

Plymouth Argyle Football Club



Principles for Receiving Comments, Suggestions, Concerns and/or Complaints

Policy statement:

PAFC fosters a culture of inclusion, transparency and openness as this will support demonstrating that it has nothing to hide in terms of its practice. Therefore, PAFC is open to feedback from children and adults, as well as their parents, families and carers - including receiving feedback from Directors and staff - as this will assist the organisation in improving how it carries out its activities and delivers its services.

PAFC - as an organisation which treats all children and adults with dignity and respect - is committed to protect them from harm and will seek to encourage and enable everyone to take an active role in planning and decision-making in all ways that are appropriate to the individual.

PAFC will seek to achieve this aim through:

- A commitment to a listening environment within the organisation.
- The use of a suggestion box to give everyone that engages with the organisation an opportunity to make suggestions about how things could be improved
- Maintaining a record of matters, ideas and suggestions that are made by children and adults - as well as their parents, families and carers - and the actions taken
- Providing regular feedback on actions taken and developments within PAFC

How PAFC will involve parents, families and carers of children and adults:

PAFC realises that parents, families and carers have a wealth of knowledge about the emotional, physical and cultural needs of their child/family members/adults at risk for whom they care for, or work with. PAFC therefore believes that it is important to establish and maintain contact with the parents, families and carers who are involved with the organisation. This will be achieved through encouraging all parents, families and carers to make representations to PAFC's management committees and/or their participation in services or activities provided by PAFC. Such involvement will also be an important source of reassurance and support for everyone who has a vested interest in the protection of a child or adult.

How PAFC will involve staff in contributing to the organisations work with children and adults:

As far as PAFC staff members are concerned, supervision and support will enable line managers to gain valuable insights provided by staff and to learn lessons to ensure that the organisation is operating effectively.

In addition to the above processes, PAFC will seek to encourage feedback via the use of satisfaction surveys that staff, children, adults, parents, families and carers can complete anonymously.

How parents, families and carers can raise concerns or complaints:

PAFC encourages all parents, families and carers - who have a concern or complaint about some aspect of the organisation - to use PAFC's complaints procedure.

PAFC's complaints procedure provides the following:

- A fair and clear process to raise concerns or complaints
- A named first point of contact, as well as a named alternative - should the first point of contact be unavailable, or is the subject of the complaint
- An appeals process in cases where a complaint cannot be resolved at the first stage
- Who within PAFC has the final decision in relation to a concern or complaint
- Realistic time limits for each stage of the complaints procedure to ensure matters are dealt with promptly
- PAFC's full complaint policy and procedures are provided in this document.
- Complaint procedure principles: Everyone involved in a complaint (complainant and the subject/s of the complaint) will be provided with the opportunity to represent their side of the case.
- In the case of a complaint from a child or young person, representation can include input from a parent, family member, carer or an advocate
- In the case of a complaint from an adult at risk, representation can include input from a partner, parent, other family member, carer or an advocate
- In the case of a complaint made by a parent, partner, family member, carer or an advocate, representation can include input from a friend or family member

Where the complaint is regarding a PAFC staff member - or about a family member or carer/advocate acting inappropriately - the person dealing with the complaint will ensure that there is absolute clarity regarding:

- The particular incident of concern and whether there have been any previous incidents
- Any remedial action to be taken e.g. an apology and any new behaviour expected
- What will happen if the agreed arrangements are not adhered to, PAFC's complaint procedure will ensure that records of discussions - and any information shared at each stage of the procedure - will be made clearly, recorded accurately, kept confidentially and stored in a secure location in line with the organisations policies and procedures relating to the Recording, Storing and Sharing of Information.

Where a complaint is in relation to a particularly serious safeguarding incident e.g. where abuse or exploitation is suspected - then the reporting procedure relating to Responding, Recording & Reporting Allegations of Abuse (as detailed in the Safeguarding Policy) will take precedence over PAFC's Complaints Procedure.

