



# **British Rowing Complaints Policy**

**June 2026**

[Version 1.0]



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

British Rowing is committed to providing high quality services in all areas of operation. However, we recognise there may be occasions when we do not meet our expected standards, and if this is the case, we want to hear about it, deal with the situation in a timely manner and put measures in place to prevent reoccurrence.

## 2. PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITY

This policy sets out the procedures for making complaints about British Rowing and how these complaints will be handled whilst also providing a framework for ensuring that complaints are handled fairly and expeditiously.

British Rowing takes all complaints seriously and treats all complainants and their concerns with respect and, where necessary, confidentiality

This complaints procedure will not be used whilst legal action regarding the same issue or closely related matter is being undertaken, as the legal process takes precedence. British Rowing will typically defer commencing/suspend any ongoing complaint investigation immediately once legal action is underway, either by British Rowing or against British Rowing.

The British Rowing Complaints Officer holds overall responsibility for ensuring this policy is adhered to, that complaints are managed accordingly and audited. The Complaints Officer shall also be responsible for the logging, management and responses to complaints and coordinating any investigation or action in relation to complaints made.

## 3. SCOPE

In the context of this policy, a complaint is considered to be an expressed view that we have failed to perform or deliver a service that British Rowing can reasonably be expected to provide. For example, this might be an expressed dissatisfaction about a policy, action, lack of action, or service provided either directly or indirectly by British Rowing.

## 4. NOT COVERED UNDER THIS POLICY

This policy does not cover:

- (i) Complaints relating to the conduct/behaviours of British Rowing Affiliated/Non-Affiliated Clubs, Coaches, Members, where there is an alleged breach of any British Rowing policy, Code of Conduct, the Membership Rules or Articles of Association. These should be made using the Reporting Procedures. These can be found on the British Rowing website. British Rowing will then consider whether action is warranted and proportionate pursuant to its Regulatory Framework.
- (ii) Complaints, allegations or concerns relevant to safeguarding should be made using the Reporting

Procedure, found on the British Rowing website, and will be handled by the Safeguarding Team.

- (iii) Complaints concerning Club-Level Matters (e.g. complaints relating to the management of a rowing club, their fees, rules and requirements). British Rowing will refer such matters to be dealt with under the Club Dispute and Regional Dispute Resolution Procedure. British Rowing will not intervene where the Club Dispute and Regional Dispute Resolution Procedure has been properly applied.
- (iv) Complaints relevant to selection decisions.
- (v) Complaints relating to the decision of an outcome issued under the Disciplinary or Safeguarding Regulations of British Rowing.

## 5. HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

All complaints should be made in writing by emailing [complaints@britishrowing.org](mailto:complaints@britishrowing.org).

Complaints received via telephone will be passed to the Complaints Officer (the officer responsible for managing, investigating, and resolving complaints under this Policy) who will decide whether to treat the complaint as a formal initial complaint.

The Complainant will be informed of this and the policy and procedures here will apply.

The complaint must include:

- (i) The complainant's name
- (ii) The complainant's individual British Rowing Membership Number (if applicable)<sup>1</sup>
- (iii) The nature and details of the complaint (including as much detail as possible, for example dates of occurrence, times, other people/members involved, location of the issue).

Those who require assistance and/or adjustment to assist them in making an initial complaint can request the support of the Complaint Officer. Where a Complainant or other party requires adjustments to enable them to participate fairly in any aspect of the complaints process, the Complaints Officer will consult with the individual and, where considered reasonable, will ensure appropriate adjustments are made.

## 6. PROCEDURE

### INITIAL COMPLAINT

All complaints will be acknowledged via email within three (3) working days of receipt.

British Rowing may recommend the complaint be referred to a third-party organisation where:

- (i) The complaint does not fall under the jurisdiction of British Rowing; or

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<sup>1</sup> Located on JustGo and/or any membership card issued by British Rowing

- (ii) Where a complaint is considered to relate to a service that is provided jointly by British Rowing and a third-party organisation and British Rowing considers the third-party organisation would be in a better placed position to respond to the complaint.

British Rowing will, where possible, provide a formal response to complaints within 21 working days of receipt of the initial complaint. Where it is not possible to provide a response within this timescale, the complainant will be informed in writing of the reasons for the delay and the updated estimate timescale for the provision of the response.

## **ESCALATION OF COMPLAINT**

Once the formal response has been provided, if the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome, they can request the complaint be escalated to the second stage of the complaint process.

Should a complainant wish to pursue this, they should respond to the formal outcome within 14 working days of the date of delivery setting out the reasons for the request.

Upon receipt, the Complaints Officer will pass the case file, any associated documents to either the Director of Culture and Integrity, who will review the initial complaint, any investigation or enquiries carried out by the Complaints Officer or any third-party and the initial response provided. Following this, they will provide a further formal response as soon as reasonably practicable.

Once this second stage response has been provided, there is no further escalation or appeals process.

At any stage of the complaints procedure British Rowing may, at its sole discretion, decide to refer the complaint to the British Rowing Disciplinary Group<sup>2</sup> for review, advice and/or recommended action.

