

CASTLE JUNIORS FOOTBALL CLUB



Complaints and Discipline Policy - Version 6

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Anyone is entitled to complain about conduct or behaviour of any person connected with the Club in any capacity – Club Official, coach, member, player, parent, guardian, etc. This could be because it is felt that someone has behaved in a way that is unsafe, unprofessional, discriminatory, offensive or intimidating. It could also be because someone has broken Club rules or policies.
- 1.2 The Club takes complaints seriously and the person making the complaint should not be harassed, bullied or put at a disadvantage because of highlighting a complaint matter. The complainant should receive a proper response to their complaint, regardless of their age, gender, disability, race, religion, nationality, social status, sexual orientation or political persuasion.

2.0 General Principles

2.1 Fairness

The Club believes that complaints should be dealt with fairly and openly. Unless it would put other people at risk, those affected by a complaint should have a chance to contribute and respond to any investigation.

2.2 Safety and welfare take priority

The Club will always give priority to concerns that affect safety and welfare. Issues affecting children or adults at risk will be treated very seriously.

2.3 Confidentiality

The Club treats complaints as confidentially as possible. Sometimes we have to discuss complaints with other persons or 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 appropriate authorities. If necessary, we will get advice from other organisations such as the Police or Social Services.

2.4 Timeliness

The Club recognises that there may be some issues, such as safeguarding, which require urgent reporting. For other matters, the Club seeks to handle complaints Monday-Friday and not at weekends. This helps to ensure that appropriate people are available to respond to issues. If the matter is not urgent, we therefore ask that matters arising over the weekend are held until normal working hours on Monday.

3.0 Process

- 3.1 If you have a complaint, it is often best to start by having a conversation with someone at the Club. There are some suggestions below about who to speak to. They may be able to help to resolve your problem. You could also make a written complaint which should be addressed to “Complaints & Discipline Committee Chair, Castle Juniors Football Club” and can be handed to any coach or Management Committee member. If your complaint needs to be looked into further, you will normally be asked to put your complaint in writing. The Club accepts anonymous complaints, but it is often very difficult to investigate these properly. It is easier for us to handle your complaint if you provide as much detail as possible about the matters giving rise to your complaint.
- 3.2 Complaints will usually be handled by Management Committee members. However, there are a number of people that you can speak to who will help you to make a complaint. Useful contact details have been included at the end of this policy.
- 3.3 You can speak to any of our Club Management Committee member. They may be able to discuss your complaint in detail.
- 3.4 Any of the coaches working at the Club can also tell you how to make a complaint. He or she might direct you to a Club Management Committee member.
- 3.5 If you are a child, or if you are worried about the safety or welfare of a child or an adult at risk, you can speak to the Club Safeguarding Officer or anyone else involved at the club that you trust.

4.0 Complaint Investigation

- 4.1 The Club will issue an initial response to your complaint within five working days (or as soon as practicable after this). If the matter is urgent, the Club will respond more quickly depending on the nature of the information available to us at that time.
- 4.2 The Club will investigate your complaint fairly in accordance with the Club’s Disciplinary Procedures outlined later in this policy. This means that we will contact all of the relevant people with regard to the complaint. We will try to gather any information that may be relevant to handling your complaint. Sometimes we will ask to show copies of information from the investigation to other people 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 or that to do so may have a harmful effect. We will attempt to complete the process in as short a time as is appropriate in ensuring thoroughness and openness.
- 4.3 Sometimes we will refer serious or complex matters to another organisation outside the Club. We reserve the right to seek advice from appropriate organisations such as the Police, IFA or Social Services and to make any such referrals as may be necessary.
- 4.4 You will be given the details of a person who will be your point of contact at the Club

with regards to your complaint. That person will make sure that 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 at appropriate intervals throughout the process. If there are delays in handling your complaint for any reason, we will keep you informed.

