

## Complaints Procedure

1. This is the formal procedure for dealing with external complaints against the Football Foundation and all of its Operational partners.
2. The Foundation is committed to ensuring all complaints are fully investigated and dealt with in the appropriate manner. Complaints will be dealt with fairly, speedily and resolved as close to the point of origin as possible. Those who have raised the complaint will be treated fairly at all times before, during and after the conclusion of the process.

The complaints procedure may not be used in relation to action taken in the context of an appeal against a decision to reject a funding bid. The appropriate forum for this is the Appeals Procedure.

## Responsibility

3. The Human Resources Manager is responsible for all complaints involving a member of staff and The Head of Office Management is responsible for all complaints against a Grant Recipient. Any complaint that is brought to their attention must be dealt with in accordance with this policy.

The Human Resources Manager or The Head of Office Management must be notified promptly of any circumstances that may give rise to action being taken under this policy so that appropriate steps can be taken to advise on statutory and other requirements.

## Type of Complaint

4. A complaint might relate to:
  - Standards of communication with the Foundation
  - Quality of support given by Foundation employees
  - A specific incident relating to a member of staff
  - A third party complaining against a Grant Recipient
  - Equal Opportunities

This list is not exhaustive and there may be other reasons for making a complaint.

Many such problems can be resolved informally through discussion with the relevant employee and/or their manager.

Any complaint will be dealt with as quickly as possible and in confidence

## Procedure

5. **Informal Procedure:** The Foundation and the Complainant should attempt to resolve the complaint informally through discussion.

A record will be made detailing the nature of the complaint raised, the employee and/or manager's response, any action taken and the reasons for it. Employees have a right to be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union representative at any meeting to discuss the complaint.

**Formal Procedure:** At each stage of the complaint process the Foundation must be given a reasonable opportunity to consider their response to the information provided by the complainant. The complaints procedure exists as a formal way of raising an issue that has not been resolved informally, or is so serious that a formal approach needs to be taken.

All parties must take all reasonable steps to provide the information required and attend any meeting where required. If a complainant fails to provide appropriate information or to attend any meeting on a second occasion without good reason, the Foundation shall be entitled to continue with the process and make a decision based on the information available, and this decision will then be communicated to the complainant in writing.

## **Stage One: First formal meeting**

- The complaint must be put in writing to the Human Resources Manager or the Head of Office Management. This will help to clarify the issue and to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding or misinterpretation.
- The Human Resources Manager or the Head of Office Management will investigate the complaint as soon as possible and invite the complainant to provide further information or to attend a meeting at a mutually agreed venue to discuss it.
- The Human Resources Manager or the Head of Office Management will respond in writing to the complainant with their decision and inform them of their right of appeal, **within five working days** of receipt of further information. If it is not possible to respond within the specified time period, the complainant should be given an explanation for the delay and told when the response can be expected.
- If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision they should refer their complaint in accordance with Stage Two.

## **Stage Two: Appeal**

- If the matter has not been resolved satisfactorily at Stage One, the complainant may appeal by giving written notice to the Human Resources Manager or the Head of Office Management **within five working days** of the date of the decision under Stage One. A Director not previously involved with the issue will hear the complaint.
- The Human Resources Manager or Head of Office Management will invite the complainant to an appeal meeting or to provide a statement of appeal. This should normally take place **within five working days** of receiving written notification from the complainant. If this is not possible due to operational commitments, the meeting will be held as soon as is practical.
- The Director will decide on the complaint and deliver a decision, in writing, **within five working days** after the meeting. Their decision will be final.

## **Complaints from a third party against a Grant recipient:**

- The complainant will be asked to write to the Head of Office Management, detailing their complaint.
- The Head of Office Management will notify the relevant Director, Programme Manager and Technical Advisor of the complaint. The content of the complaint must be considered in the monitoring process of the project to ascertain if there is any substance to what the complainant has raised.
- The complaint will be kept on record in the relevant project file.
- A letter will be sent to the complainant by the Head of Office Management, **within five working days** of the complaint. The letter will outline the processes the Foundation have in place for awarding funding, ensuring grant recipients are adhering to the terms and conditions and the ongoing monitoring of the project.

## **Complaints from a third party against a Football Foundation employee:**

- The complainant will be asked to write to the HR Manager, detailing their complaint.

- The HR Manager will notify the relevant Director and the employee's line manager of the complaint in order for it to be considered in the context of the employee's work record.
- The complaint will be kept on record in the relevant personnel file.
- Should further action against the employee be considered necessary, this will then become an internal and private affair for the Foundation to deal with in accordance with its own internal policies and procedures. The complainant may be asked to offer further evidence or testimony about the nature of their complaint against an employee. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times and no third party will be put in to any sort of difficult working situation with a Football Foundation employee during or after the complaint process as far as is possible.
- The complainant will be told of any return to work of a Foundation employee if that return follows a period of suspension for investigation. The full support of the organisation will be afforded to any third party in rebuilding working relationships with its employees when there has been unrest.

## Records

6. At all stages of the formal procedure, written records should be kept showing:
- The nature of the complaint raised
  - The Foundation's response
  - Any action taken and the reason why.

These records will be kept confidential, and will be retained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Copies of any meeting records should be given to the individual(s) concerned and the individual asked to sign a copy to indicate their agreement that they are an accurate and complete record of what was said. In certain exceptional circumstances, some information may be withheld, for example, to protect a witness.

## Notes

- a) If the complaint concerns an alleged wrongdoing or criminal offence by persons within the Foundation, the complainant should raise it immediately with the Human Resources Manager who will refer it to the Chief Executive.
- b) A second management representative from another function may be invited to attend any formal complaint meetings in order to act as a witness and note-taker.
- c) The timescales referred to above will be adhered to wherever possible. However, where there are good reasons, e.g. the need for further investigation or the unavailability of witnesses or companions, each party may request that the other agrees to an extension of the permitted timescale.
- d) The Foundation reserves the right to seek assistance from external facilitators at any stage in the procedure, in the interest of seeking a satisfactory outcome for all concerned.