



# NEWCASTLE UNITED COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE



## Club Complaints Procedure

The Club takes seriously its duty to all its supporters, customers, staff, participants, scholars and other stakeholders and operates at all times within the law, proper procedure and applicable professional codes and regulations. We recognise that in discharging our duty, issues of concern may arise, and we will always seek to resolve these in the most effective way possible, taking an informal approach first wherever appropriate.

If you're not happy with something that we've done, your first step should be to give us some feedback. You can do this in the following ways:

**Write:** Supporter Services, St. James' Park, Strawberry Place, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4ST

**Email:** [supporter.services@nufc.co.uk](mailto:supporter.services@nufc.co.uk)

**Call:** 0344 372 1892 Option 1 (a message will be taken by our team, and someone will get back to you)

We will do all that we can to ensure that we put things right, but if you feel that you want to make a complaint, we will take your complaint seriously and if it is not possible to resolve concerns informally, issues will be investigated and managed in accordance with this Complaints Procedure.

The Club reserves the right to refer issues raised under the Complaints Procedure to an alternative process where it is deemed more appropriate to the issue under consideration.

Please note that complaints sent to any other department, including any of the Club's directors or shareholders, will be passed to our Supporter Services team and will be dealt with under this procedure.

### I. Scope

Anyone can make a complaint to us; we ask you to make contact as soon as possible after the event about which you are complaining so that we can be sure investigate promptly. We don't normally deal with issues that have taken place longer than 3 (three) months' ago, however if you feel there are exceptional circumstances, please get in touch.

This procedure does not apply to complaints made by employees, working interns, research students, or contractors, all of whom have processes under their respective agreements and arrangement and are covered by human resources policies.

We want to encourage openness and transparency and therefore will not normally investigate anonymous complaints but will review these individually to determine whether an investigation is warranted based on the available information.

We will not accept as evidence recording of conversations (or otherwise) that were obtained covertly or without the informed consent of all parties being recorded.



All meetings held in relation to complaints will be held in private. We will make clear the purpose and note taking arrangements for meetings to all attendees and will seek and record consent to participation before the meeting is convened. We will not allow meetings to be recorded electronically except where this is required as a reasonable adjustment.

If other bodies are investigating aspects of the complaint (for example the police, Premier League, FA, safeguarding team etc.) we may suspend the Complaints Procedure investigation pending completion of other investigations and this may mean we cannot adhere to complaint handling timescales.

If a complainant commences legal action against the Club in relation to their complaint, we will consider whether to suspend the Complaints Procedure in relation to their complaint until legal proceedings have concluded.

A complainant can choose to withdraw their complaint at any point and if this happens, we will ask them to confirm their decision in writing.

We will always ensure that personal information is protected and that we comply with relevant data protection legislation. This may mean that we are unable to share specific details related to individuals with complainants. Please see our website for a copy of our Privacy Policy: <https://www.nufc.co.uk/privacy-policy/> and Section 4 of this procedure.

## **2. General Procedure**

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint and try to resolve your complaint quickly, and at the first point of contact if we can.

### **2.1 Stage 1: Informal resolution**

Wherever appropriate we will always encourage informal resolution of issues – because informal resolution works best. Our Supporter Services Executive Team will ask the complainant to provide details (the context of the complaint, issues of concern and people involved) with the aim of reviewing these to agree a practical resolution that works.

We aim to resolve complaints at Stage 1 within 10 (ten) working days and if this isn't possible, we will contact the complainant with an update and will notify them of a new timescale for resolution.

### **2.2 Stage 2: Formal investigation**

If we haven't been able to resolve an issue at Stage 1, or the complaint is too serious or complex to be dealt with at Stage 1, we will use Stage 2 of this procedure. A senior member of our Supporter Services team will deal with complaints at Stage 2, and the following approach will be taken:



- a. We will ask complainants to provide details of their complaint in writing to us at [complaints@nufc.co.uk](mailto:complaints@nufc.co.uk). This is to help us to understand what's happened so that we can properly investigate the matter and take action where appropriate.
- b. Complaints at Stage 2 will be investigated, and an outcome provided which will include the following information:
  - a review of what has happened and the findings of the investigation;
  - our decision about the complaint; and
  - details of next steps, including where appropriate what we will do to put things right (if appropriate).

We aim to investigate and provide an outcome at Stage 2 of the procedure within 20 (twenty) working days and if this isn't possible, we will contact the complainant with an update and notify them of the new timescale. We will keep the complaint open until we have completed our investigation and notified the complainant of the outcome.

