



Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Rugby- Whistleblowing Policy

Date Created: 24/02/2019

Location: Rossmore Leisure Centre Poole Dorset BH12 4HR

Author: Joanna Barents

Revision Date: To be reviewed June 2019, by Becky Hill

Next Review Date: July 2022

1. Introduction

1.1. Players and volunteers are often the first to realise that there may be something seriously wrong within an organisation. However, they may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up would be disloyal to their colleagues or to the organisation. They may also fear harassment or victimisation. In these circumstances it may be easier to ignore the concern rather than report what may just be a suspicion of malpractice.

1.2. Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Rugby are committed to the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In line with that commitment, all who have contact with the club and who have serious concerns about any aspect of its work, are encouraged to come forward and voice any concerns. It is recognised that most cases will have to proceed on a confidential basis.

1.3. This Whistle-Blowing Policy makes it clear that an individual may report any concern without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. It is intended to encourage and enable members and volunteers to raise serious concerns within The Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Rugby Club rather than overlooking a problem or airing their concerns outside the club.

2. Aims of Policy

2.1. The Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Rugby Whistle-blowing Policy is designed for use where there are concerns about serious malpractice, impropriety or cover-up – please see the definitions below. For other matters, there is an existing Complaints Policy & Procedures for volunteers, members and the public to raise any general complaints with The Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Rugby Club.

2.2. This Whistle-blowing Policy is designed to enable anyone to raise concerns internally and at a high level and to disclose information which the individual believes shows malpractice or impropriety. In particular the policy aims to:

2.2.1. encourage individuals to feel confident in raising serious concerns and to question and act upon concerns about practice

2.2.2. provide avenues to raise concerns and receive feedback on any action taken

2.2.3. ensure that the individual receives a response to any concern and that they are aware of how to pursue them if not satisfied with such a response

2.2.4. re-assure individuals that they will be protected from possible reprisals or victimisation providing there is reasonable belief and the disclosure is made in good faith.

3. Scope of Policy

3.1. This policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may at least initially be investigated separately, but then might lead to the invocation of other procedures e.g. disciplinary. Such concerns may include:

3.1.1. financial malpractice, impropriety, bribery or fraud.

3.1.2. failure to comply with a legal obligation or statutes.

3.1.3. dangers to Health & Safety or the environment.

3.1.4. conduct which is a breach of the law.

3.1.5. improper behaviour or unethical behaviour.

3.1.6. failure to comply with The Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Policies and Procedures

3.1.7. attempts to conceal any of these.

4. Safeguards

4.1. The Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair are committed to good practice and high standards and aims to be supportive of all who are involved with the organisation. The policy is designed to offer protection to all who disclose concerns, provided any disclosure is made:

4.1.1. in good faith;

4.1.2. in the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure that it tends to show conduct that falls within points at paragraphs 2 and 3 above; and

4.1.3. if you make a disclosure to an appropriate person (please see below).

4.2. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects employees from victimisation, discipline or dismissal where they raise genuine concerns of misconduct or malpractice. It is important to note that no protection from internal GBWR disciplinary procedures is offered to those who choose not to use the procedure. This policy does not, however, form part of any GBWR employee's contract of employment.

4.3. The Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair will not tolerate any harassment or victimisation (including informal pressures) and will take appropriate action to protect all who raise a concern in good faith.

4.4. Any investigation into allegations of potential malpractice will not influence or be influenced by any disciplinary or redundancy procedures that may already affect an employee.

5. Confidentiality

5.1. The Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual making the allegation may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

6. Anonymous Allegations

6.1. This policy encourages individuals to put their name to any whistle-blowing disclosures they make. Any concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible and will only be considered at the discretion of The Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Board of Trustees. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:

6.1.1. seriousness of the issues raised;

6.1.2. the credibility of the concerns;

6.1.3. the credibility of the evidence offered to support those concerns; and

6.1.4. the likelihood of confirming the whistle-blowing allegation from attributable sources

7. Untrue Allegations

7.1. In making any whistle-blowing disclosure, an individual needs to exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information. If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, then no action will be taken against that individual.

7.2. If, however, an individual makes any frivolous, malicious or vexatious allegations (and even more so if he or she persists in making them), The Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair may take disciplinary or other action against that individual.

8. How to report a concern and relevant timescales

8.1. Players should report any whistle-blowing concerns they have to a member of the Committee.

8.2. The reporting route depends, however, on the seriousness and sensitivity of the issues involved and on who is suspected of the malpractice. The member can decide which Committee member is best placed to hear the concern. If it involves a member of the Committee then the whistle-blower should report it to the Chair of Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Rugby. If it involves the Chair themselves, then the whistle-blower should report it to the Bournemouth Rugby Club Executive Committee.

