



Port Vale Football Club

Allegations of Abuse against Staff

Version control

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Document review

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Version history

Version	Date Released	Originator	Authorised	Comments
1.0	Mar 2021	Jon Bloore	Board	Original Policy Implementation
1.1	August 2021	Tim Bailey		Revised version

Introduction

Port Vale Football Club is committed to providing the highest level of care for both its players and its staff. It is extremely important that any allegations of abuse against a coach, any other member of staff, or volunteer in our Club are dealt with thoroughly and efficiently, maintaining the highest level of protection for the Child or Adults at Risk whilst also giving support to the person who is the subject of the allegation.

This policy is designed to ensure that all staff, young people and parents or carers are aware of the procedure for the investigation of allegations of abuse in order that all complaints are dealt with consistently and efficiently as possible.

We hope that having a clear policy outlined will help young people to feel comfortable that they can voice concerns about any member of staff. Allegations will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) immediately or to the CEO where the (staff member) is the subject of an allegation. All allegations will be taken seriously and investigated immediately.

Purpose

The procedure for dealing with allegations against staff depends on the situation and circumstances surrounding the allegation. This policy must be followed when dealing with allegations but may be adapted to each case. This policy will be used alongside the Club's **complaints policy and safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk policy**.

Note: Port Vale FC Complaints policy and procedures are contained within the company handbook. Safeguarding children and the Adults at Risk Policies are contained on the Club Website.

This policy will be used in any case where it is suspected or alleged that a member of staff or a volunteer at the club has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed a child/adult at risk or may have harmed a child/adult at risk (our **Safeguarding Children/Adult at Risk policy** outlines what it means to harm a child/adult at risk);
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child/adult at risk; or
- behaved towards a child/adult at risk or children in a way that indicates he or she may pose a risk of harm to children/adult at risk.

Timescale

It is imperative that allegations against staff are dealt with as quickly as possible to:

- minimise the risk to the child/adult at risk.
- minimise the impact on the child's academic progress.
- minimise stress to the employee concerned.
- ensure a fair and thorough investigation for all parties.

To enable this to happen, all staff, parents, and young people and service users should be aware of the procedures set out in this policy.

Procedure

Reporting an allegation

All allegations made against staff should be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO). Complaints about the DSO should be reported to the

SSM. Complaints about the SSM should be reported to the Chief Operating Officer (Claire Halket) who will then contact the designated officer at the local authority.

Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague towards a child/adult at risk are undoubtedly placed in a very difficult situation. They may worry that they have misunderstood the situation and they will wonder whether a report could jeopardise their colleague's career. All staff must remember that the welfare of the child/adult at risk is paramount and must report their concerns immediately.

The DSO/SSM/CEO or board member will contact FA safeguarding team and EFL safeguarding team and the designated officer at the local authority refer to EFL guidance for managing safeguarding concerns and a discussion will take place to decide whether:

- more information is required; or
- no further actions are needed; or
- a strategy discussion should take place; or
- there should be immediate involvement of the police or social care.

The club will share available information with the FA safeguarding team designated officer about the allegation, the child, and the person against whom the allegation has been made and consider whether a police investigation or a strategy discussion is needed. Representatives from other agencies may be invited to the discussion and could include representatives from health, social care and police.

Note : Stoke On Trent local authority designated officer is John Hanlon Telephone direct line 01782 233342 Mobile number 07385 362877e: john.hanlon@stoke.gov.uk and the designated Adult Safeguarding manager can be contacted via e: DASM@stoke.gov.uk .

Staffordshire FA Contact is Jan Scott and he can be contacted via e: Jan.Scott@StaffordshireFA.com

Or e: safeguarding.children@TheFA.com

Investigation

An investigation into the allegation is normally carried out by the authority in which it sits e.g. criminal allegations will be investigated by the Police and non-criminal allegations will be investigated in the first instance by the club and or the FA safeguarding team. This will be agreed at the initial evaluation stage. Where the Club is not conducting the investigation, it will cooperate with investigative agencies. The investigation will be overseen by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) who will record and be reported to by all other relevant agencies involved.

Internal investigations must be second to any safeguarding investigation and may need to be delayed until the external investigation is complete.

