



# Volunteer Complaints and Appeals Policy

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# Contents

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<b>1. Purpose</b> .....	2
<b>2. Scope</b> .....	2
<b>4. Procedure for Raising a Complaint</b> .....	3
<b>4.1 Informal Resolution</b> .....	3
<b>4.2 Formal Complaints Process</b> .....	3
<b>5. Review Arrangements</b> .....	5
<b>6. Contact Information</b> .....	5
<b>APPENDIX A: NWS Values (extract from Ethical Framework)</b> .....	6
<b>APPENDIX B: NWS Code of Ethics / Behaviour Charter</b> .....	7
<b>APPENDIX C: Raising a Concern or Complaint (Quick Guide for Volunteers)</b> .....	9

## 1. Purpose

Neighbourhood Watch Scotland (NWS) volunteers form a diverse group of people from all walks of life, each with unique skills and experiences. NWS values the contributions of our volunteers and aims to maintain strong relationships built on mutual respect and trust. However, we acknowledge that issues may arise, and we are committed to addressing concerns or complaints in a fair, timely, and transparent manner.

This policy outlines the process for anyone wishing to raise complaints against any of our volunteers irrespective of role and details the procedures we will follow to resolve them.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all NWS volunteers. Complaints concerning Trustee Board Members will be handled in accordance with NWS governance procedures and OSCR guidance.

This document covers complaints regarding volunteer behaviour including:

- Unfair treatment or discrimination
- Bullying or harassment
- Conflicts with staff, other volunteers, or members of the community
- Any breach of NWS policies or procedures

This policy should be read alongside:

- NWS Values and Code of Conduct/Behaviour Charter (Appendices A and B)
- Volunteer Management policy

All policies and documents referenced above are available at:

**[www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk)**

## 3. Principles: Values and Ethical Framework

NWS seeks to inspire, encourage and enable the people of Scotland to become more connected and actively engaged to improve community wellbeing. This mission is supported by the 'NWS Values and Ethical Framework' which sets out the standards of behaviour that NWS expects from all its volunteers.

This policy is based on the following principles:

- **Confidentiality:** All complaints will be handled confidentially, and information will only be shared with those directly involved in the resolution process.
- **Fairness:** Complaints will be addressed impartially, ensuring that all parties have the opportunity to be heard.

- **Timeliness:** Complaints will be addressed promptly, with clear timeframes for responses and actions.
- **Support:** Volunteers are entitled to support during the complaint process, including access to an advocate or representative, if needed. Volunteers are encouraged to seek assistance from the NWS Team who will make reasonable adjustments to ensure that the process is accessible to all.
- **No Reprisals:** Volunteers will not face any repercussions for raising a complaint in good faith.

## 4. Procedure for Raising a Complaint

### 4.1 Informal Resolution

NWS encourages its coordinators to resolve local concerns informally, wherever possible. To do this, coordinators should speak directly to the person involved to address the issue. Open, calm and respectful communication can often resolve problems quickly and efficiently. If challenging, or the matter remains unresolved, a coordinator may seek advice on this from the NWS Team.

There are certain exceptions to local resolution as follows:

- Data protection breaches are suspected.
- Safeguarding concerns arise – these must always be referred to Police Scotland and / or the Local Authority in accordance with the NWS Safeguarding Policy.
- Criminal behaviour is alleged - any allegations of a criminal nature should be reported to Police Scotland and the NWS team informed.
- Reputational risk exists - the behaviour of a member has impacted on or may impact upon the reputation of NWS.

All complaints of this nature and must comply with the formal complaints process.

### 4.2 Formal Complaints Process

Formal complaints should be submitted to the NWS Director and/or Chair for investigation. Any complaints made concerning a Trustee should be addressed to the NWS Chair for investigation. A complaint made against the NWS Chair will be directed to the Vice Chair or other representative of the Board fulfilling this role.

