

Sussex Clubs for Young People Professional Curiosity Whistleblowing and Managing Allegations

Reviewed 23rd February 2022

Signed

Chair of Directors: Peter Gooch

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Policy Statement

Sussex Clubs for Young People (SCYP) is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity, and accountability.

An important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable staff and directors, to voice concerns in a responsible and effective manner. It is a fundamental term of every contract of employment that an employee will faithfully serve his or her employer and not disclose confidential information about the employer's affairs. Nevertheless, where an individual discovers information which they believe shows serious malpractice or wrongdoing within the organisation then this information should be disclosed internally without fear of reprisal, and there should be arrangements to enable this to be done.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act, which came into effect in 1999, gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. SCYP has endorsed the provisions set out below to ensure that no members of staff or directors should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

It should be emphasised that this policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety. It is not designed to question financial, or business decisions taken by SCYP, nor should it be used to reconsider any matters which have already been addressed under harassment, complaint, disciplinary or other procedures. Once the "whistleblowing" procedures are in place, it is reasonable to expect staff to use them rather than air their complaints outside SCYP.

Scope of Policy

This policy is designed to enable employees and directors of SCYP to raise concerns internally and to disclose information which the individual believes shows malpractice or impropriety. This policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may at least initially be investigated separately but might then lead to the invocation of other procedures e.g., disciplinary. These concerns could include:

- Financial malpractice or impropriety or fraud
- Failure to comply with a legal obligation or Statutes
- Dangers to Health & Safety or the environment
- Criminal activity
- Improper conduct or unethical behaviour
- Allegations of abuse of a child in our care or by employees, directors or volunteers
- Attempts to conceal any of these

Safeguards

Protection

This policy is designed to offer protection to anyone who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made:

- in good faith
- in the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure that it tends to show malpractice or impropriety and if they make the disclosure to an appropriate person (see below).

It is important to note that no protection from internal disciplinary procedures is offered to those who choose not to use the procedure. In an extreme case malicious or wild allegation could give rise to legal action on the part of the persons complained about.

Confidentiality

SCYP 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.

Anonymous Allegations

This policy encourages individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible, but they may be considered at the discretion of SCYP. In exercising this discretion, the factors to be considered will include:

- The seriousness of the issues raised
- The credibility of the concern
- The likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources

Untrue Allegations

If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. In making a disclosure the individual should exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information. If, however, an individual makes malicious or vexatious allegations, and particularly if he or she persists with making them, disciplinary action may be taken against that individual.

Procedures for Making a Disclosure

On receipt of a complaint of malpractice, the person who receives and takes note of the complaint, must pass this information as soon as is reasonably possible, to the Chair or another Director:

Complaints of malpractice will at first be investigated by the Chair and other Directors as required, who will meet as soon as is practical and appoint from among them an investigating officer to deal with the matter.

If there is evidence of criminal activity, then the investigating officer should inform the police. SCYP will ensure that any internal investigation does not hinder a formal police investigation.

If there is concern for any reason about the behaviour or actions of any adult outside of SCYP the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) in the local authority should be contacted who is responsible for:

- the co-ordination and overseeing of individual cases.
- liaising with police and other investigative agencies.
- providing advice and guidance to statutory and voluntary organisations; and
- monitoring the progress of all cases to ensure that they are dealt with as quickly as possible, in line with a thorough and fair process.

The LADO must be made aware of all safeguarding complaints or concerns made about, or in relation to, any childcare setting.

Timescales

Due to the varied nature of these sorts of complaints, 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.

The investigating officer, should as soon as practically possible, send a written acknowledgement of the concern to the complainant and thereafter report back to them in writing the outcome of the investigation and on the action that is proposed. If the investigation is a prolonged one, the investigating officer should keep the complainant informed, in writing, as to the progress of the investigation and as to when it is likely to be concluded.

All responses to the complainant should be in writing and sent to their home address.

Investigating Procedure

The investigating officer should follow these steps:

- Full details and clarifications of the complaint should be obtained.
- The investigating officer should inform the person against whom the complaint is made as soon as is practically possible. They should be informed of their right to be accompanied by a representative at any future interview or hearing held under the provision of these procedures.
- The investigating officer should consider the involvement of Independent Listeners' and the Police at this stage and should consult with the Chair and Directors accordingly
- The allegations should be fully investigated by the investigating officer with the assistance where appropriate, of other individuals / bodies.

- A judgement concerning the complaint and validity of the complaint will be made by the investigating officer. This judgement will be detailed in a written report containing the findings of the investigations and reasons for the judgement.

The Chair and Directors will decide what action to take. If the complaint is shown to be justified, then they will invoke the disciplinary or other appropriate Company procedures.

The complainant should be kept informed of the progress of the investigations and, if appropriate, of the outcome.

If appropriate, a copy of the outcomes will be passed to independent arbitration to enable a review of the procedures.

If the complainant is not satisfied that their concern is being properly dealt with by the investigating officer, they have the right to raise it in confidence with the Chair and Directors, or one of the designated persons described above.

If the investigation finds the allegations unsubstantiated and all internal procedures have been exhausted, but the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, SCYP recognises the lawful rights of employees and ex-employees to make disclosures to prescribed persons (such as the Health and Safety Executive, the Audit Commission, or the utility regulators), or, where justified, elsewhere.

Appendix One - Contacts

West Sussex

Children's Social Care Integrated Front Door (IFD)

Monday to Friday between 9am-5pm: 01403 229900

Out of Hours Emergency Tteam: 0330 222 6664

Email: WSchilddrenservices@westsussex.gov.uk

Local Authority Designated Officers

Email: LADO@westsussex.gov.uk Phone: 0330 222 6450

East Sussex

Children's Social Care Single Point of Advice (SPoA)

Monday to Thursday 8.30am-5pm and Friday 8.30am-4.30pm.

Phone: 01323 464222

Email: 0-19.SPOA@eastsussex.gov.uk

Out of Hours Social Care Service - Children's services: 01273 335905/6

Child Protection Plans: 01323 466606

Safeguarding Investigations Unit

For all Safeguarding Investigations Unit, dial 101, and ask for the relevant team – Hastings, Eastbourne, Brighton, Littlehampton or Horsham

Brighton and Hove

Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) / Front Door for Families

Telephone: 01273 290400

Email: FrontDoorForFamilies@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Out of Hours Emergency Duty Service: 01273 335905 or 335906

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Telephone: 01273 (29)5973

Email: LADOenquiries@brighton-hove.gov.uk