



DEPARTMENT	Operations / Safeguarding
POLICY/PROCEDURE	COMPLAINTS POLICY
DATE OF ISSUE	JUNE 2026
DATE OF REVIEW	JUNE 2027
VERSION	3

Document Control

Item	Detail
Document title	Lincoln City Football Club Complaints Policy
Version	Version 3 - 2026/27 website refresh
Department	Operations / Safeguarding
Policy owner	Chief Finance and Governance Officer, supported by Heads of Department, EXCO, Safeguarding and Club Services
Applies to	Supporters, customers, stakeholders, parents, carers, young players, visitors and members of the public using Club services
Review	At least annually, and sooner where required by EFL, IFO, legal, safeguarding, service or operational change

This refreshed policy modernises the 2025-26 complaints procedure, makes the process easier to follow online, aligns supporter-facing response commitments with the EFL complaints approach, and keeps the important safeguarding, unacceptable behaviour and vexatious complaint controls.

Overview

Lincoln City Football Club welcomes comments, concerns and complaints. We will treat complaints seriously, respond fairly, protect confidentiality where appropriate and use learning to improve the service we provide.

The Club is committed to continuous improvement. We recognise that, occasionally, mistakes will be made or the service offered will not meet an individual's requirements or expectations. Complaints help us put things right where we can and improve future service.

- Complaints will be treated seriously, fairly and in an open manner.
- Complaints will be acknowledged promptly and normally in writing.
- Complaints will be investigated proportionately by the relevant department or senior lead.
- The Club will aim to resolve justifiable complaints within 28 working days wherever reasonably practicable.
- Where a complaint is complex or requires longer investigation, the complainant will be kept updated.
- Complaint learning will be reviewed to improve Club services, safety, accessibility and supporter experience.

Scope and Responsibilities

This policy applies to complaints from supporters, customers, stakeholders, parents, carers, young players, visitors and members of the public. It does not replace staff grievance, disciplinary, safeguarding, ticketing appeal, supporter sanctions appeal or other specialist procedures where those routes are more appropriate.

Role	Responsibility
All staff	Receive concerns courteously, take them seriously, record relevant details and direct them through the correct route.
Heads of Department	Investigate and respond to complaints within their area, including learning and service improvement actions.
Chief Finance and Governance Officer	Coordinate formal complaints, maintain oversight of records and support governance reporting.

Role	Responsibility
EXCO / senior executive lead	Review unresolved complaints and provide senior oversight where departmental resolution has not been achieved.
Chief Executive Officer	Consider final internal escalations where required. The CEO's decision is the final Club decision.
Safeguarding leads	Take immediate ownership of safeguarding concerns and ensure they are handled under the relevant safeguarding policy and statutory route.

How to Make a Complaint

Many concerns can be resolved quickly by speaking to the relevant team. Where that is not possible, or where the issue is serious, the complaint should be submitted in writing so the Club can understand the concern, investigate properly and respond clearly.

Information to include	Why it helps
Name and contact details	Allows the Club to acknowledge and respond. Anonymous complaints may be difficult or impossible to investigate fully.
What happened	Include dates, times, location, fixture, staff/team involved and any relevant background.
Evidence	Attach booking references, emails, photographs, screenshots, ticket details or witness information where available.
Impact	Explain how the issue affected you or others.
Outcome sought	Tell us what you would like the Club to consider, while recognising that not every requested outcome may be possible.

Representatives and reasonable adjustments: The Club usually expects a complaint to be made by the person concerned, but will consider complaints from a parent, carer, advocate or representative. We will also consider reasonable adjustments where a person needs support to access the complaints process.

Complaints Process

Stage	What happens
Stage 1 - Informal resolution	Where possible, the relevant team will try to resolve the concern quickly and informally. If this does not resolve the matter, the complaint can move to the formal route.
Stage 2 - Formal complaint	Formal complaints should be submitted in writing. The Club will aim to acknowledge within seven working days and refer the matter to the relevant Head of Department.
Stage 3 - Department response	The relevant Head of Department will investigate and aim to provide a written response within 28 working days of the original written complaint. Where this is not possible, the Club will explain why and provide an update.
Stage 4 - Senior review	If the complainant remains dissatisfied, the matter may be reviewed by an EXCO or senior executive lead. The Club will aim to acknowledge the escalation within seven working days and provide a response within 28 working days where possible.
Stage 5 - Final internal review	If the complainant remains dissatisfied after senior review, the matter may be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for

Stage	What happens
	final internal consideration. The CEO's response is the final Club position.
Independent review	After the Club process has been completed, or where football's complaints process permits escalation because of delay, the complainant may refer the matter to the Independent Football Ombudsman where it falls within its remit.

Complex complaints: Some complaints require CCTV review, witness accounts, safeguarding input, police liaison, ticketing records, staff HR processes or legal advice. Where this affects timescales, the Club will aim to keep the complainant updated.

Independent Football Ombudsman

The Independent Football Ombudsman is the final stage in football's complaints process. It can consider whether a complaint has been fairly handled and whether due process has been followed. It does not normally act as an alternative interpretation of EFL regulations, Club decisions, on-field matters or referee performance.

