



Football Family Ltd: Complaints and Appeals Procedure

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Policy	003	01.09.20	31.07.21	C.Parry

Positional Statement

As part of this policy and general Football Family organisational culture, parents and learners are encouraged to express their views on what goes on within Football Family, so that staff receive an early warning of potential difficulties, and many problems can be prevented from arising. Certain general underlying principles should be observed whenever concerns or complaints are raised.

Publicity

Parents, carers, and other members of the Football Family community will always be made aware of the ways in which they can raise concerns or lodge a formal complaint. A summary of how Football Family deals with complaints will be included in the information which is given to new parents when their children start their education with Football Family, and in the information given to the children or young adults themselves. Football Family will make the procedures available in languages other than English when required. Braille or large print version will be made available if requested. Football Family will consider in advance how it would locate qualified interpreters in various languages, including British Sign Language.

Procedures

Procedures will be as speedy as possible - consistent with fairness to all concerned, each stage of the procedure will have known time limits. Where it is not possible to meet these, information about progress must be given to the complainant. Care will be taken not to draw things out with unnecessary bureaucracy. Football Family have a hierarchy for dealing with complaints. The complaints procedure is distinct from formal disciplinary proceedings for staff and this needs to be made clear to all concerned. There may be occasions where a complaint launches a disciplinary procedure which puts the complaints procedure on hold. If so, the complainant will be informed of this and any non-disciplinary aspects of the complaint will be dealt with by the usual complaint procedures; the complainant will be updated on progress on a regular basis. It may be clear after the disciplinary procedures have been completed that responses to the complainant are required (e.g. an apology or an explanation of new policies to avoid a similar problem again).

Support for complainants

As part of the general publicity about complaints procedures, it is important for complainants to know where they can go for information, advice, and advocacy, if they require it. Ideally, support should be offered from individuals and organisations who are clearly separate from those complained against. Parents and carers raising concerns or complaints will be invited to be accompanied by a friend, a relative or a representative at any stage of the procedure.

Support for a person complained against

Staff who may be questioned as part of a complaint's procedure investigation must feel that they are being treated in a fair way and be informed that they too will have an opportunity to put their case. They will be told about the procedure, given a copy of it, and be kept informed of progress. There is a crucial balance to be maintained between supporting the individual so that his/her rights and reputation are protected and investigating a complaint thoroughly and impartially. The staff member has the right to be accompanied by a union representative, friend, or colleague at discussions about the complaint.

Confidentiality

It is very important to treat conversations and correspondence with discretion. It is vital that complainants feel confident that their complaint will not mean that their child will be penalised. However, from the outset, all parties to a complaint should be made aware that some information may have to be shared with others involved in the operation of the complaint's procedure. It is usually procedure to disregard anonymous complaints unless somebody is prepared to substantiate them, but the danger in this is that they may relate to something quite serious. If the forewarned eventuality occurs, to the detriment of Football Family, the complainant may come forward subsequently and say that she/he alerted Football Family even though the complaint was unsigned. It will be at the discretion of the DSL to decide whether the gravity of an anonymous complaint warrants an investigation.

Redress

If the outcome of the complaint's procedure shows that Football Family is at fault, it is often enough to provide redress in the form of an acknowledgement that the complaint is valid. Alternatively, it may be appropriate to offer one or more of: an apology; an explanation; a promise that the event complained of will not recur; an undertaking to review Football Family policies or practices in the light of the complaint. Fear of litigation should not prevent Football Family from admitting to parents when mistakes have been made.

Staff awareness and training

Football Family staff, including non-teaching staff, should be familiar with the procedures so that they can advise parents about their operation. Potentially most staff could be involved in handling complaints, especially at an informal level. Their confidence in doing so depends on them having clear information about the procedures, reassurances that senior staff are committed to the procedures and some basic training in the practical interpersonal skills needed in dealing with people who are upset or angry. All Football Family staff and volunteers will have clear information about which staff have responsibilities so that complainants do not get continually passed from one to another.

Record keeping

If complaints are to contribute to raising the quality of education, then they need to be recorded and monitored termly by senior staff. Recording should begin at the point when a concern or initial complaint has become the kind of complaint that cannot be resolved on the spot but needs investigation and/or consultation with others in Football Family, and will require a report back (either orally or in writing) to the complainant. Recording at the earliest stages need only be a very basic record of the complaint, giving the date, name of complainant and general nature of the complaint.

Stage 1: The first contact - guidelines for dealing with concerns and complaints informally

Most concerns and complaints can be resolved informally. There are many occasions where concerns are resolved straight away.

Complainants must feel able to raise concerns with members of staff either in person, by telephone, email or in writing. On occasion it may be appropriate for someone to act on behalf of a complainant making a complaint.

At first it may be unclear whether a complainant is asking a question or expressing an opinion rather than making a complaint. A complainant may want a preliminary discussion about an issue to help decide whether he or she wishes to take it further.

Procedure for Football Family Centre's to use at Stage 1

Complainants have an opportunity to discuss their concern with the appropriate member of staff who clarifies with the complainant the nature of the concern and reassures them that Football Family wants to hear about it. The "appropriate member of staff" is the person who has been designated to handle the complaint and not the member of staff being complained about. The member of staff may explain to the complainant how the situation happened. It can be helpful to identify at this point what sort of outcome the complainant is looking for.

If the member of staff first contacted cannot immediately deal with the matter, s/he makes a clear note of the date, name, and contact details of the complainant.

If the concern relates to the DSL, the complainant is advised to contact Craig Parry.

The staff member dealing with the concern makes sure that the complainant is clear what action (if any) or monitoring of the situation has been agreed, putting this in writing only if this seems the best way of making things clear.

