

The Canine Behaviour and Training Society - complaints procedure.

1. Goals of the TCBTS

1.1 Our goal is to inspire owners by implementing solutions to dog behaviour and training problems using compassionate, ethical and effective methods. We recognise that the welfare of the dog is paramount which is reflected in our **Code of Practice**.

2. Aims of TCBTS complaints procedure

2.1 To ensure that all complaints are handled and investigated in a professional and timely manner.

2.2. To treat all complainants and TCBTS members fairly within the principles of the TCBTS constitution, the TCBTS Code of Practice and the general law.

2.3 To seek resolution between the complainant and the TCBTS member.

2.4 To seriously investigate all complaints.

2.5 To apply the complaints procedure to all Student, Provisional and Full Members

2.6 In so far as it is reasonable and without compromising the impartiality or objectivity of the investigative process, the Committee will endeavour to support any TCBTS member who may find themselves the subject of a complaint and potentially further investigation.

3. What constitutes a valid complaint?

3.1 Any material breach of the TCBTS Code of Practice, Social Media Policy or any documents that form the constitution of TCBTS

Examples of complaints:

1. Misleading or unscientific information on members' marketing materials.
2. Failing to maintain adequate insurance.

3. Deliberately causing avoidable harm, contrary to the welfare interests of an animal.

Examples of issues which will not be considered as complaints:

1. Failure to satisfactorily resolve a client's problem insofar as is reasonable.
2. Failure to keep an appointment.

Issues raised by a client, veterinary personnel, other industry professionals, or members of the public, that following an initial investigation are not deemed by the board to be of a serious nature, would not immediately invoke the full complaints procedure, and it would be expected that if possible, following discussion, the matter could be resolved informally without further involvement with the complainants.

****informally - We will look to resolve the complaint to the satisfaction of the complainants without invoking the full complaints procedure. An informal resolution may still result in internal recommendations and learning outcomes for the member****

4. Who may make a complaint?

4.1 Anyone may make a complaint, including members of the public, other members, veterinary professionals, other organisations. This list is not exhaustive.

5. The complaints procedure.

5.1 All complaints must be made in writing and submitted by either e-mail or post to the TCBTS office. The complainant will give their full name, contact telephone number, e-mail address (if available) and postal address. Full contact details will be requested if not initially provided. Failure to provide satisfactory information will render the complaint null and void.

Anonymous complaints will be disregarded.

5.2 If we believe a complaint is frivolous or vexatious, we reserve the right to terminate our investigation of the complaint. A complaint will be deemed vexatious or frivolous if it is:

- a) obsessive, harassing, or repetitive;
- b) insistent on pursuing non-meritorious complaints and/or unrealistic, unreasonable outcomes;
- c) insistent on pursuing what may be meritorious complaints in an unreasonable manner;
- d) designed to cause disruption or annoyance; and/or
- e) demanding for redress which lacks any serious purpose or value.

In such cases, TCBTS will write to you explaining why we are terminating consideration of your complaint.

5.3 The complaint will be logged at the administrative office. Membership status of the individual will be checked and if found not to be a member the complainant will be informed that no action can be taken by the TCBTS.

5.4 The letter of complaint and contact details of the member will be passed to the Board designated complaint manager (CM). The CM will then inform the member by email or phone that a complaint has been received and that details will follow once the full details of the complaint have been established and whether there are grounds for a complaint. The member will be informed within 28 days, this time frame may be extended by agreement of the board.

Once appointed, the CM will be the initial point of contact for the member and complainant.

5.5 The CM will contact the complainant by telephone, e-mail or letter to ascertain the exact terms of the complaint. The precise details of the complaint will be ascertained and documented by CM and submitted to the complainant for agreement.

5.6 If the complainant advises of independent parties who may be able to support the complaint, the validity of this will be checked by the CM.

5.7 If the complainant supplies names and contact details (telephone number, e-mail address and postal address) of those independent parties referred to above then they will be contacted in writing/email by the CM. Failure to provide contact details will mean no contact will be made.

5.8 The CM will carry-out an initial investigation into the complaint and report back their findings to the complaint committee/board.

If during the initial investigation there are areas requiring further clarification from the member. Following notification of the member (5.9) the member will be invited to attend an informal fact-finding meeting and where possible this will be with the CM and an allocated board member.

5.9 The CM will contact the member in writing (e-mail, postal) and explain the terms of the complaint, including the name of the complainant and witnesses if the complainant is happy for this to be revealed.

