



Netball Northern Ireland Complaints Procedure

Ratified: June 2025

Review due: June 2026



Policy Statement and Aims

Netball Northern Ireland (NNI) is committed to delivering a quality service at all times. NNI **'Equity Policy'** outlines the behaviours expected from all within the 'Netball Family'. NNI are committed to ensuring that, all its members are treated with fairness and respect.

If, for any reason, members feel that this commitment has not been honoured this document provides a standardised process on how to manage a complaint of a breach of policy or rule.

This policy is intended to contribute to the effective and efficient operation of NNI and Appropriate Authorities (e.g. Clubs and Registered users), by providing a means of receiving and addressing feedback and complaints from service users/members.

Responsibility: Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the Management board of Netball Northern Ireland

Situations where this policy may be preceded by other policies include:

- Safeguarding concerns must be raised immediately with NNI Safeguarding Officer/s (Karen Rollo & Lisa Rickett) and will be handled in line with NNI Safeguarding Regulations
- Anti- Doping - NNI has adopted the UKAD rules and all matters regarding doping shall be dealt with in accordance with these rules. Sheonah Forbes, Warriors Head Coach, is the NNI lead for anti-doping matters.

Our policy is:

- To provide a fair complaints procedure which is clear and easy to use for anyone wishing to make a complaint
- To publicise the existence of our complaints procedure so that people know how to contact us to make a complaint;
- To make sure all complaints are investigated fairly and in a timely way;
- To make sure that complaints are, wherever possible, resolved and that relationships are repaired;
- To encourage and promote appropriate and where necessary improved behaviour of members
- To gather information which helps us to improve what we do.

General Principles

NNI Staff, volunteers and members are representing the organisation during their day-to-day netball activities and every act will reflect upon the organisation good or bad.

Any Staff member or Volunteer may receive feedback regarding the level of service from NNI. The initial contact is important and will set the tone for how the service user feels they have been treated. Any Feedback should be forwarded to a senior staff member and complaints directed to the Administration Officer.

All Complaints received will be acknowledged and necessary enquires conducted to establish the facts. Where the Complainant does not wish to provide their contact details, the complaint will still be processed and an investigation will take place where enough evidence is available to substantiate the complaint.

NNI are committed to providing a high standard of service and continually strive to meet public expectations. From time-to-time things can go wrong or are perceived by others to have gone wrong. When this happens we will:

- Treat the Complaint and the Complainant with respect and dignity and deal with them fairly and sympathetically
- Try to resolve Complaints informally wherever possible
- Ensure that Complaints are resolved in an appropriate, timely and professional manner
- Treat all complaints sensitively and only discuss them with those who are directly involved in trying to resolve the issue
- Listen to people involved and decide on any action based on the available evidence
- Use a consistent approach to resolving Complaints ensuring impartiality and fairness
- Adopt a positive approach by using the Complaint as an opportunity to take actions to improve the service provided
- Provide an effective response and ensure, where appropriate, the cause of the Complaint is addressed.

This policy is designed to:

- Encourage NNI Volunteers and Staff to have a positive attitude towards Feedback and Complaints received from service users or the public.
- Provide a consistent approach when dealing with Feedback and Complaints.
- Provide a system whereby Feedback and Complaints can be dealt with promptly, fairly, politely and with understanding in all aspects of the service provision.
- Provide a confidential system that service users, Volunteers and Staff have confidence in.
- Provide a standard, auditable and traceable process for users.
- Provide a means of collecting Feedback and Complaints about the service of NNI, so that improvements can be made.

Staff or Volunteers dealing with problems must not rely on second or third hand versions of events and should make an objective judgement based on what facts exist.

Whilst fully supporting the right to complain, we expect our Staff and Volunteers to be treated courteously at all times. Violent or abusive language or behaviour towards them is unacceptable. Where there is a threat or use of physical violence or verbal abuse towards our Staff or Volunteers, all direct contact with the Complainant will cease and the behaviour may be reported to the police.