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Where no satisfactory solution has been found within ten working days, complainants will be asked if they wish their concern to be considered further. If they do, they should be given clear information, both orally and in writing, about how to proceed and about any independent advice available to them.

In some cases, it may be necessary for a complaint to progress straight to stage 2.

Stage 2: Referral to the Designated Safeguarding Lead- David Simms

At this stage it has become clear that the concern is a definite complaint. In some cases, the DSL has already been involved in looking at the matter; in others it is his/her first involvement. In either case, it is helpful for the DSL (or the person delegated to investigate) to use guidelines to ensure consistency among cases, and to make sure that nothing happens at this stage which could make it difficult for later stages to proceed smoothly.

As the Operations Manager has a responsibility for the day-to-day running of Football Family, he/she has the responsibility for the implementation of a complaints system, including the decisions about their own involvement at various stages. One of the reasons for having various stages in a complaint's procedure is to reassure complainants that their grievance is being heard by more than one person. The Operations Manager should decide to ensure that their involvement will not predominate at every stage of a particular complaint. For example, arrangements may be made for other staff to deal with complainants' concerns at Stage 1, while the Operations Manager deals with contact with complainants at Stage 2. Even at that stage the Operations Manager may designate another member of staff to collect some of the information from the various parties involved, though the decision on action to be taken may not be delegated. In some cases, a complaint will have been taken straight to Stage 2 and will have been investigated by the Operations Manager as the most appropriate person.

Procedure for Football Family Centre's to use at Stage 2

The Operations Manager (or designate) acknowledges the complaint orally or in writing within three working days of receiving the written complaint. The acknowledgement gives a brief explanation of Football Family's complaints procedure and a target date for providing a response to the complaint. This should normally be within ten working days; if this proves impossible, the complainant should be contacted with a reason for the delay and a revised target date.

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The Operations Manager (or designate) provides an opportunity for the complainant to meet him/her to supplement any information provided previously. It is made clear to the complainant that if she/he wishes, she/he may be accompanied to any meeting by a friend, relative, representative, or advocate who can speak on his or her behalf, and that interpreting facilities are available if needed.

If necessary, the Operations Manager (or designate) should interview witnesses and take statements from those involved. If the complaint centres on a learner than they may also need to be interviewed. Learners would normally be interviewed with their parent/carer present if under 18 or a vulnerable adult. In some situations, circumstances may prevent this, e.g. where this would seriously delay the investigation of a serious/urgent complaint or where circumstances mean that a learner has specifically said she/he would prefer that parents or carers were not involved. In such circumstances another member of staff with whom the pupil feels comfortable should be asked to attend. If a member of staff is complained against, the needs of that person should be borne in mind.

The Operations Manager (or designate) keeps written records of meetings, telephone conversations, and other documentation.

Once all the relevant facts have been established, the Operations Manager (or designate) should then produce a written response to the complainant or may wish to meet the complainant to discuss/resolve the matter directly.

A written response includes a full explanation of the decision and the reasons for it. Where appropriate, this includes what action Football Family will take to resolve the complaint. The complainant is advised that should she/he wish to take the complaint further she/he should notify the owners of Football Family within 20 working days of receiving the outcome letter.

If a complaint is against the action of the Operations Manager, the complaint should be moved to directly to Stage 3.

Procedure for Football Family Centre's to use at Stage 3

Complaints only rarely reach this formal level, but it is important that Football Family are prepared to deal with them when necessary.

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At this stage, Football Family Centre's should seek advice from Craig Parry. The owner may wish to find a useful "outside view" on the issues and ensure that the correct procedures are followed.

Football Family Ltd Request for Complaint Investigation

Information for all complainants

If you have a complaint about a matter which is the responsibility of Football Family Ltd, and you have not been able to resolve it by raising the issue direct with the appropriate area or department, please complete the form below to enable us to investigate your complaint.

If you have relevant documentary evidence to support your complaint, it should be submitted with this form. Evidence submitted should be as concise as possible and relevant to the complaint. Unreasonable quantities of evidence or evidence which is deemed not to be relevant to your complaint may not be considered. Investigation of your complaint will not commence until you confirm that your supporting documentation is complete; please see Section 3 of the form.

The complaint form and any supporting documents will be seen by the person investigating your complaint, by anyone named in the complaint and by relevant staff in the department(s) being complained about.

Information for students only

If you are a student (or recent student), we strongly encourage you to speak to your assessor before completing this form.

Your assessor can:

- Help students to decide whether making a complaint is the best course of action, or whether another procedure may be more appropriate
- Explain how the complaint procedure works, and what the potential outcomes may be
- Read drafts of any correspondence students write to Football Family Ltd (including complaint forms), to help students make their case as clearly as possible
- Support students at any meetings they attend with Football Family Ltd staff in relation to their complaint if requested.

Once completed, this form should be submitted by email to or by post to:

Operations Manager
21 Vicar Crescent
Darfield
Barnsley
S73 9LB

1. Personal Details

First Name:	
Surname/family name:	
Address:	
Email:	
Telephone:	
Programme of Study: <i>(for students only)</i>	

2. Your Complaint

A. Please provide a summary of your complaint below (300 words max).

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B. Please describe what action you have taken to pursue the complaint to date (200 words max)

C. Please provide a brief explanation of the issue(s) you consider to be unresolved (200 words max).

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D. Please explain how you would like your complaint to be resolved (200 words max).

E. If you are submitting a complaint more than six months from when you first became aware of the problem, please provide a brief explanation for the delay (200 words max).

3. Supporting documentation

Do you wish to submit any supporting documentation for consideration? Yes/No

If "Yes", please tick here to indicate that what you have submitted is complete

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Signature:

Date:

Policy Reviews

This Policy will be renewed annually.

For further information or to discuss any concerns regarding this, or any of our other Policies and Procedures, please contact 01226 758644