


NORTHUMBERLAND FOOTBALL LEAGUE

LEAGUE COMPLAINTS PROCESS

EST 1946



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INTRODUCTION



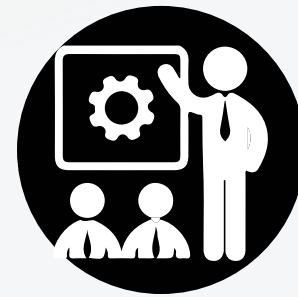
1.1

This document outlines The Northumberland Football League's ("The NFL") commitment to dealing with complaints that fall within the remit of The NFL. It also provides information as to how the complaints process is managed, responded to and how we will reflect upon complaints when periodically reviewing our disciplinary processes.



1.3

The outcome of any complaint made to the NFL, along with any resulting actions, will be explained to the complainant in writing.



1.2

The NFL takes all complaints seriously and commits to ensuring that complaints, concerns and issues raised by stakeholders are properly investigated in an unbiased, non-judgmental, transparent, timely and appropriate manner.



1.4

This complaint process aims to:

- provide a quality and responsive service; and
- acknowledge that all people who are involved in the NFL have a right to complain if they are unhappy about the process or an aspect of the process.

OUR AIMS

2.1

The NFL is committed to achieving a fair and transparent process. This will be achieved by promoting a clear structure for Participants and their representatives, who are involved in the process, to provide feedback or register complaints.

