



Purpose

It is important to Special Olympics New Zealand that volunteers, athletes and supporters associated with any of its clubs should, at all times, show respect and understanding for each other.

To ensure the good name and reputation of Special Olympics New Zealand and all Special Olympics Clubs is maintained, this Policy outlines the complaints, member discipline and appeals process. While parties are always encouraged to resolve matters between themselves, this policy allows for complaints to be made where this cannot be achieved.

Authority to Act

This Policy outlines the authority delegated to Special Olympics Clubs to manage complaints. Complaints considered using this process may be behavioural, procedural or of any other nature considered to bring Special Olympics New Zealand or Special Olympics Clubs into disrepute.

Where SO Clubs have been unable to independently resolve complaints, the CEO of Special Olympics New Zealand has authority to oversee the complaints, member discipline and appeals process in consultation with the SONZ Board Complaints Sub-Committee. Any escalated complaints, discipline recommendations or appeals decision made by the sub-committee will be conveyed back to the SO Club through the CEO. The CEO reserves the right to escalate any complaint or appeal to the Sport NZ mediation service.

Complaints Process

To be read in conjunction with the [Complaints Procedure Flowchart \(Appendix 1\)](#)

- Complaints are to be made on the [Special Olympics New Zealand Complaints Form](#) where practicable. Where not practicable, the information required in the complaints form should be provided in writing.
- The complaint should be made within 3 days of the alleged event occurring or as soon as possible. However, if a complaint is made at the time of an alleged sexual/physical assault it is recommended the person in charge phone the New Zealand Police, and immediately inform the Special Olympics New Zealand CEO.
 - Complaints regarding Club athletes or volunteers, and Club Committee/Board Members (excluding the Club Chairperson) are to be referred to the Club Chairperson. The Chairperson determines whether the complaint is of a nature that needs to be escalated to SONZ for support in how to manage.
 - Complaints about the Club Chairperson and any Special Olympics Employee (excluding the Special Olympics New Zealand CEO) are to be referred to the Special Olympics New Zealand CEO.

- Complaints about the Special Olympics New Zealand CEO are to be referred to the Special Olympics New Zealand Board Chairperson.
- Note: a person receiving a verbal complaint should ask whether the complainant wishes them to:
 - a. simply listen and advise the complainant about what their options are and what the complainant might do;
 - b. act as a mediator between the complainant and the alleged offender to try and resolve the complaint; or
 - c. undertake further investigation including where appropriate, escalation.
- Having determined the complainant's wishes, the person must:
 - a. act in accordance with the complainant's selection; and
 - b. keep the matter confidential and only discuss it with those people whom the complainant has agreed should be spoken to about the Complaint to the extent possible.
- The Club Chairperson/SONZ CEO will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within 3 days of receiving it and convenes the Complaints Sub-Committee (for Clubs, this will likely be the Club Chairperson along with one or two members of the Club committee/board as determined appropriate).
- The Club Chairperson/SONZ CEO is responsible for ensuring the complaint is noted in their Complaints Register.
- The Club Chairperson/SONZ CEO advises the party whom the complaint is made against and outlines the process for handling the complaint. If the person is under 18 years of age their parent/guardian must also be notified at this stage.
- The Club Chairperson/SONZ CEO will seek further information from complainant(s) and other relevant parties as required.
- The Complaints Sub-Committee meets in person (where practicable) with the person(s) the complaint is made against. The person the complaint is made against should be extended the opportunity to have a support person present. This meeting should occur within 14 days of receipt of complaint. Where it is not possible to meet face to face, the meeting can be held by phone or videocall.
- If further assistance is required to help with deciding the outcome of a complaint, then the Club should refer to the Special Olympics New Zealand CEO for advice.
 - Where the Complaints Sub-Committee recommends that the athlete/volunteer should have their registration suspended or terminated, a recommendation is to be made to the Special Olympics New Zealand CEO, who will advise outcome of the recommendation.
- The Club Chairperson/SONZ CEO advises the party the complaint was made against of the outcome of the complaint process (verbally) within 5 days of a decision being made, followed by written confirmation. Appeal rights to be outlined.

- The Club Chairperson/SONZ CEO advises the complainant of outcome. This should be in writing and after the party the complaint was made against has been verbally advised of the outcome.
- The Club Chairperson and Special Olympics New Zealand CEO will review any practices/procedures around the nature of the complaint and revise/implement new practices/procedures to avoid recurring complaints or support the handling of future complaints.
- All paperwork relating to the complaint is filed for safe keeping.
- Appeals to a decision need to be received by the Special Olympics New Zealand CEO within 10 days of the date of the written notification of the decision.

Confidentiality and Privacy

The details of all complaints are to be treated as confidential unless otherwise agreed between the parties. The private details of an individual (unless already publicly available) are not to be released either during the complaints, member discipline and appeals process or following.

Written Records

All matters related to a complaint should be in written form and saved in the complaints file. This includes, but is not limited to, summaries of phone conversations, and witness statements (to be dated and signed by witness).

Exclusions

Complaints relating to a person's character or personality are excluded from this process (parties being encouraged to resolve the matter directly with one another) unless the behaviour of either party is such that it affects the running of a club, its trainings or events.