The following definitions should be used when determining the outcome of the investigation:

- **Substantiated:** there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
- **Malicious:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive
- **False:** there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
- **Unsubstantiated:** there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.
- **Unfounded:** to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made

Supporting those involved

The person(s) who makes the allegation and their parents/carers.

Parents and carers will be notified if their child makes or is involved in an allegation against staff if they do not already know. However, if the police or social services are to be involved, they will be contacted first and will advise as to what information may or may not be disclosed to the parents. *[There will be a staff member designated to the role of liaising with the parents and child about the case and ensuring that they are fully informed as far as is possible.]* Parents and carers will be made aware of any progress in the investigation, and where there is no criminal prosecution, the outcome will be explained to them. This may be a disciplinary outcome. During a disciplinary hearing the deliberations and information used for making a decision are usually confidential, but parents will be told the outcome in confidence.

Social services and the police may be involved and will provide the school with advice on what type of additional support the child may need.

The club's **Whistleblowing Policy** contained in the Company Handbook enables staff to raise concerns or allegations against their colleagues in confidence and for a sensitive enquiry to take place.

The Employee

Port Vale Football Club has a duty of care to its employees and will take steps to minimise the stress of any allegation and the investigation process.

The person who is the subject of the investigation will be informed as soon as possible and usually after the initial discussion with the designated officer. The employee will then be advised on what the next course of action will be. However, if the police or social services are to be involved, they will be contacted before the employee, and will advise as to what information may be disclosed to the person under investigation.

The DSO/SSM or BOARD named representative will keep the employee informed of the progress of the case and any other work-related issues.

The employee may need additional support and the club will consider what might be appropriate to best accommodate this. If it is a criminal investigation and the police are involved, they may provide this additional support.

Confidentiality

The club will make every effort to guard the privacy of all parties during and after an investigation into an allegation. It is in everyone's best interest to maintain this confidentiality to ensure a fair investigation with minimum impact for all parties.

A breach of confidentiality will be taken seriously and may warrant its own investigation.

Suspensions

The club will not suspend a member of staff without serious consideration and will not do it automatically once an allegation has been made. Depending on the nature of the case, it may be possible that alternative arrangements are made so that the individual can continue working.

The employer [board] holds the power to suspend an employee but will listen to the views of the police and or FA and or LADO regarding suspension.

In the case of suspension, the employee will receive written confirmation within one working day and will be informed of the reason for the suspension.

Resignations

If an employee resigns when the allegation is made against them or during an investigation, the investigation will continue until an outcome has been reached, with or without the employee's cooperation. They will be given full opportunity to answer the allegation.

Record keeping

Where an allegation is found to be malicious, it will be removed from the record of the employee concerned.

For all other allegations, records of investigations and outcomes will be kept in the employee's personal file and they will be given a copy. The record will be kept, including for people who leave the organisation, at least until the person reaches normal retirement age or for 10 years if that will be longer, from the date of the allegation.

Details of any allegation made by a young person will be kept in the confidential section of their record.

All allegations of this nature will be recorded on TOPICS under "Raising a safeguarding concern".

Action on conclusion of the case

If the allegation is substantiated and the employee is dismissed or resigns, or we cease to use the volunteer's services, the school will consider whether a referral must be made to the DBS as appropriate.

If it is decided that the employee may return to club I after a suspension, then provisions will be put in place by the club to ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible. This may involve a phased return for a trial period or the use of another member of staff as a support system in the short term. If the child/adult at risk who made the allegation is still at the club, the club will consider what needs to be done to manage the contact between employee and child/adult at risk.

Action in the case of false or malicious allegations

Where an allegation is proved to be false, the SSM may refer to social services to determine whether the child/adult at risk needs support or has been abused by someone else.

The club's **behaviour policy** sets out the disciplinary action that may be taken against pupils who are found to have made malicious allegations against club staff. The SSM may consult the club board when considering what action to take.

If the claim has been made by a person who is not a member of the club, the club may pass the information to the police who may take further action against that person.

After the case

No matter what the outcome is of an allegation of abuse against staff, the club will review the case to see if there are any improvements that can be made in its practice or policy that may help to deal with cases in the future.

Signed by:

_____ **Name Board member** **date:**

_____ **SSM** **date:**

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis or following learning outcomes as a result of a significant incident or when legislation / statutory guidance changes by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.