The process for dealing with complaints is as follows:

<b>Submission</b>	Any formal complaint must be intimated by email or letter to the NWS Director / NWS Chair (or deputy) providing details of the nature of concern including date(s), location and people involved.
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<b>Acknowledgment</b>	An acknowledgment will be sent within <b>5</b> working days where possible, confirming receipt and advising the complainant of the next steps.
<b>Investigation</b>	<p>An impartial member of staff, will be appointed to investigate the matter.</p> <p>An investigation will then be conducted, gathering relevant information and ensuring fairness to all parties involved.</p> <p>The complainant may be asked to discuss the complaint in more detail and may bring a support person to any meetings (in person or on-line) if required.</p> <p>Every effort should be taken to ensure the identity of the complainer is not revealed without their consent.</p>
<b>Outcome</b>	<p>The outcome of the investigation (dismissed or upheld) will be provided within <b>30</b> working days of the complaint being received.</p> <p>If additional time is required, the complainant will be informed of the reason and provided with an updated timeline.</p>
<b>Possible Actions</b>	<p>The resolution may involve further meetings, mediation, or other actions considered appropriate to address the matter. The following actions may be considered as options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advice or guidance</li> <li>• Verbal warning - may be appropriate in the event of minor misconduct being upheld.</li> <li>• Formal notice - written notification of a finding of unsatisfactory behaviour.</li> </ul> <hr/> <p>Formal notice may also include notification of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Suspension of NWS role:</b> this may be applicable as a temporary measure while investigation is underway into a serious, matter such as a safeguarding concern or a reputational risk.</li> <li>• <b>Restriction of NWS role:</b> this could be stepping down from a coordinator role but remaining part of the membership.</li> <li>• <b>Other relevant action:</b> this could be a course of action agreed with the volunteer involved such as an apology, or the attendance of a training course.</li> <li>• <b>Membership withdrawal:</b> this may be applied where the investigation concludes that there have been a serious breach of the NWS Values and Ethical Framework or other NWS policies, or where the member has not complied with previous restrictions or sanctions imposed.</li> </ul>

<b>Appeals</b>	<p>If the complainant or the subject of complaint is not satisfied with the outcome, they may appeal the decision. Appeals must be submitted in writing within <b>10</b> working days of receiving the resolution.</p> <p>The appeal will be reviewed by the NWS Director and/ or NWS Chair (or designated deputy) unconnected with the original complaint and a final decision will be communicated within <b>10</b> working days of the appeal being lodged.</p> <p>The decision of the appeal is final, and no other appeals will be permitted in connection with the same complaint.</p>
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## Record Keeping


All correspondence pertaining to a complaint will be retained for a period of 2 years from the date of decision in line with governance and GDPR principles.

## 5. Review Arrangements

This policy is intended to provide a clear framework for managing and supporting volunteers within Neighbourhood Watch Scotland. It will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant and aligned with the organisation’s objectives and legal requirements.


## 6. Contact Information

Any questions regarding this policy, please contact the NWS Team at:

 01786 463732

 [www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk](http://www.neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk)

 [info@neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk](mailto:info@neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk)

 21 Claylands Road, Newbridge, Edinburgh EH28 8LF.

## **APPENDIX A: NWS Values (extract from Ethical Framework)**

### **Our Vision:**

To create safer neighbourhoods and stronger communities by promoting local co-operation, safety and resilience.

### **Our mission:**

To inspire, encourage and enable the people of Scotland to become more connected and actively engaged to improve community wellbeing.

### **Our Values:**

Our organisational values are integral to everything we do. We value:

#### **Ambition**

- We aspire to develop new and innovative ways to empower communities to work together to protect against crime and improve community wellbeing, and to share best practice with others.

#### **Credibility**

- We are a trusted source for crime prevention guidance and local community safety information, provided by key partners that is credible, reliable and relevant.

#### **Collaboration**

- Teamworking is vital to success. We will work with partners and volunteers to enable communities to create and maintain safe, secure and supportive neighbourhoods.

