

WHISTLE BLOWING 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 canoeing.
- 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 the BCU are covered by this policy.

KEY PRINCIPLES

The following important principles are contained within this policy:

- The code is complementary to the BCU's Child Protection Policy & Procedures and its Code of Ethics and Conduct.
- The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy.
- If a matter raised results in any disciplinary action, the BCU's disciplinary procedures will apply.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

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 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.

The BCU is committed to the highest possible standards of openness, honesty and accountability. In line with that commitment, individuals are encouraged, if they have serious concerns about any aspect of a child's safety and welfare, 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 the BCU 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 the BCU,

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its employees, all persons registered as members of the BCU and any persons who are the subject of any complaint, as well as the person making the complaint.

SAFEGUARDS

The BCU is committed to good practice and high standards and wants to be supportive of everyone within the canoeing community.

The BCU 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.

The BCU 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

The BCU 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 BCU Child Protection Lead 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 be considered (at the discretion of the BCU Case Management Referral Group).

In exercising the discretion, the factors to be taken into account would include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised.
- The credibility of the concern.
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources or factual records.

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 BCU's disciplinary procedure will apply.

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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 BCU's Child Protection Policy & Procedures.

HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

Individuals should raise the concern in the first instance with the BCU Child Protection Lead Officer on 0845 370 9503 or by post to BCU, 18 Market Place, Bingham, Nottingham, NG13 8AP (you should mark the envelope 'private & confidential') or email at childprotection@bcu.org.uk If you believe that you have not received a satisfactory response to your concern, you should approach the Chief Executive.

Concerns may be made verbally or in writing to the Child Protection Lead Officer (as above). 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 BCU's Child Protection Lead Officer that there are sufficient grounds for their concern.

HOW WILL THE BCU RESPOND?

The action taken by the BCU will depend on the nature of the concern. In all cases the matter will be referred to the BCU Child Protection Case Management Referral Group.

In order to protect individuals it is likely that the BCU Child Protection Lead Officer will conduct initial enquiries so that the Case Management Referral Group can decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take.

Receipt of the individuals concern will be acknowledged immediately and, within five working days of the concern being received, the BCU will write to them:

- Indicating how the matter will be dealt with.
- Giving an estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response.
- Tell them whether any initial enquiries have been made.
- Tell them whether further investigations will take place, and if not, why not.

The amount of contact between the people considering the issues and the whistle blower will depend on the nature of the matters raised, the potential difficulties involved and the clarity of the information provided. If necessary, further information will be sought from the whistle blower as part of the investigation process.

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When any meeting is arranged, the whistle blower has the right, if they so wish, to be accompanied by a friend or a person of their choice who is not involved in the matter to which the concern relates.

The BCU will take steps to minimise any difficulties which individuals may experience as a result of raising a concern. For instance, if the whistle blower is required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the BCU will advise them about the procedure.

The BCU accepts that the whistle blower needs to be assured that the matter has been properly addressed. Subject to legal constraints, they will receive information about the outcomes of any investigations, and the action that is to be taken against those whose actions caused them concern. Also, if appropriate, what policy changes are to be made to minimise the possibility of a similar concern being raised in the future.

HOW THE MATTER CAN BE TAKEN FURTHER

This policy is intended to provide individuals with a way in which they can raise concerns about the safety and welfare of any child, young person or vulnerable adult involved in any canoeing activity under the jurisdiction of the BCU. The BCU hopes individuals will be satisfied that any child protection matter they raise has been considered properly. If they are not satisfied, and if they feel it is right to take the matter outside of the BCU they should contact:

- The Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) 0116 234 7278;
- Their local area Child Protection Committee.
- Their local Social Services.
- Their local police.

If they do take the matter outside of the BCU, they will need to ensure that they do not disclose prohibited confidential information. They must check this before they make contact.