



# Complaints Policy and Procedures



## **Introduction & Scope of the Complaints Policy**

Everyone is entitled to be treated with respect by the staff, volunteers, members, training course providers and any servant of Mountaineering Ireland. Moreover, they are entitled to expect that the systems in place in Mountaineering Ireland are appropriate for their purposes and not unfair or unnecessarily onerous for them.

Everyone is eligible to use these procedures. Complaints may come under a number of headings. They may be concerned with

- Administrative services;
- Alleged actions or inaction by Mountaineering Ireland or a member of its staff;
- Events, gatherings or meets;
- Membership matters and services;
- Training, those delivering training schemes or training assessment outcomes.

Just as complainants deserve respect, everyone else must be treated with respect also. Therefore, complaints which the CEO considers to be malicious or vexatious or where false information is knowingly submitted will be dismissed.

The complaints system will operate in accordance with the principles of natural justice, equity and fairness.

**Complaints relating to children, the misuse of drugs, sexual misconduct or any other matter(s) considered to be of a serious nature will be reported to the appropriate authorities as necessary.**

## **Procedures for dealing with Complaints – Informal Procedures**

As a general principle, it is desirable that complaints are dealt with as quickly as possible. Therefore, persons who have a complaint should begin to deal with matters within 30 days of the alleged incident. Mountaineering Ireland's response is designed to take place within a similar time frame. It is desirable that complaints be dealt with in an informal manner as quickly and at as low a level as possible. Therefore, if a person, for example, has a complaint against the actions or inactions of an individual staff member they should quickly approach that person, explain their concerns and seek an immediate resolution by discussion. If the person concerned does not engage with them meaningfully or in any event the matter is not resolved at this first stage, the complainant should approach Mountaineering Ireland's CEO<sup>1</sup> and discuss their concerns. The CEO will normally seek to resolve the issue by discussion with both parties. If necessary, the parties may seek the support of a mediator to assist in this process. If a mutually acceptable outcome is achieved as a result of this discussion or mediation, a brief written record, signed by both parties, may be prepared. A copy of this record may be kept on file by Mountaineering Ireland. If a mutually acceptable solution can not be reached either party may invoke the formal complaint procedures.

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<sup>1</sup> All references to the CEO are to be taken to refer to the Chairperson where the CEO is the respondent.



## **Procedures for dealing with Complaints – Formal Procedures**

The formal complaints procedures will normally only be invoked when the informal procedures have been exhausted. In certain exceptional cases, the CEO may direct that matters proceed directly to the formal stage.

A formal complaint must be in writing and signed. Formal complaints will in every case be copied to the person complained of (the respondent). The formal complaint must identify the respondent and give comprehensive details of the complaint. A copy of this may be kept on file.

On receipt of such a formal complaint, Mountaineering Ireland will appoint an Investigating Officer to investigate the complaint. The Investigating Officer will normally be a senior member who has had no interest in the matter under dispute nor has any close relationship with the complainant or respondent. The Investigating Officer will try by all appropriate means to determine the facts behind the complaint. He or she will make a judgement on the gravity of the circumstances and the behaviour which is appropriate for members of a sporting community in their dealings with one another. In the course of the investigation, the Investigating Officer may interview both parties to the dispute and any third party who may be in a position to assist in the investigation. At any such interview, the parties may be accompanied. On completion of the investigation, the Investigating Officer will prepare a written report for the CEO. This report should determine all essential detail and include recommendations on measures to be taken to resolve the complaint. The CEO shall forward a copy of the report to the parties and shall determine whether both parties accept the report and its recommendations as a fair outcome of the proceedings. If either party is dissatisfied with the report of the Investigating Officer or with the remedial actions taken arising from the report, they may appeal to the Complaint Appeals Committee.

### **Complaint Appeals Committee**

A Complaints Appeals Committee (CAC) shall be constituted for the purposes of dealing with the appeal. It shall consist of three persons nominated by the President.

Appeals to the CAC shall consist of a statement of the reasons why the report of the Investigating Officer is not accepted. No member of the CAC may have had any interest in the matters under dispute or close relationship with any of the parties. The CAC members will be supplied with copies of all the documents which have been prepared in the course of the procedures to date.

The Committee shall determine its own procedures and, if it considers it necessary, may invite oral submissions or further written submissions. Its decisions shall be copied to all parties to the dispute under consideration and may, at the CAC's own discretion, be copied to the board of Mountaineering Ireland if it considers its decisions have implications for the development of relevant procedures, processes or operations within Mountaineering Ireland.

There shall be no further avenue for appeal within Mountaineering Ireland.