

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY



PURPOSE

To encourage individuals to feel confident in raising concerns about the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in football.

To provide a method of raising concerns and to receive feedback on any action taken.

To ensure that individuals receive a response to their concerns and that they are aware of how to pursue them if they are not satisfied.

To reassure individuals that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistle blowing in good faith.

SCOPE

ALL those involved in activity carried out under the jurisdiction of Ashington FC are covered by this policy.

KEY PRINCIPLES

The following important principles are contained within this policy:

- The code is complementary to the Ashington FC Child Protection Policy and its Codes of Conduct;
- The Club Welfare Officer has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy;
- If a matter raised results in any disciplinary action, the Ashington FC disciplinary procedures will apply.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Players, coaches, officials, parents or team followers are often the first to realise that a child's safety or welfare are under threat. They may not express their concerns however because they feel that speaking up would be too difficult to handle. It may also be that they fear harassment or victimisation.

In these circumstances it may feel easier to them to ignore their concerns rather than report what may just be a suspicion of poor practice. Ashington FC however is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability and, in line with that commitment, individuals are encouraged to come forward and voice those concerns.

This policy makes it clear that 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 Ashington FC rather than overlooking a problem.

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It is in the interest of all concerned that disclosure of potential abuse or irregularities are dealt with properly, quickly and discreetly. This includes the interests of the Ashington FC, all persons registered as members of the Ashington FC and any persons who are the subject of any complaint, as well as the person making the complaint.

SAFEGUARDS

Ashington FC is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of everyone within the club.

Ashington FC recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the alleged poor practice. If an individual believes what they are saying to be true, they should have nothing to fear because, in reporting their concern, they will be doing their duty to the child, young person or vulnerable adult concerned.

Ashington FC will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect individuals when they raise a concern in good faith.

Any investigation into allegations of alleged poor practice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary procedures that already affect individuals.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Ashington FC will do its best to protect the identity of the whistle blower when they raise a concern and do not want their name to be disclosed. It must be appreciated that the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and a statement by the whistle blower may be required as part of the evidence. They will be given prior notice of this and a chance to discuss the consequences. Support is available from the club's Safeguarding Officer.

ANONYMOUS ALLEGATIONS

This policy encourages the whistle blower to put their name to their allegation. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will still be considered.

UNTRUE ALLEGATIONS

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, but it is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against them. If, however, it is established that they have made malicious or frivolous allegations, or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against them. In such cases, the Ashington FC disciplinary procedure will apply.

THE 'WHISTLE BLOWING' POLICY

The whistle blowing policy should only be followed if the person raising the concern feels unable to follow the standard reporting procedures as set out in the club's Child Protection Policy.

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HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

Concerns may be made verbally or in writing to the club's Safeguarding Officer. The individual should set out the background and history of the concern, giving names, dates and places (where possible) and the reason why they are particularly concerned about the situation. The earlier the individual expresses concern, the easier it is for someone to take action. Although the whistle blower is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate to the club's Safeguarding Officer that there are sufficient grounds for their concern.

Individuals should raise the concern in the first instance with the club's Safeguarding Officer. Contact details can be found on the club web site <https://ashingtonfc.co.uk/> under the CONTACTS tab.

If you believe that you have not received a satisfactory response to your concern, you should approach the parties below.

- Club Assistant Safeguarding Officer:
- Club Secretary:
- Club Chair:
- Sussex County Football Association's Safeguarding team **Tel:** 01903 768578
Email Safeguarding@SussexFA.com or by writing to Sussex County FA Ltd, Culver Road, Lancing, West Sussex, BN15
- The FA Child Protection Team on 0800 169 1863 or email safeguarding@TheFA.com.
- The Child Protection in Sport unit 24-Hour Helpline 0808 800 5000 or email cpsu@nspcc.org.uk
- Or by going direct to the Police and/or Social Services

This policy was reviewed in October 2025 and updated with new club logo approved at AGM 25/06/2025.