IFO contact	Details
Address	Independent Football Ombudsman, Premier House, 1-5 Argyle Way, Stevenage, Hertfordshire, SG1 2AD
Telephone	0330 165 4223
Email	contact@theifo.co.uk
Website	www.theifo.co.uk
When to use	After the Club process has been completed, or where the complaint has not been properly responded to within the timescale recognised by football's complaints process and no reasonable explanation for the delay has been provided.

What to send to the IFO:

- A summary of the complaint and desired outcome.
- Copies of correspondence with the Club.
- Any evidence relied upon, such as ticket references, photographs, screenshots or witness details.
- The Club's final response, or evidence of delay where applicable.

Safeguarding and Welfare Concerns

A concern is safeguarding-related where it involves a child or vulnerable adult being at risk of abuse, significant harm, exploitation or neglect, or where there is a concern that a member of Club staff, volunteer, contractor or associated person may have caused or may cause harm.

Do not wait for the complaints process: Safeguarding concerns must be referred immediately through the Club's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy or Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy. Where there is immediate risk, emergency services or statutory agencies should be contacted.

- Non-safeguarding complaints should normally follow this complaints policy before escalation to the EFL, IFO or other external bodies.
- The FA Case Management Team may be involved where football safeguarding concerns require assessment, suspension from football or other safeguards.
- Where a complaint includes both service and safeguarding elements, the safeguarding route will take priority for the safeguarding matters.

Confidentiality, Records and Learning

Complaints will be handled confidentially and shared only with those who reasonably need the information to investigate, respond, safeguard, comply with legal obligations or improve services. Where a complaint relates to a member of staff, specific employment action will not normally be shared with the complainant.

Area	Approach
Confidentiality	Information will be handled sensitively and shared on a need-to-know basis.
Data protection	Personal information will be managed in line with applicable data protection requirements and Club procedures.
Records	Complaint records, appeals, outcomes and evidence will be kept securely.
Monitoring	Complaint records will be reviewed to identify themes, risks and improvement actions.
Reporting	Relevant complaint data and learning may be reported to senior leadership and the Board in an appropriate format.

Unacceptable Behaviour

The Club understands that making a complaint can be stressful and that people may be upset, frustrated or determined. Assertive communication will not, by itself, be treated as unacceptable. However, staff and other service users must not be subjected to abuse, threats, harassment or unreasonable demands.

Type	Examples
Aggressive, offensive or abusive behaviour	Threats, physical violence, personal abuse, derogatory remarks, discriminatory language, intimidation, inflammatory allegations, abusive calls, emails, posts or social media communications.
Unreasonable demands	Repeated requests for urgent responses outside reasonable timescales, insistence on dealing only with one named person, excessive calls or emails, changing the substance of the complaint repeatedly, or raising unrelated matters.
Unreasonable persistence	Continuing to pursue a complaint after a final decision, refusing to accept explanations about what the Club can or cannot do, or repeatedly reopening the same issue without new information.

Reasonable adjustments: The Club recognises that disability or mental ill health may affect how someone communicates. We will consider reasonable adjustments, but may still manage contact where necessary to protect staff, other service users and the effective handling of complaints.

Managing Unacceptable or Vexatious Contact

Where behaviour becomes unacceptable, the Club will normally explain why and give the person an opportunity to modify their behaviour. If it continues, the Club may apply proportionate contact controls while seeking, where possible, to preserve at least one reasonable route of communication.

- Limit contact to a specified day, time or method.
- Require contact through a specified member of staff or a representative.
- Decline further telephone contact while maintaining written contact.
- Read and file correspondence, responding only where new and relevant information is provided.
- Suspend or terminate consideration of a complaint where behaviour prevents fair handling.
- Decline to consider future complaints on the same issue where the matter has been properly concluded.
- Report threats, abuse, harassment or suspected offences to police, governing bodies or legal advisers where appropriate.

Vexatious complaints: A complaint may be treated as vexatious where it is obsessive, harassing, repetitious, designed to cause disruption, pursued in an unreasonable manner, or demands outcomes that lack serious purpose or value. This decision will be taken carefully, with the circumstances of the case and any previous final decision considered.

What Has Changed - 2026/27 Refresh

Area	Update reflected in this version
EFL complaints approach	Response commitments now reflect the EFL supporter complaints approach: acknowledgement within seven working days and a detailed response within 28 working days where a full response cannot be given immediately.
IFO route	The IFO section now explains that the IFO is the final stage in football's complaints process and can review fairness and due process.
Reasonable adjustments	The policy now makes clearer that complainants may use a parent, carer, advocate or representative, and that reasonable adjustments can be considered to support access to the process.
Safeguarding	Safeguarding concerns are separated from routine service complaints and must be escalated immediately through safeguarding routes.
Unacceptable behaviour	The policy keeps proportionate controls for abusive, threatening, unreasonable or vexatious contact while recognising distress, disability and mental ill health considerations.
Learning and governance	The monitoring section now more clearly links records, themes and outcomes to service improvement and Board/senior leadership oversight.

Related Policies and Documents

- Supporter Charter and EFL Ground Regulations.
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy.
- Supporter sanctions policy and procedure.
- Access Statement and reasonable adjustment arrangements.
- Ticketing terms and conditions.
- Data protection and records management procedures.