

# **The Boys' Brigade and Girls' Association In the Republic of Ireland**

## **Complaints Policy**

The Boys' Brigade and Girls' Association in the Republic of Ireland (The BB) is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of all members and leaders. We also try to ensure that members have a positive and enjoyable experience when participating in the BB and that leaders are valued as they volunteer with the BB.

This complaints procedure aims to cover any situation which may arise, when children or their parents/guardians are not happy with the way the children were treated while they were at an event/activity run by the BB. This complaints procedure should be followed if a leader feels that they have a grievance against the operation or decisions of the Organisation or another leader which affects their ability to perform their job satisfactorily.

Complaints may arise in response to:

- An alleged breach of the Code of Behaviour by an employee or leader;
- A particular practice issue;
- Perceived poor attitude of an employee or leader;
- A child feeling unhappy about an incident or an event;
- A parent/guardian feeling unhappy about an incident or event involving their child;
- Dissatisfaction in relation to an aspect of the service being provided.

### **What Complaints are accepted**

- Complaints involving child protection concerns must be dealt with in accordance with the BB procedures as set out in the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and not through the Complaints procedure;
- The Complaints procedure below should not be used to disagree with a national policy set by the Organisation.

There are basic rules for the acceptance of complaints:

- Complaints must be raised within three months of you knowing the facts (the BB will not deal with complaints that are older);
- The BB does not investigate anonymous complaints;
- Complaints that are broadly or substantively the same as a previous Complaint will not be accepted;
- The BB will refuse any Complaints which are believed to be vexatious or malicious.

### **Who can make a complaint**

Complaints can be made by:

- Children who are members of the BB;
- Their parents/guardians;
- Leaders of the BB;
- Other advocates on behalf of children.

### **How to make a complaint**

- If the complaint is in relation to the safety and welfare of children the complaints should be made to the Regional Safeguarding Panel;

- Other complaints by members or their parents/guardians should be made to the Captain of the Company of which the child is a member, with whom you should raise the concern orally;
- Complaints by leaders should be made to the Captain of their company initially;
- If the complainant does not want to discuss the matter with the Captain of the Company, if the Captain cannot answer the complainant's concern, the complainant is dissatisfied with the initial response of the Captain to a complaint, or if the complaint is more serious, the complaint can be made in writing to the Regional Safeguarding Panel/Management Committee.

### **Information the Complainant needs to provide**

Complaints by members or their parents/guardians should be made, in the first instance, orally to the Captain of the Company and provide them with the following information to allow her to investigate the complaint:

- Name of child affected and the section or event they were involved in;
- If the complaint is being made by a parent/guardian, the name and address of the parent/guardian;
- Exactly what the complainant is dissatisfied with;
- The name of the leader who dealt with the matter the complainant is dissatisfied with.

Complaints by leaders should be made, in the first instance, orally to the Captain of their Company and provide them with details of the operation or decision of the Organisation or other leader which they feel is affecting their ability to perform their job satisfactorily.

Complaints made in writing should be made on the Complaints Form.(included in the appendices or available on the BB website) and give as much factual details as possible to allow the matter be investigated.

### **If I make a Complaint how will my Complaint be dealt with**

Your complaint will be dealt with fairly and objectively. The BB policy is to deal with any valid Complaints in a positive and pro-active manner and expect resolutions and outcomes to contribute to a process of continuous improvement.

Please bear in mind that Captains in the BB are volunteers and have other calls on their time. It may therefore take time to process a complaint; however you will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint with an acknowledgement of a formal complaint within seven days and response to the complaint within four weeks. Where it is not possible to respond to the complaint within four weeks, you will be provided with an update within that period and the matter resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Captain or Regional Safeguarding Panel/Management Committee may need to speak to you and a number of other people to fully understand your complaint and the circumstances surrounding it.

Ultimately the Captain or Regional Safeguarding Panel/Management Committee will make a decision about the Complaint and will inform you in writing as to whether your complaint is upheld or not and the actions that will be taken as a result.

The Captain or Regional Safeguarding Panel/Management Committee will keep records of all complainants received, investigations undertaken and outcomes reached and responses to the complainant.

### **Actions that may be taken in response to the investigation of a complaint:**

Responses to a complaint might include:

- An apology (either verbal or written) to the complainant and/or the member;
- An explanation provided to the complainant and/or member, e.g. as to why something happened;
- A review of a decision made;
- An assurance that any poor practice identified in the investigation will be addressed at future activities;
- A meeting with the employee / leader (who is the subject of the complaint) and the complainant in order to resolve the situation;
- Compulsory attendance by leader at specific training event;
- A period of supervision of leader by Captain in Company;
- In the case of a serious incident the suspension or dismissal of leader.

### **What if I am not satisfied with the outcome of my Complaint**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your Complaint or the way in which it was handled, then you may appeal. You must appeal within 21 days of being given the decision and outcomes of your Complaint.

Your appeal must be formally lodged in writing to the Regional Safeguarding Panel/Management Committee. In your appeal, you must clearly explain the basis on which you are making the appeal and your preferred outcome to resolve the issue.

Your appeal will consider the process undertaken to handle the original complaint and the outcome of the original Complaint. You will be kept informed of the progress of your appeal with an acknowledgement of your appeal within seven days and a response within four weeks. Where it is not possible to complete the appeal within four weeks, you will be provided with an update within that period and the matter resolved at the earliest possible opportunity.

Your appeal will be investigated by the Regional Safeguarding Panel/Management Committee. They may need to speak to you and a number of other people to fully understand your appeal and the circumstances surrounding the investigation of your Complaint. Anyone being spoken to by the Regional Safeguarding Panel/Management Committee as part of the appeal is free to bring another person with them to meetings.

The Regional Safeguarding Panel/Management Committee will make a decision about the appeal and will inform you whether your appeal is upheld or not and the actions that will be taken as a result.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, there is no further escalation of the Complaint and the BB will not consider further any action regarding the Complaint or the appeal.

