Waldridge Park JFC Complaints Policy and Procedure

1.1 This guidance is based on the principle that, where at all possible, complaints will be dealt with informally between the club volunteers and the complainant. Where this has been tried and been unsuccessful, the more formal procedures will give the complainant a route to ensuring the issue is appropriately considered.

1.2 The club should be mindful to consider ‘The Right to a Fair Trial’. Where concerns are raised the club intends for these to be dealt with: Fairly; Openly; Promptly; Without Prejudice; and for the complaints procedure to be publicised. It is for the management committee to decide how to fulfil this requirement but details of the complaints procedures may be included in:-

* The club website;
* Information given to new parents when their children join the club;
* Information given to players themselves;
* Bulletins or newsletters;
* Documents supplied to all stakeholders;

There are certain complaints that may fall outside the remit of the management committee’s complaints procedure. They are to be promptly referred to through the appropriate processes (e.g. County FA discipline, local police force).

1.3 The management committee has approved the following procedure which explains what you should do if you have any concerns about the club. All volunteers will be familiar with the procedure and will be able to assist you.

1.4 The management committee may choose not to engage with a complainant who is not a club member.

2.1 Raising concerns. The majority of concerns can be dealt with without resorting to the procedure.

Where you have a concern about any aspect of the club or your child’s enjoyment, raise this with your child’s coach via the phone or in person. Ideally, they will be able to address your concerns on the spot, or can arrange a meeting with you to discuss the issue. Complaints relating to pitch time should be referenced via the Recruitment and Retention of Players Policy to the team coach in the first instance.

2.2 All concerns will be dealt with confidentially, although the volunteers may need to take notes if they feel that the matter may need to be taken further or it may arise again in the future. Any such notes will be kept in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). However, such notes would be able to be used to as evidence if further investigation was required, or if the concern became a formal complaint. General complaints about the club, but not specifically against any person, would usually be addressed as complaints against the management committee of the club and therefore addressed as a complaint for the Chair or Vice Chair to respond to.

3.1 Safeguarding. Wherever a complaint indicates that a child’s wellbeing or safety is at risk, the club is under a duty to report this immediately to the local authority and or police as per the Child Protection Policy.

4.1 Confidentiality. Complaints should be treated in confidence and information only given on a need to know basis. It is not advisable for details of a complaint to be discussed at full club meetings as this may prejudice any involvement of management committee members at a later stage. However, the management committee may be required to consider recommendations that come out of a complaint process. Additionally, complainants should also refrain from jeopardising a fair and impartial process by breaching confidentiality or by making public comments, which could be detrimental to the reputation of club volunteers.

5.1 Social Media. In order for complaints to be resolved as quickly and fairly as possible, we request that complainants do not discuss complaints publically via social media such as facebook and twitter.

Complaints will be dealt with confidentially for those involved, and we expect complainants to observe confidentiality also.

6.1 Complaints that result in volunteers’ capability or disciplinary fact finding. If at any formal stage of the complaint it is determined that volunteers disciplinary or capability proceedings are necessary in order to resolve the issue, the details of this action would remain confidential to the Chair/ Vice Chair, Secretary and/or the Welfare Officers as appropriate. The Chair may appoint any of those named positions to carry out a fact finding exercise. The complainant is entitled to be informed that action is being taken and the eventual outcome of any such action, but they are not entitled to participate in the proceedings or receive any detail about them.

7.1 Complaints about the Chair. Where a complaint regards the Chair, the complainant should first directly approach the Chair in an attempt to resolve the issue informally. If the complainant is not satisfied with this outcome they should notify the Vice Chair and/ or Welfare Officers if appropriate. The Stage 2 process may then commence, and the Vice Chair will be the individual responsible for the investigation rather than the Chair. Where a complaint regards the Chair and Vice Chair together, the same process applies to be carried out by the Club Secretary and/ or Welfare Officers as appropriate.

7.2 The full complaints procedure will commence from stage one on this direction. If dissatisfied with the response, the complainant may write to the County FA (see the contact details at the end of the document).

8.1 Anonymous complaints. The management committee will not consider anonymous complaints.

9.1 Procedure. If you need to raise an issue in the first instance, please do so with the relevant member of club volunteers who should be willing to talk to you and seek to establish a solution. If you are not satisfied and with this response and believe the issue has not been resolved, please use the following procedure as detailed below.

10.1 Timeline. This begins when concerns are raised, prompting the informal and immediate addressing of issues by relevant volunteer (Chair/ Vice Chair/ Secretary/ Welfare Officer).

10.2 Stage 1 Informal investigation (fact finding) by Chair or appointed fact finder (as detailed above) Where dissatisfied with outcomes, progress to Stage 2 from Stage 1 should take no more than seven days.

10.3 Stage 2 Formal investigation by Chair or appointed fact finder. Where dissatisfied with the outcome progress to Stage 3. Stage two should take no longer than 28 days.

