



SUFFOLK TENNIS

SUFFOLK LAWN TENNIS ASSOCIATION

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Approved: 28th March 2024

For review by: March 2027

INTRODUCTION

This policy tells you how to make a complaint about Suffolk Lawn Tennis Association (SLTA) or services it provides through a third party. This is the policy that we will follow if your complaint is about:

- Someone's conduct or behaviour
- The facilities or services provided
- The Committee's decisions and/or failure to act

This policy needs to be used in conjunction with SLTA's Safeguarding Policy, Code of Conduct and its Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, as well as the Lawn Tennis Association's Disciplinary Code¹.

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

You have the right to complain. We take complaints seriously. Safety and welfare take priority and safeguarding issues will be treated very seriously and dealt with under the Safeguarding Policy.

You should not be harassed, bullied or put at a disadvantage because of making a complaint. You should receive a proper response to your complaint, regardless of your age, sex, gender, disability, race, religion, nationality, marital or social status, sexual orientation or political beliefs. We believe that complaints should be dealt with fairly and openly. We treat complaints as confidentially as possible and expect complainants and those complained about to treat the matter as confidential, even after the process concludes. Information shared inappropriately may result in legal recourse or action being taken under the LTA's Disciplinary Code. Unless it would put other people at risk, those affected by a complaint should have a chance to contribute and respond to any investigation.

¹ <https://www.lta.org.uk/4afe42/siteassets/about-lta/file/lta-disciplinary-code-with-effect-from-1-january-2023.pdf>

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 on our concerns to the right authorities. If necessary, we will obtain advice from other organisations such as the Police, Social Services or the LTA.

HOW TO MAKE A COMPLAINT

Whilst you can raise your complaint with any member of the Committee, complaints will usually in the first instance be handled by the Secretary who will then distribute the complaint to an appropriate person/s for investigation. If the complaint is made about the Secretary, the complaint should be made to the CSO (County Safeguarding Officer). Identification of the investigating officer/s will be designed to assure impartiality. Useful contact details have been included at the bottom of this policy.

Complaints do not have to be made in writing but the complainant's full name, email address and telephone number have to be recorded when the complaint is made, so that the wording of the complaint can be agreed with the complainant as it cannot be investigated otherwise.

WHAT WILL WE DO TO INVESTIGATE?

We will give an initial response to your complaint within 7 days. If the matter is urgent, we will respond more quickly. We will investigate your complaint fairly. This means that we will discuss the complaint with all of the relevant people. We will try to gather any information that may be relevant to handling your complaint.

Sometimes we will ask to show copies of information from the investigation to other people to allow them to respond. This is because we believe in fairness and openness. We will not share information if we think that this will endanger someone's safety or welfare.

HOW WILL I KNOW WHAT IS HAPPENING?

You will be given the details of a person who will be your point of contact at SLTA. That person will make sure that you understand the process, and will help to answer any questions or concerns that you have. You will be given an update on the progress of your complaint every two weeks, with the aim of resolving it within 6 weeks. If there are delays in handling your complaint for any reason, we will keep you informed. If your complaint leads to formal disciplinary action against someone, we will usually inform you about the outcome. We will not tell you the outcome if we believe that telling you would create a risk to other people. In this situation, we will still try to tell you about how you are affected by the action that we have taken.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE OUTCOMES OR RESULTS OF MY COMPLAINT?

In many cases, we are able to resolve problems informally. This might include:

- An explanation or apology
- A change in arrangements for a particular activity
- An agreement to communicate or act differently in future
- Closure of your complaint without action
- Sharing of a report with recommendations about lessons learned to be made to the committee
- Formal disciplinary action (see Disciplinary Policy)
- Notification to, or referral of the outcome, to outside organisations, such as the LTA, Police or Social Services as appropriate

IS THERE ANYONE ELSE I CAN TALK TO?

For most complaints, the quickest, easiest and most appropriate method of resolving your complaint is to follow the process above. However, sometimes it can be useful to speak directly to someone outside SLTA. Such circumstances may arise when:

- You need urgent advice about someone's safety or welfare (see Safeguarding Policy)
- Your complaint is very serious
- Your complaint involves other organisations
- You need specialist advice

PUBLICISING THE POLICY

The website contains a copy of this policy. All committee members have knowledge of the policy and its use.

MONITORING THE POLICY AND COMPLAINT RESOLUTION

A complaints database is maintained by the Secretary to allow review of performance in complaint handling by the Committee over time. A report on complaints received and resolved will be presented to each committee meeting so lessons can be learned. A report will be made to the AGM annually on lessons learned.

MANAGING UNREASONABLE COMPLAINANT BEHAVIOUR

In a small minority of cases, people pursue their complaints in a way that is unreasonable. This can absorb a disproportionate amount of SLTA's resources (mainly volunteers' time), and cause unnecessary distress. Single incidents may be unacceptable but more often the difficulties arise from unreasonably persistent behaviour that is time-consuming to manage and/or which interferes with proper consideration of the complaint. Examples of unreasonable actions and behaviours include:

- Refusing to specify the grounds of a complaint, despite offers of help
- Refusing to cooperate with the complaints investigation process

- Insisting on the complaint being dealt with in ways that are incompatible with this policy and good practice
- Making unjustified complaints about those who are trying to deal with the issues, and/or seeking to have them replaced
- Changing the basis of the complaint as the investigation proceeds
- Denying or changing statements made at an earlier stage
- Introducing trivial or irrelevant new information at a later stage
- Pursuing parallel complaints on the same issue
- Making excessive demands on the time and resources of those involved in investigating the complaint
- Submitting repeated complaints on essentially the same issue
- Refusing to accept the decision; repeatedly arguing points with no new evidence and/or continuing to express the complaint as if it has not already been investigated and resolved.

Any actions taken should be proportionate to the nature and frequency of the complainant's contact; and the impact of behaviour determined as unreasonable on SLTA and its members. Actions may include:

- Limiting the complainant to one medium of contact and/or one person with whom to communicate
- Requiring any personal contacts to take place in the presence of a witness
- Refusing to register and process further complaints about the same matter
- Informing the complainant that future correspondence will be read and placed on file but not acknowledged, unless it contains material new information
- Taking action under the Disciplinary Policy which, if the complainant is found to be in contravention of the Code of Conduct, may result in escalation to the LTA.

APPEALS

There is no process in place for appeal for complainants unhappy with SLTA's response, or for those criticised in the response to a complaint.

ADDENDUM

If you have a general query about this complaints policy, you should contact:
Secretary@SLTA.uk The Secretary's details are also on the website.