

What is Whistleblowing?

'Whistle-blower' is a term commonly used to describe a person who alerts an authority to acts of wrongdoing, usually by someone within the authority's jurisdiction. Whistle-blowers are witnesses to a malpractice and must not be penalised for any disclosure of information, in fact certain categories of whistle-blowers are protected by the law'. Herefordshire Fencing Club (HFC) is committed to encouraging a culture of openness: to uphold the reputation of the organisation, maintain the sport's and the public's confidence, and to protect its members (i.e. athletes, coaches, staff, volunteers etc.).

It is in the interests of the sport and its membership that individuals with genuine concerns are able to raise them in a confidential and effective way. This policy outlines the mechanism by which serious concerns can be lodged with HFC and addressed appropriately. For the purposes of this policy the workplace includes that of Herefordshire Fencing Club as well as off-site locations related to competition and training camps.

Where possible confidentiality will be maintained, although it must be stressed that in serious cases of fraud and in cases of child protection it will be not always be possible to maintain strict confidentiality if the concerns reach the investigation stage.

Process and Procedures

All employees, athletes, contractors and students within HFC in any capacity, at one time or another may have concerns about what is happening. It is the duty of everyone to speak up about genuine concerns. These concerns are usually best resolved by having a conversation with their Welfare Officer or other trusted appropriate adult.

When disclosing a concern, an employee, athlete, contractor or student must reasonably believe two things:

1. That they are acting in the public interest; and
2. That the disclosure may fall under one or more of the following headings of malpractice (the list is not exclusive):
 - a criminal offence e.g. fraud;
 - betting, corrupt conduct, inside-information and match fixing;
 - someone's health and safety is in danger e.g. coercion of an athlete to train against medical advice or conducting an unsafe-practice;
 - risk or actual damage to the environment;
 - a miscarriage of justice;
 - an organisation is breaking the law e.g. incorrect or inadequate insurance cover; or
 - covering up wrong-doing, such as fabricating test results or supporting cheating (sport rule violation, anti-doping rule violation).

Employees, athletes, contractors and students may be worried about raising such issues or may want to keep the concerns to themselves, perhaps feeling that it is none of their business or that it is only a suspicion. They may feel that raising the matter would be disloyal to colleagues, coaches, managers or to HFC. They may decide to say something but find that they have spoken to the wrong person or raised the issue in the wrong way and are not sure what to do next.

HFC takes any form of misconduct seriously and has introduced this policy to enable employees, athletes, contractors and students to raise concerns early and in the right way.

We encourage all individuals, where appropriate, to raise the matter as a concern rather than wait for proof.

Assurances to employees, athletes, contractors and students

The HFC board members are committed to this policy. If a genuine concern is disclosed under it, we will use all reasonable endeavours to protect the position of the individual concerned, provided they are acting in good faith. This assurance does not apply to someone who maliciously, raises a concern that they know is untrue.

The daily environment for a HFC employee, athlete, contractor or student may be challenging following a whistleblowing disclosure, both whilst the disclosure is being investigated and following the conclusion of the process. If the individual feels that his/her environment is not tolerable, discussions should take place with British Fencing who will seek to either redeploy that individual, suitably change their environment, or ensure that they are not disadvantaged as a result of making the disclosure.

HFC does not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern. However, we recognise that someone may wish to raise a concern 'in confidence'. If any individuals ask us to protect their identity we will not disclose it without their consent. If the situation develops and HFC and/or British Fencing is not able to resolve the concern without revealing their identity (for instance because evidence is required in court), we will consult with the employee, athlete, contractor or student on how they would like to proceed.

We recognise that if we do not know the identity of the person disclosing a concern, it may be more difficult to resolve the matter: however, we will always endeavour to balance this with the needs of the individual raising a concern.

Procedure

Once HFC has been made aware of a concern we will make an initial assessment in order to decide what action should be taken. This may involve: an internal investigation; or an external review/investigation completed by independent experts who are not involved in the operation of HFC or British Fencing. The person disclosing will then be made aware of who is handling the concern and how they can be contacted and whether they will be required to assist in the future. Any investigation will not, at any stage, be carried out by any person against whom allegations are made, and details will only be shared with those individuals who are considered vital to the effective functioning of any investigation. A Panel will then be formed based on the needs of the case, which will be composed of those who have the knowledge required to fairly assess the disclosure.

HFC will act as quickly as possible to resolve the matter though the time taken to come to a resolution will depend on the nature of the disclosure. If appropriate and confidentiality allows, the person disclosing may be kept informed though this may not always be possible.

When raising a concern the employee, athlete, contractor or student may be asked how they feel the matter might best be resolved. At this stage, we must be made aware of any personal interest in the matter. If the concern is deemed to be covered more appropriately by the Grievance Procedure we will make the individual aware and direct them to the policy. Records of disclosures will be kept in accordance with applicable law.

Raising a concern internally

Those who have a concern about misconduct would ideally raise it in the first instance with their club Welfare Officer. This may be done orally or in writing. The person disclosing must

state whether they wish to raise the matter in confidence so the appropriate arrangements can be made.

If after following these concerns the person disclosing feels the matter has not been addressed, or if they feel that the matter is so serious that they cannot discuss it with any of the above they should contact the CEO of British Fencing.

If the person disclosing is still not satisfied with the decision making process or the action taken they can go to the other levels of escalation.

Raising a concern externally

If you discover any wrongdoing, including bad practice or abuse you should report it to the British Fencing Association's Equality and Safeguarding Manager - Liz Behnke using any of the following methods:

- **Via Post:**
Equality and Safeguarding Manager
British Fencing
1 Baron's Court, 33-35 Rothschild Road, London W4 5HT
- **Via email:** equality@britishfencing.com
- **Via Telephone:** 07717740125 Some professions, such as medicine and physiotherapy, have statutory duties to inform certain categories of disclosure externally. In disclosure cases such as criminal misconduct, child or vulnerable adult abuse, all employees, athletes, contractors and students must inform the regulatory authorities without undue delay.

The disclosure process when dealt with internally by British Fencing and/or HFC may be duty bound to report this externally to statutory bodies.

Keeping the British Fencing Board informed

The CEO or Welfare Officer will notify the Chair of the Board when a whistleblowing case has instigated a Panel investigation. Details of the case will not be discussed at that stage. Once the Panel findings are concluded, the Board will be fully informed, in confidence.

Further information

For your information some regulatory statutory bodies are listed below. These Regulatory statutory bodies have individual policies and procedures for handling concerns and complaints. Many of their websites contain guidance on issues that you may face which may be helpful in your initial deliberations on whether to make a disclosure.

The Information Commissioner

In relation to compliance with the requirement of legislation relating to data protection and to freedom of information. Email: casework@ico.gsi.gov.uk and the website is www.ico.gov.uk

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC)

Matters relating to child welfare and protection. Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

1. **PROCESS FLOWCHART**

