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GUNNERSBURY TRIANGLE SPORTS & SOCIAL CLUB

**Complaints Policy**

Gunnersbury Triangle Club (“GTC” or “Club”) takes complaints about conduct and behaviour very seriously and works in line with the LTA’s (our main governing body) processes and procedures to respond to concerns.

This is the policy the Club will follow if a complaint is made. A complaint could be made if the reporter believes someone has behaved in a way that is unsafe, unprofessional, discriminatory, offensive or intimidating. It could be because someone has broken important rules or policies.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all complaints are resolved quickly, within the spirit of our Club and also where possible, at the level at which they arise.

**Values and Principles**

We base our complaints policy on the following values and principles which are in line with the Club’s Code of Conducts and Equality and Diversity Policy (<https://www.gunnersburytriangleclub.org.uk/members-area/policies-and-procedures/>).

You have the right to complain: we take complaints seriously. You should not be harassed, bullied or put at a disadvantage because of making a complaint.

* Equality - you should receive a proper response to your complaint, regardless of your age, gender, disability, race, religion, nationality, social status, sexual orientation or political persuasion.
* Fairness - we believe that complaints should be dealt with fairly and openly. Unless it would put other people at risk, those affected by a complaint will have the opportunity to contribute and respond to any investigation.
* Safety and welfare take priority - we will always give priority to concerns that affect safety and welfare. Issues affecting children will be treated very seriously.
* Confidentiality - we treat complaints as confidentially as possible. Sometimes we have to discuss complaints with other organisations. If we are worried about a risk to a person or to the public, we might need to pass on our concerns to the right authorities. If necessary, we will get advice from other organisations such as the Police, Social Services, LTA or another sports section governing body.

**How to make a complaint?**

1. Should a member have an issue relating to the Club, every effort should first be made to **resolve the matter informally.**
2. The Club encourages the use of informal discussion to resolve complaints. Therefore, unless they feel unable to do so, any member wishing to file a formal complaint, should first of all discuss the issue with the Club Chair, another appropriate member of the Management Committee or a Section Head. This provides an opportunity to resolve the grievance without recourse to the formal procedure.
3. In many cases, we are able to resolve problems informally. This might include:

* a change in arrangements for particular activities;
* an explanation or apology;
* an agreement to communicate or act differently in future; and/or
* clarifications to responsibilities or roles.

1. No record will be kept of complaints resolved informally.
2. Regarding any **formal** action on your complaint, we ask you to put it in writing with full details and forward it to the Club Chair or Club Secretary of the Management Committee within 28 days of the incident. The report should include:

* details of what occurred;
* details of when and where the occurrence took place;
* any witness details
* details of any former complaints made about the incident, including the date and to whom such complaint was made and
* an indication as to the desired outcome.

1. Complaints made against the Management Committee as a whole should be addressed to the Trustees.
2. Throughout the complaints procedure, all parties, including the complainant and reported party, should maintain confidentiality.

**How will I know what is happening?**

You will be given the details of a person who will be your point of contact at GTC. That person will make sure you understand the process, and will help to answer any questions or concerns that you have. You will be given an update on the progress of your complaint every two weeks. If there are delays in handling your complaint for any reason, we will keep you informed. We will not tell you the outcome if that person is a child, or if we believe that telling you would create a risk to other people. In this situation, we will still try to tell you about how you are affected by the action that we have taken.

Once a formal complaint has been submitted, the reported party will be informed within seven (7) days. Reported parties will also be given a point of contact at GTC and updated in the same way as described above.

### What will we do in the investigation stage?

We will give an initial response to your complaint within seven (7) days. If the matter is urgent, we will respond more quickly. We will investigate your complaint fairly. This means that we will investigate the complaint by discussing the details with all of the relevant parties. We will try to gather any information that may be relevant to handling your complaint.

Any information submitted by you as part of the complaint may be shared with the other parties involved in order to allow them to respond. This is because we believe in fairness and openness. We will not share information if we think that this will endanger someone’s safety or welfare.

1. If the reported party is an employee of the Club, the Club will regard the incident as a potential disciplinary issue and will follow any disciplinary procedure set out for employees or (if none exists) the ACAS Codes of Practice.

