



AFC Wimbledon Safeguarding Whistleblowing Policy

Purpose

This policy is intended to encourage individuals to raise any concerns they have about the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in AFC Wimbledon, and details how their concerns can be raised.

It provides for a method of raising concerns, assurance of receiving a response, how feedback will be received on any action taken and how to further pursue the matter if they are not satisfied.

AFC Wimbledon seeks to reassure individuals they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith.

Scope

This policy covers everyone involved in activity carried out under the jurisdiction of AFC Wimbledon.

Policy Statement

It is often the case that players, coaches, officials, parents or team followers are 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.

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. AFC Wimbledon urges anyone to come forward and voice those concerns, and commits to matters of concern being raised without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage.

The policy is intended to encourage and enable individuals to raise serious concerns **within** AFC Wimbledon 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. This includes the interests of all persons involved with AFC Wimbledon, the person making the complaint and the person who is the subject of the complaint.

Safeguarding

AFC Wimbledon recognises that raising a concern and reporting an allegation can be a difficult decision to make through fear of reprisals from those responsible for the alleged poor practice. If an individual believes what they say is or may be true, they should have no reason to fear reporting their concern as a duty of care to the child, young person or vulnerable adult concerned.



THE ACADEMY

HOMEGROWN & HUNGRY

Where concerns are raised in good faith, AFC Wimbledon will offer full support to the whistle-blower and will not tolerate any resulting bullying, harassment or victimisation whatsoever. If this does occur, any perpetrators will be dealt with under Club disciplinary policy/procedures, which may result in possible expulsion from the club.

Confidentiality

AFC Wimbledon will do its utmost to protect the confidentiality of a whistle-blower if they do not want their identity to be disclosed. It must be acknowledged that any subsequent investigation into an allegation, the whistle-blower may be needed provide a statement to form part of the evidence.

If the investigation process requires the whistle-blower to be identified, or it becomes apparent that the whistle-blower will be identified, notice will be given to them by the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), to which person the identity disclosure will be made. They will then be given the opportunity to discuss any likely consequences.

Raising a Concern or Making an Allegation

In the first instance, concerns should be brought to the attention of the Club's DSO either verbally or in writing. AFC Wimbledon's DSO is John Harwood who can be contacted via email at welfare@afcwimbledon.ltd.uk. The concern needs to be as specific as possible including the reason for the concern, an outline of the issue, the history or background, any names, dates and locations where possible.

The earlier an individual expresses a concern, the easier it is for someone to take prompt and efficient action. Although the whistle-blower is not expected to prove the truth of an allegation, they will need to demonstrate to the club's DSO that there are sufficient grounds for their concern.

Anonymous Allegations

AFC Wimbledon encourages the whistle-blower to put their name to a concern or allegation. Anonymous concerns or allegations are much less powerful and are therefore much harder to prove. Any concern or allegation received anonymously will still be considered and an investigation will be undertaken at the discretion of the DSO who will assess the seriousness of the concern, the credibility of the concern, and the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources or factual records.

Untrue or Unproven Allegations

If an investigation finds that the concerns or allegations made by a whistle-blower are untrue or have not been substantiated but were reported in good faith, then no action will be taken against the whistle-blower. However, if it is established a concern or allegation was made with malicious or frivolous intent or for personal gain, disciplinary action may be taken against them. In such cases, AFC Wimbledon's disciplinary policy/procedure will apply.

Responses and Outcomes to Concerns and Allegations

The DSO or other relevant person, body or organisation will respond accordingly to all concerns and allegations that are raised with communications either by email, telephone or in person as



THE ACADEMY

HOME GROWN & HUNGRY

is deemed appropriate, and will liaise with the whistle-blower as necessary until the matter is concluded.

The Investigation Process

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

- Club Chief Executive
- The London or Surrey FA County Welfare Officer
- Ann Hussey, Child Protection Advisor, The Football League, Operations Centre, Edward VII Quay, Navigation Way, Preston, PR2 2YF ahussey@football-league.co.uk Tel: 01772 325811
- The FA/NSPCC Child Protection 24-Hour Helpline 0808 800 5000
- Or by going direct to the Police and/or Social Services