

Whistle Blowing Guidelines

Introduction:

The National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of bowls are all working together with the Bowls Development Alliance and are committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for children and adults at risk to participate in the sport of bowls. They each recognise their responsibility to promote a safe environment and for any concerns to be reported without fear of reprisal.

This policy should be read in conjunction with all the organisations' own policies regarding whistleblowing.

What is Whistle Blowing?

Whistle blowing is an early warning system. It is about revealing and raising concerns over misconduct or malpractice within an organisation or within an independent structure associated with it.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects those who raise legitimate concerns about specified matters. It makes provision about the kinds of disclosure that may be protected and the circumstances in which disclosures are protected. This policy is therefore intended to comply with the Act by encouraging everyone in bowls to make disclosures about fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing in the sport and anyone within it, without fear of reprisal, so that problems can be identified, dealt with and resolved quickly.

Principles

- You should be aware of the importance of eliminating fraud or wrongdoing, and report anything that you become aware of that is illegal.
- You will not be victimised, subject to detriment or dismissed for raising a legitimate matter under this procedure.
- Covering up someone else's wrongdoing is also a disciplinary offence. Never agree to remain silent about a wrongdoing, even if told to do so by someone in authority.
- You will not be penalised for raising a qualifying disclosure even if it is not upheld, unless the complaint was both untrue and made in bad faith.
- It is not the responsibility of the person reporting the disclosure to investigate – it is the responsibility of the respective NGB (BE, EIBA, ESMBA, BCGBA and EBF) to investigate.
- Confidentiality should be upheld in line with legislation and government guidance. Confidentiality will be maintained during the process to the extent that it is practical and appropriate in the circumstances.
- Maliciously making a false allegation is a disciplinary offence.

Objectives of the Policy

All club and county members, committee members, coaches, volunteers and parents/carers should have an understanding of whistle blowing.

All club and county members, committee members, coaches and volunteers should know where to access this Policy for whistle blowing and to follow it when anything is reported. All players and parents/carers should be aware of the policy of the NGB, club or county and of what action should be taken when legitimate concerns arise.

Individuals should be assured that they will be supported when concerns are reported.

Qualifying Disclosures

NGBs would expect their members or participants to report any of the following:

- A criminal offence (including fraud)
- A failure to comply with a legal obligation
- A miscarriage of justice
- The endangering of an individual's health and safety
- Damage to the environment
- Deliberate concealment of information relating to any of the above

Where the nature of the disclosure is not included in the above list, it should be made by way of the relevant NGB's Grievance Procedure and/or Safeguarding Policies and not under the Whistle Blowing procedure.

Your belief must be reasonable, but it need not be correct. It might be discovered subsequently that you were in fact incorrect, but you must be able to show that you held the belief in good faith and that it was a reasonable one to hold in the circumstances at the time.

Disclosure Procedure

1. If you wish to make a qualifying disclosure you should in the first instance report the situation to an appropriate person. This could be within your club, county association or the relevant Bowls NGB.
2. Such disclosures should be made promptly so that investigation may proceed, and any action taken quickly.
3. All qualifying disclosures will be taken seriously. The disclosure will be promptly investigated and as part of the investigatory process, you will be interviewed and asked to provide a written statement setting out the nature and details of your qualifying disclosure and the basis for it. Confidentiality will be maintained during the process to the extent that it is practical and appropriate in the circumstances.

4. In order to investigate a disclosure, an NGB must be able to determine the scope of the investigation and the individuals who should be informed about the disclosure. The NGBs reserve the right to appoint another investigator to investigate the disclosure other than the designated person to whom you reported.
5. Your NGB may ask you to attend a meeting at a reasonable time and place at which your disclosure can be discussed. You should take all reasonable steps to attend that meeting and you have the right to bring with you an appropriate other individual of your choice.
6. Once the investigation has been conducted and completed, you will be informed in writing of the outcome and the NGB's decision as soon as possible.
7. If you wish to appeal against the NGB's decision, you must do so in writing within five working days of the decision. On receipt of an appeal a senior officer shall make arrangements to hear your appeal. Your National Governing Body may ask you to attend a meeting at a reasonable time and place at which your appeal can be discussed. You should take all reasonable steps to attend that meeting and you have the right to bring with you an appropriate other individual of your choice.
8. Following your NGB appeal hearing, you will be informed in writing of the outcome and their conclusion and decision within five working days.
9. Once the NGB decision has been finalised, any necessary action will be taken. If no action is taken, the reason will be explained to you.
10. If, on conclusion of the above stages, you reasonably believe that appropriate action has still not been taken, you may report the matter to the proper authority in good faith. The Act sets out a number of prescribed bodies or person/s to which qualifying disclosures can be made. However, NGBs always encourage members and staff to raise their concerns directly in the first instance, rather than externally. This enables issues to be dealt with promptly and speedily.

Implementation

The NGBs all endorse this policy and will ensure that it is followed by all bowls organisations that fall within their remit. This policy should be implemented within all bowling organisations.

Key Legislation

The key legislation can be found at [Whistleblowing policy - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/whistleblowing-policy)