



# Complaints Procedure

16 January 2024

Version 1.2

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 There may be times when an individual or organisation wishes to raise a Complaint in relation to a Partaker or with Scottish Athletics itself.
- 1.2 This policy describes the procedure for raising a Complaint to Scottish Athletics and sets out how complaints will be investigated and responded to.

## **2. Purpose of this Policy**

- 2.1 This policy is designed to provide all Partakers with the opportunity and guidance to raise a Complaint. It is designed to settle disputes and potential disciplinary issues quickly and fairly.
- 2.2 The Complaints Procedure shall apply to hear and determine:
  - 2.2.1 Complaints; and
  - 2.2.2 Any dispute or matter referred to Scottish Athletics for which there is no express procedure provided for, and which the Board are content to have determined.

## **3 Policy Objectives**

- 3.1 The object of the Complaints Procedure is to ensure overall justice through fair, consistent, impartial and independent decisions in the determination of complaints and potential disciplinary proceedings, if appropriate.
- 3.2 The Complaints Procedure also seeks to ensure that decisions are reached in a timely manner for all involved.
- 3.3 The Complaints Procedure should be read in conjunction with the Articles of Association, and the definitions therein, as well as the Disciplinary Policy for Partakers.

## **4 Policy Statement**

- 4.1 The Scottish Athletics Complaints Procedure (hereinafter referred to as “this procedure”) provides a framework and process to raise a Complaint, should it be so required. It is a tool to address unacceptable conduct or performance promptly, fairly and consistently. On occasion, it may be necessary to impose a sanction if the conduct or performance complained of is considered to be a disciplinary offence in line with Scottish Athletics’ Disciplinary Procedure for Partakers.

## **5 Scope of the Policy**

- 5.1 This policy applies to any person or body who is a member, or who is operating in the capacity of a member of Scottish Athletics through one of its membership categories, including volunteers, entrants to events operating under a Scottish Athletics licensed event, and individuals or organisations contracted to or whose services are engaged to deliver programmes and courses on behalf of Scottish Athletics, who will collectively be called Partaker throughout this policy.

- 5.2 This policy continues to apply to all those who have resigned from being a Partaker, provided that they were a Partaker as at the date of the alleged incident.
- 5.3 The decisions reached using the Complaints Procedure shall be observed and applied by all.
- 5.4 Rules for competitions are covered separately by UK Athletics when specific competitions are held either under UKA or World Athletics dictate, as amended from time to time.
- 5.5 Complaints that pertain to appeals against selection decisions shall be determined by the appeal procedure in the relevant competition selection policy.
- 5.6 All safeguarding matters shall be handled by UK Athletics in accordance with UK Athletics & The Home Country Athletics Federations Safeguarding Regulations.
- 5.7 Where a complaint concerns a “GB&NI Coach” or a level 4 or 5 Technical Official, the complaint will be referred to UK Athletics.

## **6 Complaints Secretary**

- 6.1 The Chief Executive Officer shall appoint a person to be Complaints Secretary.
- 6.2 The Complaints Secretary shall implement and administer this Policy in accordance with the directions of the Chief Executive Officer and Investigator.
- 6.3 The Complaints Secretary may with the approval of the Chief Executive Officer delegate any function in a particular complaints case to another suitable person.
- 6.4 The appointed Complaints Secretary having an interest in a matter to be discussed must declare that interest as soon as they are aware of it and must have no involvement in capacity as a secretary during the transaction of that business.

## **7. Complaints Proceedings**

- 7.1 Proceedings shall be brought by means of a “Complaint”.
- 7.2 A Complaint shall concern:
  - 7.2.1 Any breach of Scottish Athletics governance or any other behaviour alleged to be contrary to the interests of Scottish Athletics as a whole;
  - 7.2.2 Breach of any code of conduct, equality policy, welfare policy, terms and conditions, or any other code, rule or policy published from time to time by Scottish Athletics or that is otherwise adopted by Scottish Athletics;
  - 7.2.3 Any alleged breach of any other policy of Scottish Athletics or any other body to which Scottish Athletics may be affiliated with or a member of and to which the party is expected to comply;
  - 7.2.4 Any applicable in-competition offending or out-of-competition offending that amounts to misconduct of a more general nature;
  - 7.2.5 Any conduct which may be considered by the Chief Executive Officer likely to bring athletics in Scotland into disrepute or is considered to be detrimental to the best interests of athletics in Scotland and/or the development of the interests of athletics in Scotland;

