



## Complaints Policy

The Boys' Brigade is committed to dealing with complaints fairly, effectively and in a timely fashion. This policy is aimed at BB Leaders, parents and carers, children and young people, Church members and members of the public. Employed staff should use the Grievance Policy published in the staff handbook.

### What constitutes a complaint?

We need to first define what a complaint is and what a safeguarding matter is, understanding that there may sometimes be a grey area.

Examples of issues defined as complaints:

- Conflict between leaders
- Incompetence or misconduct (non- safeguarding)
- Criminality or non- compliance with BB regulations
- Discrimination or harassment experienced by a leader or parent/carer
- Parents complaining of their child receiving unfair treatment (in gaining awards, for example)
- Members of the public complaining about noise/mess/vandalism caused by BB
- Church officials and BB leaders in conflict

Matters that are to be treated as safeguarding would include:

- Leaders shouting at children/young people or using sarcasm, sexual innuendo, inappropriate jokes etc
- Alleged bullying by leaders or by young people where this has been reported
- Leaders operating outside of the Code of Good Practice
- And of course, any allegation, concern or suspicion about a registered leader or young person where a child or young person has been harmed or deemed to be at risk

Because the two lists are not comprehensive, if there is any doubt about whether a complaint should be treated as a safeguarding matter, then this should be reported to the Director of Youth and Children's Work so a discussion and joint agreement can be reached on how the matter is processed.

If an investigation into a complaint reveals a safeguarding aspect, then this must be passed to the Director of Youth and Children's Work.

### How to process a complaint

Once it's been established that the matter is a complaint, the following procedure should be followed:

1. Complaints are made to or passed on to the Regional Director. Regional Directors' names and contact details should be advertised in relevant leaflets and on the website
2. The RD will register receipt of the complaint (be it by phone call, letter or email) by recording the date and nature of the complaint, the name and contact details of the complainant and the relationship of that person to the leader/Company involved. The outcomes should also be recorded. All Regions should use the same format as a "register of complaints".
3. A central log of all complaints will be maintained at BBHQ to establish trends and any need for policy development or training.
4. For serious complaints, complainants will be urged to put their complaints in writing
5. For less serious complaints, we will aim to resolve the matter informally without resorting to formal investigation, if appropriate.
6. Complainants should be asked if they have tried to resolve the issue locally before escalating to the Regional Office, and if not should be encouraged to do so.
7. If a complainant is unwilling to identify themselves it may not be possible to process their complaint. We will maintain the confidentiality of all personal information and will not disclose without permission unless legally obliged to.
8. The RD investigates the matter in the most appropriate way and will attempt to report back to the complainant within 2 weeks. If this timescale is extended for whatever reason, the complainant should be contacted with an explanation and a revised estimate of when the matter will be concluded
9. A record is kept of the complaint, any actions taken and any good practice recommendations arising from the case (to be shared with SMT) This will enable audit trails to be established if there are patterns emerging in relation to individuals or Companies.

#### **What if the complainant is not satisfied?**

In some cases it may be possible for the complainant to request leave to appeal. This would be in writing to the Brigade Secretary, unless the complaint or the process involved the Brigade Secretary, in which case it would go to the Chair of Trustees. The leave to appeal request should be submitted within 28 days of receiving the outcome information.

The complainant would have to demonstrate one of the following grounds if an application to appeal was to be granted:

- Correct procedure was not followed
- Certain facts were ignored or not considered in resolving the complaint
- The outcome was not proportionate to the matter complained about.

If an appeal is granted, this will be considered by a group of Trustees convened by the Chair of Brigade Executive. This decision will be final.

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