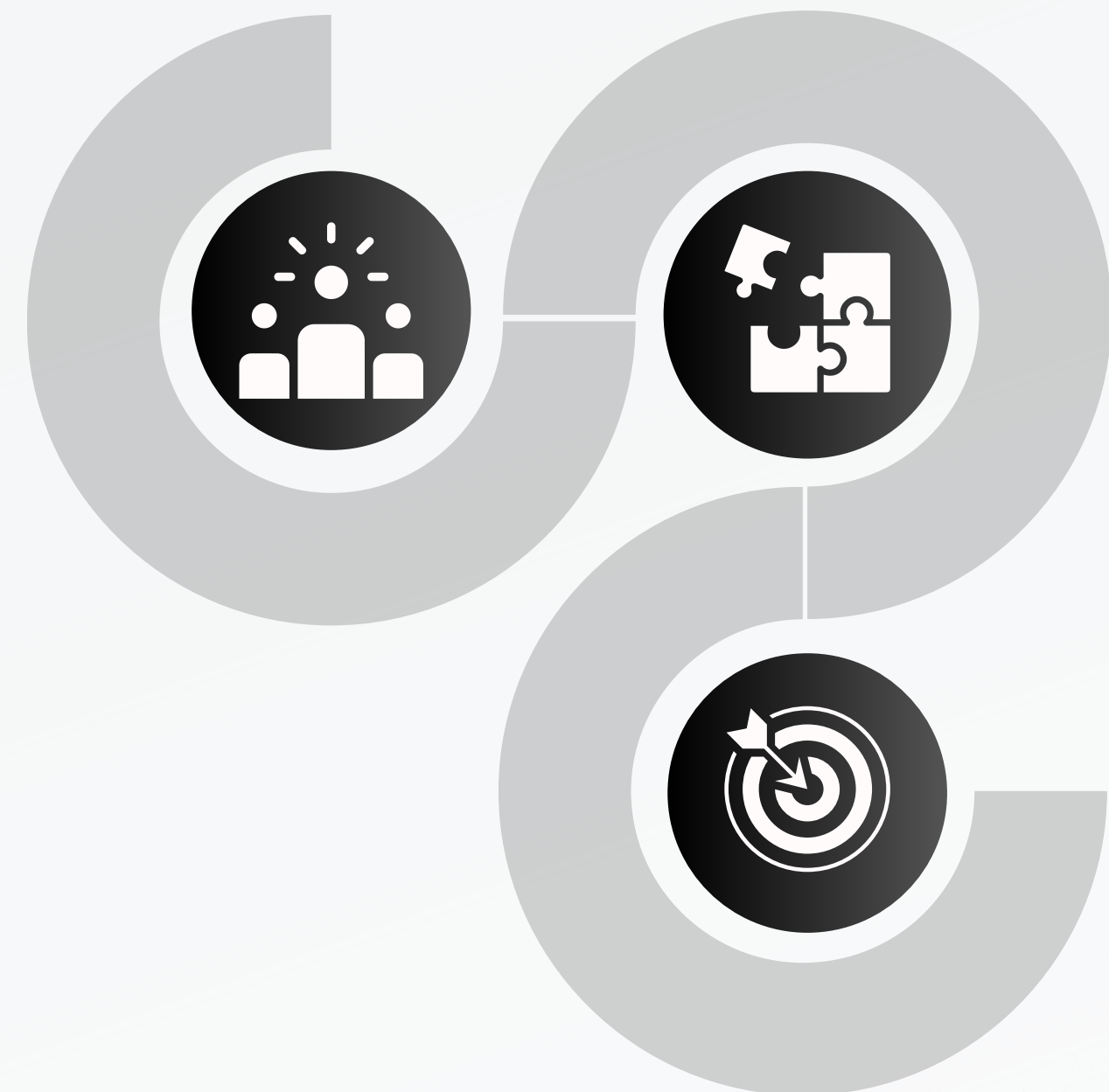
2.2

When handling complaints, the NFL will:

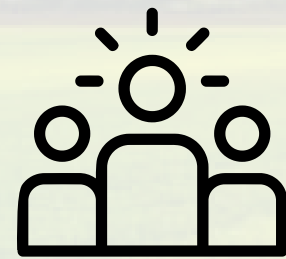
- ensure complainants are treated fairly and provided with a transparent, simple service to assist them in making their complaint.
- ensure complaints are received in good faith and investigated thoroughly, in accordance with procedure and in a timely manner.

2.3

The NFL will strive to ensure that complainants receive appropriate help and guidance to aid them in making a complaint or understanding the procedure.



VALUES



CLARITY

That information about the process and how it is structured should be clear and accessible



Excellence

That complainants have an opportunity to tell us about their experiences in order to better services



Collaboration

That the Process is transparent and able to account to complainants for all decisions made.

WHAT IS A COMPLAINT?

A complaint can be defined as a statement of dissatisfaction, provided in writing, from a person or company, about the provision of, or failure to provide a service.

WHO CAN MAKE A COMPLAINT?

Those directly involved in the Process can raise a complaint. If the complainant is a minor, a responsible adult can or must bring the complaint on their behalf.

Those involved in the Process may include but is not limited to:

- Complainant (Over/Under 18)
- Witnesses (Over/Under 18)
- Participant Charged (Over/Under 18)
- Appellant (Over/Under 18)
- Case Representative (acting on the instruction of the complainant)[1]
- Responsible Adult (including a Parent, Guardian or Care.

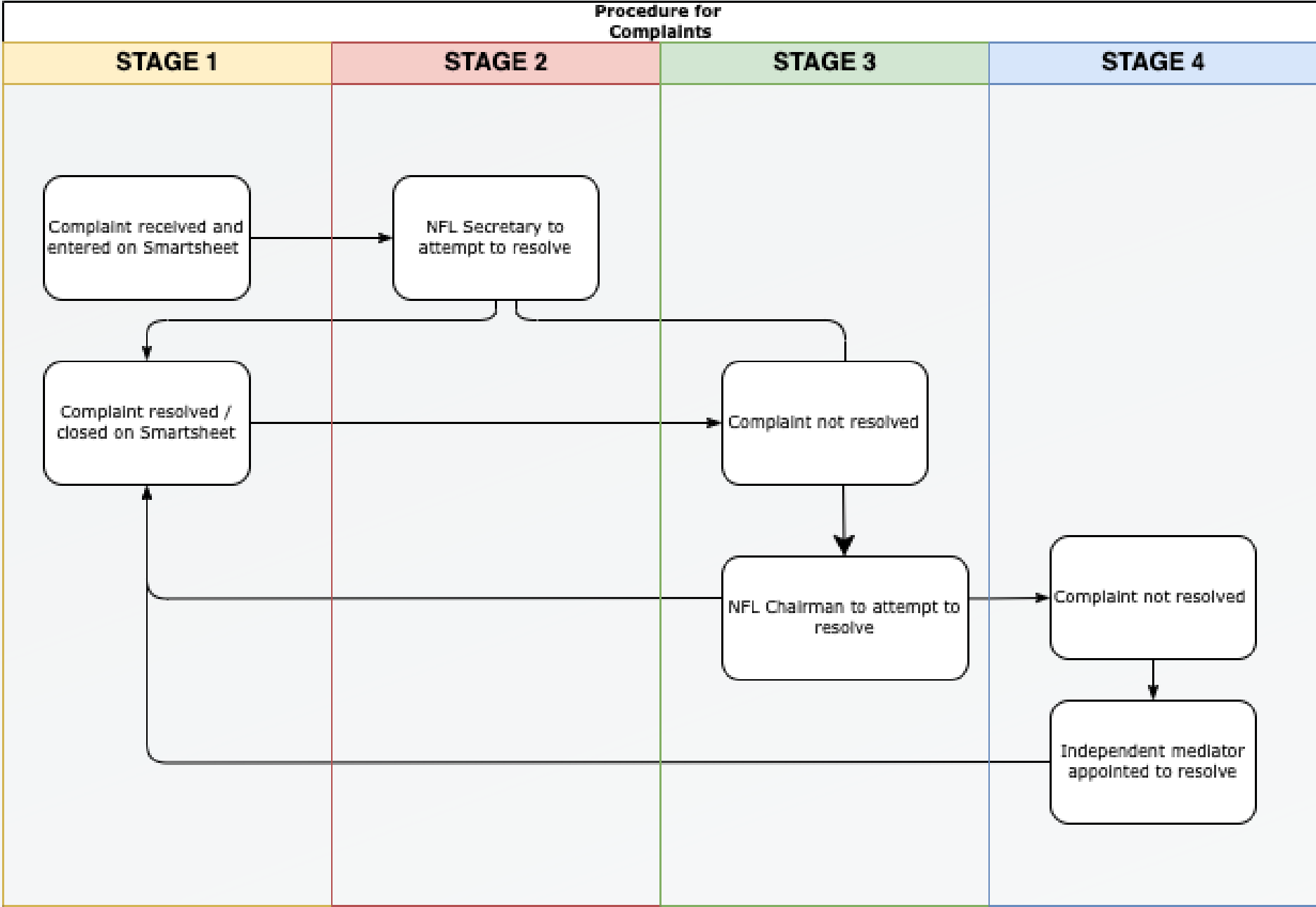
The Case Representative who acted on behalf of the participant charged during the Disciplinary Process

