

# WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY FOR SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF POLICY

British Fencing (BF) is committed to the highest possible standards of integrity, transparency, and accountability. In line with this commitment, we encourage everyone to come forward and voice their concerns in relation to safeguarding and welfare.

**Doing nothing about it may seem the easiest thing to do, but what concerns YOU may also be the concern of others: it won't go away and the situation could get worse.**

Whistleblowing is the action that someone takes to report wrongdoing or dangers that could affect others within the sport.

## WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

BF believe whistleblowing to be a positive act and that it makes a valuable contribution to creating a fair and safe environment to all participants in fencing and encourage anyone who has a concern to raise it with us.

The aim of this policy is to:

- Support the promotion of the process of whistleblowing in safeguarding
- Help embed a positive culture where people feel comfortable reporting concerns
- Provide clear guidance on the roles and responsibilities of all staff, board, volunteers and members
- Identify a clear pathway for reporting and investigation
- Outline the protection of the whistleblower

This policy specifically relates to whistleblowing in relation to safeguarding and welfare.

There is a separate Whistleblowing Policy that relates to concerns over suspected malpractice, fraud, corruption or bribery and an internal Whistleblowing Policy for staff.

Please do not use this process if you have a complaint. There is a separate Customer Complaints Policy which describes how to make a complaint.

Please note British Fencing is not a prescribed regulator for whistleblowing purposes under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998.

## 2. RAISING A CONCERN

### 2.1 WHO CAN RAISE A CONCERN?

Any athlete, member, volunteers, officials, member of the public or their representatives, staff, businesses, public and voluntary bodies can raise a safeguarding concern about, or to, BF.

### 2.2 WHAT IS THE SCOPE OF A CONCERN?

When disclosing a genuine concern under the Whistleblowing Policy, a person must reasonably believe two things:

1. That they are acting in the public interest - Personal grievances and complaints are **not** usually covered by Public Interest Disclosure law and so disclosing would not be considered as acting in the public interest.
2. That the disclosure may fall under one or more of the following headings of malpractice (the list is not exclusive):
  - Danger or risk of harm to an individual's welfare.
  - Risk of, or actual breach of, BF Safeguarding Policy which impacts the welfare of individuals.

### 2.3 HOW TO RAISE A CONCERN

If you have any concerns with regard to the behaviour of any adult towards a young person or adult at risk in connection with fencing, it is important that you share your concerns with BF's Lead Safeguarding Officer. The earlier you express your concern the more likely it is that it can be resolved quickly and without potentially further harm to any young person.

Reporting forms can be found on the BF website:

[REPORT A CONCERN](https://www.britishfencing.com/welfare-zone/report-a-concern/) (<https://www.britishfencing.com/welfare-zone/report-a-concern/>)

In disclosure cases such as criminal misconduct, child or adult at risk abuse, all individuals should understand that regulatory authorities should be informed without undue delay.

The disclosure process when dealt with internally by BF may be duty bound to report the concern externally to statutory bodies.

## 3. ASSURANCES TO WHISTLEBLOWERS

This policy has been written in line with the Public Disclosure Act 1998 which protects workers making disclosures about certain matters of concern, when those disclosures are made for public interest. BF recognises that not everyone involved in fencing is a "worker", but the same principle will apply to anyone involved in fencing.

### 3.1 COMMITMENT

The BF Board members are committed to this policy. BF recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make. If a genuine concern is raised BF will:

- not tolerate any harassment or victimisation of the whistleblower
- take appropriate action to protect the whistleblower
- not discriminate against, victimise nor be judgmental of the whistleblower
- ensure that any other process involving the whistleblower (eg selection, disciplinary, HR procedures) is not influenced by, nor influences the investigation into the concerns.

This assurance does not apply to someone who maliciously raises a concern that they know is untrue.

Depending on the individual's situation, the environment in fencing for that individual 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 their environment is not tolerable, discussions should take place with BF so support can be offered - this may include redeployment, changes to the fencing environment, or ensuring that the individual is not disadvantaged as a result of making the disclosure.

### 3.2 CONFIDENTIALITY

BF does not tolerate the harassment or victimisation of anyone raising a genuine concern. However we recognise that some may wish to raise a concern in confidence under this Policy.

If an individual asks us to protect their identity we will make every effort not to disclose it without their consent, unless we are legally required to do so.

Be aware that the statutory requirements to share information in relation to safeguarding concerns (especially as they relate to minors) means that we are sometimes unable to protect the identity of the whistleblower. Where this is the case, we will inform the individual.

In other situations, if BF is not able to resolve the concern without revealing their identity (for instance because evidence is required in court, or because the concern by its nature identifies the person raising it), we will consult with the individual on how they would like to proceed and do our best to take their views into account.

Please bear in mind that if BF does not know the identity of the person disclosing a concern, it will be much more difficult to investigate the matter and to provide with feedback if appropriate.

## 4. WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Where you have provided contact details will acknowledge receipt of your concern within fifteen working days.

In the event that the concern does not fall under Safeguarding we will direct you to the relevant policy/procedure (eg Complaints Policy).

All concerns will be dealt with in accordance with the BF Safeguarding Procedures.

Depending on the concern we may not be able to update you on the progress and the outcome.

## 5. UNTRUE OR MALICIOUS ALLEGATIONS

If an allegation is made in good faith and the whistleblower reasonably believes it to be true, even it is not confirmed by the investigation, BF will recognise the concern and make every effort to protect the individual.

Whether or not an allegation is confirmed, BF will not take action against an individual for the action of passing on a concern to BF that they have raised in good faith and reasonably believes to be true.