

Resolving complaints: information for people considering making a complaint about Scouting

The Scout Association has a procedure in place to ensure that complaints are taken seriously and dealt with appropriately. This document describes how to make a complaint and how your complaint will be dealt with.

It is the policy of The Scout Association to have a fair and open process for dealing with concerns and complaints raised by members and non-members that directly affect them or their children in Scouting.

How do I complain?

In the first instance, you should try an informal approach to resolve your complaint and to see what action will be taken. We hope that many complaints can be dealt with quickly and informally.

If the informal approach proves to be unsatisfactory, then you may wish to register a formal complaint. Formal complaints should be made in writing to one of the people detailed below. It is helpful when registering a formal complaint if you can provide us with concise details about the problem and your preferred outcome to rectify the issue.

What complaints are accepted?

We accept complaints about how you have been treated by Scouting or, if you are a parent or carer of a young person, how that young person has been treated by Scouting.

We have a few basic rules for the acceptance of complaints:

- Complaints must be raised within three months of you knowing the facts (we do not deal with complaints that are older).
- Complaints must be about how you or your children have been treated in Scouting (except for parents/carers of children in Scouting we do not accept complaints that are raised on behalf of or regarding other people).
- We do not accept complaints that are broadly or substantively the same as a previous complaint or that we believe to be vexatious or malicious.
- We do not generally investigate anonymous complaints.

Who deals with complaints about paid Association staff?

In the first instance, complaints regarding a member of paid Association staff should be addressed to the relevant line manager so they can carry out an investigation. If you are unsure of the name of the manager you need to contact, the Scout Information Centre can assist you – they are available on 0345 300 1818.

Who deals with complaints about volunteers?

If your complaint is about a volunteer, it will be dealt with by the local volunteer manager in Scouting or by someone asked by them to investigate the complaint. If your complaint is about the local volunteer manager then it will be dealt with by the next senior volunteer manager or by someone asked by them to investigate the complaint.

If your complaint is about your Beaver Scout Colony, Cub Scout Pack, Scout Troop or some other aspect of your local Scout Group then it will be dealt with by the Group Scout Leader.

If your complaint is about your Explorer Scout Unit then it will be dealt with by the District Explorer Scout Commissioner.

If your complaint is about some other aspect of Scouting in the District then it will be dealt with by the District Commissioner.

In all cases, if you are not sure then ask the Group Scout Leader or the District Commissioner or contact the Scout Information Centre (0345 300 1818) who will help you to find the right person.

How will my complaint be dealt with?

Your complaint will be dealt with fairly and objectively. We handle complaints in a positive and pro-active manner and expect resolutions and outcomes to contribute to a process of continuous improvement.

Please bear in mind that adults in Scouting are volunteers and have other calls on their time. It may therefore take a little longer to sort out your complaint, however you will be kept informed of the progress of the complaint with an acknowledgement of a formal complaint within seven days and regular updates (typically at least every four weeks).

The investigator may need to speak to you and a number of other people to fully understand your complaint and the circumstances surrounding it.

The manager will make a decision about the complaint and will inform you whether your complaint is upheld or not and the actions that will be taken as a result.

What if I am not satisfied with the outcome of my complaint?

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of your complaint or the way in which it was handled, then you may appeal. You must appeal within 28 days of being given the outcome of your complaint.

Your appeal must be formally lodged with the next level of volunteer manager in Scouting. If you are not sure who this is, then the manager who dealt with your complaint will provide the details. In your appeal, you must clearly explain the basis on which you are making the appeal and your preferred outcome to resolve the issue.

Your appeal will consider the process undertaken to handle the original complaint and the outcome of the original complaint. You will be kept informed of the progress of your appeal with an acknowledgement of your appeal within seven days and regular updates (typically at least every four weeks).

Your appeal will be investigated by the next senior volunteer manager or by someone asked to do this on the next senior manager's behalf. The investigator may need to speak to you and a number of other people to fully understand your appeal and the circumstances surrounding the investigation of your complaint.

The next senior manager will make a decision about the appeal and will inform you whether your appeal is upheld or not and the actions that will be taken as a result.

If you are not satisfied with the outcome of the appeal, there is no further escalation of the complaint and we will not consider further any action regarding the complaint or the appeal.

Whistleblowing and the Charity Regulatory Bodies

As a charity, Scouting is regulated by the relevant regulatory body in each country of the United Kingdom. In very serious matters, which may include whistleblowing, the regulatory body may consider acting on a complaint made to it directly. The regulatory body will not generally become involved with a dispute between members of the charity or where a concern is about policies followed or actions taken by the trustees within the law and the provisions of the charity's governing document (in Scouting this is "Policy, Organisation and Rules" found at www.scouts.org.uk/por).

The Scout complaint process should deal properly with your complaint, however you have the right to raise a serious issue directly with the Charity Commission at <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/> for England and Wales, with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland at <http://www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/> or with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) at <http://www.oscr.org.uk/>.