- 7.2.6 Conduct by any person or body who is subject to the Complaints Procedure that amounts to a breach of the same.
- 7.3 Certain types of Complaints made to or by Scottish Athletics may be subject to specific measures in how they are dealt with. These include:
- 7.3.1 Any Complaint that amounts to or is connected to a breach of any relevant anti-doping rules shall ordinarily be referred to UK Athletics, however a Complaint can still be taken further to this policy should it be considered appropriate (whether in substitution or in addition to action by UK Athletics);
- 7.3.2 Any Complaint may be pursued notwithstanding that a separate criminal investigation and/or criminal proceedings may be ongoing.
- 7.4 Complaints may be initially presented to Scottish Athletics by:
- 7.4.1 Any Partaker;
- 7.4.2 A parent or guardian on behalf of a Partaker under the age of 16;
- 7.4.3 The Chief Executive Officer;
- 7.4.4 Scottish Athletics Welfare Team
- 7.4.5 It should be noted by Partakers that general members of the public may also make a complaint to Scottish Athletics with regards to the conduct of Partakers either in or out of competition.
- 7.5 If a person has a complaint to make regarding the interpretation or application of a Club's constitution or Club's rules, that complaint must be made to the Club. A Club's decision may possibly be capable of being appealed to Scottish Athletics under the scope of this policy.

## **8. Complaints Involving Child Abuse or other Criminal Offences**

- 8.1 Where the complaint concerns a Child or an Adult at Risk it will be managed in line with the procedures set out within the 'UK Athletics & The Home Country Athletics Federations Safeguarding Regulations'. Such complaints or concerns should be raised immediately by contacting the Scottish Athletics or UK Athletics welfare teams or by submitting a concern via this link <https://www.uka.org.uk/submit-a-concern/>
- 8.2 If the Complaint involves another type of criminal offence, the complaint shall be referred to Scottish Athletics Welfare Officer in the first instance. Thereafter, the Chief Executive Officer, Scottish Athletics Legal Advisor and Head of Operations shall deal with such cases as appropriate.
- 8.3 For such cases no fee is required and the initial contact need not be in writing.

## **9. Interim Suspension**

- 9.1 The Chief Executive Officer may suspend a Partaker from any or all of the privileges of affiliation ('interim suspension') on receipt of any of the following:
- 9.1.1 Notification that an individual has been charged with an offence; or
- 9.1.2 Notification that an individual is the subject of an investigation by the police, social services or any other authority relating to an offence; or

9.1.3 Other evidence which causes the Welfare Officer or Chief Executive Officer to reasonably conclude that an individual may have committed an offence.

then in any such case the Chief Executive Officer may impose upon the individual an interim suspension from any event or activity promoted or authorised by Scottish Athletics or any body directly or indirectly affiliated to Scottish Athletics wherever held.

9.2 In reaching their determination as to whether an interim suspension should be imposed the Chief Executive Officer shall give consideration to, inter alia, the following factors:

9.2.1 Whether a child or children or young persons(s) is/are or may be at risk;

9.2.2 Whether a member of a vulnerable group may be at risk:

9.2.3 Whether the allegation(s) is/are of a serious nature; and

9.2.4 Whether a suspension is necessary or proportionate to allow conduct of any investigation (by Scottish Athletics or any other authority or body) to proceed unimpeded.

9.3 Where an individual shall have been convicted or have been the subject of a caution in respect of an offence the Chief Executive Officer shall have power to impose summarily either or both of the following penalties:

9.3.1 The withdrawal with immediate effect of any licence granted on behalf of Scottish Athletics, which the individual may hold;

9.3.2 The suspension sine die of the individual from any event or activity promoted or authorised by Scottish Athletics or any other body directly or indirectly affiliated to Scottish Athletics wherever held.

There shall be a right of appeal under this Section 9.3 through the procedures contained in the Disciplinary Policy for Partakers.