What is a Complaint

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, whether justified or not, about an aspect of NNI. If for any reason you are not happy with any aspect of the service you have received from Netball Northern Ireland, in the first instance, you should speak directly to the member of staff concerned.

A complaint is not a forum to be used to insult the accused, nor should it contain irrelevant information. The complaints process should not be used to make an enquiry, ask a question, an attempt to prioritise an issue that had already been raised or a request for clarification

NNI will try to settle complaints informally for the benefit of all parties, this action may not require an investigative panel but will facilitate parties to discuss concerns raised.

Complaints under this Policy

Although the **following list is not exhaustive**, it gives our members an idea of the issues that may lead to a feeling of mistreatment, resulting in a complaint:

- We have **given you incorrect advice or information**
- We have not treated you respectfully
- We have **not worked within the law or in line** with our **policies or procedures**
- We have **discriminated against you** or have not treated you fairly
- The game has been brought into disrepute. This excludes in game behaviour which has been appropriately dealt with by umpires using World Netball Game Management protocols.
- There has been inappropriate behaviour, in particular one of the following:
 - An opposing team
 - A specific player or players
 - An umpire/umpires
 - Spectators
 - A coach
 - Anyone affiliated with NNI

Independent evidence must be provided to support any complaint to allow for a full investigation. The absence of which may prohibit a fair and impartial investigation.

Time frame

The Complaint must be received in writing as per this procedure within **7 days** of the alleged breach taking place.

How is a complaint made

NNI strongly encourage clubs, schools and other personnel to address any complaints they have directly with the club, school or personnel concerned as the issue may be more appropriately and swiftly resolved at the time and by the individuals who are responsible for/witness/been part of the issue being complained about.

NNI recommends that each club and school should also have its own policy and process to deal with complaints in place.

If anyone wishes to bring a complaint relating to a breach of policy or rule to NNI it must be set out in writing and emailed to admin@netballni.org, marked as Confidential – Complaint. Any complaints not received in this format will be rejected.

On receipt of a complaint, an acknowledgement receipt will be sent by email from admin@netballni.org.

How are complaints handled

Resolution Procedure

The resolution procedure for any Complaint has two potential stages; informal and formal. Unless serious it is always preferable to seek to resolve a Complaint through informal resolution stage.

Confidentiality: All complaint information will be handled sensitively, telling only those who need to know and following any relevant data protection requirements eg as outlined in the Netball Northern Ireland Privacy Policy.

Unless they are serious, Complaints are best resolved locally and informally by Staff or Volunteers. The best way of doing this is to address issues as they come up and work to resolve matters quickly, simply and informally.

Resolving problems is easiest if they are dealt with as soon as they happen – ignoring a problem and hoping it will go away does not usually help.

The first step when seeking to resolve a Complaint is to establish the key facts. This will help decide whether an informal or formal approach is appropriate. Establishing facts may involve talking to those involved, reading correspondence, or looking at written or photographic evidence relevant to the problem.

Facts can often be identified through informal discussions and this is usually done prior to starting a formal process and does not necessarily mean any further discussion or action will be necessary. Most informal resolution stages will involve little more than discussions between people affected and a verbal agreement on expectations for future ways of working. Conversations in 1:1 meetings, informal catch ups, routine feedback all form part of informal problem solving.

During an informal stage, a record of the Feedback or Complaint and brief notes of key events should be made and kept in accordance with GDPR.

At the end of the informal stage, a short letter or email should be sent to those people involved setting out the agreed expectations for the future. A record should be kept in to ensure all parties can understand and learn from all problems.

If an initial attempt to resolve an issue is unsuccessful, it is necessary to understand why it has not resulted in the desired outcome and decide in conjunction with the Complainant whether to try an informal approach again.

