

Complaint handling principles and guidelines

Principle	Guidelines
Treat complaints seriously	Inappropriate behaviour, even if it occurs under the guise of 'fun', needs to be addressed. Taking the matter seriously means not dismissing the complaint and agreeing to look into the issue.
Act promptly	Complaints should be responded to as quickly as possible as this can help to 'nip problems in the bud' before the situation worsens. Serious complaints such as child abuse, physical assault, sexual harassment and sexual assault should be responded to immediately.
Treat people fairly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't make a judgement until you've heard both sides of the story. • Explain the complaint handling process. • Allow people to have a 'support' person with them. • Don't hold a grudge against those involved in the complaint. <p>It's important to make sure that both the person complaining and the person complained about are not harassed or victimised because of their involvement.</p>
Stay neutral	It's important that you remain impartial and that you're trusted by those involved. If the complaint is about your management of the club or issues in any way related to you, you should ask the management committee to appoint someone objective to investigate the complaint.

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Keep everyone informed	<p>Everyone involved in the complaint needs to know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what's going to happen and when; • who's going to be involved; • how long it's going to take; • possible outcomes. <p>If the process takes a few weeks, make sure that you keep everyone up to date.</p>
Maintain confidentiality	<p>Only those involved in the complaint (this may include witnesses) need to know about it. Reassure people that confidentiality will be maintained.</p>
Keep accurate records	<p>Keeping written records is important. Even if the matter is not formally investigated, document all meetings and interviews – e.g. who was present; key points; agreed outcome(s).</p>
Work from the principle of 'innocent until proven guilty'	<p>The person accused of inappropriate behaviour has the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know who's complaining about them; • have all the allegations put to them; • tell their side of the story; • have the matter investigated and resolved before action is taken; • have 'the punishment fit the crime' if it's substantiated. <p>Individuals should, where appropriate, have the opportunity to correct their behaviour.</p> <p>There are some situations, however, that require urgent action (e.g. physical or sexual assault and suspicion of harm against a child).</p>

Information courtesy of the South Australian Equal Opportunity Commission.