

# **Scottish Youth FA**

## **Complaints Management System**



## 1 INTRODUCTION

**The Scottish Youth FA** is a Company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital under cover of The Companies Acts 1985 to 2006, governed by Articles of Association and a set of Supplementary & Playing Rules.

**The Scottish Youth FA mission is:**

Leading the way and modernising our approach to guarantee the continued growth of grassroots football. Encouraging all boys and girls throughout Scotland to play organised football and enabling every child to develop and flourish as a player. SYFA is helping all SYFA volunteers to create a safe and fun environment while developing and supporting all players.

**The Scottish Youth FA vision is:**

To increase the number of children and young adults playing organised, quality football throughout Scotland.

## 2 POLICY STATEMENT

### 2.1 Purpose

This policy outlines the procedure to follow to make a complaint and the procedure SYFA staff, volunteers and members will follow to manage complaints.

### 2.2 Scope

This policy applies to SYFA Member League(s) or Association(s); SYFA Member Club(s); SYFA Registered Player(s); SYFA Registered Official(s); and parent/guardians of a player who wish to complain about SYFA Member League/Associations; Clubs; Registered Players; Officials; members of Staff; Directors, or members of a Committee; Parent/guardians of a player or official; or members of any other recognised football organisation.

**N.B: This policy does not apply to concerns of a Child Protection nature.**

If you have any concerns about the welfare of a player, please complete a Concern Recording Form and email this to our National Protection Officer at: [syfaprotection@scottish-football.com](mailto:syfaprotection@scottish-football.com)

If you think a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999, or call the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000, straight away.

### 2.3 Principles

SYFA is committed to providing an excellent service to everyone affected by its work. As such, we do not view comments, complaints, or constructive feedback as unwanted, rather as learning opportunities that contribute to our culture of continuous improvement.

Principles of integrity and transparency inform this policy and its application.

## **2.4 Objectives**

The objectives of this Complaints Management System are:

- 2.4.1 To ensure complaints are taken up with the relevant party and investigated at the appropriate level
- 2.4.2 To ensure proportionate outcomes
- 2.4.3 To provide a consistent approach in the way SYFA deals with complaints
- 2.4.4 To make provision for monitoring and evaluation of complaints so lessons are learned/operations are improved where necessary

## **3 DEFINITION OF COMPLAINT**

For the purposes of this Complaints Management System:

A **complaint** is a communication, in writing, of concern or dissatisfaction relating to an act; an omission; a standard of service; or perceived wrongdoing. Per the Articles of Association, the expression “in writing” means written, printed, typewritten or lithographed or others and other modes of representing or reproducing words in a visible form.

## **4 COMPLAINTS PROCESS**

### **4.1 Stage 1**

In the first instance, any issues or concerns must be taken up directly with the party the issue/concern is about. An informal verbal conversation or email exchange may be most appropriate at this stage to avoid progressing to a complaint. The main rationale behind this is to achieve early resolution, resolving straightforward matters at the first opportunity and as close to the point of contact as possible.

For an issue to be considered a complaint and dealt with as such, it must be submitted in writing to the party it is about. The purpose of all correspondence ought to be seeking mutual resolution and sharing perspectives.

Staff, volunteers or members receiving a complaint may settle the issue by:

- Explaining the source of the problem or misunderstanding
- Offering an on-the-spot apology, if appropriate
- Suggesting reparative or preventative measures going forward

This approach aims to encourage healthy communication and supportive dynamics at local level. Taking initiative to deal with problems first-hand, as and when they arise, and in a respectful manner is not only central to fulfilling SYFA’s mission but also is an important skill to model for our youth players. Communicating the problem directly gives the party an initial opportunity to rectify minor problems and ensures misunderstandings are overcome or avoided.

In practice, the majority of complaints will be best resolved at Stage 1, without involvement at national level.

However, a complaint will be escalated to Stage 2 if:

- The complainer is dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 1 and requests an investigation;
- The issues raised are complex and require investigation at a national level within SYFA; or
- Exceptional circumstances specific to the case call for SYFA involvement.

Critically, both parties must be able to establish to SYFA that they have made a genuine and concerted effort to resolve the complaint at a local level before it can escalate to Stage 2.

