

Complaints Policy

This policy tells you how to make a complaint at Hook Norton Tennis Club. This is the policy that we will follow if your complaint is about someone's conduct or behaviour. This could be because you think that someone has behaved in a way that is unsafe, unprofessional, discriminatory, offensive or intimidating. It could be because someone has broken important rules or policies.

Values and principles

You have the right to complain: 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

: we believe that 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 and respond to any investigation.

Safety and welfare take priority

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

How to make a complaint?

If you have a complaint, it is often best to start by having a conversation with someone at the club. There are some suggestions below about who to speak to. They may be able to help to resolve your problem. You could also make a written complaint. The address for written complaints is at the bottom of this policy. If your complaint needs to be looked into further, you will normally be asked to put your complaint in writing. We accept anonymous complaints, but it is often very difficult to investigate these properly. It is easier for us to handle your complaint if you provide as much detail as possible.

Who to contact to make a complaint?

Complaints will usually be handled by senior staff and officials.

Useful contact details have been included at the bottom of this policy.

- Management committee: you can speak to any of our officials/committee members
 - Coaches : any of the coaches can also tell you how to make a complaint
 - Child Protection Officer
- : if you are a child, or if you are worried about the safety or welfare of a child
- Anyone else involved at the place to play that you trust

The address for written complaints has been included at the bottom of this policy.

What will we do to investigate?

Complaints Policy

We will give an initial response to your complaint within five working 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 the place to play

. 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. 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 that person is a child, or 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:

- A change in arrangements for particular activities
- An explanation or apology

- An agreement to communicate or act differently in future
- If an informal resolution is not suitable, then a small committee of senior officials will look at the information about the case. We will try to make sure that this committee does not contain anyone directly involved with your complaint. They might decide to take the following action:

- Formal disciplinary action under the rules of the place to play
- Formal disciplinary action against a member of staff
- Changes in formal contracts or arrangements put in place by the place to play
- A decision to refer the case to another organisation such as the LTA, 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 directly to someone outside the place to play :

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

The LTA is able to advise on a range of different complaints, and in some cases will handle the complaint directly. If you are worried about a child's welfare, you can contact the following people:

- The Child Protection Officer at the County LTA
- The National LTA Child Protection Department (24hrs)
- Childline, or the NSPCC advice line, local Social Services, Police

Questions or queries about this policy

If you have a general query about this complaints policy, you should speak to the following Chairman of the Club

Supporting Guidance from LTA to be read with our Policy

Why have a complaints policy?

Dealing properly with complaints is an important part of running a club or centre. It helps you to tackle problems before they become serious. If problems do become serious, the policy provides a way for them to be dealt with.

An effective complaints policy shows that you are serious about listening to your members and customers and can encourage members to feel confident and safe. The LTA is not able to resolve all of the complaints and problems that arise in

British tennis. We strongly recommend that clubs put in place a system to deal with problems locally. The LTA is available both to clubs and to individuals in case serious problems arise.

How do we put the policy in place?

Remember, the policy will only be effective if you are able to deliver what it offers to your members and customers. You should read the policy carefully and plan how to make the policy a reality in your club. This guide gives you some advice on how to do this. When you have done this, you need to fill in the boxes and spaces on the policy. This will make sure that your members and customers can find the correct details.

Values and principles

The values and principles outlined in the sample policy are important. Read and understand them, and refer to them when responding to complaints or problems. There is extra information below about how to put these values and principles into action. This is an important part of the guide, because clubs that understand this usually find it easier to put in place the detail of their policy.

The right to complain

If you deal positively and seriously with complaints you will be able to tackle real problems and quickly resolve less important matters. Remember, complaints are important because they can sometimes reveal serious issues. You should take care to make sure that complainants are not disadvantaged if they decide to speak out. This is especially important for children and other vulnerable adults. This guide is for tennis clubs and centres who wish to put in place a complaints policy. A model policy is provided with this guide. You should read these documents together. If you already have a complaints policy, you do not have to adopt this LTA policy, but it might give you some ideas.