NNI can support any complainant to:

1. identify the appropriate approach to resolving a Complaint or providing Feedback
2. engage with a process of local, informal resolution
3. determine if the Complaint is serious or should be referred to a relevant authority e.g. Police, social services

Complaints mainly fall under 3 categories Minor, Moderate or Severe. Examples include:

Example Complaint	Rating	Example Sanction
Change of date/venue of event	Minor	Operational timeline reviewed
Challenge to in game sanctions outside of CRAG guidelines	Moderate	Suspension of personnel/disciplinary action
Threatening behaviour	Severe	Revocation of membership

In assessing whether a problem is serious, Staff or Volunteers dealing with the problem should consider the potential or actual risk to people, resources or netball/Netball NI's reputation.

Duty to refer and Police Matters

In certain circumstances where someone is suspected of causing harm to a vulnerable person, NNI has a legal responsibility to report the incident to the relevant authorities.

If the police, or other authorities, are investigating the issue raised, this will take precedence over NNI policies.

The formal stage of resolution should be used if:

1. a problem cannot be resolved informally
2. the issue involves allegations of serious misconduct;
3. the Complainant wishes to progress their Complaint to the formal stage

Complaints Procedure

All Complaints received will be assessed by NNI for validity and ranked into one of the three categories and where appropriate an Investigation will be convened.

An Investigation panel will include:

1. Lead Investigator (who will request and collate all statements/evidence to be reviewed)
2. Independent (external to the club/school/member concerned)
3. Expert (person with expert knowledge/experience in the particular area, eg umpiring/finance)

The Investigating panel shall be entitled to conduct such investigation into a Complaint as they see fit. The Investigator will inform the Complainant that they are dealing with the matter and inform a summary of the Complaint will be disclosed to the Respondent. The Respondent will be sent a summary of the allegations against them and then given 14 days to respond to the allegations in writing.

The panel will investigate the complaint with an open mind and, in doing so, contact may be made with the Complainant, the Respondent and all witnesses to deal with all questions of the Investigator however, this is not mandatory, evidence can be obtained via emails/statements already collated. The Investigator may request signed statements from relevant parties. Everyone involved in the investigation including witnesses will be bound by confidentiality and must not discuss it outside of the investigation process, breach of this stipulation, may render the complaint null and void.

For the purposes of information, the panel may need to consult with the Chief Executive, other parties and/or seek legal guidance. Any sanctions will be agreed by the investigating panel and, depending on the nature of the complaint, can range from operational change to fines. This list is not exhaustive.

If NNI confirms a recommendation that there is no case to answer, NNI shall inform the Complainant and Respondent accordingly. There shall be no appeal against a decision that there is no case to answer.

The Investigator shall be entitled to depart from the procedure above to the extent that they see fit in any given situation, depending on the circumstances of the Complaint and the Response.

Complaints (& concerns)

Stage 1- Informal Resolution

Most Complaints can be dealt with and resolved quickly at the initial point of contact informally. The main principle is to seek early resolution, resolving Complaints at the earliest opportunity and as close to the point of service delivery as possible. Any NNI member of Staff or Volunteer can deal with a Complaint at this stage.

Stage 2- Complaint investigated by nominated manager

Where it has not been possible to achieve resolution under stage 1 or the Complaint is more complex and requires detailed Investigation, the Complaint will be handled under stage 2 of the process. A stage 2 Investigation aims to establish all the facts relevant to the points made in the Complaint and to give the Complainant a full, objective proportionate response.

Where a Complaint is made under Stage 2, a written complaint should be emailed to admin@netballni.org

A Staff member of NNI will be nominated as the Investigating Officer to deal with the Complaint and Investigation.

The following timescales apply under Stage 2 of the Complaint procedure: -

- A formal acknowledgement of the Complaint will be sent within 15 working days.
- A full reply will be provided after an Investigation within the following 20 working days.
- If a full response cannot be provided within the time set out above due to a more complex Investigation, an update will be provided with an expected completion date.

Stage 3 (Appeal) Complaint and Investigation reviewed by a Senior Member of the staff team or Board Member.

If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the response given under stage 2, they can Appeal and request a review of the Complaint and Investigation by a senior member of NNI Management Team (Reviewing Officer).

