

Concerns and Complaints Policy



Hutt Valley Gymnastics (HVG) believes that all members (athletes, coaches, staff, and parents) deserve, and should always show, respect and understanding for each other. The Club cares about its athletes, their families and staff and operates within a policy of openness, fairness, and transparency. It is important to us that any concerns you have are addressed professionally and sensitively, with appropriate action taken as soon as practical.

Purpose

A member may wish to make a complaint about a wide variety of actions, decisions or processes that affect them or another member. When disagreements or disputes arise, it can become a significant issue. Responding quickly, fairly, and thoughtfully to address concerns and complaints is important to everyone involved. The purpose of the Concerns and Complaints Policy and Process is to:

- To provide a procedure for complaints to be communicated to the appropriate person.
- To ensure that complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely manner.
- To ensure members are comfortable in expressing their concern.
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved.
- To maintain confidentiality and the rights of the individuals involved.

A complaint may be in relation to an act, behaviour, omission, situation, or decision that the complainant considers unfair, unjustified, or unlawful. All complaints are to be submitted in writing using the Club's Complaints template. (Appendix 1).

Complaint Handling Principles

As a Club we are committed to handling complaints in a fair, just, and transparent way and will ensure we always follow clear processes and procedures. We are committed to adherence to the following principles and will:

- Treat complaints seriously.
- Act promptly.
- Treat people fairly and listen to both sides of the story.
- Stay neutral.
- Keep parties to the complaint informed.
- Maintain confidentiality as far as possible.
- Protect against victimisation.
- Keep accurate records.
- Make decisions based only on information gathered not personal views.
- Ensure disciplinary action is relative to the breach.

Complaint Handling Options

Our Club will deal with complaints in several ways:

- Informally for less serious complaints; example: coach showing favouritism towards their own child in team selection.
- Formally in some circumstances; example: an athlete missing out on team selection because of race or religious beliefs or where a serious physical or verbal assault has occurred.
- By referral to an external agency for very serious issues; example: suspicious of harm against a child.

The Club will in some circumstances seek the support of their Regional Relationship Manager, National Sport Organisation (Gymnastics New Zealand) or the local Regional Sport Trust (Sport Wellington) to deal with a complaint. For example, if a fair process cannot be guaranteed because the person being complained about is also responsible for dealing with complaints at the Club.

The Complaints Review Officer will be responsible for ensuring informal and formal review processes are fully documented and retained in a confidential file with the club records.

Timeframe for Lodging Complaints

A complaint must be received by the Club Secretary in writing not later than 20 working days following the incident that has led to the complaint. An extension may be available for complaints from the public.

Retraction of a Complaint

A complaint can be retracted by the complainant in the form of a written letter to the Club Secretary.

MOTION: This policy was reviewed and adopted by the Hutt Valley Gymnastics Club Committee on 27th July 2023. It is scheduled to be reviewed annually.

Appendix 1

Hutt Valley Gymnastics Centre Complaints Form

This form is to be used for submitting a complaint to the Hutt Valley Gymnastics Club. Complaints will not be considered unless received in this format and submitted to complaints@huttvalleygymnsports.co.nz.

Name

Role (ie. athlete, parent/guardian, coach, staff member, official etc.)

Email

Mobile Number

Please outline your concern or complaint including all relevant information, dates etc. as clearly as possible (using bullet points where possible).

Desired outcome of this complaint.

Have you had a one-on-one conversation with the person you are raising the complaint about?

Yes | No

Are you happy to be contacted for further information? (Yes/No). Please indicate preferred method of contact (Please circle)

Yes | No

Email | Phone

Signature:

Date:

Procedure: Concerns & Complaints



In the First Instance ...

Complaints Procedure for Athletes

In the first instance the Athlete should discuss any concerns/problems with their session coach (either after a session or at a time that is suitable to both). If you feel more comfortable you are welcome to approach the Head Coach or Programme/Administration Manager.

Complaints Procedure for Parents & Carers

In the first instance the Parent/Carer should discuss any problems with the Child's Coach (either after a session, provided the coach is free, or via email). You are welcome to speak to the Programme Manager so they can let the Coach know to make himself/herself available after the session. Thereafter you should bring it to the attention of the Head Coach or Programme/Administration Manager.

