

Scottish Bridge Union (SCIO Reg No SC051361)

Complaints Procedure

Introduction

The SBU is a member organisation which relies almost entirely on volunteers to provide the service of allowing members to play the game at their desired level.

It is recognised that on occasions members and external parties may feel they have not received the level of service to which they feel entitled and may wish to raise a complaint.

As is normal it will very often be the case that concerns of members and external parties will be able to be satisfied by an explanation given by an officer or a volunteer without the need to formally raise a complaint.

There will however be occasions when an individual feels they do wish to raise a formal complaint and this procedure outlines how this may be done and how the complaint will be handled.

The Board of the SBU recognises that when a complaint is raised it is important that it is dealt with timeously and fully. Complaints can provide the SBU with valuable information which can lead to improved service provision and member satisfaction.

What is a Complaint?

A complaint may relate to

- an alleged failure of the SBU to provide an appropriate level of service
- an alleged failure by an employee or volunteer of the SBU to follow the policies and procedures of the SBU
- an ongoing concern which has already been fully investigated by a Club, Area or District

A complaint is not

- a concern which relates to a potential breach of the SBU's Disciplinary Code
- a concern in relation to a decision made by a Tournament Director
- a concern relating to an affiliated Club, Area or District which has not been fully investigated by the relevant Club, Area or District

Who can raise a complaint?

A complaint can be raised by a member of the SBU or any external party or individual who has dealings with the SBU.

This procedure does not apply to employees of the SBU.

Notification of Complaints

A member or an external party can raise a complaint by contacting the General Manager either in writing or by email (email generalmanager@sbu.org.uk). A complaint about the General Manager should be raised with the Chair of the Board. All complaints received will be acknowledged and the complainer will be informed whether the complaint is being treated as a Stage 1 or Stage 2 complaint.

Complaints must be notified within 6 months of when the complainer was first aware of the problem.

Complaints Handling

In line with best practice the SBU have adopted a 3-stage process for handling complaints.

Stage 1 Frontline Response

This will be used to resolve issues which are straightforward and simple and require little or no investigation. The Complaint will be addressed as close to the point of service delivery as possible and will normally be dealt with by the Chair of the relevant Operational Committee or sub-committee of the Board. If appropriate the matter will be addressed by the General Manager.

Once the issue has been addressed a response will be provided in writing or by email to the complainer. The response will:

- tell the complainer the outcome of the complaint (whether it is resolved, upheld, partially upheld or not upheld).
- explain the reasons for the decision and outline any agreed action taken to resolve the complaint.
- include an apology where things have gone wrong.
- explain how the complainer can escalate the complaint to stage 2.

Frontline responses should normally be provided to the complainer with 7 days of the complaint being received.

Stage 2 Investigation

Where the member is not satisfied with the frontline response or refuses to engage at the frontline or where the complaint is complex, serious or high-risk the complainer will be advised that the matter has been referred to the Board of Trustees for Investigation.

The Board of Trustees will appoint a Trustee or other suitably experienced member to carry out an investigation of the points raised in the complaint.

Following the investigation, a definitive response in writing or by email will be provided to the complainer. The response will be clear and easy to understand and will

- address all the issues raised and demonstrate that each element has been fully and fairly investigated
- tell the complainer the outcome of the complaint (whether it is resolved, upheld, partially upheld or not upheld)
- explain the reasons for the decision and outline any agreed action taken to resolve the complaint
- include an apology where things have gone wrong
- highlight any area of disagreement and explain why no further action can be taken
- explain how the complainer can escalate the complaint to stage 3

Stage 2 responses should normally be provided to the complainer within 3 weeks of the complaint being received by the Board of Trustees

Stage 3 Scottish Charity Regulator

Where the complainer is not satisfied with the response following the Stage 2 investigation they may take the matter up with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) at <https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/raise-a-concern/>

Resolving the Complaint

A complaint is resolved when both the SBU and the complainer agree what action (if any) will be taken to provide a resolution for the complainer without necessarily making a decision as to whether or not the complaint is upheld.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

Confidentiality is important in complaints handling. This involves maintaining the complainer's confidentiality and confidentiality in relation to staff or volunteers involved in the complaint. There is clearly a balance to be struck between being open and transparent and ensuring compliance with for example data protection legislation. Further guidance is available from the SBU's Data Protection Officer (email membership@sbu.org.uk).

Reporting of Complaints

The General Manager will annually provide the Board of Trustees with a Complaints Handling Report.

This report will report on numerical data regarding:

the number of complaints received.

the number of complaints upheld, partially upheld and not upheld at each stage.

the number of complaints escalated.

The report will also describe any lessons learned or changes made to operational procedures as a result of handling complaints in the previous year.

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