

Welsh Fencing Ltd

Concerns and Complaints Policy

1 Introduction

Welsh Fencing is committed to dealing effectively with any concerns or complaints you may have about our service. We aim to clarify any issues about which you are not sure. If possible, we will put right any mistakes we may have made. If we got something wrong, we will apologise, and where possible we will try to put things right. We also aim to learn from our mistakes and use the information we gain to improve our services.

2 When to use this policy

When you express your concerns or complain to us, we will usually respond in the way we explain below. Sometimes, you might be concerned about matters that are not decided by us, e.g. issues that are within the remit of other organizations such as Sport Wales or the British Fencing Association, and we will then advise you about how to make your concerns known.

3 Informal resolution

If possible, we believe it's best to deal with things straight away rather than try to sort them out later. If you have a concern, raise it with a member of the Board. Contact email addresses for the Board are all available on our website. If you are not sure, send it to our Vice-Chair at vicechair@fencing.cymru. He or she will try to resolve it for you there and then. If there are any lessons to learn from addressing your concern, then the Board Member will draw them to our attention. If the Vice-Chair can't help, they will explain why, and if you wish to continue with your concern, you can then ask for a formal investigation.

4 How to express concern or complain formally

You can express your concern by emailing complaints@fencing.cymru

5 Dealing with your concern

1. We will formally acknowledge your concern within a reasonable time and let you know how we intend to deal with it. We intend that this reasonable time will be 5 working days.
2. We will ask you to tell us how you would like us to communicate with you and establish whether you have any particular requirements – for example, if you have a disability.
3. We will deal with your concern in an open and honest way.
4. We will make sure that your dealings with us in the future do not suffer just because you have expressed a concern or made a complaint.

Normally, we will only be able to look at your concerns if you tell us about them within a reasonable period of time (certainly no longer than six months). This is because it's better to look into your concerns while the issues are still fresh in everyone's mind.

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Safeguarding issues are the exception to this and will be considered as soon as they are raised with us, irrespective of how long ago the incident(s) occurred.

If you're expressing a concern on behalf of somebody else, we'll need their written agreement to you acting on their behalf.

6 What if there is more than one body involved?

If your complaint covers more than one body (e.g. Welsh Fencing and SportWales) we will usually work with them to decide who should take a lead in dealing with your concerns. You will then be given the name of the person responsible for communicating with you while we consider your complaint.

If the complaint is about a body working on our behalf, for example volunteers, you may wish to raise the matter informally with them first. However, if you want to express your concern or complaint formally, we will look into this ourselves and respond to you.

7 Investigation

We will tell you who we have asked to look into your concern or complaint. If your concern is straightforward, we will usually ask somebody from the Board to look into it and get back to you. If it is more serious, we may use someone from elsewhere in the organisation or in certain cases we may appoint an independent investigator.

We will set out to you our understanding of your concerns and ask you to confirm that we've got it right. We will also ask you to tell us what outcome you're hoping for.

The person looking at your complaint will usually need to see the files we hold relevant to your complaint. If you don't want this to happen, it's important that you tell us.

If there is a simple solution to your problem, we may ask you if you're happy to accept this.

We will aim to resolve concerns as quickly as possible and expect to deal with the vast majority within 20 working days. If your complaint is more complex, we will:

- let you know within this time why we think it may take longer to investigate
- tell you how long we expect it to take.
- let you know where we have reached with the investigation, and
- give you regular updates, including telling you whether any developments might change our original estimate.

The person who is investigating your concerns will aim first to establish the facts. The extent of this investigation will depend on how complex and how serious the issues you have raised are. In complex cases, we will draw up an investigation plan.

In some instances, we may ask to meet you to discuss your concerns. Occasionally, we might suggest mediation or another method to try to resolve disputes.

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We will look at relevant evidence. This could include files, notes of conversations, letters, e-mails, social media or whatever may be relevant to your particular concern. If necessary, we'll talk to the staff or others involved and look at our policies and any legal entitlement and guidance.

8 Outcome

If we formally investigate your complaint, we will let you know what we have found in keeping with your preferred form of communication. This could be by letter or e-mail, for example. If necessary, we will produce a longer report. We will explain how and why we came to our conclusions.

If we find that we got it wrong, we will tell you what and why it happened. We will show how the mistake affected you.

If we find there is a fault in our systems or the way we do things, we will tell you what it is and how we plan to change things to stop it happening again.

If we got it wrong, we will always apologise.

9 Right of Appeal

If we do not succeed in resolving your complaint, you may appeal against the decision. The Board will then appoint a separate panel of 3 x Board members who will review the information and may ask to meet the complainant. They will consider the appeal and will report on their findings.

10 Learning lessons

We take your concerns and complaints seriously and try to learn from any mistakes we've made. Our Executive Board considers a summary of all complaints quarterly as well as details of any serious complaints.

Where there is a need for change, we will develop an action plan setting out what we will do, who will do it and when we plan to do it by. We will let you know when changes we've promised have been made.

11 What if I need help?

If you need extra assistance, we will try to put you in touch with someone who can help.

12 What we expect from you

In times of trouble or distress, some people may act out of character. There may have been upsetting or distressing circumstances leading up to a concern or a complaint. We do not view behaviour as unacceptable just because someone is forceful or determined.

We believe that all complainants have the right to be heard, understood, and respected. However, we also consider that our members and volunteers have the same rights. We, therefore, expect you to be polite and courteous in your dealings with us. We will not tolerate aggressive or abusive behaviour, unreasonable demands, or unreasonable persistence. We have a separate policy to manage situations where we find that someone's actions are unacceptable.