Member Discipline

Where a complaint is upheld in whole or in part, Special Olympic Clubs through this Policy are delegated authority to make decisions on member discipline except the decision to suspend or terminate a member's registration.

Where a Special Olympics Club wishes to pursue suspending or terminating a member's registration, a recommendation must be made in writing to the Special Olympics New Zealand CEO in the first instance, who will consult with the Special Olympics New Zealand Board Complaints Sub-Committee.

Any decision made by the Sub-Committee will be conveyed through the CEO. Special Olympics Clubs may otherwise consider and implement disciplinary outcomes, but only to a level commensurate with the matter upheld. Examples may include removing a volunteer/athlete from a sub-committee, non-elected role, training, event, or social activity.

Appeals

Any appeals to decisions made via the complaints process are to be made to the Special Olympics New Zealand CEO within 10 days of the written confirmation of the decision. The CEO will consult with the Special Olympics New Zealand Board Complaints Sub-Committee to consider the appeal.

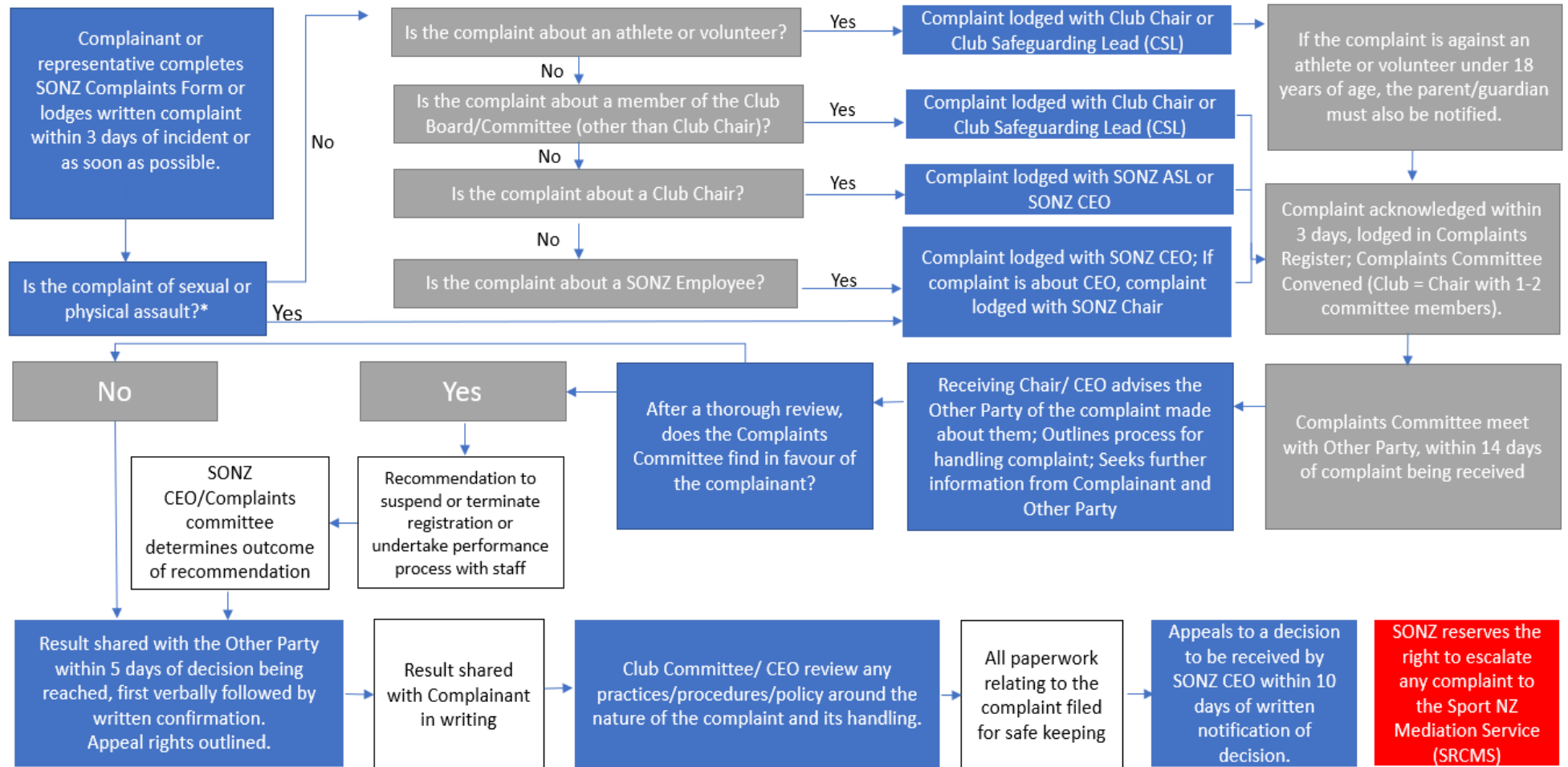
Relevant Documents

- [Special Olympics New Zealand Complaints Form](#)
- Special Olympics New Zealand Complaints Procedure Flowchart (Appendix 1)

Policy Approval

Policy last approved	August 2023
Policy to be reviewed	August 2024

Appendix 1: Complaints Procedure Flowchart



*If the complaint is of an alleged sexual or physical assault **which has just occurred**, it is recommended the person in charge phone the NZ Police.