COMPLAINTS THAT CANNOT BE DEALT WITH VIA THIS PROCEDURE

- A complaint about the way a safeguarding concern has been managed (further details contained at Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk)
- The raising of a safeguarding concern unless the concern relates directly to the league's process
- The complaint has already been dealt with by this Complaint Procedure;
- The complaint is more than 12 months old and it would not be possible for The NFL to consider the complaint effectively and fairly; (further detailed contained at Timescales of Making a Complaint); or
- A complaint in relation to any disciplinary sanctions imposed by a Regulatory Commission or any Appeal board which have been addressed in line with FA Rules and Regulations. This does not prevent a complaint being raised in relation to the process (not outcome) of how a decision was made.

HOW TO COMPLAIN

- Complaints should be sent in writing (preferably by email) in accordance with the stage of the complaint.
- The nature of the complaint should be detailed along with specific examples highlighting the grounds for the complaint, such as of perceived poor practice, or any specific incidents, along with supporting evidence such as email correspondence or other documentation.
- Once the complaint referral has been completed, the complaint process and relevant timings would commence.



Stage 1
The relevant department within the NFL will log the complaint.

Stage 2
The complaint is passed to the NFL’s secretary or equivalent will investigate the complaint and respond to the complainant within the timescales set out in this procedure.

Stage 3
If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 2, they can refer their complaint to the Chairman of the NFL.

Stage 4
If the complainant feels that the problem has not been satisfactorily resolved at Stage 3, they can request an independent mediator be appointed to resolve the complaint.

9.1

1.1 The league must deal with each complaint in a prompt and courteous manner, taking due care and consideration to follow the procedures set out within this document.

9.2

The league will use best endeavours to:

- acknowledge all complaints within 5 working days;
- respond to all stages of the Non-serious Cases and Administration within 10 working days;
- respond to all stages of the Serious Cases within 5 working days;
- resolve all complaints within 12 weeks of acknowledgement.

9.3

Should the league not be able to fulfil the timeframes outlined in 9.2, this will be communicated to the complainant with an estimated date of resolution and the reason for delay.

9.4

If any additional information has been requested or if the complainant's written agreement to contact a third-party is required, the league will respond within 30 days upon receipt of such details from the complainant.

LEAGUE EXPECTATIONS

TIMESCALES FOR MAKING A COMPLAINT

The total complaints procedure should be finalised in no more than 90 days unless there are exceptional circumstances in which case the complainant will be kept informed of progress.



Complaints about issues or events that occurred more than 12 months prior to the date of the complaint will not normally be considered unless any of the following circumstances apply:



- The complainant was incapacitated by ill-health beyond the 12 month period which prevented him/her from making a complaint within the timescales permitted and provides proof of this

- It would have been unreasonable for the complaint to have been made earlier than it was made

Similarly, there will be no review of a complaint that was dealt with more than 12 months ago.



ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

Complaints received anonymously will be recorded and considered, but action may be limited if further information is required to ensure a full and fair investigation.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND ADULTS AT RISK

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All safeguarding concerns outside the process about the welfare of a child or adult or the behaviour of an adult towards a child or young person under 18 years of age in football should be reported in one of the following ways:

- To the league welfare officer – please find out from your club who these people are;
- To your County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer. Click www.thefa.com/about-football-association/who-we-are/county-fas for a list of County FA contacts;
- By emailing The FA Safeguarding Team at safeguarding@TheFA.com;
- If urgent and you cannot contact your club, league or County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer, then call the NSPCC 24-hour helpline on 0808 800 5000;
- If it is an emergency because a child or children are at immediate risk, then call the Police or Children's Social Care in your area.

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Please note that there is no time limit on reporting a safeguarding concern.

DATA PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY

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13.1

To process a complaint The NFL will hold personal data about the complainant, which the individual provides, and which other people give in response to the complaint.

13.2

The identity of the person making the complaint will only be known to those who need to consider the complaint and will not be revealed to other people or made public. However, it may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in some circumstances, for example, where relevant legislation applied, or allegations are made which involve the conduct of third-parties.

13,3

The NFL will normally destroy complaints files in a secure manner six years after the complaint has been closed.



COMPLIANCE AND REVIEW

14.1

Complaints are an important tool which, alongside data provided by exit surveys, stakeholder surveys, user feedback and focus groups, will allow us to learn about the services we provide. They provide a useful source of information about how individuals see our services and how we are serving them.

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14.2

The NFL will monitor the volume and subject matter of complaints in order to:

- help maintain standards of fairness and equality whilst delivering a game free from discrimination;
 - identify the cause of complaints;
- implement preventative measures to reduce the risks of recurrences;
- take corrective action where Regulations allows;
- optimise procedures for dealing with complaints which will assist with The NFL's culture of continuous improvement;
- be responsive to the needs of those affected by the work of The NFL.

QUALITY ASSURANCE

To ensure that The NFL can learn from complaints, the following data will be collected:

- Name and address (unless it is an anonymous complaint);
- Name of person dealing with the complaint;
- Date of complaint and response;
- Nature of complaint;
- Action(s) taken/recommendations made in response to the complaint lessons learnt.

PERSISTENT AND/OR UNREASONABLE CONTACT

16.1

Wherever possible The NFL will do everything in its power to investigate complaints fully and resolve our customer's issues.

16.2

However, there will be occasions in which The NFL are unable to meet customers' expectations or that the complaint itself does not justify further investigation. This may be for example, because the complainant is unreasonable or persistent in nature, or a combination of the two.

16.3

It is the role of the Chairman of the NFL to determine whether a complainant is unreasonable and/or persistent if they meet any of the following criteria:

1. Persistence in pursuing a complaint after the full complaint's procedure has been exhausted;
2. Continually changing the substance of the complaint or continually raising new issues about the complaint;
3. No precise issue has been identified in the complaint;
4. Threats of intimidation, physical violence or other abusive language or behaviour;
5. Participant has an excessive number of contacts with The FA amounting to harassment;
6. Harassed or been abusive towards members of staff;
7. Displayed unreasonable or unrealistic demands and fails to recognise these requests are unreasonable;
8. Making a request that is outside The NFL's remit.

Following this the appropriate person will inform the complainant of the action The NFL has chosen to take against them. This will include any or all the following:

- Refuse to accept any further phone calls from the complainant or anyone calling on the complainant's behalf;
- Terminate any calls made to The NFL by the complainant;
- Refuse to grant any further meetings with the complainant;
- Allow limited contact with a nominated person;
 - Limit the type of correspondence the complainant can make;
- Where appropriate, to report the matter to the Police, appropriate governing body or take legal action. In such cases, we may not give the complainant warning of that action.

PERSISTENT AND/OR UNREASONABLE CONTACT

16.5

All future correspondences that the complainant makes to The NFL have to be kept on record.

16.6

The NFL will advise the complainant that should they be unhappy with the decision they can escalate the complaint to the appointed independent mediator within 2 working days of the decision of Stage 3.

16.7

The NFL will review all future correspondences with the complainant to evaluate whether limited contact remains appropriate. Due consideration will be given if:

- the complainant provides new, important information which merits a reassessment of the complaint;
- the complainant issues a separate complaint which warrants the use of the general complaints procedure;
- the complainant displays a change of attitude/behaviour when dealing with the NFL.

16.8

If a complainant is categorised as 'unreasonable and/or persistent', their access or ability to make contact will be limited. This will be reviewed, and the complainant will be advised accordingly.