



## THE WALSALL FOOTBALL CLUB LIMITED

<b>POLICY TITLE: WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY</b>
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### **INTRODUCTION**

The Club is committed to developing a culture where it is safe and acceptable for everyone involved in Club activities to raise concerns about any unacceptable practice, behaviour, wrongdoing or misconduct. This includes, but is not limited to, offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003, Protection of Children Act 1978 s1, and Equality Act 2010 s.26.

Recognising that, through loyalty or fear of repercussion, people may be reluctant to voice worries, this policy has been created to encourage members of the game to speak up, knowing that they will be supported and their concerns will be handled sensitively.

Speaking up will enable safeguarding concerns to be investigated and dealt with for the benefit of all involved and for that of the wider game. Anyone making a disclosure can be confident that the matter will be handled appropriately and with an appropriate level of confidentiality.

### **SCOPE**

Everyone involved in activity carried out under the jurisdiction of Walsall Football Club are covered by this policy.

It enables anyone to raise concerns through channels that they are comfortable with and gives all parties the opportunity to resolve a concern and for any necessary action to be taken.

This policy should NOT be used for any matters presenting an immediate threat to life or property. For emergency assistance, please contact your local authorities or call the relevant emergency phone number.

Neither should it be used for:

- Grievances or whistleblowing relating to your employment ordinarily dealt with under your employer's grievance or whistleblowing policies.
- Contractual or personal disputes, including contractual disputes with agents and clubs.
- Issues relating to club memberships or other internal club disputes, which should be raised with and managed by the club.

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

Players, coaches, officials, parents or team followers 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 by speaking up it would be difficult to handle. It may also be that they 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. Walsall Football Club would encourage anyone to come forward and voice their 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 Walsall Football Club rather than overlooking a problem or blowing the whistle outside.

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

### **SAFEGUARDING**

Walsall Football Club realise 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. Walsall Football Club will fully support the whistle blower and will not tolerate any bullying, harassment or victimisation whatsoever. If this does occur, any perpetrators will be dealt with under Walsall Football Club's disciplinary policy/procedure resulting in possible expulsion from the Club.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Walsall Football Club will do its utmost to keep confidential the identity of a whistle blower. Should any allegations be made through whistleblowing it should be noted that a statement may be needed to form part of the evidence.

Should the whistle-blower need to be identified or it becomes apparent that the whistle-blower will be identified because of any subsequent investigation, notice will be given to the whistle-blower, by the Club's Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) to which persons the identity disclosure will be made, with a chance to discuss any likely consequences.

### **ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS**

This policy encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible and more difficult to investigate effectively, but they may be considered at the discretion of the Club. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised and any potential safeguarding risks indicated
- The credibility of the concern
- The likelihood of confirming or clarifying the allegation from attributable sources
- Statutory agency advice e.g. LADO, Children's Social Care or the Police

If anybody feels unable to disclose their identity this policy seeks to encourage them to report any safeguarding concern in good faith and through external agencies such as the NSPCC Helpline (0808 800



5000) if necessary. Contact details for local statutory agencies and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) are set out in the Club's Safeguarding Policy.

The NSPCC Helpline for Whistleblowing can be contacted for support and advice by telephone on 0808 028 0285 or email at [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

### **RAISING A CONCERN OR MAKING AN ALLEGATION**

Anyone wishing to raise a concern should do so either verbally or in writing to the DSO.

Walsall Football Club's Designated Safeguarding Office is Lee Fraser who can be contacted at [lee.fraser@walsallfc.co.uk](mailto:lee.fraser@walsallfc.co.uk) or on 01922 622791 or 07712467699.

The concern needs to be as specific as possible including any names, dates and locations where possible.

The burden of proof does not lie with the initial person/people who alerted the club.

Should any concerns or allegations be made, Walsall Football Club would encourage the whistle-blower to put their name to the allegation. Any concerns or allegations that are anonymous are much less powerful and are therefore much harder to prove. Should Walsall Football Club receive any anonymous allegations these, of course, will be investigated.

If, after the course of the investigation, it has been found that the concerns or allegations are untrue or have not been substantiated then no action will be taken against the whistle-blower. If, however, it is established that they have made malicious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against them. In such cases Walsall Football Club's disciplinary policy/procedure will apply.

All investigations will be undertaken by the DSO who may be supported by the Senior Safeguarding Manager or a member of the Club's Senior Management Team. However, should you feel that you have not received a satisfactory response to your concern you can approach the following people/organisations:

- Stefan Gamble, Senior Safeguarding Manager, Walsall Football Club  
01922 622791 or [stefan.gamble@walsallfc.co.uk](mailto:stefan.gamble@walsallfc.co.uk)
- Lee Fraser, Designated Safeguarding Officer, Walsall Football Club  
01922 622791 or [lee.fraser@walsallfc.co.uk](mailto:lee.fraser@walsallfc.co.uk)
- Sarah Willis, Birmingham County Football Association's Safeguarding Officer  
07791 120829 or [support@birminghamfa.com](mailto:support@birminghamfa.com)
- EFL Safeguarding Manager, Alexandra Richards  
07792 284740 or [arichards@efl.com](mailto:arichards@efl.com)  
EFL, EFL House, 10-12 West Cliff, Preston, PR1 8HU
- The FA / NSPCC Child Protection 24-Hour Helpline 0808 800 5000
- [www.FootballSafe@TheFA.com](http://www.FootballSafe@TheFA.com)
- Or by going direct to the Police and/or Social Services



## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The process for dealing with a concern will vary depending on its nature, complexity and seriousness. It may not always be possible or appropriate to investigate. However, as far as practicably possible, we will seek to deal with your concern as below:

- We will acknowledge receipt of your disclosure as soon as possible.
- It will then be directed to the person best placed to deal with it and we will provide you with their name.
- The nominated person may then contact you to:
  - Let you know they have been passed your concern to deal with
  - Provide you with an estimate of how long it will take to handle and assess your concern
  - Ask for further information
  - Advise you of the process for dealing with your concern
- Your disclosure may then undergo an initial review and may be investigated, which could include contacting the individuals relevant to the concern. It is also possible that the matter may not be investigated further. The Club is not obliged to investigate if it believes there is no merit in doing so, or if an investigation is not appropriate or proportionate.
- As far as practicable, we will keep you informed of developments and of the overall finding, although we may not be able to disclose full details of the outcome for reasons of confidentiality, privacy and the legal rights of others involved.

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