



## Hashtag Utd Youth Complaints Procedure

It is recognised that in any football club, differences and misunderstandings may arise. Successful resolution of any differences depends on the willingness of the parties involved to communicate with one another. Every effort should be made to resolve disputes in an informal manner whatever issues arise. However, there will be occasions where issues cannot be resolved informally. In these instances, it is the policy of Hashtag United Youth FC to provide an orderly and formal procedure to deal promptly and fairly with any serious allegations. Therefore, if any member, parent/carer, club official or FA official feels that they have experienced or witnessed something of concern or something that breaks the club's policies or code of conduct, that cannot be dealt with informally, they should report the matter to the club. Any formal complaint must be given in writing and forwarded to the Club Chairman, Head of Youth Football, Club Welfare Officer or Club Secretary.

### **Informal Resolution**

For issues that are straightforward and easily resolved, requiring little or no investigation, a private word to those involved might remedy the issue or concern that has arisen. This is not to undervalue minor concerns, but in some instances a remedy can be decided upon quickly and to the satisfaction of all (an apology, explanation, or other action). For example, it may be some aspect of club policy has not been fully understood by a parent, or incorrectly applied by a coach, or the club policy itself is unclear or contradictory. A private word with the 'frontline' person (e.g., Coach or Club Official) might be the obvious and simplest approach to take. The club would expect the issue to be resolved within one to two weeks and the Coach or Club Official is required to report to the Co-Chairman and Head of Youth Football the concern and resolution offered so that this can be agreed and recorded in the club minutes.

### **Formal Grievance Procedure**

There is always the potential for more serious concerns to arise that require more significant intervention. In these instances, a more formal process is required so that the club can both record and address the issue or concern.

As soon as practical, and no later than seven days after the incident, the complainant should issue a complaint in writing, to those mentioned above, to include the following:

- i. Details of what, when and where the occurrence took place
- ii. Any witness statements or names of those willing to provide a statement
- iii. Names of others who maybe have witnessed or experienced similar treatment
- iv. In your view, a suggested resolution

The CWO team will run an initial investigation into the complaint and are responsible for the investigation and for applying the following guiding principles:

- The CWO team will remain in contact with the complainant and deal with the complaint constructively
- The complainant will receive confirmation by email within 48 hours that the club has received and is dealing with their complaint
- The CWO team will investigate the complaint and respond to the complaint within 30 days of receipt (either with a proposed resolution, or details of further actions to be taken)
- The CWO team will investigate the complaint by looking at what might have gone wrong and/or what needs to be done to rectify the cause of the complaint. They will also assess whether someone has suffered any injustice, and what remedy would be fair and proportionate in the circumstances
- The CWO team will consider whether to consult or inform the FA in relation to any breach of FA rules or guidelines
- Where the complaint indicates a law may have been broken, the club will inform the relevant statutory authority
- Complaints that have a general significance across the club might necessitate wider consultation and perhaps even discussion by the club committee
- Any investigation should be open, fair and respectful to all concerned. Therefore, investigation meetings with those involved may be necessary.

At times, it may be necessary for an individual to be suspended from their role during the investigation. This will occur when a safeguarding concern has arisen, regarding a child (under 18).

Safeguarding concerns raised about a child will be taken seriously. If a child has suffered significant harm under the Children Act 1989 Section 31(9), the police and children's services will be notified immediately, followed by Essex FA Designated Safeguarding Lead.

On completion of the investigation, the CWO team will present their findings to a Grievance Panel, formed of three members of the Hashtag United FC youth or senior committee.

The Grievance Panel will formally respond to the grievance and, if necessary, request further information or a grievance hearing involving all interested parties.

If the Grievance Panel deem that a hearing is necessary, all sides can put their case forward. Having heard all sides of the argument, the Grievance Panel will decide on how best to resolve the complaint.

The Grievance Panel will have the power to:

- i. Warn as to future conduct
- ii. Suspend from membership
- iii. Remove from membership any person found to have broken the club's policies or codes of conduct.

This decision will be communicated to all interested parties. Decisions on all grievances will be made

within two weeks of the formal grievance procedure being initiated. The decision of the Grievance Panel is binding, and no appeal is allowed. If any party remains unhappy, they should escalate their complaint to Essex FA.

If a child or young person is in immediate danger, call 999.

If you're worried that a child is being abused or neglected, call Essex children's social services on 0345 603 7627. Out of hours or bank holidays, call the emergency duty team on 0345 606 1212.

Essex County FA Safeguarding Manager - Helen Hever - [helen.hever@essexfa.com](mailto:helen.hever@essexfa.com), 01245 393098.

Hashtag United Football Club – Club Welfare Officer – [maxine@hashtagyouth.co.uk](mailto:maxine@hashtagyouth.co.uk)

Hashtag United Football Club - Head of Youth Football – [clinton@hashtagyouth.co.uk](mailto:clinton@hashtagyouth.co.uk)

For further guidance and or information, please refer to the Hashtag United Youth Football Club Disciplinary Procedure and Guidance Documents.