

- While we seek to advance the values and shared interests of the supporters' trust movement in ways which meet the needs of our members and stakeholders, sometimes things can go wrong. When this happens, it is important that clear procedures are in place to enable complaints to be heard and improvements to be made to our services or the way we work.
- At its meeting on October 13th 2011, the Board agreed a new complaints procedure which sets out how individuals or organisations that are unhappy with our work can make their views known and how complaints will be addressed.

Principles underpinning our approach to complaints

- Supporters Direct is an umbrella body joined by organisations who share its goals of supporter involvement and community ownership.
- All are autonomous organisations responsible primarily to their own members and over whom Supporters Direct has no formal power save those conferred upon it by virtue of its membership policy.
- Our resources must be focussed on helping to achieve our goals and so our ability to investigate and police complaints is to be necessarily kept to a minimum to ensure a strong focus on our work.
- Our members may often consider courses of action which cause controversy and debate, amongst their members and non-members alike, and the outcome will often be disappointing to some. This is the nature of democratic organisations, and so we will not consider a complaint against a member (or against SD for assisting the member in the course of the matter being decided) on these grounds. The exceptions to this are where:
 - The procedure by which a member reached its position was flawed, in which members' rights or ability to influence the debate was significantly impaired, or where there was information critical to the debate which was not known at the time by members but which should have been.
 - The position taken on an issue or behaviour of the organisation is in contravention of the requirements of the SD membership policy

Specific Criteria for Complaint

If the subject of the complaint is a member of Supporters Direct:

- **Anyone** may draw our attention to actions, statements, policies etc which are believed to be in contravention of the membership policy of Supporters Direct.
- **Members** of one of our own member organisations may draw our attention to where they believe the Trust's internal processes have not been followed, or where there were significant flaws which impaired the legitimacy of the internal outcome.

We will only take matters further after attempts to resolve the matter internally have been exhausted, although we reserve the right to act where such internal processes have proven defective, or where the matter is of such urgency that we have an overriding interest in acting.

If the subject of the complaint is not a member of Supporters Direct:

- We have no authority over non-members and cannot act in pursuit of complaints

If the subject of a complaint is an officer or Director of Supporters Direct acting in an official capacity:

- If you are not happy with an SD service or we have not done something we said we would, please let us know. We would welcome the opportunity to put matters right for you and for others who might use our services in future.

- We also like to know when you are happy with our services. Whether you think we're doing well or feel we need to do better, we value your opinion and want to hear from you.

If the subject of a complaint is the private behaviour of a Director or staff member of Supporters Direct:

- We will not normally consider complaints against individuals' conduct in their own lives unless the actions being complained about are clearly in contravention of the core principles of Supporters Direct and therefore call into question that person's commitment to our core principles.

What to do

- Rather than immediately complain, it will nearly always be more useful to speak to the person involved in the situation you wish to comment or complain about. Most problems can be dealt with quickly by the people closest to the situation.
- Complaints against a member of SD or a member of staff other than the Chief Executive should be addressed by email or post to the Chief Executive. Complaints against a Board member or the Chief Executive should be addressed by email or post to the Secretary.
- Complaints should be submitted in writing by email or post and must identify the complainant; we cannot take action on complaints submitted anonymously.

What happens next...

- Within 2 working days of your comment or complaint being received, we will contact you to acknowledge receipt and to let you know what happens next. Our order of preference for communications for this acknowledgement will be by email then posted letter in that order, unless you specify otherwise.
- In the case of a complaint, we will tell you whether we will be taking it forward, who is dealing with it and how long the investigation will take. If we do not propose to deal with it, we will explain why.
- We aim to resolve complaints within 10 working days. However some complaints take longer to investigate and when they do, we will contact you to advise you of the delay and when you can expect a response from us.
- Whilst investigating a complaint, we give and expect confidentiality and reserve the right to cease pursuing a matter if we believe that this is not the case on your part.
- We respect the confidentiality expected by complainants but in the course of making further enquiries, it is often the case that to pursue the matter inevitably makes it clear who the complainant is. If we feel that this might happen, we will first contact you to gain your consent, unless you specify to us in your initial complaint that you are happy to us to do this.
- Should the outcome of a complaint be referral to another body for disciplinary action against an individual officer or a member, we regret that we will be unable to communicate the outcome as fully as we might wish under other circumstances, as those secondary processes are themselves subject to confidentiality.

What if I'm unhappy with the response?

- If you have made a complaint and are unhappy with the response you receive, you can write to the Chair who will look at the situation and decide if further action is needed. They can be contacted via secretary@supporters-direct.org.