



## **Complaints Procedure**

Last updated 15/12/2023

### **Aims of PACT Dogs Ltd**

The aims of the PACT are set out in the association's mission statement and can be found under About Us.

### **Aims of this complaints procedure:**

- To ensure that all complaints are considered, handled and investigated in a professional manner.
- To treat all complainants, staff and PACT members fairly and according to the principles of the PACT Dog Ltd mission statement, whistleblower policy, ethics policy, code of conduct and the law.
- To seek resolution between the complainant and the PACT member.
- To actively and sincerely investigate all complaints.
- To apply the complaints procedure to all full members.

### **Valid complaint Criteria**

What constitutes a complaint?

Any material in breach of either the Mission Statement, Ethics Policy or Member Code of Practice of the PACT Dogs Ltd.

Any behaviour or conduct in breach of either the Mission Statement or Member Code of Practice of the PACT Dogs Ltd.

Examples of complaints:

- False, misleading or unscientific information on members' websites, social media or other marketing and promotional materials.
- Use of unethical, harmful and aversive methods and techniques.
- Causing avoidable stress, distress and/or harm the welfare of an animal and/or client.
- Failing to maintain suitable and adequate insurance.

Examples of issues which will not be considered within the scope of PACT Dog Ltd complaints:

- Failure to adequately resolve a client's training issue (within reason).
- Failure to keep an appointment or follow-ups.
- Disagreement over payment for services.
- Pointing out the failings or mistakes of others, or voicing differing opinions, in regards to others working within the field of dog training, to clients or veterinary professionals. Others may include non-PACT members, or those who are working within or outside the PACT.

The full complaints procedure will not apply where issues are raised by either a client, others working within the industry of animal behaviour and training, or veterinary personnel members that do not relate directly to PACT Dog Ltd activities or code of practice.

## **Who can lodge a complaint**

Anyone may lodge a complaint, including existing PACT members, members of the public, veterinary professionals, and members of other organisations. This list is not exhaustive.

## **Complaints procedure**

All complaints must be made in writing and submitted by either e-mail to [complaints@pact-dog.com](mailto:complaints@pact-dog.com); Online form <https://www.pact-dogs.com/contact-us-1> or post to the PACT Dogs Ltd office (Endelig, New Farm Road, Alresford, England, SO24 9QH).

Complainants must give their full name, contact phone number, e-mail address (if available) and postal address. Full contact details will be requested if not initially provided. Failure to provide this information will render the complaint null and void. It is not possible to process anonymous submissions as a complaint.

The complaint will be logged with the administrator. If the complaint is regarding a PACT Member, membership status of the individual will be checked and if found not to be a registered PACT member or a member of Staff the complainant will be informed that no action can be taken by the PACT Dogs Ltd.

The letter of complaint and contact details of the member of staff or PACT Member will be confidentially handled by the designated Head of Quality and Governance who handles complaints (Now referred to in this document as the Complaints Investigator).

The Complaints Investigator will contact the complainant by phone, email or letter to determine the particulars of the complaint. The exact details of the complaint will be verified and documented by the Complaints Investigator and submitted to the complainant for agreement.

Should the complainant advise of independent parties who may be able to support the complaint, validity will be checked by the complaints member.

Should the complainant supply names and contact details (phone number, email address and postal address) of those independent parties referred to above, they will be contacted in writing by the complaints member. Failure to provide the above details will mean no contact will be made.

The Complaints Investigator will contact the member of Staff or PACT member who is the focus of the complaint (from this point referred to as the Complainee), in writing by email or post, to notify and explain the details of the complaint, including the name of the complainant and witnesses if applicable. The Complaints Investigator will forward copies of all relevant documentation to the Complainee by either email or recorded delivery. The Complainant will only be asked to respond once all documentation has been received.

The Complainee will be asked to submit a written response to the allegations within 14 days of receipt of all documentation. Extensions may be granted at the discretion of the Complaints Investigator.

The Complaints Investigator will consider the Complainee's written response and, if deemed reasonable, no further action will be taken and all parties will be informed in writing.