9.4 Without prejudice to the generality of Section 9.3, Scottish Athletics may from time to time issue guidance or directions with regard to compliance with Section 9.3.

9.5 Interim suspension shall be a neutral action and shall not imply any prejudgement of the substantive issue.

## **10. Making a Complaint and Complaints Procedure**

10.1 With the exception of 8.1, to present a Complaint to Scottish Athletics the complaint must be set out in writing and sent to the Complaints Secretary at the Scottish Athletics registered address, either by hand, post or email to [complaints@scottishathletics.org.uk](mailto:complaints@scottishathletics.org.uk)

10.2 The written notice of Complaint must include:

10.2.1 The grounds of Complaint;

10.2.2 The basis for the Complaint;

10.2.3 The person or party complained of;

10.2.4 What, if anything, has been done to attempt to resolve the Complaint informally if appropriate;

10.2.5 A list of the witnesses to the matters complained of;

- 10.2.6 A list of all documents produced in support of the Complaint;
  - 10.2.7 The documents produced in support of the Complaint; and
  - 10.2.8 The Appropriate Fee of £50, (except when the written application comes from the Chief Executive Officer or Welfare team) which is refundable if the complaint is upheld.
- 10.3 The written Complaint must reach the Complaints Secretary not later than 28 days after the incident which gave rise to it. Notwithstanding that a Complaint must ordinarily be referred to the Complaints Secretary within 28 days of the incident which gave rise to it, the Chief Executive Officer can decide to extend the time for presenting a Complaint to the Complaints Secretary and receive a complaint late provided that they are satisfied that a reasonable explanation has been provided for the late presentation of the Complaint. The decision in this regard of the Chief Executive Officer is final and there shall be no right of appeal.
- 10.4 On receipt of a Complaint it shall be at the sole and unfettered discretion of the Chief Executive Officer to decide whether a Complaint is:
- 10.4.1 Investigated further;
  - 10.4.2 A decision be made for alternative dispute resolution to be pursued by the parties;
  - 10.4.3 Dealt with under the Scottish Athletics Disciplinary Policy for Partakers in the event that the conduct complained of is potentially a disciplinary matter; or
  - 10.4.4 Rejected and no further action be taken.
- 10.5 In deciding what to do with a Complaint, the Chief Executive Officer shall be entitled to take into account any issue that they consider relevant and may make any assessment or determination that they consider appropriate including (without limitation) assessing the possible validity of the Complaint and whether the Complaint is unjust, malicious, vexatious or being unreasonably brought, is unfounded or wholly unfounded.
- 10.6 No person shall complain to the Chief Executive Officer, make any other protest or otherwise seek to put pressure on the Chief Executive Officer in relation to the decision to bring, or not bring, a Complaint or any other decision made further to 10.4. Acting contrary to this rule may amount to misconduct further to this policy and may result in a Complaint.
- 10.7 If the Complaint is rejected, the Complaints Secretary shall be under no obligation to notify the party against whom a Complaint was initially made either that a Complaint had been made to Scottish Athletics or that it was rejected. Equally the Chief Executive Officer shall be under no obligation to keep a Complaint made to the Chief Executive Officer confidential at any stage.

## **11. Investigation**

- 11.1 The Chief Executive Officer may appoint as Investigator any person or organisation that does not have an interest in the case other than a Director and the Complaints Secretary. The Investigator may be internal (e.g. staff member) or external to Scottish Athletics.
- 11.2 The Investigator shall be entitled to conduct such investigation into a Complaint as the Investigator sees fit and all persons and parties subject to the procedures shall cooperate fully with the same. Failure to co-operate may amount to misconduct.

