

## **Alnwick Tennis Club Complaints Policy and Procedure**

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### **Complaints policy and procedure**

This policy covers how you as a club member can make a complaint and it describes the process that will be followed. For welfare issues concerning children and adults at risk, please refer to our Safeguarding Policy 2022. In some cases, it may be appropriate to refer to the Club's Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

### **Complaints**

Alnwick Tennis Club takes all complaints about inappropriate conduct and behaviour seriously and follows the LTA's advice on how to respond.

A complaint may be an expression of dissatisfaction with the conduct of the Club's committee or its officers, coaches, or individual members. Examples of behaviour that might justify making a complaint would be someone behaving in a way that is unsafe, unprofessional, discriminatory, offensive, or intimidating or because someone has violated the Club's Constitution, Code of Conduct, Policies or Procedures.

If a member is the recipient of, or observes, inappropriate or offensive behaviour of another member, every effort should be made to resolve the issue informally through constructive dialogue. It may help to seek advice or support from another club member.

If the complaint is of a serious nature or cannot be resolved informally, then a formal complaint can be brought to the attention of the Club Chair or a member of the Management Committee.

This document describes the process that we shall follow if you make a formal complaint.

Alnwick Tennis Club bases our complaints policy on values of Equality, Fairness, Safety, and Confidentiality (Note 1)

### **Investigation of a complaint**

If the complaint cannot be resolved informally, you will need to document it in writing and send it to the Chair of the Management Committee or Club Secretary. Please provide as much detail as possible as this helps us handle your complaint thoroughly and swiftly.

Our complaint handling procedure will adhere to the following principles

- Treat complaints seriously
- Act promptly and with regard for the safety of all members involved
- Treat all parties to a complaint fairly and listen to both sides of the story
- Maintain neutrality and act with impartiality towards all parties
- Keep parties to the complaint informed
- Preserve confidentiality if possible
- Keep accurate records
- Make decisions based only on information gathered not personal views
- If a complaint is upheld and disciplinary action is considered necessary, it should be proportionate to the breach

LTA = the Lawn Tennis Association, [www.lta.org.uk](http://www.lta.org.uk)

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The Chair will appoint someone to investigate the complaint or, in the case of a serious or complicated complaint, a small group of up to 3 club members at least one of whom will be from the Management Committee. All members chosen to investigate the complaint will be independent from the incident or source of the complaint. Should the complaint be made against the Chair, the individual(s) chosen to investigate the complaint will be appointed by the Management Committee.

A person who is the subject of a complaint will be told about the complaint and will be given an opportunity to respond in detail before a decision is made.

An initial response to your complaint will be given as soon as possible, usually no longer than 10 working days from receiving the complaint. If the matter is urgent, we shall try very hard to respond more quickly.

We shall investigate your complaint fairly. This means that we shall gather relevant information and discuss the complaint with everyone known to be involved.

We will ensure that investigation of the complaint is conducted in a confidential manner and always give priority to members' well-being. (Note 2)

The process and outcome of the complaint will be complete within 21 working days, unless exceptional complexities are uncovered that require a longer time.

While we aim to resolve all complaints, in some situations we may decide we cannot investigate further, for example because there is insufficient information to draw a conclusion. The club reserves the right to end any investigation or to refer it to the LTA as it deems appropriate. If this happens you will be given the reasons for the club's decision.

### **How will I know what is happening?**

You will be told at the outset who will be your point of contact for the duration of the investigation. That person will make sure that you understand the process involved and will help to answer any questions or concerns that you have.

While the complaint is being investigated you will be asked not to discuss it further with other members and to allow the investigation to proceed without interference.

You will be given an update on the progress of your complaint weekly or less frequently if you have agreed to this. If there are delays in handling your complaint, we shall keep you informed. If your complaint leads to formal disciplinary action against someone, we will usually inform you about the outcome.

At the conclusion of the investigation, you and, if the complaint is against one or more named individuals, they will be told the outcome of the investigation. In some circumstances it may be necessary to inform the membership, for example to advise them of the importance of observing our Code of Conduct or of a change in governance, taking due regard of confidentiality of anyone involved in the complaint.

We shall not tell you the outcome if we are investigating the conduct or behaviour of a child or if we believe that telling you would create a risk to other people. In this situation, we shall still try to tell you about how you are affected by the action that we have taken.

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### **What are the possible outcomes or results of my complaint?**

These might include:

- A change in arrangements for club activities
- An explanation or apology
- An agreement to communicate or act differently in future
- Formal disciplinary action
- Changes in the club's governance or rules and procedures
- A decision to refer the case to another organisation such as the LTA, the Police, or Social Services.
- Closure of your complaint without action

### **Is there anyone else I can talk to?**

Sometimes it can be useful to speak to someone outside the club if:

- You need urgent advice about someone's safety or welfare
- You don't want to discuss the issue with someone at the club
- Your complaint is very serious
- Your complaint involves other organisations
- You need specialist advice

### **Appeal**

If you are not happy with the outcome you may appeal within 10 working days of receiving the written response to your formal complaint. Your appeal should be submitted in writing to the Club Chair or Secretary who will review together the matter and may undertake or instigate further independent investigation if required. You will receive a written response, as soon as reasonably practicable, to let you know of any further action that will be taken to resolve the matter.

### **Questions or comments about this policy**

If you have a general query or comments about this complaints policy, contact the Club Chair or Secretary who will bring this to the attention of the Management Committee and respond or refer you to a point of contact for further guidance.

Approved by the Management Committee and Signed



Chair



Welfare Officer

Date 29/9/22

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### Notes

#### Note 1: Values

*You have the right to complaint: we take complaints seriously. You should not be harassed, bullied or put at a disadvantage because of making a complaint.*

- **Equality:** you should receive a proper response to your complaint, regardless of your age, gender, disability, race, religion, nationality, social status, sexual orientation or political persuasion.
- **Fairness:** complaints should be dealt with fairly and openly. Unless it would put other people at risk, those affected by a complaint should have a chance to contribute to and respond to any investigation.
- **Safety and welfare take priority:** we shall always give priority to concerns that affect safety and welfare. Issues affecting children will be treated very seriously.
- **Confidentiality:** we treat complaints as confidentially as possible. Sometimes we have to discuss complaints with other organisations. If we are worried about a risk to a person or to the public, we might need to pass our concerns to the right authorities. If necessary, we shall get advice from other organisations such as the Police, Social Services or the LTA.

#### Note 2: Confidentiality

- Sometimes we will show copies of information from the investigation to other people to allow them to respond.
- We will not share information if we think that this will endanger someone's safety or welfare.
- We shall take into consideration data protection and privacy rules when handling a complaint and we shall therefore not pass on personal information unless we receive permission from the complainant to do so.
- The club will take reasonable steps to conduct a thorough investigation and will always give priority to someone's safety and well-being.