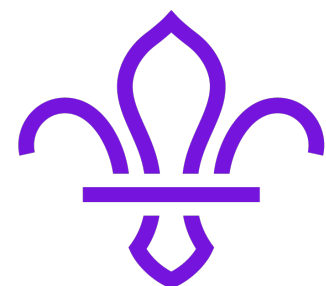




Scouts Complaints Policy - December 2025

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Scouts
22nd Stoke

The purpose of this document is to give guidance to Lead Volunteers and Team Leaders who are required to deal with complaints which have been received about Scouts. Whilst this policy is taken directly from the national policy, the process in dealing with complaints at 22nd Stoke Scout Group will fall within this policy and all points followed.

1. Scout Values

In line with its values, The Scouts recognises its responsibility to deal fairly, constructively and consistently with expressions of concern or dissatisfaction from members and non-members, including parents and carers on behalf of themselves or their children.

As Scouts we're guided by the values of integrity, respect, care, belief and co-operation.

When applying this policy, these values should be at the forefront of every interaction and decision that's made, and all involved should be regularly reminded of them.

Focusing on the values of respect and care, the wellbeing and mental health of all involved when dealing with an expression of concern or dissatisfaction should be considered throughout. More information is available on the Supporting the wellbeing and mental health when a concern is raised webpage.

2. Dealing With Complaints

Where an individual has raised a concern or several concerns which, individually or collectively, could be classified under more than one of the Scouts' policies, it may be decided to consider them all under the same policy. When concerns raised have engaged more than one Scouts policy, Scouts may consider pausing one or more aspects in order to effectively manage the concerns. This may apply to a variety of scenarios including where safeguarding concerns have been raised alongside a complaint, or where a Subject Access Request has been submitted alongside a complaint. Scouts has complete discretion to decide under which of its policies a concern should be considered and their decision in relation to this is final.

2.1 Dealing with complaints informally

Many complainants don't want to enter a formal complaints procedure. They simply want to have their questions answered, their concerns dealt with, or their opinion noted. As a result, local, informal resolution should always be attempted before engaging the formal complaints policy.

It's important to recognise the point when a complaint reaches a stage at which it should be dealt with formally. We ask that complainants try an informal attempt at resolution wherever possible.

If a complaint is to be dealt with formally, the steps set out in the rest of this policy should be followed.

2.2 What complaints are accepted

A complaint can be raised by members (including youth members), non-members or by the parent or carer of a child (who is a youth member of Scouts) that are directly affected by the concern being raised. If, for any reason, someone is unable to make the complaint themselves, a representative (such as a friend or family member) may make a complaint on their behalf. In this case, the representative should explain why the individual is unable to make the complaint themselves. If appropriate, you'll need to contact the individual to confirm that they've consented to the representative acting on their behalf.

Complainants should be encouraged to provide their name and contact details as it makes it easier for us to fully investigate the complaint, verify information and update the complainant on the progress of the investigation. However, if a complainant withholds their identity, steps will be taken to investigate the complaint to the extent possible.

Complainants can ask to keep their identity confidential and specify any other aspects of the complaint that contain sensitive information. You should aim to keep such details confidential wherever practical, but no absolute assurance can be given to the complainant as there may be situations in which disclosure will be necessary or even legally required.

Complaints will only be accepted within three months of the date that the complainant reasonably knew enough facts to report the issue.

If there's reasonable belief that a complaint is vexatious or malicious, then it won't be progressed. A complaint is vexatious or malicious if it's possible to demonstrate it's without basis and that it would tend to or is being made with an intention to cause worry, upset, annoyance or embarrassment.

Complaints broadly or substantively the same as a previous complaint raised under any of Scouts' policies will not be progressed.

The Complaints Policy should not be used where individuals disagree with a national policy set by Scouts. Any concerns about national policy should instead be raised through The Scouts Support Centre.

If a complainant does not agree with the reason for their complaint not being progressed, they are entitled to one appeal in accordance with this policy.

2.3 Who should complaints be made to?

The vast majority of adults involved in Scouts are volunteers. Complaints received will be passed to the most appropriate and most local Lead Volunteer or Team Leader for resolution. Contact details of the relevant appropriate volunteer Lead Volunteer or Team Leader can be obtained from the Scout Support Centre. The appropriate Lead Volunteer or Team Leader can then decide whether they'll manage the complaint themselves or delegate to one of their team members to manage the complaint.

If the appropriate Lead Volunteer, Team Leader or their delegated person are unable to investigate the complaint for any reason including a conflict of interest (see definition below), the complaint should be passed onto a Lead Volunteer or Team Leader from an equivalent part of the movement for them to progress the complaint.

Conflict of interest – A conflict of interest is when someone's judgement or actions are, or could be, affected by something unconnected with their role in Scouts. This includes any circumstances that affect, or could be seen to affect, someone's independence or impartiality.

If a Lead Volunteer or Team Leader from the management level above is an 'acting' Lead Volunteer or Team Leader where a complaint is to be managed, then whenever possible they shouldn't manage the complaint so as not to create a conflict of interest if an appeal is needed.