Complaints Procedure for Coaches

In the first instance the Coach should discuss any problems with the Head Coach. If you prefer you are welcome to discuss your concern with the Programme/Administration Manager.

Complaints Procedure for Other Staff and Elected Officers

In the first instance the person should discuss any problems with the senior manager (likely to be Administration Manager, Programme Manager or Committee Chair).

Further Steps ...

If you are not satisfied with the options identified in the first instances, your concern should be put in writing on the Complaints Form (Appendix) and submitted to complaints@huttvalleygymsports.co.nz. This complaints email is cleared directly by the Complaints Officer to ensure correct action is taken.

Process for Dealing with a Complaint

When a complaint is received this will immediately be referred to the Club Chairperson who will act as the Complaints Review Officer who is responsible to ensure the correct procedures are followed.

Should there be a conflict of interest, the Club President (or Chairperson) must delegate the role of Complaints Review Officer to another club officer or committee member. The Complaints Review Officer will meet with the complainant and:

Listen

- Let the complainant have their say.
- Reiterate back to the person making the complaint what they have just said.
- Ask appropriate questions to clearly understand the nature of the complaint.
- Make it clear that the complaint has been heard and is welcomed.
- Explain any limits to confidentiality (absolute confidentiality cannot be provided if there is a suspicion of harm against a child).
- Determine the complainant's expectations of next steps.
- Provide a timeframe of up to five days within which there will be a response back to the complainant with progress towards resolution of the issue.

Inform

- Let the parties involved know about the complaint including advising any person/s being complained about of the complaint made and any likely investigation.
- Explain in some circumstances such as misconduct, escalation to external parties may occur.
- Confirm that all parties can trust the Club to respect confidentiality.
- Have available a copy of the complaint for the person being complained about.
- Keep everyone informed of the timeframe for an investigation.

Gather Evidence

- Identify what information is needed and who can best provide it to inform decision making.
- Gather information and witness statements if these are appropriate to the situation.
- Ensure witness statements are received within two days of the request being made.

Consider Options and Decide

Having defined the seriousness of the issue, the Complaints Review Officer will determine the most appropriate course of action to take. The Complaints Review Officer will then consider the options and decide on the most appropriate course of action, informal process, formal process or engagement of an external agency.

Informal Process

When a complaint is informal, the Complaints Review Officer may decide to take the following action:

- Provide more information to the person complaining.
- Suggest the person complaining talks directly with person complained about.
- Facilitate an informal discussion with all those involved.
- Find a time to talk privately with the person being complained about (eg. not in front of the team or parents).
- Let them know that concerns have been expressed but try not to make the discussion personal.
- Ask for their perspective on the issue and what might have led to this being a concern.
- Ask all parties for their ideas on how to sort out the issue.

- Respond to all parties with the outcome and monitor the situation.

Formal Process

Formal processes involve following more structured processes and involving other (external) parties to resolve the issue. Examples of formal processes that the Complaints Review Officer might choose to use are:

- Mediation.
- A Club Decision Panel (or Club Committee) hearing.
- Escalation within the sport (to regional or national level).
- Referral to an external agency.

MEDIATION

This is a good option when:

- One person has laid a complaint about the behaviour of another person.
- Both parties are agreeable to mediation taking place.
- An ideal outcome is all members satisfied with the outcome and remain involved in the Club.

Steps to follow

The Complaints Review Officer will:

- Seek agreement of both parties to participate in a mediation process.
- If agreement is reached identify and appoint an independent mediator that is satisfactory to both parties.
- Coordinate arrangements for the mediated session on a date, time and place agreed by the parties.
- Note: If there is no agreement reached to mediate then this option cannot proceed.

DECISION REVIEW PANEL HEARING

This is a good option when:

- The person complaining requests this action.
- Mediation is not possible.
- There is a possible detriment to either party if the complaint is unresolved.
- The parties have not been able to resolve the problem themselves.
- Outcomes could include disciplinary sanctions including suspension or termination of membership, referral to an RSO or National Sport Organisation for further investigation or referral to an external authority.