10.4 Stage 3 Formal appeal to full management committee (minus any who happen to be complainants or the subject of the complaint) This is the final stage of the club’s complaints procedure. Stage three should take no longer than 28 days.

10.5 Where the complainant is dissatisfied with outcomes, they may contact the Local County FA if they wish to escalate further.

10.6 We will endeavour to abide by timeframes stated for each stage however where further investigations are necessary or other delays are experienced, new time limits can be set and the complainant made aware of the new deadline and given an explanation for the delay. The suggested time limits in this procedure refer to calendar days, i.e. including club holidays and weekends. However, be mindful that the management committee all have full time jobs outside of the voluntary time they spend working on club activities, thus these timeframes are not always possible to achieve, and should therefore be regarded as target timeframes.

10.7 The management committee reserve the right not to investigate complaints that have been made three months after the subject of the complaint took place, except in exceptional circumstances. What is meant by exceptional circumstances is where new evidence has come to light, where the complaint is of an especially serious matter or where there is reasonable justification for why the complainant has been unable to raise the complaint before this time. The Chair or Vice Chair will review the situation and decide whether or not to enact the complaints procedure, informing the complainant of the decision.

10.8 A log of all correspondence in relation to the complaint will be kept in accordance with the Data Protection Principles.

10.9 The Chair or Vice Chair or appointed fact finder will consider all evidence they deem to be relevant; this may include but is not limited to: a statement from the complainant, where relevant a statement from an individual who is the subject of the complaint any previous correspondence regarding the complaint any supporting documents in either case interview with anyone related to the complaint.

10.10 The fact finder may decide to have a meeting with the complainant (and where relevant, the subject of the complaint) if they feel that it would be appropriate for the investigation.

10.11 After considering the available evidence, the fact finder can:

* Uphold the complaint and direct that certain action be taken to resolve it
* Reject the complaint and provide the complainant with details of the stage three appeals process.
* Uphold the complaint in part: in other words, the Fact Finder may find one aspect of the complaint to be valid, but not another aspect. They may direct for certain action to be taken to resolve the aspect that they find in favour of the complainant.
* Reject the complaint on the grounds of being a malicious act and refer the matter to the discipline policy as club misconduct- this outcome will not afford progress to stage three.

10.12 The Chair or Vice Chair or Club Secretary must inform the complainant of their decision in writing within the time frame detailed above from taking receipt of the complaint. They must explain clearly why they have come to the decision that they made. They must detail any agreed actions as a result of the complaint.

10.13 Finally, they must provide the complainant with details of how to progress the complaint to stage three if they are not satisfied, providing them with the contact details of the full management committee.

11.1 Stage 3 – Appeal – Review by a Panel of the Management Committee. If the complainant wishes to appeal a decision at stage two of the procedure, or they are not satisfied with the action that the appointed fact finder has taken in relation to the complaint, the complainant is able to appeal this decision. They must write to the full management committee via the chair/ vice chair through the club email as soon as possible after receiving notice of the appointed fact finder’s decision, briefly outlining the content of the complaint and requesting that a complaints appeal panel is convened. This is not applicable in cases where the fact finder identifies the complaint as malicious or patently unfounded.

11.2 The complainant must request an appeal panel within 10 club days of receiving the fact finder’s decision or it will not be considered, except for in exceptional circumstances. On receipt of this written notification, the following steps will be followed:

11.2.1. The management committee will write to the complainant within seven days to confirm receipt of the appeal request and detail further action to be taken.

11.2.2. The management committee convene a panel of at least three management committee members (if multiple management committee members are the subject of the complaint independent volunteers from across the club may be selected to sit on the panel). The appeal hearing will take place within 28 days of receipt of the date of the confirmation letter from the management committee to the complainant, confirming the appeal.

11.2.3. In addition to the panel, the following parties will be invited to submit information, where applicable: - the complainant - the fact finder who dealt with the complaint at Stage two – where the complaint regards a volunteer, the volunteer who is the subject of the complaint. The complainant is also able to bring a companion with them to the hearing if they are a minor. Where the subject of the complaint is a minor, that minor is also able to bring a companion with them. The companion will be an adult.

11.3 If after the hearing any party feels that further action is necessary, please see the contact details at the end of the procedure. Extra care will be taken to consider the vulnerability of children where they are present at a complaints hearing.

11.4 The panel can make the following decisions: -

• Dismiss the complaint in whole or in part –

• Uphold the complaint in whole or in part –

• Decide on the appropriate action to be taken to resolve the complaint –

• Recommend changes to the club’s systems or procedures to ensure that problems of a similar nature do not recur.

11.5 All parties who attended the meeting will be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal within seven days (excluding those which fall in the club holidays). This is the final stage at which the club will consider the complaint. If the complainant remains dissatisfied and wishes to take the complaint further, please see the contact details for the County FA at the end of the document. The club will not consider the complaint beyond this.

12.1 Company Secretary, Durham County Football Association, Codeslaw, Riverside, Chester-le-street.

DH3 3SJ