

## COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### Aims of the CABTi

The aims of the CABTi are set out here: <https://coape.org/cabti-home-page/>

### Aims of the CABTi complaints procedure:

- To ensure that all complaints are considered, handled and investigated in a professional manner.
- To treat all complainants and CABTi members fairly and according to the principles of the CABTi Code of Practice and the law.
- To seek resolution between the complainant and the CABTi 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 the Code of practice of the CABTi.
- Any behaviour or conduct in breach of code of practice of the CABTi.

Examples of complaints: ○ False, misleading, or unscientific information on members' website, social media or other marketing and promotional materials.

- Use of unethical, harmful, and aversive methods and techniques by a CABTi member.
- 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 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 regard to others working within the field of dog training, to clients or veterinary professionals. Others may include CABTi members, non- CABTi members.
- Where issues are raised by others working within the industry of animal behaviour and training, or veterinary personnel members these would not be subject to the full complaints procedure, and it would be expected that the matter could be resolved informally.

### **Who can lodge a complaint?**

Anyone may lodge a complaint, including existing CABTi 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 e-mail to CABTi. 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. Anonymous complaints will be disregarded. The complaint will be logged with the administrator. 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 CABTi.

The letter of complaint and contact details of the member will be passed to the CABTi Complaints Committee.

The CABTi Complaints Committee 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 CABTi Complaints Committee 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 CABTi Complaints Committee.

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 CABTi Complaints Committee. Failure to provide the above details will mean no contact will be made.

The CABTi Complaints committee will contact the CABTi member who is the focus of the complaint, 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 CABTi Complaints committee will forward copies of all relevant documentation to the member by either email or recorded delivery. The CABTi member will only be asked to respond once all documentation has been received.

The CABTi member 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 CABTi Complaints Committee.

The CABTi Complaints committee will consider the CABTi member's written response and, if deemed reasonable, no further action will be taken and both parties will be informed in writing.

Should the CABTi Complaints Committee not consider the CABTi member's written response appropriate or reasonable, he/she will be informed in writing. Mediation between the complainant and CABTi member will be undertaken if necessary to reach an acceptable complaint resolution.

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

The complaints panel will consist of the CABTi Complaints committee. The CABTi member and complainant will be allowed to bring another person. Both 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 CABTi Complaints committee will determine the nature of the meeting, how best to proceed and whether cross examination is necessary or appropriate.

Should either the CABTi member 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 CABTi Complaints committee. Members may not be suspended or expelled unless at least two thirds of the committee present votes in favour either. The member 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 CABTi Complaints committee will investigate and ensure the credibility of the claim and reserves the right to terminate membership immediately.

### **Additional points**

The CABTi Complaints committee may deem the use of phone calls necessary for ease, clear communication and clarity. In this case, the CABTi member will be contacted, and a mutually convenient date and time agreed on. Members will not be called unexpectedly and questioned. Phone calls between the CABTi Complaints committee and the CABTi member 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 example, they may include offering an apology to the complainant, completing CPD within a specified timeframe, suspension for a period of time, or expulsion for serious or continuing repeated offences. Failure to comply with recommendations may result in further disciplinary actions by the CABTi Complaints committee.

### **Follow-up to complaint**

If the complaint is not upheld, a record will not be kept nor 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. Details of an upheld complaint will not be passed on to any other organisation either formally or informally.