#### **Inclusiveness**

- We welcome everyone and recognise the value of our culturally diverse society. Future growth stemming from enhanced engagement with under-represented groups will see us deliver wider public benefit.

#### **Neighbourliness**

- We are community focused and advocate for good, kind, caring neighbours who bring people together to create community cohesion, protect the vulnerable and foster community spirit.

#### **Resilience**

- Through nurturing public confidence and wellbeing, we support local communities to find local solutions that make neighbourhoods safer and stronger by minimising risks.

## **APPENDIX B: NWS Code of Ethics / Behaviour Charter**

To meet our aims all NWS staff, Trustees, and volunteers are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with the following standards of behaviour, and in keeping with the relevant NWS policies and procedures.

### **1. Professionalism (doing the right thing)**

All individuals must conduct themselves in a professional manner which does not discredit Neighbourhood Watch Scotland or its partners, nor undermine public confidence in any NWS related activities.

### **2. Selflessness**

All individuals must act in the public interest and in the interest of their local communities.

### **3. Honesty**

All individuals must be honest, trustworthy, and act with integrity. This means that you must:

Operate in a financially responsible and transparent manner, ensuring that records are kept of any expenses, fees, costs, gifts, and gratuities relating to Neighbourhood Watch; and

Avoid any situation where a conflict of interest may arise or exist between you and/or other parties and/or Neighbourhood Watch.

### **4. Fairness, respect, and courtesy**

All individuals must treat everybody (including other members, organisations and partners) with respect, courtesy, fairness and impartiality.

### **5. Leadership, objectivity, and openness**

All individuals in a supervisory, coordinating or management capacity must be empathetic, encouraging and supportive to others. Any decision making should be based on facts, in an open and transparent manner, free from bias.

### **6. Accountability**

All individuals should be active within their respective roles and or communities, operating with the best interests to build a supportive, resilient and trusted environment.

This means that you must:

Take responsibility for your decisions, actions, and omissions; and Challenge, and where necessary report any unlawful, unfair or discriminatory behaviour or practice, or any breaches of the Code of Ethics by anyone associated with NWS

### **7. Confidentiality**

All individuals must treat personal information with respect and in accordance with the law. This means that you must:

Respect the privacy of others; and ensure that any use of personal information is in full compliance with Data Protection legislation.

## **8. Accessibility and Inclusion**

All individuals must not discriminate unlawfully or unfairly. This means that you must:

Treat people fairly and with respect regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership, pregnancy, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation; and respect the rights of all individuals and treat people in accordance with their needs. This means that you will accommodate any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to facilitate Neighbourhood Watch activity and its accessibility to all.

## APPENDIX C: Raising a Concern or Complaint (Quick Guide for Volunteers)

### Neighbourhood Watch Scotland

#### Step 1: Informal Resolution (Where Appropriate)

- Speak directly with the person involved
- Stay calm, respectful, and open
- Seek advice from the NWS Team if needed

#### When NOT to Resolve Informally:

- A data protection breach is suspected
- A safeguarding concern arises
- Criminal behaviour is alleged
- There is a reputational risk to NWS

**Important:** Safeguarding or criminal matters must be reported to Police Scotland.

#### Step 2: Making a Formal Complaint

Submit by email or letter to the NWS Director and/or Chair.

Include what happened, dates, location, and people involved.

#### What Happens Next

- Acknowledgement within 5 working days (where possible)
- Impartial investigation by a member of NWS
- Outcome within 30 working days

#### Possible Outcomes / Actions

1. Advice or guidance
2. Verbal warning (minor issues)
3. Formal written notice - Possible actions to be taken may involve suspension from membership; restriction of role (serious matters); to undertake further training; issue of apology, or membership withdrawal (serious breach).

#### Appeals

Appeals must be submitted in writing within 10 working days.

Final decisions are issued within 10 working days and are binding.

#### Need Advice?

Email: [info@neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk](mailto:info@neighbourhoodwatchscotland.co.uk)

Phone: 01786 463732