



Complaints Policy

Version	Date	Author	Changes
2.0	16 Oct 2024		New Version

Committee Approval:



Waterford Boat Club (WBC) views complaints as an opportunity to learn and improve for the future, as well as a chance to put things right for the person or organisation that has made the complaint.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint
- To make sure everyone at WBC knows what to do if a complaint is received
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do

Definition of a Complaint

A complaint is any expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about any aspect of WBC.

Where Complaints Come From

Complaints may come from any person or organisation who has a legitimate interest in WBC, e.g. members, volunteers, funders, members of the local community etc..

Confidentiality

All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements.

Responsibility

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Boat Club Captain

Review

This policy is reviewed every three years and updated as required.

Complaints Procedure

Publicised Contact Details for Complaints

Written complaints may be sent to the Boat Club Captain, Canada Street, Newtown, Waterford, X91 VHTZ or by e-mail at complaints@waterfordboatclub.ie

Receiving Complaints

Official complaints must be submitted in writing. If complaints are received verbally or in person, and the person who receives the complaint should:

- Listen to the complaint.
- Assess if a solution to the complaint can be found and implemented through informal discussions with those involved, or if a formal complaint needs to be made and the complaints procedure needs to be implemented.



- Tell the complainant that we have a complaints procedure if they wish to make a formal complaint.
- Where appropriate, ask the complainant to send a written account of the complaint by post to the captain at the address above to begin the complaint process.

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.
- Obtain details about the complaint before any personal details.
- 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".
- Be clear about what you can do, how long it will take and what it will involve.
- Don't promise things you can't deliver.
- Give clear and valid reasons why requests cannot be met.
- Make sure that the person understands what they have been told.

Wherever appropriate, inform the person about the available avenues of review or appeal.

Resolving Complaints

Stage One

On receiving the complaint, the Boat Club Captain records it in the complaints log. If it has not already been resolved, they should identify the appropriate person to investigate it and to take appropriate action. If the complaint relates to a specific person, they should be informed and given a fair opportunity to respond.

The person handling complaints should acknowledge them within one week. The acknowledgement should say who is dealing with the complaint and when the person complaining can expect a reply. A copy of this Complaints Procedure should be attached.



Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within four weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is justified or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken due to the complaint.

Stage Two

If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage One, they can request that the club president officially review the complaint. At this stage, the complaint will also be passed to the Complaints and Disciplinary Committee for note.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response you receive at Stage One, they can take this further by writing to the Club President by letter or at the above email.

The complainant can outline what happened; when it happened; who dealt with the complaint so far.

This must be done within two weeks of receiving a response to stage one.

The president should acknowledge them within one week. The acknowledgement should say when the person complaining can expect a reply.

Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within two weeks. If this is not possible because, for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

If the president considers it worthwhile, they may ask the complainant to come to a meeting to discuss the complaint in more detail. This meeting would normally be held within one week of us receiving your complaint.

The president should send you a written record of the meeting and a formal reply to your complaint.

Stage Three

If the complainant feels that the problem has still not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage Two, they can request that the complaint be officially reviewed by the Complaints and Disciplinary Committee (C&D Committee).

The request to the C&D committee for an official review should be acknowledged within one week of receiving it, advising who will deal with the case and when the complainant can expect a reply.

The C&D Committee will be composed of a panel of 4 people – a WBC Committee representative and 3 external members. The WBC Committee representative will not chair the committee. Depending on the complaint, the chair can choose from the panel as he/she sees fit.



The C&D committee may investigate the facts of the case themselves or delegate a suitably senior person to do so.

This may involve reviewing the case paperwork and speaking with the Captain and the President who handled the complaint at Stage One and Two.

The captain should be kept informed of what is happening.

Ideally, complainants should receive a definitive reply within an additional four weeks. If this is not possible because for example, an investigation has not been fully completed, a progress report should be sent with an indication of when a full reply will be given.

Whether the complaint is upheld or not, the reply to the complainant should describe the action taken to investigate the complaint, the conclusions from the investigation, and any action taken due to the complaint.

The decision at stage three is final unless the C&D committee decides it is appropriate to seek external assistance to help find a resolution.

The findings and recommendations of the C&D committee are final.

Variation of the Complaints Procedure

The committee may vary the procedure for good reason. This may be necessary to avoid a conflict of interest; for example, a complaint about the Captain should not also have the Captain as the person leading a review.

Monitoring and Learning from Complaints

Complaints should be reviewed annually to identify any trends which may indicate a need to take further action.