

Complaints procedure

1. Introduction

The Football Foundation is committed to working in an open and accountable way to provide a high quality and professional service at all times. Despite this commitment, we recognise that there are occasions, where an individual, applicant or club may not be completely happy with their interaction with us, or our operational partners. If you are dissatisfied in any way, we want to know about it. We aim to respond positively and courteously to any complaint, and by putting right our mistakes, improve our processes.

2. Scope

1. This is the formal procedure for dealing with external complaints against the Football Foundation (Foundation), its staff, grant recipients 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.

This 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 Foundation's Appeals Procedure.

3. Type of complaint

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; and/or
- Equal opportunities.

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

4. Responsibility

The Foundation's Head of Business Services is responsible for managing all formal complaints involving a member of staff and our operational partners, and is also responsible for complaints against a grant recipient. Any complaint that is brought to their attention will be dealt with in accordance with this policy.

The Head of Business Services 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.

5. Attempts to resolve the matter informally

In the first instance, attempts should be made to resolve the matter informally through discussion or correspondence. This will involve an appropriate member of the Foundation team responding to any

matters raised without unreasonable delay, and where necessary, providing explanations and answers to questions that have been raised.

A record will be made detailing the nature of the complaint raised, the employee and/or manager's response, any action taken and the reason for that action.

Please note that all attempts should be made to resolve the matter informally, before moving to the formal procedure.

6. Making a formal complaint

If attempts to resolve the matter informally have not been successful, a formal complaint can be made. To do this you need to set out your complaint in writing, by letter or email, explaining the details behind the cause of your dissatisfaction. This will help to clarify the issue and to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding or misinterpretation. The complaint should be addressed to the Head of Business Services and sent to enquiries@footballfoundation.org.uk or sent to Whittington House, 19-30 Alfred Place, London, WC1E 7EA.

7. Formal complaints procedure: Stage one - consideration of your complaint

You will receive an acknowledgement to your complaint **within three working days** and a written response **within ten working days**. In considering the complaint, the Head of Business Services will:

- Investigate the issues raised, respond in writing to you with their decision, and inform you of your right of appeal.
- Where further details are needed, you will be invited to provide the necessary information, or to attend a meeting at a mutually agreed venue to discuss matters.
- **Within five working days** of the receipt of any further information, the Head of Business Services will respond in writing to you with their decision, and inform you of your right of appeal.

If it is not possible for the Foundation to respond within the timescales given, you will be given an explanation of the reasons for the delay, and a timescale by which a full reply will be received. At all stages, any complaint will be dealt with in strict confidence.

All parties must take all reasonable steps to provide the information needed 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. This decision will then be communicated to the complainant in writing.

8. Formal complaints procedure: Stage two - making an appeal

Following the review of your complaint, if you remain dissatisfied you may appeal by giving written notice to the Head of Business Services **within five working days** of the date of the decision under stage one.

Your appeal will be acknowledged within **three working days** and a Head of Department not previously involved with the issue will undertake a fresh review of your complaint. As part of this process, you may be asked to attend an appeal meeting, or to provide additional information, so that your case can be comprehensively assessed.

The Foundation's Chief Operating Officer will then decide on your appeal and deliver a decision in writing. This will be **within ten working days** of your appeal, or of an appeal meeting, or following receipt of additional information. Their decision will be final.

9. Complaints from a third party against a grant recipient

- If you are making a complaint against a grant recipient you should write to the Head of Business Services detailing your complaint. An acknowledgement will be sent **within three working days**.
- The Head of Business Services will notify the relevant senior member of the Grant Management Team of the complaint. Where necessary, checks will be made to ensure that the grant recipient is adhering to their terms and conditions and the ongoing monitoring of the project. The content of the complaint will then be carefully considered to ascertain if there is substance or a case to answer to the issues raised.
- A written response will be sent to you by the Head of Business Services, **within ten working days** of receiving the complaint, responding to any issues and providing explanations and answers to questions that have been raised.
- The complaint will be kept on record in the relevant project file.

10. Complaints from a third party against a Football Foundation employee:

- If you are making a complaint against a Football Foundation employee you should write to the Head of Business Services, detailing your complaint. An acknowledgement will be sent **within three working days**.
- The Head of Business Services will notify the relevant Head of Department 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.
- 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. You may be asked to offer further evidence or testimony about the nature of your complaint against an employee. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times and no third party will be put into any sort of difficult working situation with a Football Foundation employee during or after the complaint process, as far as is possible.
- Following an investigation, a letter will be sent to you by the Head of Business Services, **within ten working days** of receiving the complaint, confirming any decision or update for you.
- You 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.
- Depending on the outcome of the investigation, the complaint may be kept on record in the individuals' personnel file.
- If your complaint is about the Head of Business Services, their role in this process identified here, will revert to a Head of Department, or the Chief Operating Officer.

11. Records

At all stages of the formal procedure, written records will be kept showing:

- The nature of the complaint raised;
- The investigation process, if applicable, and the findings;

- The Foundation's response; and
- Any action taken and the reason for the action.

These records will be kept confidential, and the Foundation is committed to complying with privacy and data protection laws, including the Data Protection Act 1998.

Copies of any meeting records will 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.

12. Additional information

- a) If a complaint concerns an alleged wrongdoing or criminal offence by persons within the Foundation, the complainant should raise it immediately with the Head of Business Services 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.

Policy review

The Foundation is committed to keeping this policy current and relevant. It will be monitored and reviewed annually.

**Football Foundation
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