Steps to follow

The Complaints Review Officer will:

- Arrange appointment of a Club Decision Panel of up to three persons (which may include expertise not available within the club or where there is a possible conflict of interest or close relationship between the people on the club committee and any of the parties to the complaint).
- Arrange a date, time, and place for the hearing at the earliest possible time.

- Advise all parties to the complaint, in writing, of the date, time and place for the hearing and the process that will be followed during the hearing.
- Advise both parties they can bring a support person to the hearing who may speak and participate in the process.
- Ensure both parties are given an opportunity to tell their side of the story before making decisions.
- Appoint a representative of the panel committee to gather more information and report back to the committee with recommendations before decisions are made if required; example: more serious or sensitive complaints such as sexual or racial harassment.
- Ensure that decisions are made based on fact.
- Ensure decisions are clearly communicated to all parties and they are offered a right of appeal.
- Ensure the committee reviews its policies following each judicial hearing and communicate the policies to club members and personnel to prevent further similar issues arising.

Appeal Process

An appeal about a decision should:

- Be provided in writing to the Club Secretary within 14 days of receiving the decision from the Club Decision Panel.
- The Secretary will refer the appeal to the Club's governing body, Gymnastics NZ to reassess the evidence and make a final judgement and recommendation.
- The appeal decision will be advised to all parties in writing.

ESCALATE TO REGIONAL RELATIONSHIP MANAGER, NATIONAL SPORT ORGANISATION, OR REGIONAL SPORT TRUST

The Complaints Review Officer will direct a complaint to the Regional Relationship Manager, National Sport Organisation, or Regional Sport Trust if:

- It is beyond the skills of the committee and specific expertise, or experience is required to manage the complaint.
- The complaint has not been able to be resolved at the Club level.
- The issue is more serious than first thought.

Steps to follow

The Complaints Review Officer will:

- Contact the CEO of the Regional Relationship Manager or National Sport Organisation or the local Regional Sport Trust to discuss the complaint, and if and how, the Club can be supported to handle the complaint.
- Keep the parties involved informed about the complaint process.
- Protect the person complaining and the person being complained about from victimisation.
- Manage any gossip or demands by people who know about the complaint.

EXTERNAL PROCESSES

All very serious allegations require urgent action and usually involve an investigation. Options for handling very serious complaints include:

- Referral to police

- Referral to a child protection authority
- Referral to an anti-discrimination agency

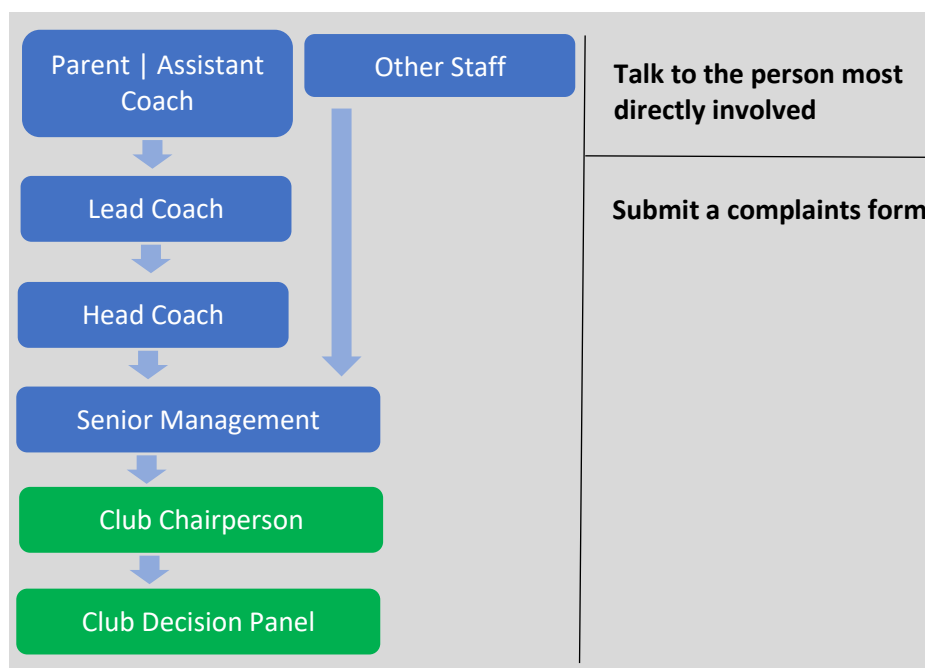
External Agency

The Complaints Review Officer will choose this option when:

- After gathering more information, the complaint appears to be very serious
- The complaint involves harm to a child
- The issue may be criminal or unlawful
- An external investigation is required

Complaints Policy – Lines of Communication

The lines of communication for parents, children, staff, coaches with concerns. In the first instance people are encouraged to talk to the person most directly involved. If the concern or complaint is not resolved, you are invited to submit a Complaint Form (Appendix 1).



Examples of communication lines for Complaint Forms:

Complaint regarding:	Address with:	Contact Email:
Coach	: Lead Coach	As appropriate
Office Staff	: Administration Manager	adminmanger@huttvalleygymsports.co.nz
Lead Coach	: Head Coach	[mag][michelle][mel]@huttvalleygymsports.co.nz
Head Coach	: Programme Manager	manager@huttvalleygymsports.co.nz
Programme Manager	: Committee Chair via Secretary	secretary@huttvalleygymsports.co.nz
Administration Manager	: Committee Chair via Secretary	secretary@huttvalleygymsports.co.nz
Committee	: Committee Chair via Secretary	secretary@huttvalleygymsports.co.nz

Club Decision Panel

The Club Committee will appoint a chairperson and two members as the Club Decision Panel. The quorum shall be three members of this panel.

The Club Decision Panel will operate under the following guidelines:

- The Chairperson will ensure no member of the Club Decision Panel, including themselves, has a conflict of interest with the matter at hand. If so, a replacement panel member will be appointed.
- The Panel need not meet to decide but can communicate via online meeting, phone, or email.
- All decisions must be reported to the Club Committee and as appropriate in an In-Committee meeting.
- Ensure confidentiality is maintained, particularly in relation to child protection cases.

Club Decision Panel Remit

The panel shall be responsible for all discipline matters involving Club members including, but not limited to:

- Competition Discipline (including foul play).
- Out of game Discipline (Pre / Post competitions, Training).
- Child Protection issues.
- Criminal investigations that could affect the Club.

The protection of children is paramount and therefore any allegations involving child protection shall result in immediate suspension from any involvement with children until the matter has been investigated. This is not a form of discipline but occurs to ensure the child is protected from any chance of harm.

CLUB DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE METHOD OF OPERATION

To ensure consistency the committee should follow the procedure detailed below.

- Any discipline matter should be reported in writing to the Chairperson. It is the responsibility of Senior Management to inform the Chairperson of any disciplinary matters.
- The Chairperson shall ensure accurate records are maintained of each and every matter that arises (Appendix 2).
- The Chairperson will inform the person, in writing, against whom the complaint has been made within seven days.
- The panel should proceed to investigate the matter to their satisfaction within a timely period.
- The panel can interview any parties involved, as necessary.

- The panel will discuss the matter and impose appropriate sanctions. To maintain consistency the panel should refer to previous matters in deciding what sanctions to impose.
- The Chairperson will inform the member concerned of these sanctions in writing. The chair will also inform the Club Committee and appropriate Senior Management (as required).
- Any matters that the Chairperson of the panel feels could be a criminal offence shall be reported to the Police.
- Any matter that involves a person putting a child at risk of harm or causes actual harm and results in the person being removed from that position shall be referred to Child, Youth and Family Services.

Appendix 2

Hutt Valley Gymnastics Centre Complaints Review Officer Record Form			
Individuals Name		Date of Meeting	
Complainant		Date of Incident	
Decision Panel Members			
Brief Description of the Incident			
Investigation Activities Undertaken/Information Sought			
Supporting Documents/Emails Attached			
Decision Panel Decision/Action			