



## **Ball Hockey UK**

### **Vexatious Complaints Procedure**

#### **Introduction**

Ball Hockey UK (BHUK) staff deal with specific complaints as part of their day-to-day management of the sport in accordance with the Complaints Procedure. The majority of complaints are handled in an informal manner and are resolved quickly, sensitively and to the satisfaction of the complainant. However, there are occasions when complainants behave in an unreasonable manner when raising and/or pursuing concerns. The consequences are that the actions of the complainants begin to impact negatively on the day-to-day running of the sport and directly or indirectly the overall well-being of the players or staff. In these exceptional circumstances, the BHUK may take action in accordance with this policy.

Raising legitimate concerns or criticisms of a complaints procedure as it progresses (for example in relation to timescales) does not make a complainant vexatious, and neither does a person seeking to challenge the outcome of a complaint that they are unhappy with. The vast majority of complaints, even those which are not upheld by BHUK, will not be defined as being vexatious.

#### **Aims Of The Policy**

The aims of this policy are to:

- uphold the standards of courtesy and reasonableness that should characterise all communication between persons who wish to express a concern or pursue a complaint;
- support the well-being of everyone who has a legitimate interest in the sport;
- deal fairly, honestly, openly and transparently with those who make persistent or vexatious complaints.

Ball Hockey UK expects anyone who wishes to raise issues to:

- treat all staff with courtesy and respect;
- respect the needs and well-being of everyone involved with the sports;
- avoid any use, or threatened use, of violence to people or property;
- avoid any aggression or verbal abuse;

- recognise the time constraints under which BHUK members of staff work and allow for a reasonable time to respond;
- recognise that resolving a specific problem can sometimes take some time;

## Who Is A Persistent Complainant?

For the purpose of this policy, a persistent complainant is anyone who complains about issues, either formally or informally, or frequently raises issues that the complainant considers to be within the remit of BHUK, and whose behaviour is unreasonable. Such behaviour may be characterised by:

- frequently complaining about a variety of different things, or the same issue through a number of different channels in an obsessive, persistent, harassing, prolific and /or repetitious manner;
- seeking unrealistic outcomes relative to the issue being raised, and stating that their intention is to persist until that outcome is achieved;
- insisting upon pursuing valid complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- persistently making the same complaint with minor differences but never accepting the outcome of any investigation into their complaint;
- challenging a historical decision/action which cannot be changed;
- contacting BHUK frequently in a lengthy and/or complicated way;
- behaving aggressively and provocatively towards BHUK and individual members of staff;
- visiting BHUK personnel, either at home or at a playing arena, demanding to see a specific officer immediately or expecting complex issues to be resolved immediately that will take up an unacceptable amount of time and where an appointment would be more suitable;
- changing aspects of the complaint or the desired outcome part way through the investigation and/or after the investigation is completed and a conclusion has been reached;
- refusing to co-operate with the investigation process;
- insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways which are incompatible with the adopted procedure or with good practice;
- making what appear to be groundless complaints about the staff dealing with the complaint, and seeking to have them replaced by someone more senior or with a person the complainant names;
- refusing to accept information provided, for no justifiable reason;
- making statements the complainant knows are not true or persuading others to do so;

- supplying manufactured 'evidence' or other information the complainant knows is incorrect;
- raising a large number of detailed but unimportant questions and insisting that they are all fully answered;
- lodging a number of complaints in batches over a period of time, resulting in related complaints being at differing stages of the complaints procedure;
- pressing for further investigation of matters that have already been addressed;
- electronically recording meetings and conversations without the prior knowledge and consent of the other persons involved;
- using obscene, racist, offensive or threatening language in written or verbal communications;
- threatening or aggressive or abusive behaviour in direct personal contact with staff;
- using the vehicle of valid new complaints to resurrect issues which were included in previous complaints; and/or persistently sending communications which demand responses, or making telephone calls seeking interviews with staff, after BHUK has closed the investigation into a complaint and all rights of review and appeal have been exhausted;
- insistence on only dealing with the BHUK President on all occasions irrespective of the issue and the level of delegation within BHUK to deal with such matters;
- insistence upon repeatedly pursuing a complaint when the outcome is not satisfactory to the complainant but cannot be changed;
- making personal derogatory comments via social media about officers of BHUK.

