

Surf Lifesaving Association of Wales (SLSA Wales)

Policy Review Section

Policy Title:

Organisation: Surf Lifesaving Association of Wales (SLSA Wales)

Version: 1.0

Approved By: Board of Trustees

Approval Date: _12 April 2026_____

Policy Owner: Chair of SLSA Wales / Whistleblowing Officer

Next Scheduled Review: __April 2029_____ (Every three years, or earlier if required)

Review Cycle:

This policy will be reviewed **every three years**, or sooner if:

- There is a significant change in charity law or Public Interest Disclosure guidance
- Governance structures within SLSA Wales change
- A whistleblowing incident highlights the need for policy amendments
- Best practice guidance for volunteer-led charities is updated

Record of Reviews and Amendments:

Version	Date	Reviewed By	Summary of Changes	Approval Signature
1.0	12/4/26	BoM	Initial policy issue	DM

Complaints Policy and Procedure

(For Members, Clubs, Volunteers, Trustees, and Members of the Public)

1. Introduction

Surf Lifesaving Association of Wales (SLSA Wales) is committed to maintaining high standards of governance, service delivery, and conduct across all levels of the organisation. As a volunteer-led charity with **no employees**, all activities rely on the goodwill, professionalism, and integrity of Trustees, volunteers, club officers, and members.

This policy sets out how complaints can be raised and how they will be managed fairly, consistently, and transparently.

This policy covers complaints about:

- The conduct or actions of volunteers or Trustees
- Decisions made by SLSA Wales or its committees
- The behaviour of affiliated clubs or club officers
- Service or communication failures
- Alleged breaches of SLSA Wales policies
- Any matter causing dissatisfaction that is not a whistleblowing or safeguarding concern

This policy **does not** cover:

- Safeguarding concerns → follow Safeguarding Procedures
- Whistleblowing concerns → follow Whistleblowing Policy
- Disputes within clubs → follow Club Constitutions & Procedures

2. Principles of the Complaints Process

SLSA Wales will ensure that complaints:

1. Are taken seriously and handled promptly
2. Are dealt with fairly, objectively, and without bias
3. Are treated confidentially, with information shared only where necessary
4. Are resolved at the lowest appropriate level
5. Are responded to within reasonable timescales

6. Do not result in disadvantage, retaliation, or unfair treatment
7. Are recorded appropriately for governance and quality assurance

3. Who Can Make a Complaint?

Complaints may be made by:

- Members of SLSA Wales
- Club officers and committees
- Parents/guardians of members
- Volunteers
- Trustees
- Members of the public with legitimate cause to complain

Anonymous complaints will be reviewed but may limit the ability to investigate.

4. Types of Complaints

Examples include:

- Poor communication
- Unfair decision-making
- Misapplication of rules or policies
- Behaviour inconsistent with SLSA Wales values
- Concern about club procedures or governance
- Failure of administrative processes
- Misconduct that does not meet the threshold for whistleblowing or safeguarding

5. How to Make a Complaint

Complaints should be submitted **in writing** (email or letter) to ensure clarity of details.

Submit your complaint to:

Primary point of contact Complaint Email:

secretary@slsawales.org.uk

Or if the complaint is regarding the secretary, then contact:

President of **SLSA Wales**

Phillrees@slsawales.org.uk

If the complaint relates to the , it should be directed to **any other Trustee**.

Information to Include:

- Your name and contact details
- Club (if relevant)
- Description of the complaint
- Names and dates involved
- Any evidence or correspondence
- What outcome you are seeking

6. Stages of the Complaints Procedure

Stage 1 – Informal Resolution (Recommended First Step)

Where appropriate, individuals should attempt informal resolution by:

- Speaking to the relevant volunteer or club officer
- Seeking clarification
- Requesting support from a Trustee or mediator

If resolved, no further action is required, though a record may be kept.

If unresolved → proceed to Stage 2.

Stage 2 – Formal Complaint

Once a written complaint is received:

Acknowledgement:

- Within **10 working days**, confirming receipt

Assessment:

- The Chair (or delegated Trustee) will determine:
 - Whether the complaint falls under this policy
 - Whether additional information is needed
 - Whether immediate action is required
 - Whether mediation may be appropriate

Investigation:

- Conducted by a Trustee or an appointed independent person
- May include interviews, document review, or consultation with clubs
- Confidentiality maintained wherever possible

Outcome:

- Issued within **30 working days**, where reasonably possible

- May include:
 - Explanation or clarification
 - Mediation or facilitated discussion
 - Apology
 - Recommendation to a club committee
 - Referral to disciplinary procedures
 - Confirmation that no further action is required

A summary of the decision will be provided in writing.

Stage 3 – Appeal

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the Stage 2 response, they may appeal **within 10 working days**.

Appeals must state:

- The grounds for appeal (e.g., process not followed, new evidence)
- The desired outcome

Appeal Panel:

- Chaired by a Trustee not previously involved
- Includes at least one additional Trustee and an independent person

Appeal Outcome:

- Provided within **20 working days**
- Decision is final within SLSA Wales

7. When SLSA Wales May Decline a Complaint

SLSA Wales may determine a complaint cannot be progressed if:

- It is malicious, discriminatory, or abusive
- It has already been investigated
- It relates to matters outside SLSA Wales' jurisdiction
- It concerns club-level issues that should be handled locally
- It is anonymous and lacks sufficient detail

8. Confidentiality and Data Protection

All complaints will be handled confidentially in line with:

- GDPR

- Charity Commission expectations
- SLSA Wales Data Protection Policy

Information will be shared only where necessary to resolve the complaint.

9. Protection Against Victimisation

No individual will suffer disadvantage for raising a complaint in good faith. Any volunteer or club officer found to retaliate may face:

- Volunteer suspension
- Removal from committees
- Referred disciplinary action
- Notification to relevant clubs

10. Records and Monitoring

SLSA Wales will maintain a record of:

- Complaints received
- Actions taken
- Outcomes
- Appeals

These records will be reviewed annually by Trustees to identify trends and improvements. These records will remain on file for 7 years.

11. Review of This Policy

This policy will be reviewed **every two years**, or earlier if required due to:

- Legal changes
- Governance changes
- Lessons learned from complaints