

Guidelines for sports clubs on addressing cases of inappropriate behaviour

1. The complaint is received and taken seriously

Pre-appointed persons within the club will receive the complaint. The person reporting the concern is acknowledged and heard without rush. The inappropriate treatment experienced by the person shall be acknowledged with an apology, and their concerns shall be taken seriously. Responsibility for the incident and for addressing it shall be assumed. No specific outcome shall be guaranteed to the person until the matter is resolved. The person shall be given a date for the next contact, which shall be adhered to regardless of whether the matter has progressed.

The person receiving the complaint is required to document:

- The content of the complaint
- The date
- The recipient of the complaint
- The reporter's name, if known

If the complaint is received by someone other than the person pre-appointed by the club, they must follow the procedure outlined above and forward the complaint to the person responsible for handling such matters within the club.

2. Responsibility for handling the case is decided

Persons primarily responsible for handling complaints have been appointed in advance by the club. However, the impartiality of those handling the complaint must be considered in each case.

Given that complaints or concerns may be emotionally charged, those responsible for handling them should not be directly involved in the case in order to ensure a fair process. If there are not enough impartial persons within the club to manage the case, an outside individual, such as someone from the national sports association or another club, may be invited to assist where possible.

In some cases, the person's coach may be the appropriate person to handle the case, for example in instances of bullying within the group or team. It must be ensured that the person handling the case receives support as needed.

3. The need for a report of an offence or child welfare notification is assessed

Together with the relevant bodies, it shall be assessed whether the matter involves illegal activity or should be handled internally by the club. If you are unsure whether an offence has been committed, you may seek advice directly from the police, the Victim Support Finland organisation (www.riku.fi) or the 'You are not alone' service ('Et ole yksin' in Finnish, www.etoleyksin.fi) without disclosing the victim's or any other parties' names. If the person who received the complaint files a report of an offence, the authorities are responsible for any further investigation of a potential crime. Other actions against the club's rules may be handled through the usual disciplinary process.

If concerns arise regarding a minor's welfare and safety, it is appropriate to file a child welfare notification. You can seek advice by contacting the child welfare social worker on duty in your area.

4. Hearing the parties when no offence is suspected

All parties are entitled to be heard. These hearings will be recorded, and those heard will have the opportunity to review the recorded information afterwards.

The following shall be recorded:

- Who has been heard
- When the hearing took place
- Who was present
- The content of the hearings
- Any agreements made regarding future actions

The parties shall be heard confidentially. When minors are involved in the hearing, their parents must be informed, provide consent, and be given the opportunity to participate in the hearing. Parents should be informed afterwards about what was discussed and what measures have been taken.

During the hearing, it is important to explain why the person is being heard, how the process will continue, and that their statements will not be challenged. You can inform young people and their parents about the 'You are not alone' service or other available support services.

In some cases, the club may not know the identity of the reporter, either because they wish to remain anonymous or because the complaint has been submitted by a third party. In such situations, an effort should be made to hear the parties in a general manner. For example, if the person making the complaint is a parent but their identity is unknown, experiences and feedback may be collected from parents in a general and confidential manner.

5. Decisions

The next steps are determined, ensuring that the interests of the child or young person take priority in all actions. Measures shall be determined in accordance with the club's rules. It is recommended that the club board decide on disciplinary measures, particularly those involving coaches or other adults. The club board must be informed of all harassment and violence cases.

6. Written summary

A written summary of the proceedings shall be prepared, and its storage location shall be determined. The summary shall record the measures, hearings, and decisions taken. Summaries shall be stored in a designated location, in compliance with current data protection legislation. It is essential to prepare a summary, as it may be needed in future conflict situations, for instance.

7. Decision notification

The relevant persons shall be notified of the decision. When a complaint or concern is submitted directly by a private individual, such as a parent or a young athlete, they shall be informed of the progress of the complaint process and the decisions made, along with the reasons for those decisions. If the complaint comes from a national sport association, a report on the investigation of the case shall be sent to the association.

It should be determined whether the entire club should be informed about the matter. In cases of harassment or violence, it is advisable to continue the discussion within the team or group and allow athletes the chance to talk about it later.

The entire process must be conducted in a transparent, fair, and open manner. All athletes, parents, coaches, and club officials must be treated equally and respectfully.