Complaints Policy

Approval date: March 2026

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Review date: March 2027

1. Purpose

North Somerset Sports Foundation is committed to providing a fair, transparent, and accessible complaints process.

We aim to ensure that all complaints are:

- Taken seriously
- Handled consistently and fairly
- Investigated thoroughly and without bias
- Resolved promptly and effectively

We view complaints as an opportunity to learn, improve, and strengthen our services and operations.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- Employees
- Volunteers
- Participants and service users
- Contractors and partners
- Members of the public and stakeholders

Complaints may relate to:

- Behaviour of staff, volunteers, or trustees
- Breaches of policies or procedures
- Unfair treatment, discrimination, or harassment
- Health and safety concerns
- Service provision or organisational decisions

3. Ownership and Contact

Complaints can be submitted via:

- Email
- Website
- In person to a staff member, line manager, or Senior Leadership Team
- Complaints Lead

A designated lead will oversee the complaints process:
Complaints Lead: Lucy Chappell, CEO

The Complaints Lead is responsible for:

- Ensuring complaints are handled appropriately
- Appointing an investigator
- Monitoring outcomes and trends

4. What is Not Covered

This policy does not replace:

- Safeguarding concerns (managed under the Safeguarding Policy)
- Whistleblowing disclosures (managed under the Whistleblowing Policy)
- Employee grievances (handled through HR policy and procedures)

5. How to Make a Complaint

Complainants should provide:

- Details of the issue
- Date(s), time(s), and location(s)
- Names of individuals involved (if known)
- Supporting evidence
- Desired outcome (if appropriate)

Accessibility

Support will be provided where needed, including:

- Assistance completing complaints
- Alternative formats
- Support from a representative

6. Complaints Process

Step 1: Acknowledgement

- Complaints will be acknowledged within 2 working days
- An investigator will be appointed by the Complaints Lead
- The complainant will be informed of the process and timescales

Step 2: Investigation

- A fair, impartial, and proportionate investigation will be conducted
- Evidence may include interviews, documents, and witness statements

Step 3: Outcome

- A response will be provided in writing
- Complaints will normally be resolved within 20 working days
- Where delays occur, the complainant will be updated

Step 4: Appeal

- Appeals must be submitted within 10 working days of the outcome
- Appeals will be reviewed by an individual not previously involved
- A final response will be issued within 10 working days of the appeal

7. Serious Complaints and Escalation

A serious complaint may include:

- Safeguarding concerns
- Allegations of abuse or misconduct
- Discrimination or harassment
- Significant health and safety risks
- Complaints involving trustees or senior staff

Serious complaints will be:

- Escalated to the Senior Leadership Team, the Complaints Lead or Board of Trustees
- Referred to external bodies where appropriate (e.g. safeguarding authorities, regulators)

8. Recording and Monitoring

All complaints will be recorded in a central complaints register.
Records will include:

- Date of complaint
- Nature of the issue
- Actions taken
- Outcome
- Any learning identified

Complaints data will be reviewed regularly (at least quarterly) by the Senior Leadership Team and Trustees to:

- Identify trends
- Improve services
- Inform organisational lea**rning**

9. Anonymous and Unreasonable Complaints

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints will be considered where sufficient information is provided, though investigation may be limited.

Unreasonable or Persistent Complaints

Where complaints are deemed vexatious, repetitive, or unreasonable, North Somerset Sports Foundation may:

- Limit contact
- Refuse to reopen previously investigated matters
- Manage communication proportionately

10. Protection Against Retaliation

North Somerset Sports Foundation prohibits retaliation against anyone who raises a complaint in good faith.
Any retaliatory behaviour will be treated as a serious matter.
Malicious or knowingly false complaints may result in disciplinary action.

11. Responsibilities

Complainants

- Provide accurate information
- Engage respectfully with the process

Staff and Managers

- Take complaints seriously
- Act promptly and fairly
- Maintain confidentiality

Senior Leadership Team and Trustees

- Oversee complaints handling
- Monitor trends and outcomes
- Ensure continuous improvement

12. Learning and Improvement

North Somerset Sports Foundation will use complaints as a tool for improvement.

Learning from complaints will:
- Inform service development
- Improve policies and procedures
- Enhance participant experience

13. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All complaints will be handled confidentially in line with data protection requirements.

14. Conclusion

North Somerset Sports Foundation is committed to resolving concerns fairly and effectively.
We encourage all individuals to raise concerns, enabling us to improve and maintain a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all.