

ALSAGER GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

Complaints Policy

1. Purpose of the Policy

Alsager Golf & Country Club is committed to providing a welcoming, respectful and safe environment for members, visitors, guests, staff and volunteers.

From time to time concerns or complaints may arise. This policy sets out a clear and fair process for raising and addressing complaints so that issues can be resolved promptly, proportionately and in a constructive manner.

The Club encourages concerns to be raised at the earliest opportunity so that they can be addressed informally wherever possible.

This policy should be read alongside the Club's Disciplinary Procedures, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Safeguarding Policies, and other relevant Club policies.

2. Scope

This policy applies to complaints relating to:

- the conduct of members
- the conduct of visitors or guests
- the conduct of staff or volunteers
- behaviour taking place on Club premises or during Club activities

Complaints may also relate to the conduct of visitors, guests, parents or guardians of junior members, contractors, or other individuals present on Club premises.

Where a complaint relates to a non member, the Club will review the matter and may take appropriate action, including restricting access to the Club or referring the matter to the member responsible for the guest where appropriate.

Complaints may also relate to concerns about discrimination, harassment, victimisation or breaches of the Club's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Where a complaint raises a safeguarding concern involving a child or vulnerable adult, the matter will be managed immediately under the Club's Safeguarding Policy and Procedures. Safeguarding concerns will always take priority over the normal complaints process.

Where appropriate, matters may also be referred to the Club's Disciplinary Procedures.

3. Informal Resolution

In many cases concerns can be resolved quickly and effectively through an informal conversation.

Members are encouraged, where appropriate, to raise issues politely and directly with the person involved or with a relevant Club representative such as:

- a member of the Management Team

- a Club Officer
- the Welfare Officer where appropriate

If a matter cannot be resolved informally, a formal complaint may be submitted in accordance with this policy.

4. How to Make a Formal Complaint

A formal complaint should normally be submitted in writing to the Operations Manager or to a member of the Club Council.

The complaint should include:

- the name of the person submitting the complaint
- the date and time of the incident where applicable
- details of the concern or issue
- the names of any individuals involved
- the names of any witnesses if known

Complaints should normally be raised within a reasonable period of the incident, ideally within 14 days.

Anonymous complaints may be considered at the discretion of the Club but may be more difficult to investigate.

Complaints should normally be made by the individual directly affected by the matter. The Club may decline to investigate complaints that are based solely on hearsay or second hand information unless there is a clear safeguarding concern or other compelling reason to do so.

Where appropriate, the Club may request further information before deciding whether a complaint should proceed to formal review.

Responsible Communication

Once a complaint has been submitted, members should avoid discussing the matter publicly or on social media while it is being considered. This helps ensure that all parties are treated fairly and that the matter can be reviewed objectively by the Club.

The Club may take this into account if behaviour relating to the complaint itself becomes inappropriate or disruptive.

5. Principles of Fair Process and Natural Justice

The Club is committed to ensuring that all complaints are handled fairly, proportionately and in accordance with the principles of natural justice.

Initial Assessment

All complaints received will be reviewed to determine whether they fall within the scope of this policy.

Where appropriate, the matter may be referred to the Disciplinary Chairperson for consideration under the Club's Disciplinary Procedures.

The Club may decide not to proceed with complaints that are malicious, vexatious, frivolous or unsupported by reasonable information.

Notification of the Person Concerned

Where a complaint proceeds to review and relates to the conduct of a specific individual, that individual will normally be informed in writing within 72 hours, where practicable, and provided with the details of the complaint.

Right of Response

The individual concerned will be given a reasonable opportunity to respond to the complaint, either in writing or in person, before any determination is made.

Fair Consideration

Any review of a complaint will take account of information from all parties involved and will be conducted in a balanced and impartial manner.

6. Investigation of Complaints

Where a complaint requires formal consideration, the Club may appoint an appropriate individual or small panel to review the matter.

The purpose of the review will be to establish the relevant facts based on the information available. This may include:

- reviewing written statements
- speaking with those involved
- considering any supporting information or evidence

Where a meeting is required as part of the review process, individuals involved may be accompanied by a support person if they wish.

If the investigation identifies a potential breach of Club Rules, Codes of Conduct, or other Club policies, the matter may be referred to the Disciplinary Secretary to be dealt with under the Club's Disciplinary Procedures.

The Club will aim to deal with complaints as promptly as possible, although the timescale may vary depending on the complexity of the matter.

7. Decision and Outcomes

Following review of the complaint, the Club may determine that:

- no further action is required
- the matter can be resolved through guidance or informal discussion
- the matter should be referred to the Club's Disciplinary Procedures, particularly where the complaint indicates a potential breach of Club Rules, Codes of Conduct, or the Club's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Any decision will seek to be fair, proportionate and consistent, taking account of the seriousness of the matter and the circumstances involved.

Where appropriate, the parties involved will be informed of the outcome.

8. Appeals Process

Right of Appeal

A complainant has the right to appeal the outcome of a formal complaint where they remain dissatisfied with the decision.

Grounds for Appeal

An appeal will only be considered on one or more of the following grounds:

- new, relevant evidence has become available that was not considered during the original investigation
- a material procedural error occurred in the handling of the complaint
- the outcome was unreasonable or not supported by the evidence

Timescale for Appeal

An appeal must be submitted in writing within **10 working days** of the date of the outcome letter. The appeal must clearly state the grounds on which it is made and include any supporting evidence.

Appeal Panel

The appeal will be considered by an individual or panel with no prior involvement in the matter. This will normally be members of the Club Council not previously involved, or, where appropriate, an independent person appointed by the Club.

Scope of Appeal

The appeal is a review of the original decision and process. It is not a full re investigation unless the appeal panel considers this necessary in light of the grounds presented.

Appeal Outcome

Following the review, the Club will confirm the outcome in writing. The appeal panel may:

- uphold the original decision
- vary or amend the original decision
- overturn the original decision

Finality

The outcome of the appeal is final and marks the conclusion of the Club's internal complaints procedure.

Disciplinary Matters

Where a matter has been considered under the Club's Disciplinary Procedures, the appeal process set out within those procedures will apply.

9. Confidentiality and Record Keeping

Complaints will be handled with appropriate discretion and confidentiality.

Records of formal complaints may be retained by the Club for governance purposes and to help ensure consistency in the handling of future matters.

Information relating to complaints will be handled in accordance with the Club's data protection obligations, and individuals retain their rights under applicable data protection legislation.

Individuals involved in reviewing or managing complaints on behalf of the Club will do so in good faith and in accordance with this policy and the Club's governing rules. Provided that actions are taken reasonably and in good faith, no personal liability shall attach to those individuals in respect of decisions made under this policy.

10. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed periodically by the Club Council to ensure that it remains appropriate and aligned with best practice.