### **2.3 Stage 3: Appeal**

If you are not happy with our response at Stage 2, you can appeal in writing to the Head of Supporter Services at St. James' Park, Strawberry Place, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4ST, or by email FAO Head of Supporter Services to: [complaints@nufc.co.uk](mailto:complaints@nufc.co.uk). This is the final stage of our complaints process.

In dealing with complaints at Stage 3 the following approach will be taken:

- a. a re-assessment of the decision by our Head of Supporter Services, or another individual at the Club with sufficient seniority who has had no previous involvement in the subject matter of the complaint;
- b. where an appeal includes new complaints, these new complaints will be referred to Stage 1 of the procedure; and
- c. in the event that an appeal does not raise any additional, materially relevant information, the Club reserves the right to seek further information and not to allow an appeal if this is not provided.

To assist us with your Stage 3 appeal, we will ask you to provide the following:

- a. What part of your complaint remains unaddressed or outstanding?
- b. What part of our response you disagree with and why?
- c. What would you like the outcome of your appeal to be?

The appeal will not involve a repeat of the full investigation. We will check the actions and decisions taken at Stage two were thorough, reasonable, and fair. We aim to give you our decision within 10 (ten) working days, and if this isn't possible, we will contact the complainant with an update and will notify them of a new timescale for resolution.



## **2.4 Stage 4: The Independent Football Ombudsman**

Once you have been through the Club's complaints process outlined above, if you are unhappy with the outcome and have reached 'deadlock', or you feel your complaint has not been appropriately addressed, you have the option to go to the Independent Football Ombudsman.

Please see their website <https://www.theifo.co.uk/> for more information.

## **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

To help us to deal with complaints effectively we ask all complainants to:

- a. provide clear and accurate information about the issues and work collaboratively with the Club to find an appropriate resolution; and
- b. act reasonably to support the effective resolution of the complaint, including fully cooperating with the investigation and being mindful of the timescales set out in this procedure.

To support effective resolution of complaints, the Club undertakes to:

- a. investigate the complaint thoroughly and reasonably;
- b. treat all those involved in the complaint fairly;
- c. ensure personal data is handled appropriately;
- d. keep all those involved in the process appropriately updated about progress and outcomes; and
- e. take appropriate action and use the insights gained from upheld complaints when considering improvements to our working practices.

## **4. Complaints - Data Protection**

When the Club receives a complaint from someone, we create a file containing details of the complaint. This normally contains the identity of the complainant and any other individuals involved in the complaint.

We will only use the personal information we collect to process the complaint and to track the activities we undertake. We may compile and publish statistics showing information such as the number of complaints we receive, but not in a form that identifies anyone.

We may have to disclose the complainant's identity to whomever the complaint is about (if anyone). If a complainant has indicated that they wish to remain anonymous we will try to respect that. However, there may be circumstances in which it is not possible to handle a complaint on an anonymous basis, and where the complaint is deemed to have sufficient



substance and/or to be of sufficient severity that further investigation is warranted, then it may be necessary to disclose the complainant's identity.

We will keep personal information contained in complaint files in line with our retention policy. This means that information relating to a complaint (other than Stage 3 appeals) will be retained for 3 (three) years from closure. All complaints resulting in an appeal will be retained for 6 (six) years from closure. All information is retained in a secure environment and access to it will be restricted according to the 'need to know' principle.

## **5. Approach to Managing Serial and Unreasonable Complaints**

The Club is committed to dealing with all complaints fairly and impartially and we will not normally limit the contact we have with complainants. We are here to help but may refuse to deal with a complaint if you act unreasonably and in some circumstances we may be unable to deal with your complaint within our normal procedure.

We will not tolerate unacceptable or unreasonable behaviour towards our employees and will take action to protect them from any such behaviour including, but not limited to, anything which is abusive, offensive, or threatening. We will immediately inform the police of any serious incidents involving aggression or threats of violence and will communicate this action in writing.

The Club defines unreasonable behaviour as that which hinders us from performing our dedicated functions or from properly considering complaints due to the frequency or nature of the complainant's contact with the Club. Where such behaviour is persistent, we reserve the right to terminate the Complaints Procedure at any stage but will always discuss and seek to resolve matters prior to taking such action.

Once the Club has made a decision regarding a complaint, and this procedure has been exhausted, the Club reserves the right to refrain from any further communication with the complainant. The Club will not re-open a complaint unless there is materially relevant and new information.