Complaints Policy

Policy statement:

PAFC recognises that everyone who uses our services, activities and/or facilities has the right to a high standard of service and a right to complain if they are not happy with any aspect of what we do. Learning from complaints helps PAFC to improve the services that are provided. Therefore, the purpose of this complaints policy and procedure is to:

- Help PAFC to provide a service of the highest standard to everyone that engages with the organisation
- Help PAFC to ensure that everyone that uses (or wishes to use) the organisation's services know that they have a right to complain if they need to
- Help PAFC to deal with complaints in a positive way and use them to improve the organisations services
- Set out the issues that could be covered under this procedure
- Set out the steps everyone should take if they wish to make a complaint to PAFC

- Set out how PAFC will deal with complaints in a fair and consistent way

Who this complaints policy and procedures applies to:

This complaints policy and procedure applies to all children, adults, parents and families, as well as carers and advocates. In addition it applies to every person that attends - or wishes to make use of - PAFC's facilities and services.

However, this policy and procedure is not intended to be used by PAFC's staff or volunteers who may be unhappy about their own experience in the workplace. In these circumstances, staff members should use the **Grievance Procedure** (the Staff Handbook) and volunteers should use the **Complaints Procedure for Volunteers** found in the Volunteers Handbook.

The complaints policy and procedure are also not intended to cover concerns that staff may have about issues of possible malpractice or wrongdoing in the workplace. These concerns should be dealt with under the **Whistle Blowing Policy & Procedure** found in this Staff Handbook.

If anyone, whether an PAFC staff member, child , adult, parent, family member, carer or advocate is concerned that a child or adult may be at risk of harm, they should use the relevant procedures contained within the Safeguarding Policy - rather than this complaints policy and procedure.

PAFC will seek to deal with complaints by:

- Defining clearly what is mean by a complaint
- Setting out a procedure that can be easily followed and understood
- Making sure that everyone knows about this policy and procedure
- Producing child and adult friendly material explaining this policy and procedure
- Reassuring people that they will not be penalised in any way for using the complaints procedure and that PAFC will respond positively to any complaints made in good faith
- Offering extra support to those who need help to make a complaint
- Taking a staged approach to complaints, that takes account of the level of seriousness and the possibility of resolution at different points
- Investigating each complaint as objectively and fully as reasonably possible
- Keeping the complainant informed during the course of the investigation, as well as about the outcome of their complaint
- Keeping clear records of complaints and of how they are resolved

Complaints Procedure

Definition of a complaint:

A complaint is a statement from someone that they are not happy about the service provided to them by PAFC and that they would like this to be improved.

The complaint may be about:

- The behaviour of a PAFC member of staff. If this relates to allegations that someone may have harmed a child or adult-or may be at risk of doing so- then the Safeguarding policy must be followed.
- The behaviour of children or adults in the group – although please note the above relating to harm
- The level, type of service received, or being refused service altogether
- The stadium or facilities
- Written information e.g. style or lack of

- Service received over the telephone e.g not being able to get through or kept waiting
- A child, adult, parent, family member, carer or advocate feeling that they have been treated unfairly, or in a way that is discriminatory
- A specific activity or outing
- Anything else related to the service provided by PAFC

Procedure for Making a Complaint : Informal	
Step 1:	If possible, the person should discuss the complaint with PAFC's DSO. If this is not possible - for example the complainant does not feel comfortable speaking to the DSO because the relationship is too difficult - the discussion should be with another member of the PAFC safeguarding team
Step 2:	PAFC's DSO - or alternative PAFC manager - will, in the first instance, try to resolve the matter informally. This is often possible and can mean that the problem is sorted out simply and more quickly.
Step 3:	If an informal solution has been tried before and has not worked, or if the complainant does not feel that informal discussions are adequate or likely to be effective, stage one of the complaints procedure should be followed.