The offices of the Patron, President, and Chief Scout do not deal with complaints, disagreements or disputes. Any correspondence received on these matters by UK headquarters will be referred to the most appropriate and most Lead Volunteer or Team Leader.

Prior to beginning an investigation into a complaint, the next Lead Volunteer or Team Leader from where the complaint is being managed should be informed and kept up to date with the progress of the investigation throughout. This Lead Volunteer or Team Leader must not get drawn into the detail of the handling of the initial complaint in case they are required to hear an appeal at a later stage.

There is no process of 'escalation' of a complaint. The complainant's recourse is solely to a single appeal once the original complaint has been investigated and the outcome known as set out in this policy.

Complaints in relation to Scouts staff and matters relating to headquarters at Gilwell Park (HQ) will be handled by the relevant line manager and/or Director and, where appropriate, the Chief Executive or senior staff member in accordance with this policy and/or relevant employee policies. Complaints related to HQ can be submitted online via this form. Details of who to make an appeal to in these circumstances will be included in the complaint response.

Complaints about staff not directly employed by Scouts should be dealt with in the most appropriate and most local level of Scouts in accordance with their relevant employment policies.

2.4 Submitting a complaint

Formal complaints should be made in writing (physically or digitally) wherever possible. If there's a reason why a complainant cannot make their complaint in writing, they can make it orally. The person to whom they make their complaint should, for the sake of clarity, summarise the complaint in writing and ask the complainant to check it is an accurate record of the conversation. Complaints should ideally be made on the Complaints Template and submitted via email to the relevant Lead Volunteer or Team Leader. For example, if the complaint is about a Group Lead Volunteer, the complaint should be submitted to the District Lead Volunteer or District Team Leader. Contact details of who to submit a complaint to can be obtained from the Scouts Support Centre.

The complaint should include:

- Complainant's full name.
- Complainant's contact details.
- How the complainant would like to be contacted in relation to the complaint.
- Complainant's relationship to the Scouts eg member or parent.
- A summary of the complaint and what they think went wrong, including dates and times or any reported incidents.
- Clear and concise statements of what they would like to be investigated.
- Details of any informal resolution that has been taken so far to try to resolve the issue.
- Details of what they would see as an acceptable outcome.
- Details of any formal concerns already raised in any part of Scouts under any of the policies.

The Scouts' Complaints Template asks that complaints be kept to no more than 1,000 words in length and complainants are encouraged to keep within this limit. Supplementary documentation may be requested at a later stage as part of the investigation process.

2.5 Acknowledging a complaint

When a complaint has been received by the relevant Lead Volunteer or Team Leader, a standard acknowledgement confirming receipt should be sent within 7 days.

Acknowledgement does not necessarily mean the complaint has been accepted in accordance with the policy, it is simply a confirmation that the information sent by the complainant, has been received.

Following the acknowledgement the appropriate Lead Volunteer or Team Leader will need to make the following decisions:

- Who will manage the complaint as set out in the ‘Who should complaints be made to?’ section above.
- If the complaint can be accepted based on what’s set out in the ‘What complaints are accepted under the Complaints Policy?’ section above.
- If the complainant has other ongoing concerns raised through any of Scouts’ policies at any management level. If so, then the appropriate Lead Volunteer or Team Leader can decide to combine the complaints and appoint one Lead Volunteer, Team Leader or another leader of another team to deal with all complaints as one.
- If the complaint is one of multiple concerns raised about the same issue or individual through any of the Scouts’ policies. If so, then the appropriate volunteer manager can decide to combine the complaints and appoint one volunteer manager, deputy or assistant to deal with all the concerns as one.

Once these decisions have been made the individual managing the complaint should communicate in writing (physically or digitally) the following points to the person raising the complaint:

- the decisions made above
- a concise list of the areas to be investigated and a request for the complainant to confirm they are happy to proceed with an investigation into the complaint on this basis.
- [if required, include a link to Making a complaint about Scouting](#)
- detail about who will be contacting them regarding the complaint and how to contact them
- the timescales of this communication (must include as a minimum an update every 14 days)

2.6 Investigating a complaint

An investigation is primarily an information gathering exercise and should therefore:

- gather all the facts
- seek the views of those involved

The individual managing the complaint can nominate someone to investigate a complaint on their behalf and report back to them with the facts to be considered. Careful consideration should be given as to who is chosen to investigate a complaint and there should be no conflict of interest (see definition above) between the investigator and others involved in the complaint.

When speaking with those involved in a complaint, you should inform them how they're involved with the complaint and give them an opportunity to respond. It's at the discretion of the investigator to decide how much detail is appropriate to provide to the individual about the complaint which has been made. You should inform the individuals you contact that their responses may form part of the response to the complaint and record appropriate notes of your conversations.

The person investigating a complaint should detail the facts in writing and may make a recommendation to the individual managing the complaint as to the outcome of the complaint based on the facts available.

The individual managing the complaint should then decide on the outcome of the complaint based on the findings of the investigation and in accordance with and informed by the Scouts' policies. There may be circumstances where you're unable to determine the outcome of individual aspects of a complaint. However, the complaint should either be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld, with recommendations on the actions to be taken based on this decision.