Equality

The best way to make sure that you are delivering an equitable response is to have a clear internal process that you will apply with care. Always be aware that personal attitudes can affect how you respond, even if you don't mean them to. Think hard about whether this is happening. You can find out more about equality in tennis at www.lta.org.uk/equality

Fairness

This is essential. It can be hard to be fair when you know the people involved in a complaint. Like the principle of equality, a good way to preserve fairness is to have a clear process to apply. There are some useful tips that you can follow to improve fairness:

- Try to avoid bias. If you have strong links with one person involved in a complaint, it is better to not to handle the matter. You might be able to put aside your feelings, but others need to be confident in your fairness.
- In most cases, a person who is the subject of a complaint should be told about the complaint, and should be given the opportunity to respond in detail before any decision is made.
- Try to avoid having important decisions about a complaint taken by a single individual.
- Never use a complaint as an ‘excuse’ or ‘reason’ to take action against someone because of other concerns. Deal with each issue clearly and separately
- Check your rules and contracts. Make sure that you read your rules and any relevant contracts and stick to them.

Safety and welfare take priority

If a complaint suggests that someone’s safety or welfare could be at risk, make those issues a priority. It is easy to become bogged down with personal disagreements or arguments over small issues. Don’t allow these to overshadow the important things.

Confidentiality

Treat complaints with sensitivity and care. Any leaks of information could have a serious impact on both the person who made the complaint and the person it was about. Think about who it is appropriate to discuss an issue with. Consider each person’s official role, as well as their experience in dealing with complaints. It’s best to have a clear structure for reporting and handling concerns. This will avoid disagreements about your handling of sensitive information. Do not share personal information or details of complaints processes with people who don’t need to know. The need for confidentiality does not affect your right to seek advice or support in some cases, and more information about this is included below.

Getting advice and reporting a concern to other organisations

Although you should deal confidentially with complaints, you are still able to seek advice and support. In fact, there are some situations where you have an obligation to discuss your concerns with others.

Children and Young people

If a complaint suggests that a child or young person could be at risk, you have an important duty to get advice at the earliest stage. It is not a breach of confidentiality to ask for advice or support from the Child Protection officer at your County LTA or from the LTA Child Protection Department. If you are not able to

contact them, your local social services, the Police, and the NSPCC can all offer advice. Keep these contact details available. If your club Child Protection Officer has been trained, then he or she will have more information about how to pass on a concern. Do not wait until a crisis has occurred.

Serious misconduct or crime

In serious cases, it can be difficult to know how to handle a complaint. In these cases, the County LTA or the LTA support centre can often provide useful advice. If you wish to contact the LTA support centre, the Child Protection Department is the best place to start. If you think that a crime may have been committed, you should consider contacting the Police. This is even more important if you think that you have information that could stop another crime from being committed.

Licensed coaches

Licensed coaches have a direct link with the LTA. If you think that a licensed coach has acted in an unprofessional way, you should think about reporting this to the LTA. We may not always take on the complaint directly, but can offer advice and support about handling the case.

Legal queries

The LTA produces a range of guidance and advice to help you understand the legal implications of some issues. The LTA cannot offer detailed legal advice to individual clubs. If you are concerned about the legal implications of a complaint, you should call the LTA's Business Advice Service (BASeline). BASeline are able to provide advice to all affiliated clubs and can be contacted on 0844 5618133.

General questions and queries

Remember that your County LTA and the LTA support centre are available to offer support and advice on a wide range of practical and policy issues.

Handling a complaint

Acknowledge the receipt of a complaint within 5 working days. If you are not able to deal with the complaint immediately, explain why and provide a timescale. Keep a record of the complaint. Record your correspondence, as well as conversations and important decisions. Provide the complainant with the details of a person to contact about the progress of their complaint.