

# Crawley Swimming Club: Complaints, Disputes and Grievance Procedure Policy



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Compliance Framework: Wavepower 2025 (Version 2.1) & Swim England Regulations 105.

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## 1. Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out how Crawley Swimming Club (CSC) manages complaints, disputes, and grievances in strict alignment with Swim England Judicial and Safeguarding Regulations. It provides a clear, fair, and transparent framework for resolving internal issues while prioritising child safeguarding and adult well-being above all else.

### Applicability

This policy applies to all club members, including swimmers, parents/guardians, volunteers, coaches, officials, trustees, and sub-committee members.

### Employment Law Exception

***IMPORTANT:*** *This policy applies to standard membership, club operational disputes, and volunteer grievances. Any formal grievance raised by a paid employee of CSC, or any operational complaint targeting an employee's contractual duties, must be handled in accordance with their Contract of Employment and statutory UK ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures, bypassing standard club panels.*

## 2. Key Principles & Wavepower Precedence

- **Informal First:** Where appropriate, minor operational or communication issues should be resolved informally.
- **Safeguarding Precedence:** Safeguarding or welfare concerns must be referred immediately to the Welfare Team. If an issue contains both administrative disputes and welfare concerns, **the safeguarding process takes absolute precedence.**
- **Regulatory Alignment:** This policy is operated in accordance with **Regulation 105 (Internal Club Disputes)** of the Swim England Handbook.

## 3. Key Roles & Responsibilities

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## 3.1 Welfare Officer / Welfare Team

- Acts as the independent, first point of contact for all safeguarding, safety, or welfare concerns.
- Manages cases strictly under Wavepower 2025 guidelines and holds the statutory duty to escalate concerns directly to the Swim England Safeguarding Team or external emergency/statutory services.

## 3.2 Parent Liaison Officer

- Acts as the primary point of contact for all non-safeguarding complaints, operational disputes, and member grievances.
- Acknowledges, logs, and tracks formal administrative cases, facilitating informal mediation where possible.

## 3.3 Executive Trustees

- Provide structural governance and appoint independent, conflict-free panels.
- **Conflict of Interest Safeguard:** No officer or Trustee may sit on an investigation team or Complaint Panel if they have any personal connection, squad involvement, or familial relationship with the parties involved.

# 4. How to Raise a Complaint, Dispute, or Grievance

## 4.1 Informal Stage

Members should first attempt an open conversation or request the Liaison Officer to facilitate minor mediation.

- Timescale: Informal resolution should ideally conclude within **10 working days**, wherever practicable.

## 4.2 Formal Complaint (Swim England Regulation 105 Track)

If informal resolution fails or is inappropriate, a formal complaint must be submitted in writing to the Liaison Officer. It must contain:

1. Full name and contact information of the complainant.
2. The specific identity of the person(s) or club entity complained about.
3. A clear, chronological description of the incident(s), dispute, or grievance.
4. Any supporting evidence (witness statements, screenshots, dates).

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5. The specific resolution or outcome being sought.

- Submission Deadline: Ideally within **10 working days, wherever practicable** of the incident or the breakdown of informal talks.

## 5. Initial Assessment & Pathway

Upon receiving a formal complaint, the Liaison Officer will, within **5 working days, wherever practicable**:

1. Issue a formal written acknowledgment to the complainant.
2. Log the issue in the club's secure, restricted complaints ledger.
3. Assess the case to ensure it contains no hidden safeguarding indicators. If any welfare or safety risks are identified, the file is immediately transferred to the Welfare Officer, and the standard complaints pathway is frozen.

## 6. Formal Investigation & Complaint Panel

### 6.1 Panel Structure

If the complaint requires a formal ruling, the Liaison Officer will convene a conflict-free, three-member **Complaint Panel** drawn from the Co-Chairs, Vice Chair, or independent Trustees. The Welfare Officer and Liaison Officer may advise the panel on policy frameworks but are strictly barred from voting or sitting as panel members to preserve their operational independence.

### 6.2 Investigation and Hearing

An appointed, independent investigator will gather statements and evidence within **10 working days**. If a formal hearing is required, both parties will be given reasonable notice and the right to present their case.

### 6.3 Decisions and Sanctions

The Panel will issue its decision in writing within **14 working days, wherever practicable** of the hearing. The complaint will be ruled as Substantiated, Partially Substantiated, or Not Substantiated. Remedial actions may include:

- A mandated formal apology or structured mediation.
- Specific training requirements or behavioural contracts.
- Temporary restrictions on club attendance, squad access, or volunteer roles.
- Escalation/referral to Swim England.

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## 7. Right to Appeal (Swim England Regulation 104 Track)

If a party believes the process was unfair, they hold the right to appeal.

- **Grounds for Appeal:** Confined strictly to procedural unfairness, a demonstrable conflict of interest affecting the panel, or significant new evidence that was not reasonably available during the initial investigation.
- **Submission:** Must be submitted in writing to the Vice Chair within **10 working days** of receiving the written decision.
- **Appeals Panel:** A completely separate, independent panel of three uninvolved Trustees will review the process. Their written decision is final within the club's internal jurisdiction. Any further escalation must proceed externally through **Swim England Regulation 104**.

## 8. Confidentiality, Data Protection, and Review

- All case files, incident reports, and panel outcomes will be stored securely by the Club Secretary in restricted electronic folders for a minimum of 3 years, or longer if mandated by Swim England framework requirements.
- Data processing will comply strictly with UK GDPR and the Club's privacy policy.
- The Board of Trustees will review anonymised complaint trends annually to identify culture or safety areas requiring structural club training.

### Emergency & Whistleblowing Safeguarding Contacts

If a dispute or complaint involves immediate danger, physical harm, or a child protection emergency, do not wait for club processes:

- **Emergency Services:** Dial 999 immediately.
- **Club Welfare Officer:** [welfare@crawleysc.co.uk](mailto:welfare@crawleysc.co.uk)
- **Swim England Safeguarding and Welfare Team:** 01509 640700 (Option 1, then Option 5) or [safeguarding@swimming.org](mailto:safeguarding@swimming.org)
- **NSPCC Child Protection Helpline:** 0808 800 5000