



# Herts Disability Sports Foundation

Registered Charity No. 1156034

## **Whistleblowing Policy**

Version control : 2.1

Date of Policy – March 2026

Date for Review – March 2029

Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'K. King', written over a faint circular stamp.

Date 18<sup>th</sup> March 2026

(Signature of Chair)

# Herts Disability Sports Foundation - Whistleblowing Policy

Introduction .....	3
What is Whistleblowing .....	3
Whistleblowing or Grievance? .....	4
Confidentiality and anonymity .....	4
Whistleblowing Procedure .....	5
Level 1 .....	5
Level 2 .....	6
Level 3 .....	6
If a Whistleblower believes they have been treated unfairly .....	7

## Introduction

1. All organisations face the risk of things going wrong or of unknowingly harbouring behaviour that is unprofessional or even illegal. Herts Disability Sports Foundation (HDSF) has a duty to identify and take measures to remedy all such behaviour, particularly with regard to issues of fraud and corruption.
2. By encouraging a culture of openness within our organisation, the Board of Trustees aims to create a working culture where employees feel able to speak up. They are the eyes and ears of the organisation and information they are aware of could prevent wrongdoing – which may damage an organisation's reputation and/or performance and could even save people from harm or death.
3. By knowing about malpractice at an early stage, we stand a good chance of taking the necessary steps to safeguard the interests of all staff, protect our organisation and stop fraud and corruption before it happens.
4. The Board actively encourages staff to raise issues which are of concern at work. The Board recognise, however, that individuals may be worried that by reporting such issues they will be opening themselves up to victimisation, detriment or risking job security. Such fears are understandable; this policy is therefore designed to provide information about the protections offered as well as the process by which concerns can be raised.
5. Volunteers who have concerns about unprofessional or illegal behaviours should use the HDSF complaints procedure.
6. The senior management of HDSF believe that victimisation of a whistleblower is not acceptable. Any instances of victimisation will be taken seriously and managed appropriately.

If an employee should choose to report their concerns to the media they will, in most cases, lose their whistleblowing rights under employment law.

## What is Whistleblowing?

7. Whistleblowing is the term used when an employee passes on information concerning wrongdoing. The wrongdoing will typically (although not necessarily) be something they have witnessed at work.
8. To be covered by whistleblowing law, an employee who makes a disclosure must reasonably believe two things;
  - a. that they are acting in the public interest (personal grievances and complaints are not usually covered by whistleblowing law), and

b. they must reasonably believe is that the disclosure tends to show past, present or likely future wrongdoing falling into one or more of the following categories:

- criminal offences (which may include fraud),
- failure to comply with an obligation set out in law,
- miscarriages of justice,
- endangering of someone's health and safety,
- damage to the environment.

9. The Employment Rights Act 1996 provides protection for workers who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters in the public interest.

10. All organisations face the risk of things going wrong or of unknowingly harbouring malpractice – acting in an unprofessional or illegal way at work. HDSF has a duty to identify and take measures to remedy all malpractice, particularly with regard to issues of fraud and corruption.

## **Whistleblowing or grievance?**

11. Sometimes an employee believes they are blowing the whistle when, in fact, their complaint is a personal grievance. The test is whether the concern has been raised in the 'public interest' or is of a personal nature. Only concerns raised in the public interest are covered by this Whistleblowing policy. Personal grievances should be raised with the line manager and/or through the Grievance Policy.

## **Confidentiality and anonymity**

12. All disclosures will be treated in a consistent and fair manner. HDSF will take all reasonable steps to maintain the confidentiality of the whistleblower where it is requested (unless required by law to break that confidentiality).

13. If you choose to make your claim anonymously it may not be possible to take the claim further if you haven't provided all the information needed.