The CM will forward copies of relevant documentation to the member by either e-mail or recorded delivery. The member will not be asked to respond until in possession of this.

a) Anyone making a complaint is expected to maintain confidentiality and avoid publishing to third parties, either on social media or by other means, any correspondence about the complaint between the complainant and defendant.

b) Once the process is underway, evidence of any attempts by either the defendant or the complainant to contact, bully, intimidate, defame, slander or libel the other party and their advisors, will be viewed as a serious breach. It may result in expulsion of the member or rejection of the complainant and their complaint.

5.10 The member will be asked to submit a written response to the allegations along with any supporting evidence, within 14 days of receipt. Extensions to this may be granted at the discretion of the Board.

5.11 The CM and TCBTS Board will consider the member's written response alongside the initial investigation and, if deemed reasonable, no further action will be necessary and both parties will be informed in writing.

5.12 In the eventuality that the CM and TCBTS Board does not consider that the member's written response is reasonable or supported by the findings of the investigation, the member will be informed in writing

Negotiation with the complainant and member may still be appropriate to reach a satisfactory resolution of the complaint.

5.13 If resolution is not reached by both parties, or the alleged offence is considered to be of such a serious nature, the complainant and member will be asked to attend a meeting of the TCBTS Complaint Committee/Board.

This meeting should take place at a convenient location or via Zoom or similar for both parties, at a time and date that is suitable. The member will be given 28 days written notice to attend a meeting of the Committee/Board and written details of the complaint made against them.

The complaints panel will consist of the CM and any other members of the TCBTS complaints committee or board as agreed upon by the Board. The member and complainant will be allowed the opportunity to be accompanied by another. The member may be accompanied by an ABTC or TCBTS member or solicitor who can support them and/or present their case. In addition, the complainant will be given the opportunity to present their case or ask another (e.g., solicitor) to do so for them.

It shall be for the complaints panel/board to determine the nature of the meeting and whether further questioning is appropriate.

If either the member or complainant declines or refuses to attend such a meeting, it may proceed in their absence.

Within 14 days of the meeting a decision will be made by the TCBTS committee/Board members, including any sanctions deemed appropriate (7.1). No member may be expelled unless at least two thirds

of the committee/Board then present vote in favour of the member's expulsion.

The member and complainant will be informed of this decision in writing.

5.14 All complaints will be investigated fully (2.4). If during any investigation pertinent to the complaint, a member is found to have additionally breached the TCBTS Code of Practice, Social Media Policy etc. (3.1) or any documents that form the constitution of TCBTS, including bringing TCBTS into disrepute, this will be reported by the CM to the TCBTS board and the member will be informed in writing and asked to respond to these in writing, within 14 days or receipt.

This may result in an additional investigation separate to the complaint and possibly further disciplinary action

6. Points to consider

6.1 For ease the use of telephone calls may be appropriate. If this option is utilised then the member will be contacted and agreement reached for a date and time. Members will not be "cold called" and questioned. Where possible, telephone calls between the CM and the member will last no longer than 30 minutes; if this is not sufficient time then both parties should agree another date and time.

Discussion of the actual complaint will only happen once the member has been informed in writing of the nature of the complaint and provided with copies of documentation relating to it.

7. Sanctions.

7.1 Sanctions will reflect the gravity of the offence, for example they may include offering an apology to the complainant, completing CPD within a specified timeframe, written warning, or expulsion for serious or continuing failures. Failure to comply with recommendations may result in further disciplinary actions by the TCBTS Board.

8. Following complaint

8.1 If the complaint is not upheld, then no record will be kept and it will not be used in any future proceedings. The process is entirely confidential. Only the complainant(s), the TCBTS member, independent parties (5.6) and the CM/TCBTS Board will have access to the relevant information relating to the complaint.

8.2 If the complaint is upheld or partly upheld then a record will be kept on file for 3 years, and knowledge of this complaint may be taken into account if other complaints of a similar nature are received in the future.

8.3 Details of an upheld complaint will not be passed on to any other organisation either formally or informally, apart from the regulator (the ABTC) if appropriate, or law enforcement agencies (if a legal requirement exists to do so).

8.4 The member may appeal the decision of the Panel. A further panel of similar composition to the original Panel (but different individuals) will consider the contemporaneous record of the complaint and review the decision and any sanction of the Panel. They may uphold or vary the decision and sanction. If it was felt further investigation was needed or if there was evidence that the original panel had been negligent the case would be reopened. The decision of the appeal panel is final.

If the member disputes the final TCBTS appeal decision the member can be referred to the ABTC complaints process.

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