Grounds for Appeal could reasonably be one of more of the following:

- The correct process was not followed
- The decision was made without considering all the relevant facts
- The decision was not one a reasonable person could have made

Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Administration Officer, admin@netballni.org detailing why you are unhappy with the outcome or conduct of the Complaint along with an administrative fee of £25 payable at the time the Appeal is lodged

Details of how to make payment will be provided upon receipt of the Appeal request.

The Chief Executive or a Head of Department will either deal with the Appeal or appoint another Officer if they have dealt with the Complaint previously. The person conducting the Appeal will write to you with their decision.

- Stage 3 of the Complaints procedure involves a member of the Executive Team or Board conducting a review of the stage 2 Investigation and the response provided. The following timescales apply under stage 3 of the Complaints procedure:
- A formal acknowledgement of the Appeal and review under stage 3 will be sent within 10 working days.
- we will inform you in writing of the final decision as soon as reasonably practicable.
- No decision or sanction shall be stayed on appeal unless the appeal panel receives and decides to grant an application for stay.
- There is no further right of Appeal.
- Where a Complainant has exhausted the Complaints procedure and continues to dispute the outcome of their Complaint, they will be advised that no further discussion will take place on this issue.

8. Decision and Outcome

- The decision may be to reject the Complaint - If the Complaint is deemed invalid, malicious or vexatious, it will be rejected. If the Complaint is rejected, NNI shall be under no obligation to notify the party against whom a Complaint was initially made, either that a Complaint had been made to NNI or that it was rejected.
- The decision may be to uphold the Complaint.
- The decision may be to lodge the Complaint with another body

Monitoring Complaints

All allegations should be made in good faith. In deciding what to do with a Complaint, NNI shall be entitled to consider any issue that they deem 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, or unfounded. Action may be taken against a complainant for malicious or vexatious allegations

Netball Northern Ireland are committed to equal opportunities and take complaints about discrimination very seriously.

We will keep all information confidential.

Can I keep complaining?

You may not be happy with the outcome of your Complaint or any Appeal you have made, but provided the proper process has been followed, we are unable to take any further action.

Repeat Complaints about the same issue will not alter this and at times Complaints can become vexatious and/or persistent, causing undue stress for Staff and Volunteers and resulting in a disproportionate use of NNI resources. In dealing with such situations the Chief Executive will ensure the Feedback and Complaints Procedure has been correctly implemented and that no material element of the Complaint has been overlooked or inadequately addressed.

Where a wider Complaint is deemed to be vexatious, persistent, is considered to have no basis or genuine substance, NNI reserves the right not to Investigate.

In this situation, NNI will notify the Complainant within 10 working days. In extreme cases of vexatious and/or persistent Complaints NNI may take Disciplinary Action against Members and Connected Participants.

Potential Outcomes of a complaint

If your Complaint is upheld, you will be responded to with 1 / more of the following:

- An apology
- A proposed remedy and timescales (if applicable);
- An indication of what service improvement will be made, or
- Progression to a disciplinary sanction if the Investigation discloses a breach of NNI's Code of Conduct.

Training

Staff and Volunteers, training will include familiarisation and understanding of the Complaints Policy. Where further training is required to effectively deal with Feedback and Complaints, this can be provided by their Line Managers through organised training events.

Line Managers or Volunteers who will be responsible for conducting stage 2 Investigations or who regularly interact with members of the public in their role, may require additional training. Appropriate training will be identified and provided by NNI.

Collating Data

NNI keeps records of Feedback received and Complaints made regarding the service provided. Upon conclusion of a Complaint, Investigating Officers and Reviewing Officers must forward to the Administration Officer all paperwork used and received during the Complaint and any subsequent Investigation. This information will be stored confidentially in accordance with Data Protection Laws, and the NNI privacy policy for the use of statistics and reports to the Executive Team and Board Members in their remit of ensuring good governance in NNI.

Audit and Review

The policy is designed to allow the use of Feedback from our service users with the aim of improving the service we deliver. Senior Staff will review the information gathered from Feedback received and Complaints and will consider whether our services could be improved.