1. If the reported party is a non-employee of the Club, or the complaint concerns a breach of the Club Rules or Code of Conduct the complaint will be forwarded to the Complaints Team who will start an investigation. The Complaints Team will be made up of a member of the Management Committee and two others with relevant experience of handling complaints.
2. If a complaint is made about a member of the Management Committee, the reported party will absent themselves from any meetings, or parts of a meeting, where the complaint will be discussed.
3. During the investigation:

* all statements will be heard individually by the Complaints Team
* the complainant and reported party may bring one companion\* to the meeting where additional support is required;
* in the case of children (U18s) the companion will be a parent/guardian or other appropriate adult who is acceptable to the parent or guardian;
* Notes of the meeting will be made by a member of the Complaints Team. A copy of the notes will be sent to all parties present within 5 days of the meeting. Involved parties will be allowed a further 5 days to raise any concerns if they feel the notes do not reflect the meeting, so that clarifications can be made. If new information is added to the meeting notes, these notes should make clear that additions have been made after the meeting.

**\*Role of the Companion**

With the permission of the involved party, the companion is allowed to:

* take notes
* set out the case of the person raising the grievance
* speak for them
* talk with them during the meeting

The companion cannot:

* answer questions put to the involved party
* prevent anyone else at the meeting from explaining their side of things

1. Following the conclusion of any investigation into the complaint, the Complaints Team will submit a report in writing to the Management Committee setting out their findings and any recommendations they consider appropriate.

**What will we do in the decision making stage?**

1. On receipt of the report from the Complaints Team, the Management Committee shall discuss the findings and may accept any recommendations made by them. If a complaint is upheld the Management Committee will have the power to impose any one or more of the following sanctions:

* warn a member as to future conduct;
* suspend a member from membership;
* remove a member from membership;
* exclude a non-member from the Club, either temporarily or permanently;
* and / or turn down a non-member’s current and/or future membership applications.

In addition, or alternatively to the above sanctions, the Management Committee may make or take the following steps:

* request the reported party provide an explanation or apology;
* request the reported party agree to communicate or act differently in future.

If the Management Committee sees substantive evidence that shows the complaint was made in bad faith, or with malicious intent, the above sanctions may apply to the complainant.

The complainant and reported party will be informed of the decision made within 10 working days following receipt of the report from the Complaints Team. The Management Committee will provide both parties with written reasons for its decision to uphold or dismiss the complaint within one (1) calendar month of such decision being made.

**What happens if I want to appeal?**

An appeal may be made only where new evidence comes to light or where due process has clearly and demonstrably not been followed. The appeal must be made within 14 days of the outcome of the investigation being notified where it:

* is alleged that due process has not been followed;
* should be made in writing to the the Complaints Team
* should refer to the original incident and date of the subsequent formal meeting;
* must detail the new evidence and explain how and when it came to light;
* should explain the desired outcome of the appeal;
* will be heard by two adult members independent from both the original complaint and the subsequent enquiry as selected by the Complaints Team
* will not be a re-investigation of the incident but will provide a fair review for all parties involved in the process in the light of the new evidence or the alleged failure to follow due process.

**Process during/after appeal hearing**

* an appellant may bring one companion to the appeal hearing where additional support is required;
* in the case of children (U18s) the companion will be a parent/guardian or other appropriate adult who is acceptable to the parent or guardian;
* appellants will be notified in writing of the decision/s made, within 10 working days of the meeting;
* other involved parties will receive equivalent notification, within 10 working days of the meeting;
* the number of appeals will be limited to one;
* the decision of the appeal will be final.

**Is there anyone else I can talk to?**

Sometimes it can be useful to speak directly to someone outside of GTC when:

• you need urgent advice about someone’s safety or welfare;

• you don’t want to discuss the issue with someone at GTC;

• your complaint is very serious;

• your complaint involves other organisations and/or

• you need specialist advice.

Across England, there are many different National Governing Bodies (NGBs) who have responsibility for managing their specific sport. Your governing body can offer support in many ways, from providing guidance and support on safeguarding and welfare within your sport.

The LTA does not offer an arbitration, dispute-resolution or independent enquiry service but can advise on a range of different complaints, and in some cases will handle the complaint directly.

If you are worried about a child’s welfare, you can contact the following people:

* The Child Protection Officer at the County LTA
* The National LTA Child Protection Department (24hrs)
* Childline, or the NSPCC advice line, local Social Services, and/or Police
* Gunnersbury Triangle Club Welfare Officer – Jane Cooper (janeandpaulcooper@btinternet.com)

GTC will take steps to conduct a thorough investigation and always give priority to someone’s safety or well-being. Whilst we aim to resolve all complaints, in some situations we may decide that we cannot investigate or take further action. We also reserve the right to end any investigation or refer to the LTA if tennis-related or other sports governing body. If this happens, those involved will be given the reason for our decision.

**Questions or queries about this policy**

If you have a general query about this complaints policy, you should speak to the following person:

Management Committee Secretary – Malcolm Jenkin ([jenkingomez@btinternet.com](mailto:jenkingomez@btinternet.com))