8.3. Concerns may be raised verbally or in writing. In either case, the following should be provided:

8.3.1. the background and history of the concern (giving relevant dates);

8.3.2. the reason for the concerns; and

8.3.3. a brief outline of the evidence offered to support the concerns.

8.4. Anyone reporting a whistle-blowing concern should do so at the earliest opportunity so that appropriate action can be taken.

8.5. Although a whistle-blower is not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of an allegation, he/she will need to demonstrate to the person contacted that there are reasonable grounds for concern.

8.6. If The Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Rugby is alerted to concerns via a 'tip off' (e.g. from a member of the public) then the person receiving the 'tip off' should attempt to obtain the following information from the informant:

8.6.1. name, address and telephone number

8.6.2. names of individual and/or bodies involved

8.6.3. a brief outline of the concerns

8.6.4. how the informant became aware of the concerns

8.6.5. whether the informant is willing and able to submit evidence and then follow the reporting procedures above.

9. Actions that GBWR will take & Investigating Procedure

9.1. The Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair is committed to investigating whistle-blowing disclosures fully, fairly, quickly and confidentially, as circumstances permit.

9.2. The Chair of The Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Rugby Club will act as Investigating Officer and will usually follow these steps:

9.2.1. obtain full details and clarifications of the whistle-blowing concerns

9.2.2. in order to protect individuals and those accused of misdeeds or possible malpractice, make initial enquiries to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take

9.2.3. within 10 days, acknowledge to the whistle-blower that the concern has been received; indicate how it is proposed to deal with the matter; and inform them whether further investigations will take place and if not, the reason for not doing so

9.2.4. if, in the judgement of the Investigating Officer, a full investigation of the whistle-blowing concern is warranted, then inform and consult with Committee and decide on appropriate course of action.

9.2.5. inform the individual, against whom the whistle-blowing allegation is made, as soon as is practically possible. (A member or volunteer will be informed of their right to be accompanied by a friend other than a family member)

9.2.6. the Investigating Officer may, where appropriate, call on the assistance of other individuals and/or bodies. For example, in cases of possible fraud, the Investigating Officer may consider the involvement of the auditors and will inform the police; and in other cases of possible criminal activity, the Investigating Officer will inform the police. The Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Rugby will ensure that any internal investigation does not hinder a formal police investigation

9.2.7. once the investigation is complete, the Investigating Officer will make a judgement concerning the validity, or otherwise, of the whistle-blowing concerns. This judgement will be detailed in a written report containing the findings of the investigation and reasons for the judgement.

9.2.10. the Investigating Officer should keep the whistle-blower informed of the progress of the investigation and, if appropriate, of the final outcome. All responses to the whistle-blower should be in writing and sent to their home address.

9.2.11. if the whistle-blower is not satisfied that their concerns have been properly dealt with by the Investigating Officer, then the whistle-blower has the right to raise this, in confidence, with the Chair of The Bournemouth Rugby Club.

9.2.12. the aim of this whistle-blowing policy is to provide an internal mechanism for reporting, investigating and remedying any Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Rugby wrongdoing. It is therefore hoped that it will not be necessary for a whistle-blower to alert external organisations. However, in very serious circumstances (or if all internal Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Rugby procedures have been exhausted but the whistle-blower considers the outcome of the investigations has not satisfactorily

address the concerns) then Bournemouth Lions Wheelchair Rugby recognises that it may be appropriate for an individual to report their concerns to an external body such as a regulator. The government has a prescribed list of Police Service; HM Revenue & Customs; and the Health & Safety Executive. A full list (and an advice line) is available from an independent charity called Public Concern at Work, who can be contacted by telephone on 020 7404 6609 and by email at whistle@pcaw.org.uk (Other appropriate bodies may include the Sports Councils, although they are not 'prescribed' bodies or regulators).

10. Timescales

10.1. Owing to the varied nature of concerns raised by whistle-blowing, which may involve internal investigators and/or the police, it is not possible to lay down precise timescales for such investigations. The Investigating Officer should ensure that the investigations are undertaken as quickly as possible, without affecting the quality and depth of those investigations.

11. Responsible Officer

11.1. The Chairperson acts as the Whistle-blowing Concerns Monitoring Officer and has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. He or she will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcome (but in a form which does not endanger confidentiality).