportunity to include their perspective within the investigation.

Procedure

Stage one:

Anyone who has a concern or complaint should contact the following:

- For general issues: the lead coach or representative for that squad
- For Junior related issues (including coaching or squad related): the Director of Junior Rowing
- For Safeguarding or welfare related issues: Club Welfare Officer/s
- For events issues: the event manager(s)
- For facilities issues: the General Manager

The complainant and person receiving the complaint will attempt to find and agree a resolution. Complaints at stage one should be resolved within 10 working days.

(Anyone who receives an informal complaint should review the Appendix for practical guidance, which outlines their role in this situation and the most productive ways to achieve an effective resolution.)

Stage two

1. Submission

- Submit your complaint using the official complaints form and noting that you are requesting your complaint is reviewed at Stage 2 of the procedure
- Please include:
 - Your full name and contact details
 - Detailed description of the issue
 - Relevant dates, times, and locations
 - Names of any witnesses or involved parties
 - Supporting evidence (if available)
 - Desired outcome
 - Previous attempts at resolution at Stage 1

2. Initial Response

- You will receive acknowledgment within 3 working days
- The complaint will be directed to the appropriate investigator:
 - Adult rowing matters: Captain
 - Junior rowing matters: Junior Rowing Coordinator
 - Facilities matters: Facilities Director
 - Safeguarding Club Welfare Officers
 - Complaints about any of the above officials: President

3. Investigation

- The investigator will:
 - Gather relevant evidence
 - Interview involved parties
 - Review any documentation
 - Maintain detailed records
 - Complete initial investigation within 14 days where possible
- For cases requiring more time, the investigator will aim to complete the investigation within 30 days

4. Outcomes and Resolution

Some examples of recommendations may be:

- Mediation between parties
- Additional training or mentoring
- Procedural changes
- Disciplinary action
- Policy adjustments
- No further action if the complaint is not upheld

All parties will receive written notification of:

- The decision
- The reasoning behind it
- Any actions to be taken
- Review rights and procedures

5. Review

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint, you are entitled to seek a review of the decision. You must submit your request for a review within 14 days of receiving notice of the outcome of your complaint.

You must be clear and specific in your reasoning why you are dissatisfied with the outcome you have received and why you are requesting a review.

Most reviews will be referred to the Club President. They may involve Board members who have not been involved in the complaint previously to help them consider your review. If the President has previously been involved in considering your complaint at an early stage, a different Board member may be asked to lead the review of your complaint. If none of this is possible the President may seek a senior member of an external club to lead the internal review.

The reviewer will consider your grounds for review and will decide ideally within 14 days. If that is not practical, they will keep you updated on progress.

In line with British Rowing's Dispute guidance, if the complainant is still not satisfied with the decision of an internal review, they will need to submit a grievance via the BR online grievance form. The result of this will be referral to the Eastern Region Rowing Council.

6. Record Keeping

The club will maintain confidential records of:

- All formal complaints received
- Investigation documents
- Hearing minutes
- Outcomes and resolutions
- Appeal decisions

7. Monitoring and Review

The Board will receive a copy of the outcomes of decisions on formal complaints, once the process has been fully completed.

The Board will review this policy annually, monitoring patterns in complaints.

8. Vexatious or Malicious Complaints

The club reserves the right to dismiss complaints deemed vexatious or malicious.

Formal complaints will not be accepted that seek to reopen a decision made on a previous complaint where the complaints procedure has been fully exhausted.

A vexatious complaint is characterised by behaviour that is unreasonable, persistent, or designed to cause disruption rather than seek genuine resolution. In deciding whether to evaluate a complaint as vexatious, the club will have regard to the British Rowing Vexatious Complaints Policy.

The decision as to whether a formal complaint is vexatious or malicious will be made in the first instance by the investigator of that complaint. If the investigator feels a complaint is vexatious or malicious, the complainant will be informed of this fact as the outcome of the complaint. This decision is subject to review in the same way as any other complaint.

9. Support and Guidance

If you require further information, please contact the Club Secretary at secretary@learc.org.uk

Appendix

Practical Guidance for Handling Verbal Complaints

- Remain calm and respectful throughout the conversation.
- Listen - allow the person to talk about the complaint in their own words. Sometimes a person just wants to 'let off steam'.
- Don't debate the facts in the first instance, especially if the person is angry.
- Show an interest in what is being said but refrain from personal opinion / agreement / disagreement.
- Ask for clarification wherever necessary.
- Show that you have understood the complaint by reflecting back what you have noted down.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings (even if you feel that they are being unreasonable) - you can do this without making a comment on the complaint itself or making any admission of fault on behalf of the organisation, e.g. "I understand that this situation is frustrating for you".
- If you feel that an apology is deserved for something that was the responsibility of your organisation, then apologise.
- It is appropriate, and often useful, to acknowledge that someone is unhappy with their experience by stating that you are sorry to hear that they are feeling as they do – the club does not want anyone to experience difficulties or be unhappy in their engagement with the club (this is not an acceptance of blame or “taking sides” but it does help for people to feel heard and therefore more likely to be able to achieve a successful resolution)
- Ask the person what they would like done to resolve the issue.
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Do not promise things you or the organisation cannot deliver.
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met.
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told.
- If appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal.

Lea Rowing Club

Formal Complaint Form

Before completing this form, please ensure you have:

- Read the Club's Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Attempted informal resolution where appropriate
- Gathered any supporting evidence

1. Personal Details

Full Name: _____

Membership Status:

- Club Member
- Parent/Guardian
- Volunteer
- Member of Public
- Other (please specify): _____

Contact Details:

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Preferred method of contact:

- Email
- Phone
- Other (please specify): _____

2. Complaint Details

Nature of complaint (tick all that apply):

- Safety Issue
- Facilities
- Coaching
- Behaviour/Conduct
- Equipment
- Discrimination/Harassment
- Other (please specify): _____

Please describe your complaint in detail:

(Include what happened, when, where, who was involved, and any witnesses)

Date(s) of incident(s): _____ Location(s): _____

Names of any witnesses:

1. _____
2. _____

3. Previous Actions

Have you attempted to resolve this informally?

- Yes No

If yes, please provide details of what steps were taken:

Who have you already spoken to about this issue?

4. Supporting Evidence

Please list any supporting evidence you are attaching:

- Emails
- Photos
- Videos
- Witness statements
- Other (please specify): _____

5. Desired Outcome

What would you like to happen as a result of your complaint?

6. Declaration

I confirm that:

- The information provided is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge
- I have read the Club's Complaints Policy and Procedure
- I understand this complaint will be handled confidentially but may need to be shared with relevant parties as part of the investigation

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form to:

secretary@learc.org.uk