This policy will be reviewed within a specified period as deemed appropriate by the policy owner, but no longer than 2 years or when external influences occur such as legislation.

Specific audits may be undertaken of any part of the process, at the discretion of an NNI Chief Executive Officer.

FAQ's

The questions and answers below should assist in making a Complaint and ensure the process is understood.

Q. Can I talk my grievance through with someone and resolve it informally instead of making a formal Complaint?

A. Yes, grievances can often be sorted out on an informal basis, which is often quicker and less onerous. Don't be afraid to speak to a relevant member of Staff or Volunteer to see if they might be able to resolve the misunderstanding. You can telephone NNI and ask to talk to a member of Staff who will be able to advise you or put you in touch with someone who can help. Alternatively, you can email admin@netballni.org

Q. How do I make a Complaint about the behaviour of a member of NNI?

A. If your complaint is about the actions or behaviour of a person who is participating or volunteering in netball (including Non-Executive Directors, Members of Working Groups. Staff) then please contact admin@netballni.org and they can support you to look to resolve informally or determine if it amounts to a breach requiring a formal complaint.

Q. How do I make a Complaint about an element of practice or delivery, a policy, decision or service?

A. If your Complaint is related to a service delivered by NNI you can contact a member of our Staff or email admin@netballni.org If it relates to a competition matter for schools or clubs, you can contact the appropriate working group.

Q. Can I submit my Complaint anonymously?

A. We encourage everyone to identify themselves when they put in their Complaint but understand that sometimes there are valid reasons for not wanting to put your name to an issue. In order to ensure that serious issues of concern are raised and addressed, we have a Whistleblowing Policy which allows all participants to raise issues without fear of any victimisation or reprisal. We would also encourage you to raise such issues internally, through a Complaint to the Administration Office, but recognise the importance of being able to take concerns to an outside body. We have identified the usual agencies which have a responsibility to consider allegations of serious misconduct, for example Health and Safety issues or financial mismanagement.

Q. What will happen to my Complaint?

A. If your Complaint is formal (Stage 2), you will receive an acknowledgement in writing within fifteen working days, with a summary of what the Complaint is understood to be. You will also be told how the matter will be progressed. Wherever possible, Complaints will be investigated and a proposed resolution made within a maximum of a further 20 working days.

Q. Who will deal with my Complaint?

A. Your Complaint will be dealt with by the person responsible for the area of operation to which the Complaint relates. If your Complaint is related to the behaviours of a member of Staff it may

be forwarded to the Head of Department to ensure that appropriate disciplinary procedures are applied. The Chief Executive may oversee the handling of the Complaint and ensure that the processes and timeframes are appropriate. At the conclusion of the matter, the person handling your Complaint will make a record of it, how it was dealt with and the resolution before sending it to the Administration Officer for a record to be kept in accordance with our Data Protection Policy.

Q. Will I receive details of sanctions applied if my complaint is upheld?

A. No, sanctions applied to upheld complaints will remain confidential to the investigating panel and the respondent. NNI are encouraging positive changes in behaviours and as such will provide a summary of the types of complaints received and sanctions applied each year.

