



# GYC Complaints procedure

GYC is committed to making our club safe, supportive and inclusive, though occasionally things do go wrong. This policy describes how we handle concerns or complaints about GYC as a club or about any GYC member or volunteer.

## Informal complaints

For minor grievances not related to safety or serious breaches of the byelaws, we would like to encourage a culture of informal problem solving. Most differences of opinion, mistakes or failings do not need to be taken through a complaints procedure, so we urge common sense and talking things through if no one is at risk of serious harm.

If the complaint relates to a particular person – please consider talking it through with them informally if you feel able to do so.

If the complaint is related to a particular activity at the club, please consider talking to the lead volunteer (such as the Rowing Captain if the issue is related to rowing activity) and explain the problem. If possible, point to the specific byelaw or policy that is of concern. Volunteers need and deserve feedback and often this will make the difference you seek.

If this does not achieve the result you want, you might consider an informal conversation with the Flag Officer responsible for activity – so Vice Commodore for water-side activities and Rear Commodore for shore-side.

## Formal complaints

GYC defines a formal complaint as ‘any expression of dissatisfaction with the activities, members, volunteers, or approach of the organisation that requires a formal response’.

You should use the formal complaints process if:

- The issue is serious, in particular if it risks the welfare or safety of another person
- You have tried to resolve this as an informal complaint and are not happy with the outcome

GYC aims to handle formal complaints in a way that:

- is straight forward for the complainant
- is dealt with promptly
- helps us to learn from the complaint and do better in future
- is proportionate; we don't over react but nor do we underestimate the severity of a problem

The responsibility of GYC will be to:

- acknowledge the formal complaint in writing;
- respond within a stated period of time;
- deal reasonably and sensitively with the complaint;
- take action where appropriate.

A complainant's responsibility is to:

- Where safety is not an issue, try and resolve the issue informally first
- Put their complaint in writing
- explain the problem as clearly and as fully as possible
- allow GYC a reasonable time to deal with the matter;
- recognise that some circumstances may be beyond the control of GYC

### **Confidentiality and third party disclosure**

GYC will attempt to handle complaints in a manner which protects the confidentiality of the complainant and accused.

However the circumstances may be such that it may not be possible to maintain confidentiality. Should this be the case, the situation will be explained before information is shared.

For example, it will often be impossible to respond to your complaint without sharing details of the complaint with the person you are complaining about.

For example, issues might arise related to the safety of an individual and GYC may have *legal* obligations under for example 'Safeguarding vulnerable adults' legislation to disclose information to the authorities.

### **Formal Complaints Procedure**

#### Stage 1

If you are unable to resolve the issue informally or it is a serious issue, you should email the Hon. Sec. at [secretary@greenwichyachtclub.co.uk](mailto:secretary@greenwichyachtclub.co.uk). Alternatively write directly to the club clearly marking the envelope as 'Complaint - for the Attention of Commodore though this will take as long as a week before it is opened.

In your letter you should set out the details of your complaint, the consequences for you as a result, and what you would like to see happen. If the Commodore believes that the matter requires further investigation s/he will appoint a Flag Officer to investigate. The Commodore will oversee this and provide the written response. You can expect your complaint to be acknowledged within 4 working days of receipt. You should get a response and an explanation within 15 working days.

The Commodore may decide to put the issue to a meeting of Council before deciding on the response, which will extend the timescales.

#### Stage 2

If you are not satisfied with the initial response to the complaint, write again to the Commodore indicating you would like the issue to be reviewed, stating your reasons and any additional evidence. The investigating Flag Officer will present the original case and your request for review to the next full meeting of Council. Council will decide the outcome and the Commodore will write to you with the decision, normally within ten days of the meeting.

## **Time-scales**

We aim to resolve all matters as quickly as possible. However, some issues will be more complex and therefore may require longer to be fully investigated. Consequently timescales given for handling and responding to complaints are indicative. If a matter requires more detailed investigation, you will receive an interim response describing what is being done to deal with the matter, and when a full reply can be expected and from whom.

## **Special case**

If the complaint is about the actions of the Commodore, the complaint should be sent to the Vice Commodore and all responsibilities mentioning Commodore in this policy will be handled by the Vice Commodore.

## **Verbal complaints**

Sometimes, a concern will be passed on verbally to a GYC volunteer. GYC may choose to follow this up and investigate so that we can learn from this feedback, though we will not in this case give feedback to the complainant.

## **Disciplinary Outcome**

If the outcome of the Complaints Procedure is that a member is found to be in breach of the Articles or Byelaws of the club, Council will, by majority vote, decide on the appropriate response depending on the severity of the breach.

1. Verbal warning being given to the offender by a Flag Officer.
2. Written warning sent to the offender by the Commodore on behalf of Council.
3. Requirement to attend a disciplinary hearing with Council.

If a disciplinary hearing is held, the offender must be given every opportunity to submit their own written response and will have the right to be supported by a friend (or '*McKenzie friend*') and call witnesses if proportionate and relevant. The outcome of the disciplinary hearing is decided by vote of Council - with available sanction including the option to terminate the individual's club membership.

Any decision from the disciplinary hearing can be subject to appeal.

**Approved by Council of Management: 19<sup>th</sup> March 2022**