



Port Vale Football Club

Safeguarding Whistleblowing Policy

PORT VALE F.C.

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Version control

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Document review

Last reviewed	Position
Mar 2021	Review and update of Club/Academy and Foundation policy to one umbrella policy.
August 2022	Review and update of Club/Academy and Foundation policy

Version history

Version	Date Released	Originator	Authorised	Comments
1.1	Aug 2019	Chris Taylor	Board	Safeguarding whistleblowing policy
1.2	Mar 2021	Jon Bloore	Board	Safeguarding whistleblowing policy
1.3	August 2021	Tim Bailey		Revised version
1.4	August 2022	Tim Bailey	Board	Revised version

1. The purpose and Scope of this Policy statement

This Policy is for use across the club and is to be observed by all staff members, the Policy exists to ensure that best practice is promoted and adhered to.

Activities undertaken at the following locations/departments are under the remit of this policy which include:

- Port Vale Football club and the Vale Park Stadium
- Port Vale Foundation Trust
- Port Vale First Team
- Port Vale Academy and youth development
- Port Vale ladies Football team
- Port Vale Retail Store
- The HUBB Foundation

Purpose of the Policy

This policy is intended to encourage individuals to raise any concerns they have about the health, safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved with Port Vale Football Club, 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.

Port Vale Football Club seeks to reassure individuals they will be protected from reprisals or victimization for whistleblowing in good faith.

Policy Statement

It is often the case that players, coaches, officials, parents, carers or team followers are the first to realise that a child's health, 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 victimization. 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.

Port Vale Football Club urges anyone to come forward and voice those concerns or suspicions and commits to supporting those who raise matters of concern being raised without fear of victimization, subsequent discrimination, or disadvantage. The policy is intended to encourage and enable individuals to raise serious concerns within Port Vale Football Club, in the first instance, 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 Port Vale Football Club, but especially the person making the complaint, the person who is the subject of the complaint and, most importantly, the person or persons who are or who may be at risk.

Safeguarding

Port Vale Football Club recognizes 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 or abuse. If an individual believes what they say is or may be true, then they should have no reason to fear reporting their concern as a duty of care to the child, young person or vulnerable adult concerned.

Where concerns are raised in good faith, Port Vale Football Club will offer its full support to the whistle-blower and will not tolerate any resulting bullying, harassment or victimisation whatsoever. Should this occur, any perpetrators will be dealt with under Port Vale Football Club's Disciplinary Policy and Procedures, which may result in possible sanctions or exclusion/expulsion from the club.

Confidentiality

Port Vale Football Club will do its utmost to protect the confidentiality of a whistle-blower if they do not want their identity to be disclosed. However, 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, then notice will be given to them by the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), to which person(s) or organisation(s) 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, and suspicions or concerns should be brought to the attention of Port Vale Football Club's Dedicated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), either verbally or in writing.

The concern needs to be as specific as possible, including the reason for the concern, an outline of the issue, the history or background and 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.

All concerns shall be recorded via "Report a safeguarding Concern" on TOPICS, this will include any issues raised that are considered to be a "safeguarding Near Miss". This will ensure transparency of investigation of all concerns raised and provide a written record of all allegations made.

Anonymous Allegations

Port Vale Football Club encourages anyone who becomes a whistle-blower to provide their name to a concern or allegation. However, it is recognised that concerns or allegations may originate from individuals who do not provide their details and wish to remain anonymous. Any Anonymous concerns or allegations will be recorded and investigated but anonymity may make the concern or allegation harder to prove.

All concerns and allegations will 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.

Malicious 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. Then this allegation may result in disciplinary action taken against the whistle-blower. In any such cases, Port Vale Football Club'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 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 Port Vale Football Club'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:

Local Area Designated Officer (LADO) E John.Hanlon@stoke.gov.uk

Football Association Safeguarding & Education Officer is Jan Scott

(E): Support@StaffordshireFA.com **(T):** 01785 256994 (ext. 205)

(M): 07969 294023

Childline: <https://www.childline.org.uk>

Stoke-on-Trent Children's Advice and Duty Service (CHAD): Phone 01782 235100. Monday – Thursday 8:30am – 6:00pm
Friday 8:30am – 6:00pm. Emergency **Duty** Team (Out of hours) Telephone: 01782 234234.

Board Authority and Acceptance of this Policy

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.

