

## COMPLAINTS POLICY AND PROCEDURE

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### OVERVIEW

England Athletics is committed to offering the highest quality of service provision across grassroots athletics and running in England and works hard to provide an efficient and effective service to all. However, we recognise that there may be occasions where we fall short of expectations and individuals may not be completely satisfied.

We believe that all individuals should have the opportunity to provide feedback on whether our standards have been met and all feedback, both positive and negative, should be acknowledged. Should this feedback be negative, and an individual is dissatisfied, we have a formal and informal complaints process which we follow to enable us to put things right.

However, some complaints may need to be dealt with under a separate process. For example, Safeguarding issues or Athlete selection.

Whilst we will ordinarily manage complaints in line with the procedure below, we may engage with an independent third party to assist with any investigation or determination of your complaint in line with this procedure.

### SCOPE

This policy applies to all stakeholders who wish to make a complaint about any of England Athletics services or activities. Please note there is a number of policies that deal with other issues such as the Whistle Blowing Policy, Safeguarding policies, Disciplinary policy.

### OUR AIM

To ensure that:

- Making a complaint is as easy as possible.
- We provide a consistent approach and deal with each complaint promptly, thoroughly impartially, fairly and confidentially.
- Treat the complaint and the complainant with courtesy, respect, and fairness always. We expect that the complainant will also treat our staff dealing with the complaint with the same courtesy, respect, and fairness.
- Provide an effective response and ensure, where appropriate, the cause of the complaint is addressed.

- We learn from complaints, use them to improve our service, and review annually our complaints procedure.
- Not treat anyone less favourably than anyone else because of the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

## INFORMAL COMPLAINTS

If you have a complaint, then in the first instance, you should speak to the member of staff or manager who has responsibility for the work. They are best placed to resolve most problems. However, they will direct you to another organisation, department, or process if the complaint cannot be dealt with by England Athletics under this policy or does not fall within the England Athletics remit, for example, safeguarding issues.

In any communication with our team, please provide the details of your complaint, any supporting information, the consequence of this complaint and what action or response you feel would help to resolve the situation. Our staff will work with you to understand why you are dissatisfied and, if possible, act to resolve the matter immediately without need for a formal process to be initiated.

If you are still not satisfied with the response or feel that the issue should be brought to the attention of England Athletics then please raise a formal written complaint, as detailed below.

In order to ensure that complaints are dealt with properly, we will not usually accept complaints that are made more than 9 months after the event being complained about or brought to your attention.

## FORMAL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### Stage 1 – Complaint

In the first instance, formal complaints are submitted in writing and should be marked for the attention of the Membership Engagement Manager as follows:

Telephone: 0121 347 6543

Email: [complaints@englandathletics.org](mailto:complaints@englandathletics.org)

England Athletics  
Athletics House  
Alexander Stadium  
Walsall Road  
Perry Barr  
Birmingham

## B42 2BE

A formal complaint will always be acknowledged within five working days of receipt, and we aim to respond to you in full within twenty working days. If this is not possible due to further investigations being required, dependent upon the nature and severity of the complaint received, we will always formally advise the complainant of the progress made so far and advise any revised timescales.

It may be necessary to contact complainants verbally during our investigations to enable us to bring the complaint to an amicable resolution. However, we will always formalise any verbal contact in writing following an outcome or action being agreed.

England Athletics aim is to resolve all matters as quickly as possible. However, inevitably some complaints will be more complex and therefore may require longer to be fully investigated and reviewed. Consequently, timescales given for handling and responding to complaints are indicative. If a matter requires more detailed investigation, you will receive an interim response describing what is being done to deal with the matter, and when a full reply can be expected and from whom.

### Stage 2 – Appeal

If you are not satisfied with the response to the complaint having followed the procedure above, then you can ask for your complaint to be reviewed. More details on how to appeal will be given in your complaint response. who has not previously been involved with handling your complaint. You must do this within ten working days of receiving the written response from the Membership Engagement Services Manager. We will require you to outline in writing why you are dissatisfied with the initial response before your request for an Appeal will be actioned. You can expect an acknowledge of your request within five working days of receipt. Your appeal will be reviewed by a senior member of staff, board member or independently appointed person. This will involve a full independent review of the handling of your complaint and all associated evidence. The outcome of the review will be communicated within twenty working days.

