



Scottish  
Swimming

## Complaints Fact Sheet



**NORTH BERWICK**  
Swimming Club

### ARE YOU HAVING TO MANAGE A COMPLAINT?

Please find below some frequently asked questions on how to manage a complaint:

**Q1 Does your club have a “Complaints Procedure”?**

All clubs should follow the Scottish Swimming Club Complaints Procedure. Scottish Swimming has developed a complaints procedure template that should be adapted for use by all clubs. It is a mandatory requirement of SASA affiliation that clubs operate a club complaints procedure and are obliged to manage members complaints when the complaint is about the running of the club or club personnel. The template is available to download on the Scottish Swimming website.

**Q2 As a member of your club committee are you aware and fully compliant with your club’s “Complaints Procedure”?**

If committee members are unaware of their procedure, we suggest you raise the topic on your next meeting agenda, to review the procedure and take steps to ensure compliance. We also recommend that this education process forms part of the induction process for all new committee members.

**Q3 Who within your club is responsible for dealing with complaints?**

If this is not already detailed within your constitution, then we recommend that the President takes full ownership and responsibility for the process, with support from the secretary and one other committee member.

We always recommend that the club keeps an open mind and invests the time “up front” when dealing with complaints. If you try to resolve the complaint through conciliation this will save the club personnel time and stress in the long run and allow you to put all your energies into the running of the club. Scottish Swimming is happy to help with this process and would ask you to contact Elaine Mackenzie, Director of Services if you would like to take up this offer.

It is often the case that people making a complaint just want to feel listened to and if they are given the right signs to ensure that the club is taking their complaint seriously, they will have a more open mind to resolving the dispute.

**Q4 What if the committee members are related / have a conflict of interest with the complainant / person being complained about?**

We strongly recommend that you review the people selected to manage complaints and proactively identify any conflicts of interest. We then recommend that you request any committee member / interested party withdraw from all proceedings. This ensures the process will be fair for everyone involved and protects the club from accusations of a biased outcome.

Independence is essential and is the key to success or the process will likely fail. If panel members have a conflict of interest, it is more likely that the process will protract and the complainant will become more aggrieved. An independent panel will successfully manage a complaint.



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### **Q5 If I receive a written complaint what should I do – NEXT STEPS?**

Address the complaint within the normal procedure as detailed within your constitution ensuring that you adhere to correct policy and timescales. Scottish Swimming strongly advise that all correspondence relating to any complaint should be in writing and well documented. The first step in responding to a complaint normally involves writing to the complainant outlining the timescales for the complaints process. The first step in Scottish Swimming's process is to ensure that the person wishing to make a complaint completes the necessary documentation and sends it to the Club to action.

### **Q6 What should I do if the complaint comes in out with our constitutional timeframe?**

Please apply a common sense approach. If the complaint is completely new to the club, and there has been no verbal discussion on the complaint to date, then you should rule the complaint out of time. However, if the complaint has been handled informally over a period of time and then a formal written complaint is lodged, we would advise that this be dealt with, even if outside the stated timeframe. This is to encourage the management of conflict prior to reaching a formal complaints procedure. Those complainants that choose this sensible approach should not be punished, as this will lead to an increase in formal complaints driven purely by timescales rather than human decorum.

### **Q7 What if the complaint is totally ridiculous in nature and does not warrant a response?**

We always advise responding to the complaint and following the correct procedure. The process will establish the legitimacy of complaints. This will allow "ridiculous" complaints to be nipped in the bud, rather than causing increased workload for the club down the road due to legitimate complaints arising over the poor handling of the initial complaint.

Experience suggests that poorly handled complaints leads to more work and hassle for the club and complaints that start off straightforward become more malicious and spiteful.

### **Q8 If the complaint is of a legal nature is there anyone I can speak to for help and advice?**

Every club affiliated to Scottish Swimming has access to a 24-hour legal helpline through our insurance policy.

**The contact numbers: Commercial Advice & Assistance  
0117 934 2111**

**Counselling Helpline  
0117 934 2121  
(24 hours a day – 7 days a week)**