

5 Tips on Managing Complaints



1. Welcoming information:

When new members join the club or returning members re-join or reregister, provide them with some written information on your club in the form of a welcome newsletter. This may include details on club leaders, important dates and fixtures, and the values that are important to the club. This should include a code of conduct for players, coaches, managers, officials and parents, and ways to raise issues with coaches/managers/ club leaders.

2. Complaints policy:

Have a complaints policy and process ready to follow for whatever turns up and to deal with the complaint at the lowest level possible. An escalated complaint is like a hurricane - the more emotional the heat, the more ferocious it becomes.

3. Respond in a timely manner:

Respond to all complaints quickly and resolve it in a timely manner. Try not wait for a committee meeting, that maybe some weeks away. Have a small sub committee in place already to deal with anything that may arise as quickly as possible if you can.

4. Acknowledge the complaint:

Communicate with the complainant to clarify their concerns and let them have their say. Check whether they are making a complaint or just letting off steam. Ask appropriate questions to clearly understand the nature of the complaint. Make it clear that the complaint has been heard and is acknowledged. Ask the complainant how they want the matter to be dealt with.



5. Complaint handling options:

Have a number of ways in which the complaint may be handled. For example:

- Informally for less serious complaints e.g. parent not happy with coach selection
- Formally in some circumstances, such as inappropriate racial comments or where a serious physical or verbal assault has occurred.
- By referral to an external agency for very serious issues e.g. suspicious of harm against a child.

Sport Waitakere can provide a sample complaints policy and can guide clubs through a complaints process.