## **7. PERSISTENT AND VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS**

British Rowing recognises that individuals may feel emotional due to the circumstances involved in a matter they are dealing with. This can lead to behaviour that is out of character, including frustration, distress or anger.

Irrespective of such feelings or difficult experiences, British Rowing requires that all individuals engage in a respectful and courteous manner, in line with the British Rowing Code of Conduct and maintain the behavioural standards expected by British Rowing at all times. Aggressive, abusive, or threatening behaviour towards British Rowing staff, officials, or volunteers will not be tolerated.

Whilst most concerns can be addressed amicably and constructively through British Rowing's Complaints Policy a small number may be pursued by individuals engaging with British Rowing in unreasonable, obstructive, or inappropriate ways. British Rowing reserves the right to protect its staff from such conduct, for example, by assigning a single point of contact for correspondence, or in more serious cases British Rowing reserves the right to refuse to engage in further correspondence.

The determination of whether a complaint or complainant is vexatious, malicious, or unreasonable rests with the Director of Culture and Integrity and/or the Chief Executive. Any such determination will be communicated in writing, along with relevant action deemed appropriate.

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<sup>2</sup> This Disciplinary Group is a group of individuals appointed by the Board to handle complaints, disputes, and breaches of conduct, ensuring fair resolution in accordance with British Rowing Regulations.

## EXAMPLES OF VEXATIOUS, MALICIOUS OR UNREASONABLE CONDUCT:

The following behaviours may lead to such a classification:

- (i) Aggressive language, shouting, or swearing at British Rowing staff or volunteers;
- (ii) Threatening or harassing behaviour;
- (iii) Threats of legal action designed to intimidate;
- (iv) Complaints intended to damage reputations rather than raise genuine concerns;
- (v) Submitting multiple concurrent or scattergun complaints;
- (vi) Repeatedly contacting different British Rowing staff members with differing or unrelated enquiries;
- (vii) Pursuing a complaint through several bodies at once;
- (viii) Excessive communication hindering a complaints or safeguarding process;
- (ix) Use of the process to deliberately disrupt British Rowing operations or the rowing community;
- (x) Refusal to accept outcomes that have been fairly investigated and resolved;
- (xi) Shifting the focus of a complaint mid-process without reason;
- (xii) Overloading the process with trivial or irrelevant matters;
- (xiii) Refusing to engage with the process while expecting a resolution;
- (xiv) Raising issues outside the remit of the complaints process after being informed otherwise; and/or
- (xv) Communicating in ways that bring British Rowing and/or the sport of rowing into disrepute.

If British Rowing considers a complaint to be vexatious and/or the behaviour of a complainant is overly persistent, and/or making disproportionate demands on time and resources, the Director of Culture and Integrity will determine an appropriate and proportionate course of action, tailored to the facts of the individual case. Such outcomes may include:

- (i) Restricting communications to one method (e.g. email only);
- (ii) Requiring communication through a named point of contact;
- (iii) Limiting the nature or frequency of contact;
- (iv) Mandating the presence of a British Rowing representative in all meetings;
- (v) Refusal to process the complaint;
- (vi) Refusal to process further complaints on the same matter;
- (vii) Temporary disengagement from the complaints process;
- (viii) The decision to exclude the maker of the persistent/vexatious complainant from British Rowing

led events or competitions;

- (ix) Referral to external statutory agencies such as the Police;
- (x) The application of sanctions against any British Rowing affiliated club associated with the individual, if appropriate; and/or
- (xi) In extreme cases, the commencement of legal proceedings to deter/prevent the individual from engaging in further contact with British Rowing.

All outcomes will be proportionate and based on the facts of the individual case. A written decision will be issued within seven working days of the decision, outlining:

- (i) The reasoning behind British Rowing's decision;
- (ii) The outcome(s) applied;
- (iii) The duration of application for any restriction applied and timelines for any review.

There is no right of appeal against any restrictions or sanctions imposed under this policy.

Due regard shall be given to whether the complainant has a disability, health condition or personal circumstances that may have a bearing on the complaining behaviour. In the interests of fairness, any relevant personal circumstances should be considered fully when determining an appropriate course of action.

# 8. CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information you provide about your complaint will be securely stored on the relevant British Rowing data management system and, where appropriate, a case file.

Information relating to your complaint that is provided in confidence will not be disclosed to any third parties without your permission, unless there is an overriding justification, for example where failure to disclose would put others at significant risk of harm or we are required to under our obligations in law. However, if your complaint relates to any third parties, you should be aware that this may make it difficult for us to investigate and resolve your complaint without disclosing the nature of your complaint.

Any personal data provided in connection with a complaint will be processed in accordance with data protection laws. Further information about how we use your personal data is provided in our privacy notices.

## Subject Access Requests

Data subject access requests and other requests that relate to individual rights under data protection law will be referred to the Data Protection Officer (DPO). Complaints raised to British Rowing which include a data protection element are managed by the British Rowing Data Protection Officer.

# POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The policy may be updated outside of these timescales should British Rowing consider an amendment necessary.

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