# Whistleblowing Procedure

14. The HDSF Whistleblowing procedure seeks to uphold the following principles:

- a. Any matter raised under this procedure will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially, and the outcome of the investigation reported back to the person who raised the issue.
- b. No employee or other person working on behalf of the charity will be victimised for raising a matter under this procedure. This means that the continued employment and opportunities for future promotion or training of the worker will not be prejudiced because they have raised a legitimate concern.
- c. Victimisation of an individual for raising a qualified disclosure will be a disciplinary offence.
- d. If misconduct is discovered as a result of any investigation under this procedure, our disciplinary procedure will be used, in addition to any appropriate external measures. Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence.
- e. An instruction to cover up wrongdoing is itself a disciplinary offence. If told not to raise or pursue any concern, even by a person in authority such as a manager, you should not agree to remain silent. You should report the matter directly to the Chair of the Board of Trustees.

15. Whistleblowing concerns should initially be raised using the Level 1 or Level 2 procedures, depending on the circumstances. The Chief Operating Officer will produce minutes of any meetings with the whistleblower and provide a copy to them.

## Level 1

16. In the first instance, any concerns should be raised with the Charity Director who will arrange an investigation of the matter. This should ideally be completed within a maximum of 2 weeks of the matter being raised.

17. The investigation may require the whistleblower and any other individuals involved to provide a written statement. If the whistleblower is invited to an interview to discuss their concerns, they may bring a colleague with them to the meeting. Any investigation will be carried out in accordance with the principles set out above. Where additional information/evidence about the concern is obtained, the whistleblower will be given the opportunity to comment on this information.

18. The person responsible for the investigation will take any necessary action, including reporting the matter to any appropriate government department or regulatory agency and also invoke any disciplinary action required.

19. On conclusion of any investigation, the whistleblower will be told the outcome and what HDSF has done, or proposes to do, about it. If no action is to be taken, the

reason for this will be explained. The outcome will also be reported to the Board of Trustees.

## Level 2

20. If the employee is concerned that the Charity Director is involved in the wrongdoing, has failed to make a proper investigation or has failed to report the outcome of the investigations to the relevant person, they should escalate the matter to the Board of Trustees. Do this by;

- a. contacting the Chief Operating Officer who will inform the Trustees and arrange for an extraordinary meeting, or
- b. contact the Board of Trustees directly by emailing [HDSFTrusteeBoard@HDSF.co.uk](mailto:HDSFTrusteeBoard@HDSF.co.uk)

21. The Full Board of Trustees will arrange for a review of the investigation to be carried out or arrange for an investigation to take place, make any necessary enquiries and make formal conclusions. A Trustee will advise the whistleblower of the outcome and what the charity has done, or proposes to do, about it – ideally within 2 weeks of the matter being raised.

22. If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained to the whistleblower.

## Level 3

23. If, on conclusion of Levels 1 and/or 2, the whistleblower believes that the appropriate action has not been taken, they can report the matter to the relevant regulatory body. This includes:

HM Revenue & Customs  
The Health and Safety Executive  
The Environment Agency  
The Serious Fraud Office  
The Charity Commission  
The Pensions Regulator  
The Information Commissioner  
The Financial Conduct Authority

The full list is in [Whistleblowing: list of prescribed people and bodies \(26 Nov 25\)](#)

They may also wish to contact the whistleblowing charity [Protect](#) on 020 3117 2520.

## If a Whistleblower believes they have been treated unfairly

24. If a whistleblower believes that they have been unfairly treated because they have blown the whistle they may decide to take their case to an [employment tribunal](#).
25. The process for this would involve attempted resolution through the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (Acas) early conciliation service. Information can be found at: <https://www.acas.org.uk/dispute-resolution> and the Acas helpline can provide further advice.
26. Further advice and information are available from Citizen's Advice Bureau and the whistleblowing charity Protect.
27. If the concern was reported anonymously, it may be harder to argue that unfair treatment was as a result of whistleblowing.
28. Any claim of unfair dismissal must be made within 3 months of employment ending.
29. A claim of discrimination due to whistleblowing must be made within 3 months of when the incident happened.
30. It is also possible, after dismissal, to apply to continue paid employment until the case is decided, but this application must be made within 7 days of being dismissed. Full details are [here](#).