



REVISED COMPLAINTS PROCESS: (Agreed by IBC Executive April 2022)

From time to time complaints arise about the behaviours / actions of members. It is important for the smooth & amicable running of the Club that such issues are promptly addressed.

Informal Resolution:

- Many complainants do not want to enter a formal complaints procedure. They simply want to have their questions answered, their concerns dealt with, an apology or their opinion noted. Consequently, informal resolution should always be attempted before engaging the formal complaints process.
- The Executive asks that complainants try an informal attempt at resolution wherever possible.

Definitions Used:

- Complaint - the issue concerned
- Complainant - the person raising the issue.
- Complainee - the person to whom the complaint refers
- IBC - the International Badgers Club
- Executive - the Executive Committee of the IBC (meeting in whole or part).
- General Secretary - the General Secretary of the IBC (or may other person to whom the Executive has delegated the responsibility).
- Investigator - The person nominated to deal with the complaint.
- "in writing" - this phase is used flexibly to include letters / emails , (but excludes telephone or Facebook narrative)

Type of Complaint:

Complaints can be of any type, but specifically the IBC will deal with the allegations relating to the following:

- Safeguarding issues
- Conduct contrary to the IBC Code of Conduct
- Conduct contrary to the Scout / Guide Laws (*defined for this purpose only as the Scout & Guide Laws of the The Scout Association of the UK & girlguiding UK*).
- Comments made in public, at an IBC gathering, on the website, in the IBC magazine or on the IBC's Facebook pages.
- Disagreements over badge authentication / identification (& categorisation of rarity). In these circumstances, the IBC may appoint an Expert Witness to adjudicate (outside of the complaints process).
- Any other type of complaint that the IBC considers appropriate to address.

What is a Valid Complaint?

- A complaint can be raised by a member (or the family of a young person, or a vulnerable adult) that are directly affected by the issue being raised.
- Complainants will need to provide their name and contact details so that the IBC can investigate the complaint, verify information and update the complainant on the progress of the investigation. Regrettably, anonymous complaints will not be processed.
- Complainants can request that their identity be kept confidential and specify any other aspects of the complaint that contain sensitive information. The IBC will aim to keep such details confidential wherever practical, but no absolute assurance can be given to the complainant, as there may be situations in which disclosure will be necessary or legally required.
- Complaints will only be processed if they are:
 - Not received after three months of the date that the complainant reasonably knew enough facts to report the issue.
 - Not relating to a disagreement with a policy set by the IBC Executive. These concerns should instead be raised direct with the Executive or via the AGM.
 - Not vexatious or malicious. A complaint is vexatious or malicious if it is being made with a primary intention to cause worry, upset, annoyance or embarrassment.
 - Not broadly or substantively the same as a previous complaint to the IBC.
 - Not anonymous.

How to lodge a formal Complaint:

If a complaint is to be dealt with formally, the steps set out in the rest of this process need to be followed.

- Write to the General Secretary (gensec@intbc.org) with details of the complaint. *(Should any other Executive Member - including the Chair - receive a complaint, it will be forwarded to the General Secretary).*
- The General Secretary will acknowledge the complaint (within XX days) and request the steps already taken in the context of an informal resolution. *Note that an acknowledgement does not necessarily mean the complaint has been accepted, it is simply a confirmation that it has been received.*
- On receipt of adequate information, the General Secretary will either deal with the matter him / herself, or nominate another Executive Member as an Investigator. Care will be taken to ensure the nominated Executive Member does not have a conflict of interest.

Appeal Process:

- The IBC is not a large organisation and does not have a multi-layer structure for various officers. For this reason, complaints will be addressed as appropriate and (in certain circumstances) a single appeal to the Chair - based on the facts alone - may be allowed. The decision of the Chair will be final. *
- There is no process of 'escalation' of a complaint. The complainant's recourse is solely to a single appeal once the original complaint has been investigated and the outcome advised as set out in this process. Any appeal must be made in writing within 30 days.
- Please note that the President of the IBC is an honorary post and will not deal with complaints.
- **In addition to the above the IBC Constitution (Clause 9 (vii) gives anyone whose membership of the IBC is suspended or withdrawn a further course of action via an Appeals Panel.*

GUIDELINES FOR OPERATING THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS:

In writing to the General Secretary, the complainant should include:

- Their full name & contact details.
- How the complainant would like to be contacted in relation to the complaint.
- A brief summary of the complaint and what they think went wrong, including dates and times
- Clear and concise statements of what they would like to be investigated.
- Details of any informal resolution that has been taken so far to try to resolve the issue.
- Details of what they would see as an acceptable outcome.

Once nominated by the General Secretary, the investigator will need to address the following matters:

- Can the complaint be accepted as being valid in accordance with the process?
- Are there any associated issues?
- Confirm that there are no conflicts of interest
- Write to the complainant confirming:
 - Their appointment (& decisions made above)
 - a concise list of the areas of concern and a request for the complainant to confirm they are happy to proceed with an investigation on this basis, requesting a response within XX days.
- On receipt of the confirmation, begin to gather all the facts / seek the views of those concerned.

When an investigator is liaising with those involved in a complaint:

- Advise that they have been appointed to address the complaint and give them an opportunity to respond. *It's at the discretion of the investigator to decide how much detail is appropriate to provide to the individual about the complaint which has been made.*
- Inform the individuals that their responses may form part of the response to the complaint and you will record appropriate notes of your conversations.

Conclusion & Closure of a Complaint:

- During the investigation all requests for information should have a response deadline of 28 days.
- Should information not be received within the advised timescale, the IBC reserves the right to close the complaint and decide on an appropriate outcome. All investigations should be targeted to be complete within a maximum time of 90 days from the initial complaint and not extended without valid reason.
- Complete the investigation & decide on an appropriate outcome, based on the findings.
- There may be circumstances in which it is not feasible to determine the outcome of some / all of a complaint, in which case the matter will be referred to the IBC Executive for advice. In these circumstances, the Executive will meet without the Chair, *(in order to ensure the validity of any possible appeal)*. Regardless, the complaint should either be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld, with recommendations for any actions to be taken.
- Following the Outcome:
 - the complainant is to be notified in writing of the outcome and any steps which will be taken as a result. The response to the complainant should:

- clearly state if the complaint is to be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld with reasons.
- identify recommendations (if any) that will be undertaken based on the outcome of the complaint.
- It's also important to contact others who have been directly involved with the complaint and share with them the outcome and recommendations if appropriate.
- All relevant paperwork, notes and correspondence will then be passed to the General Secretary where it will be kept confidentially for 12 months, before being destroyed.

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