- 4.5 If your complaint leads to formal disciplinary action against someone, we will usually inform you about the outcome. 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.
- 4.6 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
- 4.7 If an informal resolution is not suitable, then the Club's Complaints & Discipline Committee will look at the information about the case. We will try to make sure that this Committee does not contain anyone directly involved with your complaint. They might decide to take the following action:
- Formal disciplinary action under the constitution and policies of the Club
 - Changes in formal contracts or arrangements put in place by the Club
 - A decision to refer the case to another organisation such as the Police or Social Services
 - Closure of your complaint without action in the event that further investigation by the Club is either not necessary or reasonably practicable

5.0 Further Advice

- 5.1 Sometimes it can be useful to speak directly to someone outside the club. Here are some examples of when this might help:
- You need urgent advice about someone's safety or welfare
 - You don't want to discuss the issue with someone at the Club
 - Your complaint is very serious
 - Your complaint involves other Clubs or organisations
 - You need specialist advice

The Club is able to advise on a range of different complaint matters, and in some cases may handle the complaint directly.

5.2 If you are worried about a child's welfare, you can contact the following people. The contact details for these people are included below:

- The Club's Safeguarding Officer
- Childline or the NSPCC advice line
- Local Social Services
- Local Police

5.3 If your concern is a footballing matter, you may wish to contact the Irish Football Association on 028 9066 9458 or info@irishfa.com

5.4 Other useful contacts include:

South-East Health & Social Care Trust, Gateway Service 0300 1000 300
Out of hours emergencies 028 9056 5444

Local Police
Emergency: 999
Non-emergency: 101 or 0845 600 8000

Childline: 0800 1111

NSPCC advice for adults: 0808 800 5000

Signed:

Trevor Reid

Iain Greenway

**TREVOR REID
CHAIRPERSON**

**IAIN GREENWAY
TREASURER**

Date: 15 March 2021

Version	Date	Changes
1	January 2016	
2	February 2017	Minor changes to maintain consistency with other policies
3	January 2018	Minor changes to maintain consistency with other policies
4	March 2019	Changes to reflect constitution changes around committee name etc
5	January 2020	Removal of contact details and general tidying up
6	March 2021	Reference to IFA added at 5.3; and to timeliness at 2.4

Disciplinary Procedures - Version 6

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Castle Juniors Football Club aims to have clear guidance for members which cover the way that we do things. However, where continuing problems arise, the Club believes that the fairest way to resolve issues with a member's conduct or performance is to have a well structured complaints and disciplinary procedure. The procedure is designed to help members attain the organisation's standards of conduct, attendance and performance. Members have the following rights in relation to disciplinary action:

1. To be informed of the allegations of misconduct or poor performance that have been made and that are to be discussed at any disciplinary hearing;
2. To be accompanied by a someone of their choice when they engage with the disciplinary process;
3. To make an appeal against any action taken.

1.2 The Club's disciplinary process is enshrined within the Club Constitution which states as follows:

9. *Discipline and appeals*

9.1 All concerns, allegations or reports of poor practice/abuse relating to Club procedures will be recorded and responded to in accordance with the club's Complaints and Discipline Policy and Procedures.

9.2 The Club has the power to take appropriate disciplinary action, including the termination of membership.

9.3 A Complaints and Discipline Committee consisting of four individuals who are not members of the Management Committee and who are elected by the AGM, and a Chair who will be a Management Committee member, will be responsible for managing complaints and disciplinary matters involving the club.

9.4 In the event of insufficient nominations for the Committee, or the resignation of a member of the Complaints and Discipline Committee between AGMs, the Management Committee will nominate a replacement member. The replacement member will serve with full authority until the following AGM.

2.0 Potential Outcomes

2.1 Formal verbal warning

If a member's conduct, attendance or performance does not reach the standard required by the Club and this has not been resolved through informal processes, a formal disciplinary process will take place. The issues will be discussed with the member concerned who will have the opportunity to offer an explanation. If the explanation is not satisfactory, the member will be issued with a formal verbal warning, clear targets and a timetable for improvement. The discussion will be confirmed to the member in writing and the verbal warning will remain on file for six months.