- 11.3 The Investigator will inform the Complainer that they are dealing with the matter and inform that the details of the application will be disclosed to the Respondent. They will also inform the Respondent that they are the subject of an application, provide an outline of the allegation, identify who made the complaint (but only when the identification of such person is not confidential for safeguarding reasons) and seek a brief response to the complaint. Such response should include a brief factual response to the allegation.
- 11.4 The Investigator will then conduct an investigation that is thorough, proportionate, relevant and fair to all parties. Contact with the Complainer, the Respondent and all witnesses will usually be via telephone or email but may be by face to face meetings. The Complainer, the Respondent and any witnesses shall give the Investigator all reasonable assistance, including promptly supplying signed statements if necessary, making themselves available for interview, answering any questions and supplying documentary or other information.
- 11.5 The Investigator shall make a written report which shall include the documentary evidence and a recommendation as to whether the Respondent has a case to answer in relation to a potential disciplinary offence.
- 11.6 The Investigator's report shall be submitted to the Chief Executive Officer who shall either confirm the recommendation or arrange for further investigation by the same or a different Investigator.
- 11.7 If the Chief Executive Officer confirms a recommendation that there is no case to answer, the Complaints Secretary shall inform the Complainer and the Respondent accordingly. There shall be no appeal against a decision that there is no case to answer but a case may be re-examined if further evidence is later forthcoming.
- 11.8 If the Chief Executive Officer confirms a recommendation that there is a case for the Respondent to answer, the Investigator shall then be responsible for presenting the case to the Disciplinary Committee in line with the Scottish Athletics Disciplinary Policy for Partakers.
- 11.9 The Chief Executive Officer shall thereafter be entitled, at any time, to decide to refer a Complaint to the Disciplinary Committee, take no further action or recommend that alternative dispute resolution be pursued.

## **12. If Alternative Dispute Resolution Pursued**

- 12.1 It may be that the Investigator considers that the Complaint made may be appropriate for alternative dispute resolution which may include (without limitation):
  - 12.1.1 Mediation; or
  - 12.1.2 Arbitration
- 12.2 If the Chief Executive Officer deems that alternative dispute resolution is an appropriate method of resolving the matter, the Investigator shall stop any formal proceedings and provide information regarding alternative dispute resolution to the Parties.
- 12.3 If it is considered that the complaint is not suitable for alternative dispute resolution, the Chief Executive Officer will make another determination for the resolution of the complaint.

### **13. If Put Before the Disciplinary Panel**

- 13.1 If the Complaint, following investigation, is to be put before the Disciplinary Panel, the Investigator shall present the case and provide all supporting documentation to the Disciplinary Panel Chair in line with the Scottish Athletics Disciplinary Policy. This may or may not include materials provided by the Complainer. The Complaint then becomes a Disciplinary Matter.
- 13.2 The Disciplinary Panel shall operate under the Scottish Athletics Disciplinary Policy for Partakers.
- 13.3 In the event that it becomes clear that a Complaint is a potential Disciplinary Matter, the Scottish Athletics Disciplinary Policy applies at all times.

### **14. If Rejected**

- 14.1 If the Complaint is to be rejected the Complaints Secretary shall:
- 14.1.1 Notify the Complainer that no further action shall be taken and provide brief reasons for this decision; and
  - 14.1.2 Take no further action.
- 14.2 The Chief Executive Officer's decision shall not be capable of appeal but the decision can be reviewed by the Investigator if new evidence comes to light and is presented to the Complaints Secretary.
- 14.3 A decision to not proceed with a Complaint shall not preclude the Chief Executive Officer from taking that Complaint further at a later date.

### **15. Definitions**

"Appropriate Fee" means any reasonable fee set by the Board of Scottish Athletics;

"Articles of Association" mean the written rules regarding the running of Scottish Athletics which can be found on the Scottish Athletics website or at Companies House;

"the Board" means the board of Directors of Scottish Athletics, which shall comprise all of the Directors from time to time, as constituted in accordance with these Articles;

"Chief Executive Officer" means the chief officer of Scottish Athletics at the relevant time, or the person performing an equivalent function if there is no chief officer at the time, or their duly appointed deputy;

"Club" means a club which is a member of Scottish Athletics having paid any and all subscriptions, and as further defined in the Articles of Association;

"Complaints Secretary" is the person so appointed as per paragraph 6 of this policy;

"Complaint" and "Complaints" shall be a complaint as set out as per paragraph 9 of this policy;

"Complainer" means the body or individual who makes the Complaint;



“Complaints Procedure” means the process followed in dealing with complaints to Scottish Athletics, as outlined in this policy;

