POLICY AND PROCEDURE: COMPLAINTS

DATED: 23.5.22

## PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

Avon Valley Runners are committed to offering the highest quality of service provision across grassroots athletics in Wiltshire.

**Our Mission statement is:**

*To be the club of choice for runners in West Wiltshire and to be recognised as a club of excellence and support for the promotion of running as a sport and a recreational pursuit.*

Avon valley Runner’s endeavour to work hard to provide a safe, enjoyable and effective service to all. However, we recognise that there may be occasions where we fall short of expectations and individuals may not be completely satisfied.

We believe that all individuals should have the opportunity to provide feedback on whether our standards have been met and all feedback, both positive and negative, should be acknowledged. Should this feedback be negative, and an individual is dissatisfied, we have a formal and informal complaints process which we follow to enable us to put things right.

However, some complaints may need to be dealt with under a separate process. For example, escalated safeguarding concerns which will follow Wiltshire and England Athletics safeguarding procedures.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all stakeholders who wish to make a complaint about any of Avon Valley Runners, Avon Valley Triathletes, Avon Valley Youth services, activities or individuals.

## OUR AIM

To ensure that:

* Making a complaint is as clear and simple as possible;
* We deal with it promptly, politely and, when appropriate, confidentially;
* We respond in the right way – for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, or information on any action taken;
* We learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints procedure.

## Informal Complaints

If you have a complaint about an Avon Valley Runners session, event or activity, then in the first instance, you should speak to the person leading the session, event or activity. They are often best placed to resolve most problems.

If you have a complaint about the person leading a session, event or activity then this should be escalated to the committee via the Secretary.

If the complaint cannot be dealt with by Avon Valley Runners under this policy or does not fall within the Avon Valley Runners remit, for example a safeguarding that exceeds club welfare and safeguarding support, this can be escalated upwards/outwards via Wiltshire safeguarding team and/or EA safeguarding support please see the Grievance and Disputes policy and procedure.

In any communication with the team, please provide the details of your complaint, any supporting information, the consequence of this complaint and what action or response you feel would help to resolve the situation. Our team will work with you to understand why you are dissatisfied and, if possible, act to resolve the matter immediately without need for a formal process to be initiated. You will be informed of who your main contact will be in a timely fashion.

If you are still not satisfied with the response, or feel that the issue should be escalated then please raise a formal written complaint, as detailed below.

In order to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly, we will not usually accept complaints that are made more than 12 months after the event being complained about or brought to your attention.

**Formal Complaints Procedure**

## Stage 1

In the first instance, formal complaints are submitted in writing and should be marked for the attention of the Secretary as follows:

Telephone: 07564958879

Email: secretary@avonvalleyrunners.org.uk

Avon Valley Runners

Address

The Miners Arms

Highbury Street

Coleford

BA3 5NT

A formal complaint will always be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt and we aim to respond to you in full within 20 working days. If this is not possible due to further investigations being required, dependent upon the nature and severity of the complaint received, we will always formally advise the complainant of the progress made so far and advise any revised timescales.

It may be necessary to contact complainants verbally during our investigations to enable us to bring the complaint to an amicable resolution. However, we will always formalise any verbal contact in writing following an outcome or action being agreed.

## Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the response to the complaint having followed the procedure above, then you can write to the Chairman of the committee outlining why you are dissatisfied with the initial response. You can expect us to acknowledge your request within 5 working days of receipt and they will arrange for the complaint to be reviewed by a member of the committee who has not previously been involved with handling your complaint. This will involve a full independent review of the handling of your complaint and all associated evidence. The outcome of the review will be communicated within 20 working days.

Avon Valley Runners aim is to resolve all matters as quickly as possible. However, inevitably some issues will be more complex and therefore may require longer to be fully investigated and reviewed. Consequently, timescales given for handling and responding to complaints are indicative. If a matter requires more detailed investigation, you will receive an interim response describing what is being done to deal with the matter, and when a full reply can be expected and from whom.

## Final Stage

If you are not satisfied with the subsequent reply from the member of the committee allocated then you have the option of contacting the Chairman stating the reason why you are dissatisfied with the outcome. We suggest that you do this within 10 working days of receiving the written response from the member of the committee allocated.

The Chairman will usually respond within 20 working days to inform you of the action which will be taken to investigate your complaint, and when you can expect to hear the outcome of the investigation. The Chairmans decision will be final.

*In the event that the Secretary or Chairman are not available then the Vice Chair and Assistant Secretary may support this process. In the unlikely event of multiple complaints impacting on club capacity then an appointed committee member may also support this process. Any person raising a complaint will be informed of the name and contact details for the person dealing with their complaint and if this information changes at any point. The appointed decision maker can raise this to England Athletics.*

**Please note: We reserve the right at any point in the process to forward the Complaint to EA or to our legal representatives who may respond on our behalf.**

## Vexatious Complaints

If a complaint is considered persistent and/or vexatious, we may bring the communication to a close.

**Vexatious** – a complaint instituted without sufficient grounds and serving only to cause annoyance to the receiver of the complaint; an oppressive complaint (with unjust severity); or otherwise an abuse of the procedures for dealing with complaints or conduct matters.

**Persistent** – a complaint that is substantially the same as a previous complaint (whether made by or on behalf of the same or a different complainant); contains no fresh allegations which significantly affect the account of the previous complaint; no fresh evidence, being evidence, which was not reasonably available at the time the previous complaint was made, is tendered in support of it.

## Confidentiality

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both Avon Valley Runners and the complainant maintain confidentiality. If exceptional circumstances dictate that confidentiality cannot be maintained, then the complainant will always be advised of the situation.

## Monitoring and Review

Avon Valley Runners are committed to continuous improvement and will record and monitor complaints to enable a continual review of its processes and procedures.

**NB. The contents of this policy will be subject to revision from time to time.**

**Version Control**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Issue Number  | Date of Issue  | Updated by  | Update  | Communication channel  |
| 1  |   | Gill Jones  | Created  | Email, letter |
| 2  | September 2021  | Emma Davenport  | Updated  | Email, phone  |