Formal Procedure for Making a Complaint	
Step 4:	The complainant should put their concerns in writing to PAFC's DSO or, if the DSO is the subject of the complaint, to PAFC's SSM. If the complainant needs help to do this - and a family member is not able to offer this support - help will be provided by PAFC's DSO, or, if the DSO is the subject of the complaint, by another member of PAFC staff identified by the SSM.
Step 5:	PAFC's DSO or will acknowledge the complaint within two working days by sending a brief letter to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank the complainant for getting in touch & express regret that a complaint has been necessary • Assure them that the matter will be investigated • Set a provisional timescale for the investigation that is achievable, but avoids delay as much as possible • Explain when they will next be in contact • Offer a contact name - usually this will be PAFC's DSO or the SSM - in case the complainant has any questions in the meantime • Make any temporary arrangements that may be necessary pending the outcome of the investigation into the complaint
Step 6:	Normally the service to the complainant should continue as normal during the investigation into the complaint. If this is not possible e.g. because an individual has had to be excluded from an activity, or because the complainant does not want to use the service at that point, or because it would not be appropriate for the PAFC staff member to continue working with the subject of the complaint -then this should be acknowledged and temporary alternative arrangements made, wherever possible.
Step 7:	If the complaint is about a specific PAFC member of staff or other child or adult participant, then that person (and the parent/family/carer/advocate where applicable) should be informed within two working days - or as soon as possible - that a complaint has been made against them and the nature of the complaint. However, the person should not be informed if doing so would compromise anyone's safety, or a police investigation.
Step 8:	PAFC's DSO will normally be responsible for investigating a stage one complaint. Therefore, the DSO or manager should plan the investigation according to the nature of the complaint, taking into account any witnesses or specialist opinion that should be sought. As a minimum, the complainant (and parent/family/carer/advocate if the complainant is a child or adult at risk) should be interviewed. Any person who might be the subject of the complaint should also be

	interviewed, provided that doing so would not compromise anyone's safety, or a police investigation.
Step 9:	If the complaint is about a building, facilities or equipment, then this should be examined.
Step 10:	If the complaint is about access to a service, the reasoning behind a decision to offer or not offer a particular service should be examined
Step 11:	If, at any point during the investigation, it appears that a criminal offence may have been committed, the matter should be reported to the police; and to other statutory agencies, bodies and the FA & EFL. Discussions should be held with the police about whether the investigation into the complaint can continue alongside their own enquiries.
Step 12:	If it emerges at any point that a child or adult at risk may have been caused significant harm - or may be at risk of significant harm - the appropriate safeguarding procedures detailed in Safeguarding Policy should be instigated immediately.
Step 13:	PAFC's DSO should make notes of the investigation - including notes of any meetings that take place - and should write a report based on their findings. The report should state clearly whether the complaint is upheld or not, and should make recommendations about how the matter can be taken forward. The report should be shared with both the complainant and the Board Safeguarding Lead, the SSM, other safeguarding personnel as appropriate and any specific member of PAFC staff, and/or other person, who may be involved. Any comments that either party may wish to make about the extent to which they accept or reject the findings of the report should be noted.
Step 14:	Once a way forward has been agreed, this way forward should be reviewed regularly
Step 15:	If either the complainant - or a person who is the subject of the complaint - is not prepared to accept the findings of the report, they should confirm this in writing. The matter then becomes a stage two complaint.
Step 16:	A complaint also progresses to stage two if it has previously been handled within the last 12 months as a stage one complaint, but has re-surfaced.

Formal Procedure for Making a Complaint: Stage 2	
Step 17:	A stage two complaint may come about for one of two reasons. It may be a complaint that has escalated from stage one - because the complainant, or a person who was the subject of the complaint, wishes to challenge the findings from a stage one investigation. Alternatively, it may relate to matters that were investigated as a stage one complaint within the previous 12 months and has resurfaced
Step 18:	Stage two complaints should be investigated either by a manager senior to PAFC's DSO who was investigating at stage one. Alternatively, it can be investigated by a completely independent person - who is not a staff member or volunteer - and who will be nominated by the CEO of PAFC. Therefore, the investigation will be commissioned by the CEO and the findings must be reported back to them
Step 19:	If a complaint is to progress to stage two, the complainant - this could be the original complainant or a person who was the subject of the original complaint - should again indicate in writing that they wish to complain (or complain further) and should state the reason for this.
Step 20:	The written statement should be presented to the CEO, who should then, within two working days , respond in writing to the complainant in the same way as outlined for the stage one procedure. In addition, the CEO should provide the complainant with the name of the person who will investigate the stage two complaint
Step 21:	The procedure for the investigation and sharing of the report should be similar to that outlined in the stage one procedure.
Step 22:	Stage two is the final stage of the complaints procedure. If any party wishes to complain further following the completion of stage two, this should be taken up with an external party e.g. local councilor, MP or an appropriate statutory authority

Keeping a record of the complaint:

Regardless of whether a complaint is dealt with formally or informally, accurate notes should be made by PAFC's DSO - or the person conducting the investigation - of each stage of the process, including records of meetings. Anonymous summary notes of any complaint should also be kept on the complaints file with a reference number. This will assist PAFC in the process of monitoring and learning from complaints.