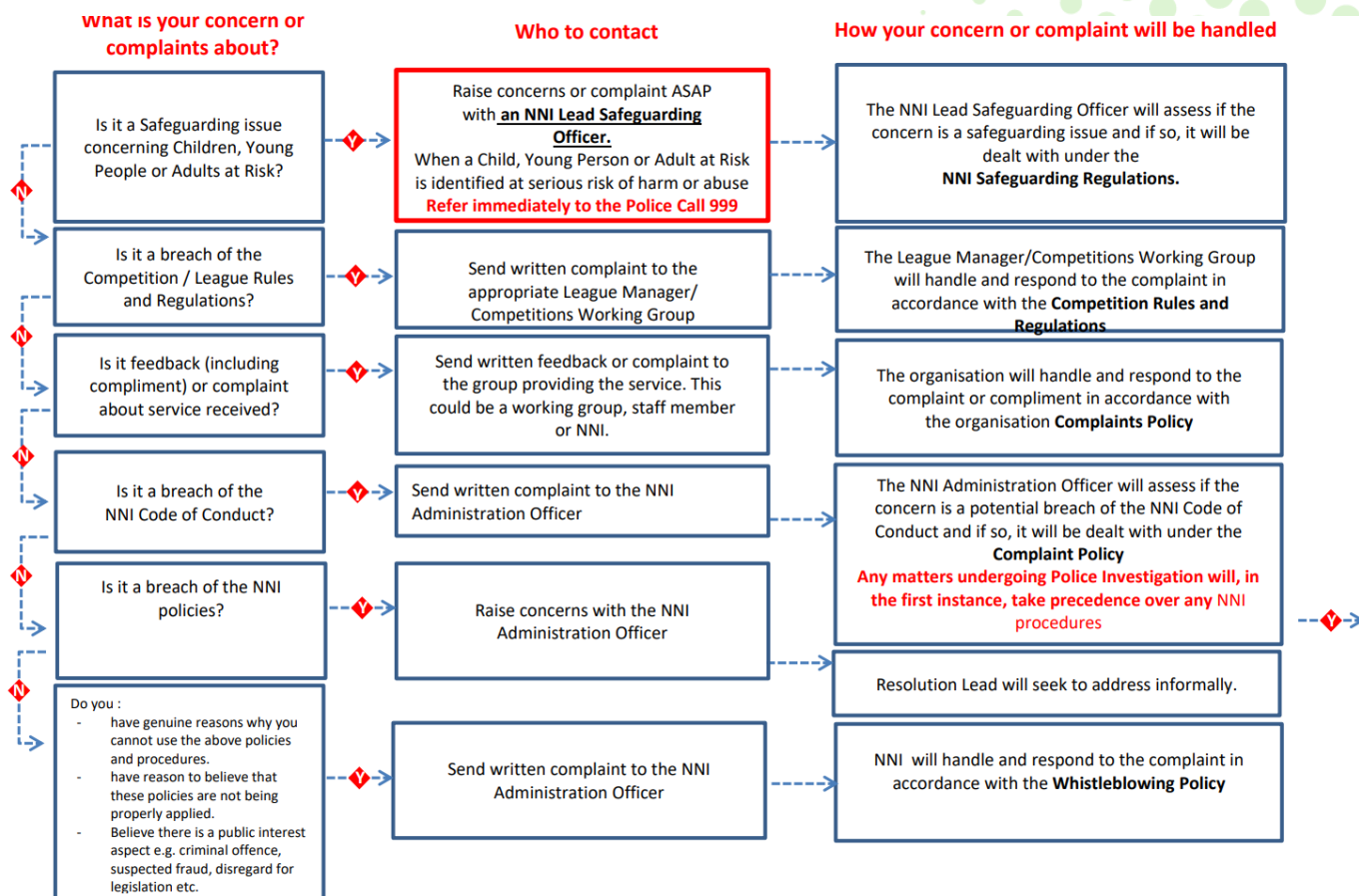
Q. Do I have a right to Appeal if I am not happy with the result of my Complaint?

A. Yes, for Complaints relating to NNI services, you do have a right to Appeal under Stage 3. Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Administration Officer, admin@netballni.org detailing why you are unhappy with the outcome or conduct of the Complaint together with an administrative fee of £25. The Administration Officer will either deal with the Appeal or appoint another person if they have dealt with the Complaint previously. The person conducting the Appeal will write to you with their decision. There is no further right of Appeal.



Formal Resolution Flowchart

Use the following flowchart to identify the relevant policy and procedure to raise a complaint to be handled formally.



Example Sanctions

Sanctions that may be applied, include but are not limited to:

Minor	Moderate	Severe
Verbal Warning Compulsory Training	Written Warning Points deduction Match Ban	Expulsion from competition Revocation of membership

*Repeated upheld complaints against a team, club, school or individual will result in immediate escalation of sanctions with no right of appeal.