



Pontefract Collieries FC: Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Document Type	Revision No	Date Created/ amended	Renewal date	Approved By
Policy	004	17.12.20	31.07.21	T.Wiles

Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Positional Statement

As part of this Policy and general Pontefract Collieries FC organisational culture, all stakeholders are encouraged to express their views on what goes on within our organisation, so that staff receive an early warning of potential difficulties, and many problems can be prevented from arising. Certain general underlying principles should be observed whenever concerns or complaints are raised.

Publicity

Stakeholders of Pontefract Collieries FC will always be made aware of the ways in which they can raise concerns or lodge a formal complaint. We will make the procedures available in languages other than English when required. Braille or large print versions will be made available if requested. We will consider in advance how we would locate qualified interpreters in various languages, including British Sign Language.

Procedures

Procedures will be as speedy as possible - consistent with fairness to all concerned, each stage of the procedure will have known time limits. Where it is not possible to meet these, information about progress must be given to the complainant. Care will be taken not to draw things out with unnecessary bureaucracy. We have a hierarchy for dealing with complaints. The complaints procedure is distinct from formal disciplinary proceedings for staff and this needs to be made clear to all concerned. There may be occasions where a complaint launches a disciplinary procedure which puts the complaints procedure on hold. If so, the complainant will be informed of this and any non-disciplinary aspects of the complaint will be dealt with by the usual complaint procedures; the complainant will be updated on progress on a regular basis. It may be clear after the disciplinary procedures have been completed that responses to the complainant are required (e.g. an apology or an explanation of new policies to avoid a similar problem again).

Support for complainants

As part of the general publicity about complaints procedures, it is important for complainants to know where they can go for information, advice, and advocacy, if they require it. Ideally, support should be offered from individuals and organisations who are clearly separate from those complained against. Stakeholders raising concerns or complaints will be invited to be accompanied by a friend, a relative or a representative at any stage of the procedure.

Support for a person complained against

Staff or volunteers who may be questioned as part of a complaints procedure investigation must feel that they are being treated in a fair way and be informed that they too will have an opportunity to put their case. They will be told about the procedure, given a copy of it, and be kept informed of progress. There is a crucial balance to be maintained between supporting the individual so that his/her rights and reputation are protected and investigating a complaint thoroughly and impartially. The staff member/ volunteer has the right to be accompanied by a union representative, friend, or colleague at discussions about the complaint.

Confidentiality

It is very important to treat conversations and correspondence with discretion. However, from the outset, all parties to a complaint should be made aware that some information may have to be shared with others involved in the operation of the complaints procedure. It is usually a procedure to disregard anonymous complaints unless somebody is prepared to substantiate them, but the danger in this is that they may relate to something quite serious. If the forewarned eventuality occurs, to the detriment of Pontefract Collieries FC, the complainant may come forward subsequently and say that she/he alerted us even though the complaint was unsigned. It will be at the discretion of the Welfare Officer to decide whether the gravity of an anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

Redress

If the outcome of the complaint's procedure shows that Pontefract Collieries FC is at fault, it is often enough to provide redress in the form of an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid. Alternatively, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of: an apology; an explanation; a promise that the event complained of will not recur; an undertaking to review our policies or practices in the light of the complaint. Fear of litigation should not prevent us from admitting to when mistakes have been made.

Staff awareness and training

Pontefract Collieries FC staff and volunteers should be familiar with the procedures so that they can advise parents about their operation. Potentially most staff/volunteers could be involved in handling complaints, especially at an informal level. Their confidence in doing so depends on them having clear information about

Complaints and Appeals Procedure

the procedures, reassurances that senior staff are committed to the procedures and some basic training in the practical interpersonal skills needed in dealing with people who are upset or angry. All our staff and volunteers will have clear information about which staff have responsibilities so that complainants are not continually passed from one to another.

Record keeping

If complaints are to contribute to raising the quality of our Football Club, then they need to be recorded and monitored by senior staff. Recording should begin at the point when a concern or initial complaint has become the kind of complaint that cannot be resolved on the spot but needs investigation and/or consultation with others in Pontefract Collieries FC, and will require a report back (either orally or in writing) to the complainant. Recording at the earliest stages need only be a very basic record of the complaint, giving the date, name of complainant and general nature of the complaint.

Stage 1: The first contact - guidelines for dealing with concerns and complaints informally

Most concerns and complaints can be resolved informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away.

Complainants must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff or volunteers either in person, by telephone, email or in writing. On occasion it may be appropriate for someone to act on behalf of a complainant making a complaint.