2.7 Responding to a complaint

Following the investigation, the complainant should be notified in writing (physical or digital) of the outcome of the investigation and any steps which will be taken as a result of the complaint.

All written responses should be given careful consideration before being sent.

The response to the complainant should:

- clearly state if the complaint is to be upheld, partially upheld or not upheld and the reasons that led to this decision referencing, where possible, all the key issues raised by the complainant based on the findings of the investigation.
- identify recommendations that will be undertaken based on the outcome of the complaint in the spirit of continuous improvement.
- identify who the appropriate volunteer manager the complainant can appeal to if they're unhappy with the process undertaken or the outcome of the complaint and how they can be contacted.

Lead Volunteers and Team Leaders responding to complaints may wish to use the [complaint response template](#).

It's also important to contact others who have been directly involved with the complaint and share with them the outcome and recommendations where appropriate. You should also inform them as to who the appropriate Lead Volunteer or Team Leader is to appeal to if they're unhappy with the process undertaken or the outcome of the complaint.

3. Appeals

3.1 What appeals are accepted?

If a complainant or those who are directly affected by the outcome of a complaint are not satisfied with the outcome of the original complaint or the process undertaken, there is a right for appeal. Only one appeal is allowed per person directly affected by a complaint and if multiple appeals raise the same concerns they may be carried out as one appeal.

Any appeal must be received within 14 days of the complainant, or those directly affected, being notified of the outcome of the original complaint.

3.2 Who should appeals be made to?

Appeals must be directed to the most appropriate and most local Lead Volunteer or Team Leader at the next level of Scouts. The appropriate Lead Volunteer or Team Leader can then decide whether they'll manage the appeal themselves or delegate to a leader of another team to manage the appeal. Contact details of the appropriate Lead Volunteer or Team Leader to raise an appeal to, can be obtained from the Scouts [Support Centre](#).

If the appropriate Lead Volunteer, Team Leader or their delegated person are unable to investigate the complaint for any reason including a conflict of interest (see definition above), the complaint should be passed onto a Lead Volunteer, Team Leader or leader of another team from an equivalent part of the movement.

3.3 Dealing with an appeal

An appeal should be treated in the same way as an original complaint. The same process should be followed and the same courtesies (especially in terms of communication) extended to all parties. Any appeal should clearly state the basis on which it's being made. An appeal will consider the process undertaken to handle the original complaint and the outcome of the original complaint. An appeal should be acknowledged in the same way a complaint is and following initial acknowledgement, the appropriate Lead Volunteer or Team Leader responsible for overseeing the appeal should send a further acknowledgement in the same manner as the complaint was handled.

Lead Volunteer or Team Leader responding to appeals may wish to use the [appeal response template](#).

4. Collection of Statistical Data

4.1 Dealing with Subject Access Requests

Individuals involved with complaints may decide to make a Data Subject Access Request (DSAR) under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). This is also known as a Subject Access Request (SAR). [Guidance on DSARs is available.](#)

If a DSAR is requested this may slow the progress of a complaint or appeal as it may provide more evidence or use resources to process the DSAR. If this is the case it should be clearly communicated with those involved with the complaint. In some cases, it may be necessary to pause the complaint/appeal investigation until the outcome of the DSAR is provided to the requestor and any reasonable time given so they can decide on how to proceed with the complaint/appeal.

It's important to maintain accurate and complete records relating to complaints and appeals, in accordance with local data retention policies in the event they are required at a later date. As a general rule, written communication containing personal information may be disclosable where a DSAR is received. However, all communication relating to a complaint or appeal should be securely stored together in one place for completeness of records and ease of reference.

Guidance and information on how to handle personal data, when dealing with complaints is available in the [Complaints and handling personal data page](#).

4.2 Dealing with Serious Incidents

The appropriate Lead Volunteer or Team Leader should be aware of the potential for public interest in a complaint about Scouts and use the local processes for such matters (which might include activating your local communications plan if appropriate).

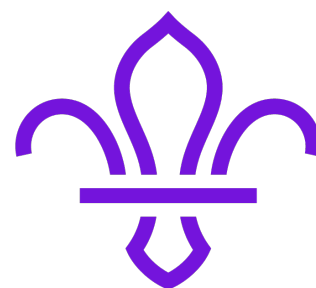
Every charity is under a regulatory obligation to report serious incidents to the Charity Commission including Scout Groups and any other charity that is part of Scouts. [Read more information on what constitutes as a serious incident and how to report it.](#)

4.3 Whistleblowing and charity regulatory bodies

Scouts' Complaints policy should deal adequately with most complaints; however, everyone has the right to raise a serious issue, which may include whistleblowing, directly with the relevant regulatory body. Information is included in the [Whistleblowing policy](#).

As well as the charity regulatory bodies you may wish to raise a serious incident involving fundraising to the following bodies:

- The Fundraising Regulator is the independent regulator of charitable fundraising in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and can be found online at www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk
- The Scottish Fundraising Standards Panel is the body which is responsible for fundraising standards in Scotland and for handling complaints related to Scottish registered charities and can be found online at www.goodfundraising.scot



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