**Please note: We reserve the right at any point in the process to forward the Complaint to our legal representatives who may respond on our behalf.**

## POLICY COVERAGE

This policy covers all issues relating to services or acts of England Athletics

Complaints, relating to the conduct or behaviours of England Athletics, clubs, associations, organisations and event providers, coaches, officials, or members where there is an allegation of misconduct should be made using the Disciplinary Policy and Procedures. These can be found on the England Athletics website.

Complaints, allegations or concerns about safeguarding should be made by contacting the lead safeguarding officer at UK Athletics. [safeguarding@uka.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@uka.org.uk)

England Athletics affiliated clubs, associations, organisations, and event providers, should have their own complaints process and/or policy.

Any complaints relating to the following should be directed to the provider directly and are not covered by this policy:

- club, association organisations and event providers or committee disputes within remit of constitution,
- matters relating to the normal business of clubs, associations and bodies or committees,
- the management of a club, association or bodies and their fees,
- rules and requirements

It is worth noting that England Athletics does not act as a regulator to clubs, associations and bodies that are affiliated to England Athletics, however we welcome feedback but will be unable to take formal action.

Complaints relating to the performance or conduct of England Athletics staff should be directed through the Member Engagement Manager [complaints@englandathletics.org](mailto:complaints@englandathletics.org)

There are some complaints not covered under this policy, such as:

- Complaints not related to the sport Athletics and Running or England Athletics
- Complaints of a criminal nature which will be passed to the police (or advised to seek advice from the police) and then investigated under the disciplinary regulations.
- Issues relating to non-licensed /permitted events delivered by third parties.
- Complaints outside of the jurisdiction of England Athletics about partners, suppliers and sponsors and any organisation contracted to work for us.

The timescales in the Complaints Policy will be adhered to wherever possible. England Athletics recognise that a degree of flexibility may be required when applying timescales. Therefore, if the timescales are not adhered to it will not invalidate the Complaints Policy or process.

## **REPEAT, UNREASONABLE, VEXATIOUS or AGGRESSIVE COMPLAINTS**

Where a complainant remains unhappy with the outcome of their complaint, provided the England Athletics process has been followed (as detailed in this policy), we are unable to take any further action. Repeat complaints about the same issue will not alter this.

At times complainants may become unreasonable, and vexatious or aggressive, causing undue stress for staff and volunteers and resulting in a disproportionate use of England Athletics resources.

Unreasonable complaints are complaints that, because of the nature of the contact or frequency with which the complaint is pursued, hinder our ability to properly consider the matters at hand or place unwarranted demands on staff time. Unreasonable complaints may be justified grievances pursued in inappropriate ways, or they may be complaints which appear to have no substance, or which have already been fully investigated or responded to under the process detailed in this policy.

Vexatious or aggressive complainants' behaviour may include:

- excessive and repeated attempts to contact staff and volunteers,
- pursuing multiple complaints against the organisation at the same time,
- making unreasonable demands of staff and volunteers,
- threats (including those of legal action) against staff/volunteers or the organisation,
- repeated raising of unreasonable complaints,
- making multiple complaints to multiple external organisations about England Athletics.

Where a complaint is deemed to be repeat, unreasonable, and vexatious or aggressive or is considered to have no basis or genuine substance, England Athletics reserve the right not to investigate.

In extreme cases of vexatious and/or persistent complaints disciplinary action against members and connected participants.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

Except in exceptional circumstances, every attempt will be made to ensure that both England Athletics and the complainant maintain confidentiality. If exceptional circumstances dictate that confidentiality cannot be maintained, then the complainant will always be advised of the situation.

## MONITORING and REVIEW

England Athletics is committed to continuous improvement and will record and monitor complaints to enable a continual review of its processes and procedures.

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**NB. The contents of this policy will be subject to revision from time to time.**

### Version Control

Issue Number	Date of Issue	Updated by	Update	Communication channel
1		Gill Jones	Created	Email, Website, Sharepoint
2	September 2021	Emma Davenport	Updated	Email, Website, Sharepoint
3	May 2024	Gill Jones & Emma Davenport	Updated	Email, Website, Sharepoint