2.2 Written warning

A written warning will be issued when sufficient improvement is not made following a disciplinary hearing where there is already a formal verbal warning in place on the member's file, or where the misconduct has been sufficiently serious as to warrant by-passing the verbal warning stage. A written warning will remain on file for 12 months, again with clear targets and time frames for improvement.

2.3 Final written warning

If there is still insufficient improvement in conduct or performance, a further disciplinary hearing will take place. If no satisfactory explanation is offered but misconduct is not serious enough to warrant dismissal a final written warning will be issued and will remain on file for 12 months. The final written warning will inform the member that any further misconduct or failure to meet the required level of performance will result in immediate dismissal from the club. It is possible to by-pass all previous stages and progress to this stage immediately if the conduct is found to be of sufficient gravity by the Club Complaints & Discipline Committee.

2.4 Dismissal

If the member still fails to reach the required standards of conduct or performance then they will be dismissed upon the decision that the majority of the Complaints & Discipline Committee are agreed. The member will be given the opportunity to provide an explanation to the Complaints & Discipline Committee of their failure to meet the required standards at a final disciplinary hearing. As with all stages of the disciplinary procedure, the member has the right to appeal and to have a witness present during any interactions with the disciplinary process. If the member is dismissed they will be provided with the reasons for dismissal, a date of termination and details of how they may appeal. There is no requirement to go through the various outcome stages set out above to arrive at dismissal if the conduct alleged and proven is of sufficient gravity.

2.5 The member will always be given as much information as possible regarding the accusations of misconduct or the records detailing failure to achieve the required performance standards. They will be given reasonable notice of the date and time of any hearing. Any action will be taken after full consideration of the facts. The Club has the right to vary the disciplinary procedure depending on the seriousness of the issues or offence(s) committed by the member in question.

2.6 Dismissal due to Gross Misconduct

Immediate dismissal from the Club may be made in the following circumstances:

- Evidence of major theft;
- Significant sexual or racial misconduct;
- Use of illegal substances;
- Significant threat to reputation or security of the club and other members.

2.7 Whilst the above procedures will be followed wherever possible and in the majority of cases, the Club Management Committee reserves the right to deviate from the above procedures at any stage should the conduct under consideration be suitably serious or there are reasonably held welfare or safety concerns. This includes the right to take "Executive Action" where necessary, up to and including the sanction of dismissal from the Club.

2.8 It should be noted that the above "Potential Outcomes" do not have to be part of a linear process. In other words, there is no requirement to start from the lowest level and work up through them one level at a time. The outcome decided upon can be pitched at any level within this framework and will be dependent upon the gravity of the matters under consideration, the nature of the evidence to hand and the potential for risk of harm to those involved.

2.9 The Club may suspend a person from being involved in the Club's activities pending the conclusion of the disciplinary process. This may, for instance, be a proportionate response where a matter is being investigated by external authorities such as the Police. Such a suspension will be without prejudice to a subsequent disciplinary process, and will be determined by the Club Management Committee. The Club disciplinary process will normally be paused until any external investigation has concluded. Whether to invoke suspension during the disciplinary process will be decided by the Club Management Committee taking account of the General Principles set out in this policy.

2.10 Any person who is the subject of disciplinary action as set out above may appeal to the Club Management Committee within ten days of being notified of the action. The Management Committee (sitting without the Chair of the Complaints & Discipline Committee) will review the process followed and decisions reached by the Complaints & Discipline Committee, and any new evidence provided in the appeal. The Management Committee will endeavour to complete this process in a timely manner. The Management Committee will then issue a decision in writing to the appellant. That decision will be final.

Signed:

Trevor Reid

Iain Greenway

**TREVOR REID
CHAIRPERSON**

**IAIN GREENWAY
TREASURER**

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