

SECTION	Youth
POLICY /PROCEDURE	Whistleblowing Procedure
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VERSION	1



Policy Statement

Lincoln City Football Club (LCFC) is committed to the highest possible standards of:

- Openness and inclusiveness
- Accountability
- Integrity in line with those commitments

The aims of this procedure are to:

- Encourage those working at or associated with LCFC to report suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that their concerns will be taken seriously and investigated as appropriate, and that their confidentiality will be respected.
- Provide guidance on how to raise concerns.
- Reassure those raising concerns that they are able to raise genuine concerns 'made in the public interest' without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

LCFC will provide all reasonable protection for those who raise concerns 'made in Lincoln City's interest'.

LCFC will be responsible for ensuring that appropriate personal support is offered both to the individual raising a concern and to the person against whom allegations have been made under this procedure.

This procedure sets out how individuals can raise concerns about the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults involved in LCFC.

It will also provide guidance on how they can receive feedback on any action taken.

LCFC will ensure individuals will:

- receive a response to their concerns.

- be made aware of how to pursue the concern further if they are not satisfied with the response.
- be re-assured that individuals will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for whistleblowing in good faith.

What is 'Whistleblowing'?

'Whistleblowing is defined as 'raising concerns about misconduct within an organisation or within an independent structure associated with it' (Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life).

In the legislation it is called a protected disclosure. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects employees from suffering a detriment in their employment or being dismissed by their employer if they make disclosures in accordance with the legislation.

An employee has certain common law confidentiality obligations to their employer. However, in a limited set of circumstances whistleblowing may override these obligations if an employee reveals information about their employment or the work of LCFC.

This guidance sets out the circumstances under which these disclosures may lawfully be made.

A concern must relate to something which:

1. Is a breach of LCFC's policies; or
2. Falls below established LCFC or EFL standards or practices; or
3. Amounts to improper conduct, including something that may be
 - a. A breach of the law
 - b. A failure to comply with a legal obligation
 - c. A possible miscarriage of justice
 - d. A Health & Safety risk
 - e. Damaging the environment
 - f. Misuse of LCFC or public money
 - g. Corruption or unethical conduct
 - h. Abuse of children, employees, casual workers or other users
 - i. Deliberate concealment of any of these matters
 - j. Any other substantial and relevant concern

These issues could have arisen in the past, be currently happening or likely to happen in the future. The law does not protect an employee who would be breaking the law in making the disclosure.

Scope:

Everyone involved in activity carried out under the jurisdiction of LCFC are covered by this policy.

Safeguarding:

Lincoln City realise that raising a concern and reporting allegations are often difficult to make through fear of reprisals from those responsible for the alleged poor practice. If the individual believes what they say to be true and are not deemed to be malicious, LCFC will fully support the whistleblower and will not tolerate any bullying, harassment or victimisation whatsoever.

If this does occur, any perpetrators will be dealt with under LCFC's disciplinary policy/procedure resulting in possible expulsion and termination of employment from the club.

Players, coaches, officials, parents or team followers are often the first to realise that an individual and, more specifically within LCFC, a child's safety and welfare is 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 victimisation.

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. LCFC would urge anyone to come forward and voice those concerns.

This procedure details how individuals can raise a matter of concern without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage. The procedure is intended to encourage and enable individuals to raise serious concerns within LCFC rather than overlooking a problem or blowing the whistle outside.

It is in the interest of all concerned that disclosures of potential abuse or irregularities are dealt with properly, quickly and discreetly.

How to raise a concern:

All concerns will be treated sensitively and with due regard to confidentiality and where possible every effort will be made to protect your identity if you so wish. Nevertheless, this information will need to be passed onto those with a legitimate need to have this information and it may be necessary for you to provide a written statement or act as a witness in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings or enquiry. This will always be discussed with you first.

Step 1

If you wish to raise a concern you should normally raise it with your line manager, or with the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) if you are not an employee of LCFC. This can be done in person or in writing.

LCFC recognises that sometimes it may be inappropriate for you to approach

your line manager or the DSO with your concern. In these circumstances, a number of alternatives are available depending on the nature of your concern.

You can contact any of the following:

- The FA
- The EFL
- The LCFC CEO

Although you are not expected to prove beyond doubt the truth of your concerns, you will need to demonstrate that you have sufficient evidence or other reasonable ground to raise them.

Step 2

The person with whom you have raised your concern will acknowledge its receipt as soon as possible and will write to you within 14 days to let you know how your concern will be dealt with.

The information you can then expect to receive is:

- An indication of how the concern will be dealt with
- An estimate of how long it will take to provide a final response
- Whether any initial enquiries have been made
- Whether further investigation will take place, and if not why not
- Information about support available for you

The person with whom you have raised your concern will at the same time notify the HR consultant that a whistleblowing allegation has been made.

Step 3

Initial enquiries will be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate. Where an investigation is necessary, it may take the form of one or more of the following:

- An internal investigation by the DSO/Department Manager, which may, for example, take the form of a disciplinary investigation
- A referral to the EFL

Step 4

You will be informed of the outcome of any investigation, in writing, and/or of any action taken, subject to the constraints of confidentiality and the law. If you do not feel your concern has been addressed adequately you may raise it with an independent body such as one of the following as appropriate:

- The EFL
- The FA
- Your trade union

- The Citizen's Advice Bureau
- A relevant voluntary organisation
- The police

You must make a disclosure 'in LCFC's interest' and in the circumstances it must be reasonable for you to make the disclosure. If there is an issue of an exceptionally serious nature, which you believe to be substantially true, then you may disclose the issue to someone other than those listed above.

In determining whether it is reasonable for you to have made a disclosure the identity of the person to whom the disclosure is made will be taken into account. Disclosures to anyone outside of the recognised bodies specified may not be protected disclosures under the Act.

Confidentiality:

Lincoln City will do its utmost to keep confidential the identity of a whistleblower. Should any allegations be made through whistleblowing it should be noted that a statement may be needed to form part of the evidence.

Should the whistleblower need to be identified or it becomes apparent that the whistleblower will be identified because of any subsequent investigation, notice will be given to the whistleblower, by the club's DSO or CEO to which persons the identity disclosure will be made, with a chance to discuss any likely consequences.

Raising a Concern or Making an Allegation:

Anyone wishing to raise a concern should do so either verbally or in writing to the DSO.

Lincoln City Designated Safeguarding Officer is Alan Welsh who can be contacted at alan.welsh@lincolncityfc.co.uk, 07732300150. The concern needs to be as specific as possible including any names, dates and locations where possible.

The burden of proof does not lie with the alerter.

Should any concerns or allegations be made, Lincoln City would encourage the whistleblower to put their name to the allegation. Any concerns or allegations that are anonymous are much less powerful and are therefore much harder to prove.

Should Lincoln City receive any anonymous allegations these will be investigated so far as is possible based on the limited information available.

If, after the course of an investigation, it has been found that the concerns or allegations are untrue or have not been substantiated then no action will be taken against the whistleblower. If, however, it is established that they have made malicious allegations, disciplinary action may be taken against them. In

such cases, LCFC's disciplinary policy/procedure will apply.