“Disciplinary Committee” means the committee appointed in accordance with paragraph 12 of the Disciplinary Policy for Partakers;

“Disciplinary Matter” means a breach of the Articles of Association or Regulations or the Policies of Scottish Athletics or any act, omission, statement or circumstance which consists of anything which is, in any way, contrary to the general law or the rules governing the sport of athletics including the Regulations or detrimental to Scottish Athletics, or to any conduct that brings Scottish Athletics or the sport of athletics into disrepute. The Articles of Association can be found on the Scottish Athletics website or at Companies House;

“Disciplinary Panel” means the panel appointed in accordance with paragraph 7 of the Scottish Athletics Disciplinary Policy for Partakers;

“Disciplinary Panel Chair” means the person so appointed in accordance with paragraph 7.1 of the Scottish Athletics Disciplinary Policy for Partakers;

“GB&NI Coach” means any person who:

- a. coaches or has coached an athlete who is or was at the time the coach coached the athlete:
  - i) a member of the UKA Futures Programme or any predecessor or successor programme; or
  - ii) a member of a Great Britain Team for any championship or competition.
- b. is an Athlete Support Personnel (ASP) for the purposes of the UK Sport Funding Eligibility Policy from time to time in place (the Eligibility Policy). An ASP includes any coach, trainer, training partner, manager, athlete representative, agent, team staff member, official, medical or paramedical personnel, or any other person employed by or working with an athlete on the World Class Programme (WCP) or a person who is nominated for inclusion on the WCP; in connection with coaching an athlete, accesses or has accessed facilities paid for in full or in part by public money through UK Sport (or any predecessor or successor organisation) or from UKA, or who has otherwise received funding from the aforementioned sources in connection with their coaching; or;
- c. has been informed by UKA, in its absolute discretion, at any time (including after any alleged misconduct) that they are a GB&NI Coach.

“Head of Operations” means the individual holding office, or equivalent;

“Investigator” shall mean the person appointed under paragraph 10.1 of the Complaints Procedure;

“Legal Advisor” is the firm and/or person who provides legal advice to Scottish Athletics;

“Partaker” means any person or body who is a member, or who is operating in the capacity of a member of Scottish Athletics through one of its membership categories, including volunteers, entrants to events operating under a Scottish Athletics licensed event, and individuals or organisations contracted to or whose services are engaged to deliver programmes and courses on behalf of Scottish Athletics;

“Respondent” means the individual or body against whom a Complaint has been raised;

“Scottish Athletics” is the National Governing Body for Athletics in Scotland;

“UKA” and “UK Athletics” is UK Athletics Limited or its successor as the governing body for athletics in the UK;

“UK Athletics & The Home Country Athletics Federations Safeguarding Regulations” means the policy and procedures in place at the time of the Complaint;

“Welfare Officer” is the current postholder, or equivalent, responsible for ensuring safeguarding, welfare and child protection policies and processes are robust and fit for purpose for Scottish Athletics;

“World Athletics” or its successor is the world governing body for athletics, including track and field, road running, race walking, cross-country running, mountain running and trail running.

## 16. Further Reading

Scottish Athletics Disciplinary Policy for Partakers

Scottish Athletics Equality Policy

Scottish Athletics Social Media Policy for Partakers

Scottish Athletics Sports Betting and Anti-corruption Policy

Terms and Conditions for the Scottish Athletics Coach Licence Scheme

Terms and Conditions for the Scottish Athletics Licence Scheme for Level 1-3 Technical Officials

UK Anti-Doping Rules

UK Athletics & the Home Country Athletics Federations Child Safeguarding Policy

UK Athletics & the Home Country Athletics Federations Codes of Conduct

UK Athletics & the Home Country Athletics Federations Safeguarding Regulations

UK Athletics Anti-Doping Rules

UK Athletics Disciplinary Rules and Procedures

This Policy is approved by the Scottish Athletics Board of Directors who will consider proposals for additions and/or amendments on an ongoing basis.

### Equality Impact Assessment Record

Date of Assessment:	16 January 2024
Assessed by:	Head of Operations, Executive and Equalities Officer
Review date:	31 January 2027 or as required