#### **4.2 Stage 2**

The complaint is referred to SYFA staff for review. The complainer must submit a SYFA Complaints Form (*Attached as an appendix to this document*) explaining in full the situation that has caused their dissatisfaction, the previous attempts made to resolve the issue and the remedial action they would deem acceptable. SYFA staff will review the substantive points of the complaints and either provide a response or, if appropriate, refer back for local resolution.

The complaint is considered resolved at this stage if the complainer is satisfied by the response or accepts the response as factual. If the complaint raises complex or troublesome issues that require detailed, formal investigation it may be necessary to escalate the complaint to Stage 3.

#### **4.3 Stage 3**

If escalated to Stage 3, it is then lodged as a formal complaint. The complainer must confirm in writing they wish the complaint to progress to Stage 3.

The Compliance and Wellbeing Coordinator will investigate the complaint in full and take appropriate action when necessary. The complainer will receive a written response within 28 days of submitting their complaint. This response will outline SYFA's stance on the matter with reference to any relevant policy and protocol.

The nature of some complaints and the level of investigation they necessitate might mean a longer period of time is required – if this is the case this will be communicated to all parties.

**NB: In most cases, due to confidentiality restraints, it is not permissible to share with the complainer the outcome or any proposed disciplinary action resulting from an investigation.**

This will be considered the official position of SYFA on the matter. In rare circumstances the complainer may request the complaint be escalated to Stage 4, this will only be granted if it is apparent there could be a grey area that requires review.

#### **4.4 Stage 4**

The National Secretary or an appropriate Director will take a fresh and impartial look at the complaint and provide a final response detailing any changes to the official position or previously proposed remedial action.

If the complainer is not satisfied with the SYFA's final response, the complaint will be considered "deadlocked".

### **5 MEDIATION**

As an alternative to the Complaints Management System, SYFA offers Mediation to resolve minor misunderstandings or disagreements and improve working relationships. Mediation may be requested by anyone involved in a dispute and will be carried out in accordance with the SYFA Mediation policy.

### **6 WITHDRAWING A COMPLAINT**

If at any stage the complainer wants to stop a complaint progressing, they can do so in writing or email to the National Secretary. However, SYFA reserves the right to continue to investigate serious complaints.

(A "Withdrawal of Complaints" form is contained in Appendix A)

### **7 COMPLAINTS CONCERNING STAFF ACTIVE IN COMPLAINTS PROCESS**

It would not be appropriate, nor in keeping with the principles and objectives of this policy, for a staff member to be involved in processing a complaint made against them. Complaints relating to the Compliance and Wellbeing Coordinator will therefore be referred to the National Secretary. Complaints made against the National Secretary will be assigned to the Board and complaints concerning a Director will be handled by another suitable Director.

### **8 COMPLAINTS RE THE COMPLAINTS PROCESS**

If a complaint is made that the procedure outlined in this policy has not been followed, the matter can be raised for discussion at a meeting of the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors' meeting will not consider the content of the complaint, rather the procedural steps that have been taken in processing it. They may decide to refer the complaint back to Stage 2 and request a report to ensure the full procedure is followed.

## 9 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Complaint data is useful from an organisational effectiveness perspective as it provides information on weaknesses and shortcomings in processes and service delivery. SYFA will monitor the volume and subject matter of complaints to:

- Identify the cause of complaints
- Take corrective action
- Implement preventative measures to reduce the risk of recurrence
- Be responsive to the needs of those affected by our work
- Optimise procedures for dealing with complaints - contributing to SYFA's culture of continuous improvement

This Complaints Management System will be subject to systematic internal review. The Compliance and Wellbeing Coordinator will produce an annual report on the findings which will be made available to the Board of Directors.

We would appreciate any feedback on user experiences of the Complaints Management System.

## Appendix A

Forms can be found at [www.scottishyouthfa.co.uk](http://www.scottishyouthfa.co.uk) : Downloads: Complaints

### **Form SYFA C01**

To be used for submission of a Complaint to SYFA (see Section 4.2)

### **Form SYFA C02**

To be used for withdrawing a Complaint