Should the Complaints Investigator not consider the Complainee's written response appropriate or reasonable, they will be informed in writing. When appropriate, at the first phase mediation between the complainant and complainee will be undertaken to reach an acceptable complaint resolution.

Should resolution not be reached by all parties, or the alleged offence is considered to be serious, the Complainant and Complainee will be asked to attend a specially chaired Complaints Panel meeting. This meeting will take place at a convenient location for all parties, at a mutually suitable time and date. The Complainee will be given 28 days written notice to attend a meeting of the Committee and written details of the complaint made against them.

The Complaints Panel will consist of the Complaints Investigator and relevant members of the PACT Dogs Ltd Complaints Committee as agreed upon by the Directors. The Complainee and Complainant(s) will be allowed to bring no more than one other person as a representative. All parties will be given the opportunity to present their case or be represented by another who will do so for them, e.g. solicitor.

The Complaints Panel will determine the nature of the meeting, how best to proceed and whether cross examination is necessary or appropriate. Should either the Complainee or Complainant decline or refuse to attend this meeting, it may proceed in their absence.

Within 14 days of the meeting a decision will be made by the Complaints Investigator and other members of the Complaints Panel. PACT Members may not be suspended or expelled unless at least two thirds of the Complaints Panel votes in favour of this action. The Complainee and Complainant will be informed of this decision in writing.

In the event of a further or more complaints being received at any time during the 5 years after a first warning has been issued, the Complaints Panel will investigate and ensure the credibility of the claim and reserves the right to terminate membership immediately.

## **Additional points**

The Complaints Investigator may deem the use of phone calls necessary for ease, clear communication and clarity. In this case, the Complainee will be contacted and a mutually convenient date and time agreed on. Complainee's will not be called unexpectedly and questioned. Phone calls between the Complaints Investigator and the Complainee will last no longer than 30 minutes; if this is not sufficient time then both parties should agree on 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 all documentation relating to it.

## **Sanctions**

Sanctions will be appropriate and reflect the weight of the offence.

For a PACT Member they may include, but not be exclusive to:

- offering an apology to the complainant,
- completing CPD within a specified timeframe
- formal warning
- suspension for a period of time, or expulsion for serious or continuing repeated offences, this includes removal of ABTC registration.

For a member of PACT Staff they may include, but not be exclusive to:

- offering an apology to the complainant,
- completing CPD within a specified timeframe
- formal warning

- suspension for a period of time, or dismissal due to gross misconduct for serious or continuing repeated offences.

Failure to comply with recommendations may result in further disciplinary actions by the Complaints Investigator.

## **Follow-up to complaint**

For transparency, the final outcome of all complaints are published on the PACT website, these records are completely anonymous of both Complainant and Complainee.

If the complaint is not upheld, a record will be kept for two years for auditing purposes, but will not be used in any future proceedings.

If the complaint is upheld, a record will be kept on file for five years, and may be taken in consideration if other complaints of a similar nature are received in the future.

If necessary the ABTC will be informed of the need to revoke membership, or intention of either party(s) to appeal.

Unless there has been any illegal activity, details of an upheld complaint will not be passed on to any organisation (other than the ABTC or B Lab UK) either formally or informally.

## **Escalation of complaints following this procedure**

### **Animal Sector Professional Standards**

As a Practitioner Organisation overseen by the Animal Behaviour and Training Council(ABTC), PACT is held to account to meet the standards set out.

Following this procedure, If either of the parties are not satisfied with the handling of a complaint they can escalate it to the Animal Behaviour and Training Council(ABTC).

For clarity, a complaint will only be reviewed by the ABTC once the process set out in this document has been completed.

Contact [info@abtc.org.uk](mailto:info@abtc.org.uk) with details of the complaint for this to be considered.

### **Business Practices**

As a B Corp, PACT Dogs Ltd has been assessed to meet the highest business practices and is held to account for this by B Lab UK.

<https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/find-a-b-corp/company/p-a-c-t-dogs-ltd/>

If a complaint specifically relates to the business practice of PACT Dogs Ltd

Find out more about how to escalate a complaint to B Corp here:

<https://www.bcorporation.net/en-us/standards/complaints/>