For the purpose of this policy, harassment is the unreasonable pursuit of such actions outlined in the points above in such a way that they:

- appear to be targeted over a significant period of time on one or more members of the BHUK staff and/or
- cause ongoing distress to individual member(s) of BHUK staff and/or
- have a significant adverse effect on the whole/parts of the BHUK community and/or
- are pursued in a manner which can be perceived as intimidating and oppressive by the recipient.

This could include situations where persistent demands and criticisms, whilst not particularly taxing or serious when viewed in isolation, have a cumulative effect over time of undermining confidence, wellbeing and health.

## Strategy For Dealing With Vexatious Complainants

In the first instance Ball Hockey UK will verbally inform the complainant that their behaviour is considered to be becoming unreasonable or unacceptable and, if it is not modified, action may be taken in accordance with this policy. This will be confirmed in writing. Where complainants have been identified as persistent or vexatious under the scope of this policy, the BHUK President, will determine what action to take. The President, or a delegated senior member of the BHUK board, will implement such action and will notify complainants, in writing, of the reasons why they have been classified as persistent or vexatious and what action will be taken. They will also be notified of the review procedure. This notification may be copied for the information of others already involved in the complaint or matters closely related to it.

A record will be kept, for future reference, of the reasons why a complainant has been classified as persistent or vexatious. If the behaviour of the complainant is not modified BHUK will take some or all of the following actions as necessary, having regard to the nature of the complainant's behaviour and the effect of this on the BHUK community:

- Withdraw contact with the complainant either in person, by telephone, by email, by letter or any combination of these, provided that at least one form of contact is maintained. If staff are to withdraw from a telephone conversation with a complainant there will be an agreed statement available for them to use at such times.
- To restrict contact to liaison through a designated member of staff.
- Notify the complainant in writing that Ball Hockey UK has responded fully to the points raised and has tried to resolve the complaint but there is nothing more to add and continuing contact on the matter will serve no useful purpose.

The complainant will be notified that any form of contact, either orally or in writing, in relation to their complaint, or any further complaints relative to the same period of time, or the same or similar issues as an earlier complaint, is at an end, and that further contact received will be acknowledged but not answered.

BHUK may temporarily suspend, for a period to be specified to the complainant, all contact with the complainant. The complainant concerned will also be given an opportunity to modify their behaviour before closing correspondence. For example, a person who writes regularly to BHUK but refuses to meet with staff could be invited to a meeting to discuss their concerns. If the complainant does not comply with the request to change their conduct then a letter should be sent making clear that future

correspondence will not be responded to, but that BHUK will note any new concerns being raised and will appropriately investigate any that are considered to be of merit.

Correspondence received from the complainant subsequent to closure will be kept on file, indefinitely, as will notes of telephone calls and any further conversations referring to the matter. Review Decisions and Withdrawing 'Persistent or Vexatious' Status Once a complainant has been determined, as persistent or vexatious, such status needs to be regularly reviewed, and, where appropriate, withdrawn at a later date. Such action may be appropriate where a complainant subsequently demonstrates a more reasonable approach or submits a further complaint for which the normal complaints procedures would appear appropriate.

A panel of BHUK members will review their decisions to categorise a complainant as persistent or vexatious every six months. The panel on review may either withdraw the categorisation of a person as persistent or vexatious or amend the strategy being applied to that person. If the panel considers it appropriate to withdraw the status of persistent or vexatious complainant, normal contact with the complainant and application of BHUK's complaints procedure will be resumed. The complainant will be given notice of this decision forthwith. Copies of all decisions relating to the categorisation of a person as a habitual or vexatious complainant will be maintained in a central register of such decisions.

## Social Media

Ball Hockey UK will remove, without notice, offensive or abusive posts from our social media channels. This includes posts that contain swearing or libellous statements. Additionally, BHUK reserves the right to take any action considered necessary where derogatory comments are made about BHUK personnel.

## Monitoring & Review

We are committed to reviewing our policies and good practice every three years or sooner if there are any changes in legislation or government guidance or as a result of any other significant change or event.

Policy Owner	Ball Hockey UK
Policy Title	Vexatious Complaints Procedure
BHUK Contact Email	<a href="mailto:contactBHUK@gmail.com">contactBHUK@gmail.com</a>
BHUK Website	<a href="http://www.ballhockeyuk.com">www.ballhockeyuk.com</a>
BHUK President Name	Rob Clayton

Publication Date	August 2021
Next Review Date	August 2024

