

Westmorland Park Lawn Tennis Club

Complaint Handling (Adopted at AGM 16 April 2011)

1. This guide provides background information about how Westmorland Park Lawn Tennis Club (WPLTC) handles complaints regarding conduct and behaviour. It also provides some guidance on other complaints which might be better handled by Bracknell Forest Borough Council (BFBC) or others.

Values/principles

2. There are some important values and principles that the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) applies to its complaints process. They also encourage other organisations in British Tennis to apply these values and principles and Westmorland Park Lawn Tennis Club has adopted these.

Right to complain:

You have a right to complain. Complaints should be taken seriously. You should not be bullied, harassed or disadvantaged for making a complaint.

Equality:

You should receive a proper response to your complaint, regardless of your age, gender, disability, race, religion, nationality, social status or sexual orientation. The LTA has an Equality and Diversity Policy to protect your rights in this area. Go to www.LTA.org.uk/equality to find out more.

Fairness:

Complaints should be dealt with fairly and openly. Unless it would put other people at risk, those affected by a complaint should have a chance to contribute and respond to any investigation.

Confidentiality:

Complaints should be treated as confidentially as possible, and should only be discussed with those involved in the investigation or decision-making process. Sometimes, advice or intervention might be needed from organisations such as social services departments, Police, or the NSPCC. The LTA and other tennis organisations reserve the right to speak to these or other authorities if this advice or intervention might be needed.

Safety and welfare are our priorities:

Concerns that affect the safety or welfare of a person or the public will be given the highest priority.

Complaints about conduct and behaviour

3. All complaints relating to the running of WPLTC should be made to the Club Chairman, or any other committee member. This includes (but is not restricted to) complaints about the application of the club rules regarding access to the courts and tournaments and also complaints about someone's conduct because it is felt to be:
 - unsafe,
 - unprofessional,
 - offensive,
 - intimidating or
 - discriminatory.

Complaints about other matters

4. If you have a different kind of complaint, it might be more appropriate for the complaint to be raised with Bracknell Forest Borough Council (BFBC).
5. Here are some examples of complaints that should be tackled this way:
 - Disputes about payment of fees to use the Westmorland Park Tennis Courts
 - Complaints by members of the public who are not members of WPLTC
 - The courts have not been adequately maintained (though members might also raise this with the committee)

Complaining locally

6. The best way to resolve problems is usually at local level, by talking to the people involved. You should normally try this before making a formal complaint. This might take the form of contacting the club, tournament organiser, referee, or coach.

Complaint formats: in person, email or letter

7. You do not need to put your complaint in writing at first, although you can do if you prefer. At the outset, you might make a complaint informally by contacting a club committee member or BFBC, if appropriate. It is often helpful to have a discussion with someone at first and sometimes the matter can be quickly resolved without any fuss. However, more serious complaints where the member is seeking disciplinary or similar action must be in writing. In all cases, if we are to take any formal action on your complaint, we will ask you to put it in writing giving full details. This helps to ensure accuracy.

Level of information

8. Provide as much information as you can. It can be difficult for us to deal with a complaint if we do not have very much information. Remember that we might not be familiar with all the background. Try to include information such as names, contact details etc. The more information you are able to provide with your initial complaint, the easier it will be for us to investigate.

Possible outcomes

9. In many cases, we can help to resolve problems informally. This might include:
 - An explanation or apology
 - Clarifications to responsibilities or roles
 - Changes in local arrangements
 - An agreement between those involved to act or communicate differently in future
10. Sometimes, our involvement might lead to formal action. Examples of this include:
 - Disciplinary action against members by the club up to and including termination of membership of the club
 - Disqualification or exclusion from an event
11. Some complaints are matters for the LTA. Your complaint could lead to formal action by the LTA. This might include:
 - Formal disciplinary or child protection proceedings against a Licensed coach, an official or a player
 - Formal disciplinary action against an LTA employee
 - Action to enforce contracts or agreements with the LTA
 - A decision to refer the case to another organisation such as the Police or social services
12. If the LTA begins formal proceedings, further investigation and correspondence may form part of these. WPLTC and the LTA may decide to close your complaint without taking further action. If this happens, you will be given the reasons for our decision.

WPLTC response to complaints

13. We try to give an initial response to complaints within five working days. If the matter is urgent, we will respond more quickly.
14. To begin with WPLTC will consider whether the matter complained about is within its powers to investigate. As is explained below (paragraph 19), some matters will be for others to consider (for example BFBC or the LTA) and WPLTC reserves the absolute right not to become involved in any matters not directly related to the running of the club. The committee or a sub-committee will consider whether the matter complained about is one for the club to

consider. If it decides it is not related to the running of the club, the complainant will be informed and given the reasons for this. If the decision was made by a sub-committee, the complainant can ask for the matter to be reconsidered by the full committee.

15. If WPLTC is to investigate the complaint we will investigate it fairly. This means that we will gather information from the relevant people or organisations. Normally our investigation will include talking to the person or organisation who is the subject of the complaint and where applicable requesting a written statement in response to the complaint. Occasionally we will need to show copies of information or reports to the complainant. This will be done with due consideration.
16. We will take reasonable steps to conduct a thorough investigation, but will always give priority to cases where there may be a risk to someone's safety or welfare, and we always reserve the right to end an investigation at any time.

Staying informed of progress

17. You, and the person(s) complained about, will be given regular updates on the progress of your complaint. These will normally be every two weeks. If there are delays in handling the complaint for any reason, we will keep the parties informed.
18. If your complaint leads to formal disciplinary action, you will normally be informed of the outcome of this action. Some cases require a higher level of confidentiality than normal. In these cases, we may not be able to inform you of the detailed outcome. We will still try to give you information about how it will affect you.

Disputes and arguments

19. Neither WPLTC nor the LTA offers an arbitration, dispute-resolution or independent enquiry service. We will not usually become involved in arguments or disputes between adults or between organisations unless:
 - The dispute is important to the whole of British Tennis.
 - The dispute involves misconduct by someone who is subject to the Rules of the LTA.

Advice from the Police, social services or other authorities

20. WPLTC or BFBC may receive complaints that we need to discuss with other authorities. These might include the Police, social services departments, the NSPCC or other government or local authority departments. This might be because:
 - A criminal offence may have been committed, or
 - There could be a risk to the public, or
 - There could be a risk to the safety or welfare of a child

21. Like any person or organisation, WPLTC does not need evidence of a crime or of a serious hazard before consulting with these statutory authorities. If we believe that their input could be relevant, we will consult at the earliest opportunity. Sometimes this consultation will lead to the direct involvement of statutory services.

Note:

Members were advised of these new guidelines at the AGM on 16 April 2011 and their immediate effect.