Copies of the final report should be given to the person making the complaint and to anyone who may be the subject of the complaint.

If the complaint leads to any disciplinary action or a referral to a statutory authority, copies of the notes made during the investigation and the report of the investigation (together with any notes relating to the outcome) should be kept confidentially on the file of any person who is the subject of the complaint.

All records should be maintained in accordance with the policies and procedures details in the section relating to the Recording, Storing & Sharing of Information within the Safeguarding Policy

PAFC will review this Complaints Policy & Complaints Procedure and best practice at least annually. In addition, more frequent reviews will be undertaken following any major safeguarding incident, incident learning outcomes, organisational changes, as well as changes to legislation.

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4.0	Annual & Role changes	Zac Newton	Aug 2023
5.0	Annual Review	Zac Newton	Feb 2025
6.0	Annual & Role changes	Zac Newton	Jan 2026

How to make a complaint

STEP 1: Most complaints can be resolved promptly at the time of the initial problem.

You can make a complaint about any area of our work. In the first instance, take prompt action:

- Talk directly with the DSO or Senior member of staff about your concerns,
- Be clear about the problem and be as calm as you can about it. If the is unable to resolve your complaint, it may be referred to the next level i.e. You may need to provide your personal details so that we can get back to you or follow up.

STEP 2: If you are not satisfied – you have the right to make a formal complaint

If you are not happy with the explanation you receive, our action to address the issue or feel that you cannot talk about it, then make your complaint **in writing with in ten working days of the incident**. Please be clear about the problem and how you feel it should be resolved.

Please mark it 'Confidential' and send to or send an email to and mark your email 'complaint' for priority attention

For General Complaints to the Supporter Liaison Officer (SLO) Daniel Pippen

by email Supporters@pafc.co.uk

Supporter Engagement Manager
 Plymouth Argyle Football Club
 Home Park
 Plymouth
 PL2 3DQ

For Safeguarding Complaints

Email Safeguarding@pafc.co.uk

Rhiannon Foote
 DSO
 Plymouth Argyle Football Club
 Home Park
 Plymouth
 PL2 3DQ

What we need to know:

- Your name and contact details, such as address, email and phone number.

- Details of the incident, what where and when it took place.
- Any witness statements and names, including contact details
- Names of any others who have been treated in a similar way or subject to a similar experience.
- Details of any former complaints made about the incident: date, and to who made
- A preference for the solution to the incident

What we will do:

- We will deal with your complaint as quickly as we can
- We will acknowledge receipt of your complaint within 5 working days
- We aim to send a full reply within 14 working days

If we are unable to respond quickly, for example we are carrying out an investigation, we will tell you when you can expect a full reply.

If we require any further information or clarification, we will contact you – so please give contact details and co-operate with our request for information.

If we have done something wrong or made a mistake, we will apologise. We will tell you what went wrong and how we are putting it right.

If you are not happy with the outcome, then you have the right of appeal.

STEP 3: Appeals

If you have followed the above steps and you remain dissatisfied with the outcome, you may appeal the outcome:

Contact

Paul.Berne@pafc.co.uk

Paul Berne
Plymouth Argyle Football Club
Home Park
Plymouth
PL2 3DQ

You need to outline the complaint and stages reached so far and the reasons why you are dissatisfied.

Your appeal will be investigated by a club official who has not been previously involved in the complaint process and you will receive written notification of the outcome within 14 working days.

STEP 4: If you want to take the matter further

If you feel the matter is still not resolved, you can refer your complaint to the FA and EFL.

Confidential
Complaint Form

Your Name and Contact Information	
Name:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
Telephone:	Mobile:
Email:	

Nature of Complaint:
What has happened? If this has built up over time, please give full history.

When did it happen? (day, date, time)

Where did it happen?

What was said or done by whom?

Witness(es): Please give names(s) and contact details

Do you know or are aware of any others who have been treated in a similar way or have been subject to a similar experience?

Has a complaint been made before about this? Please give date and to whom made:

What would be your ideal resolution?

Signed

Date