



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

This policy will set out how individuals can raise concerns about the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved at the Walking Football Association (WFA) It will provide a method of raising concerns and how they can receive feedback on any action taken. The WFA will ensure individuals will:

- receive a response to their concerns.
- be made aware of how to pursue the concern further if they are not satisfied with the response.
- be re-assured that individuals will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith.

Scope

Everyone involved in activity carried out under the jurisdiction of the WFA is covered by this policy.

Policy Statement

Workers and volunteers are often the first to realise that there may be evidence of malpractice within the WFA. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the WFA They may also fear harassment or victimisation.

In these circumstances, it may be easier for them to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of poor practice. The WFA would urge anyone to come forward and voice those concerns.

This policy details how individuals can raise a matter of concern without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. The policy is intended to encourage and enable individuals to raise serious concerns within the WFA rather than overlooking a problem or blowing the whistle outside.

It is in the interest of all concerned that disclosure of potential abuse is dealt with properly, quickly and discreetly.

Safeguarding

Employees, coaches, volunteers, parents or other participants are often the first to realise that a child's safety and welfare are under threat. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be too difficult to handle. It may also be that they fear harassment or victimisation. There may be similar concerns when it comes to threats to vulnerable adults

The WFA realises that raising a concern and reporting allegations are often difficult to make through fear of reprisals from those responsible for the alleged poor practice. If the individual believes what they say to be true and are not deemed to be malicious then the WFA will fully support the whistleblower and will not tolerate any bullying, harassment or victimisation whatsoever. If this does occur, any perpetrators will be dealt with under the WFA's disciplinary procedures resulting in possible expulsion from the WFA.

In reading this policy it should be noted that John Croot is the Senior Safeguarding Officer. While the policy speaks of line managers in terms of safeguarding consider that to mean the Designated Safeguarding Officer for the particular department.

Raising a Concern or Making an Allegation

This policy provides you with a procedure for making disclosures internally about suspected wrongdoing, irregularity or failure of standards within the WFA. Its aims are:

- to encourage you to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about possible malpractice within the WFA.
- to provide a means for you to disclose those concerns and receive feedback on any action taken.
- to ensure that you receive a response to your concerns and that you are aware of how to pursue them further if you are not satisfied.
- to reassure you that you will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation and from subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.

Confidentiality

All disclosures will be treated in confidence and wherever possible, every effort will be made not to reveal your identity. However, you may need to come forward as a witness and you will be given every support from management at that time.

Anonymous Disclosure

You should put your name to your disclosure whenever possible. Disclosures made anonymously will still be considered at the discretion of the WFA. However, it is helpful to have your name in case further information is required.

In exercising its discretion, the WFA will take into account:

- the seriousness of the issues raised.
- the credibility of the disclosure.
- the likelihood of confirming what is alleged from attributable sources.

Untrue Disclosures

If you make a disclosure in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against you. If however, your allegation is frivolous, malicious or for personal gain, you may be subject to disciplinary action.

Employee Action

As a first step, you should normally raise your concerns with your line manager. If you believe your line manager is involved, you should approach the Senior Safeguarding Officer. This depends however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and who is suspected of the malpractice.

You may raise your concern either verbally or in writing. The earlier you express the concern, the easier it is to take action. You should provide:

- details of your concerns, including the nature, dates and location of any relevant incidents.
- reasons why you feel concerned about the situation.

Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, you will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for your concern.

You may wish to consider discussing your concern with a colleague first and you may find it easier to raise the matter if there are two (or more) of you who have had the same experience or concerns.

You may invite a representative to be present during any meetings or interviews in connection with the concerns you have raised.

The amount of contact between you and the person considering the issues will depend on the nature of the matter raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, the Club will seek further information from you.

Action Taken by the WFA

The WFA will respond to your disclosure. Where appropriate, the matters raised may be:

- a) investigated by management, by internal audit, or through the disciplinary process;
- b) referred to the police;
- c) the subject of an independent inquiry.

In order to protect individuals and those accused of possible malpractice, initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

Some concerns may be resolved by agreed action without the need for investigation. If urgent action is required, this will be taken before any action investigation is conducted.

Within 10 working days of a concern being raised, you will receive a response:

- a) acknowledging that the concern has been received;
- b) telling you whether any initial enquiries have been made;
- c) indicating how the matter is going to be dealt with;
- d) giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response;
- e) supplying you with information on staff support mechanisms;
- f) telling you why if there is to be no further investigation.

The WFA will take steps to minimise any difficulties you may experience as a result of making a disclosure. For instance, if you are required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings the WFA will arrange for you to receive advice about the procedure.

You will need to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Thus, subject to legal constraints, you will be informed of the outcomes of any investigation.

How the Matter Can Be Taken Further

This code is intended to provide you with a route within the WFA to make disclosures of malpractice. The WFA hopes you will be satisfied with any action taken. If you are not, and you believe the information you have disclosed is substantially true, possible contact points are:

- Public Concern At Work
- Your trade union
- Your local Citizens Advice Bureau
- Relevant professional bodies or regulatory organisations
- A relevant voluntary organisation
- The Police

If you do take the matter outside the WFA you should ensure that you do not disclose confidential information. Check with the person dealing with your disclosure within the WFA before divulging any information.

All investigations concerning safeguarding will be undertaken by the Senior Safeguarding Officer who may be supported by an appropriate member of the Management Team.

Contacts

The email address for concerns is safeguarding@thewfa.co.uk

John Croot is the Senior Safeguarding Officer

Should you feel that you have not received a satisfactory response to your concern you can approach the following people/organisations:

- The Police - 101