At first it may be unclear whether a complainant is asking a question or expressing an opinion rather than making a complaint. A complainant may want a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether he or she wishes to take it further.

Procedure for Pontefract Collieries FC to use at Stage 1

Complainants have an opportunity to discuss their concern with the appropriate member of staff who clarifies with the complainant the nature of the concern and reassures them that we want to hear about it. The “appropriate member of staff” is the person who has been designated to handle the complaint and not the member of staff being complained about. The member of staff may explain to the complainant how the

Complaints and Appeals Procedure

situation happened. It can be helpful to identify at this point what sort of outcome the complainant is looking for.

If the member of staff/volunteer first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter, s/he makes a clear note of the date, name, and contact details of the complainant.

If the concern relates to the Welfare Officer Tom Wiles, the complainant is advised to contact Trevor Waddington the Chairman of Pontefract Collieries FC.

The staff member/ volunteer dealing with the concern makes sure that the complainant is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting this in writing only if this seems the best way of making things clear.

Where no satisfactory solution has been found within ten working days, complainants will be asked if they wish their concern to be considered further. If they do, they should be given clear information, both orally and in writing, about how to proceed and about any independent advice available to them.

In some cases, it may be necessary for a complaint to progress straight to stage 2.

Stage 2: Referral to the Welfare Officer - Tom Wiles

At this stage it has become clear that the concern is a definite complaint. In some cases, the Welfare Officer may have already been involved in looking at the matter; in others it could be his first involvement. In either case, it is helpful for the Welfare Officer (or the person delegated to investigate) to use guidelines to ensure consistency among cases, and to make sure that nothing happens at this stage which could make it difficult for later stages to proceed smoothly.

As the Welfare Officer has a responsibility for the day-to-day running of Pontefract Collieries FC, he has the responsibility for the implementation of a complaints system, including the decisions about their own involvement at various stages. One of the reasons for having various stages in a complaint's procedure is to reassure complainants that their grievance is being heard by more than one person. The Welfare Officer

Complaints and Appeals Procedure

should decide to ensure that their involvement will not predominate at every stage of a particular complaint. For example, arrangements may be made for other staff to deal with complainants' concerns at Stage 1, while the Welfare Officer deals with contact with complainants at Stage 2. Even at that stage the Welfare Officer may designate another member of staff to collect some of the information from the various parties involved, though the decision on action to be taken may not be delegated. In some cases, a complaint will have been taken straight to Stage 2 and will have been investigated by the Welfare Officer as the most appropriate person.

Procedure for Pontefract Collieries FC to use at Stage 2

The Welfare Officer (or designate) acknowledges the complaint orally or in writing within three working days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement gives a brief explanation of our complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be within ten working days; if this proves impossible, the complainant should be contacted with a reason for the delay and a revised target date.

The Welfare Officer (or designate) provides an opportunity for the complainant to meet him/her to supplement any information provided previously. It is made clear to the complainant that if she/he wishes, she/he may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative, or advocate who can speak on his or her behalf, and that interpreting facilities are available if needed.

If necessary, the Welfare Officer (or designate) should interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a child then they may also need to be interviewed. Children would normally be interviewed with their parent/carer present if under 18 or a vulnerable adult. In some situations, circumstances may prevent this, e.g. where this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious/urgent complaint or where circumstances mean that a Child has specifically said she/he would prefer that parents or carers were not involved. In such circumstances another member of staff/volunteer with whom the Child feels comfortable should be asked to attend. If a member of staff/ volunteer is complained against, the needs of that person should be borne in mind.

The Welfare Officer (or designate) keeps written records of meetings, telephone conversations, and other documentation.

Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Welfare Officer (or designate) should then produce a written response to the complainant or may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly.

A written response includes a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this includes what action we will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant is advised that should she/he wish to take the complaint further she/he should notify the Directors of Pontefract Collieries FC within 20 working days of receiving the outcome letter.

If a complaint is against the action of the Welfare Officer, the complaint should be moved directly to Stage 3.

Procedure for Pontefract Collieries FC to use at Stage 3

Complaints only rarely reach this formal level, but it is important that we are prepared to deal with them when necessary.

At this stage, we would seek advice from the Directors of Pontefract Collieries FC Trevor Waddington, Dave Beach or Tom Wiles. The Directors may wish to find a useful "outside view" on the issues and ensure that the correct procedures are followed.

Policy Reviews

This Policy will be renewed annually.

For further information or to discuss any concerns regarding this, or any of our other Policies and Procedures, please contact Tom Wiles 07725369374/ tomdwiles@gmail.com