



ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST STAFF POLICY & PROCEDURES

2023-24

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Version Control

Document Title:	Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy Season - 2023/2024
Document Owner:	Port Vale Football Club - Rich Talbot – Head of Safeguarding
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Document Review

Last Reviewed	Position	Reason
02/02/2024	Rich Talbot (Head of Safeguarding)	Updated staff changes & structure

Version History

Version	Date Released	Originator	Authorised	Comments
1.0	March 2021	Jon Bloore	Board	Original Policy Implementation
1.1	August 2021	Tim Bailey	Board	Revised Version
1.2	02/02/2024	Rich Talbot	Board	Revised Version

1. Introduction

Statement

1.1 Port Vale Football Club (hereafter referred to as the Club) is committed to ensuring that we create a safe environment for everyone visiting or taking part in activities at the Club. The Club takes our responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children, young people and adults at risk very seriously and their best interests will always be paramount when dealing with any incident. This policy sets out our commitment to safeguarding and provides a framework for what to do if concerns arise about the welfare or protection of children, young people and adults at risk whilst at the Club.

Carol Shanahan

Chair and Co-owner

Scope



1.2 This policy is for use across the Club and is to be observed by all those working or volunteering and who may encounter children, young people and adults at risk, this to ensure best practice in safeguarding is promoted and adhered to.

Activities undertaken at the following departments/locations are under the remit of this policy including:

Port Vale Football Club and the Vale Park Stadium

Port Vale First Team

Port Vale Academy and Youth Development

Port Vale Foundation Trust

Port Vale Women's Team

Port Vale Retail Store

Bescura Ltd (Family Hub)

Any location visited by staff/volunteers in an official capacity.

The Club acknowledges and accepts it has a statutory obligation and responsibility for the wellbeing and safety of all children, young people and adults at risk who are under the care of the Club or are utilising the facilities. Every person working or volunteering at the Club has a "Duty of Care" to safeguard the welfare of these individuals by creating an environment that protects them from harm.

It is extremely important that any allegation of abuse made against any coach or other member of staff, including volunteers in the Club are dealt with efficiently and thoroughly, this whilst maintaining the highest level of protection for the child, young person or adult at risk. The person(s) subject of the allegation must also be offered appropriate support by the Club.

This policy is designed to ensure that all persons are aware of the procedure for the reporting of an allegation of abuse against staff, this to ensure that all complaints are dealt with consistently and efficiently as possible.

Purpose

1.3 The intention of this policy is to allow children, young people and adults at risk to feel comfortable should they voice any concerns regarding any member of staff.

The procedure for dealing with allegations of abuse against staff depends upon the circumstances and situation surrounding the allegation. This policy must be followed when dealing with allegations but may be adapted to each individual case.

This policy will be used alongside the Safeguarding of Children and Young People Policy, the Safeguarding of Adults at Risk Policy and also the Club's complaints policy.

This policy will be used in any case where it is suspected or alleged that a member of staff or volunteer at the club has:

- behaved in a way that has harmed, or may have harmed a child, young person or adult at risk;
- possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child, young person or adult at risk;
- behaved towards a child, young person or adult at risk in a way that indicates that they may pose a risk of harm towards a child, young person or adult at risk.

Timescale

1.4 It is imperative that allegations of abuse against staff are dealt with as quickly as possible, this to:

- minimise the risk to the child, young person or adult at risk
- minimise the impact upon a child or young person's academic progress
- minimise stress to the employee concerned
- ensure a fair and thorough investigation for all parties.

To enable this to happen, all persons should be aware of the procedures set out in this policy.

2. Procedure for Reporting an Allegation against Staff

Reporting an allegation

2.1 All allegations must be reported immediately to the Head of Safeguarding (hereafter referred to as the HoS), or to the Senior Safeguarding Manager (hereafter referred to as the SSM) if the HoS is the subject of the complaint. Any complaint against the SSM must be reported into the Operations Director (hereafter referred to as the OD) who will report the allegation into the Local Authority Designated Officer (hereafter referred to as LADO).

Please see [Appendix A](#) for details of the SSM/HoS/OD/LADO.

Staff who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague towards a child, young person or adult at risk, are undoubtedly placed in a difficult position. They may worry that they have misunderstood the situation and they will wonder whether a report could jeopardise the

career of their colleague. All staff must remember that the welfare of the child, young person or adult at risk is paramount and therefore they must report their concerns immediately.

The HoS/SSM will contact the FA Safeguarding Team, EFL Safeguarding Team and LADO where a discussion will be held to decide whether:

- more information is required; or
- no further actions are needed; or
- a strategy discussion should take place: or
- there should be immediate involvement of the police or social care.

The club will share available information with the FA Safeguarding Team Manager about the allegation, the potential victim, and the person against whom the allegation has been made. Representatives from other agencies may be invited to the discussion and could include representatives from health, police and social care.

3. Investigation

3.1 An investigation into the allegation is normally carried out by the authority with which the category of risk falls, e.g. criminal offence will be investigated by the Police and non-criminal allegations will be investigated in the first instance by the club and/or the Football Association (FA) Safeguarding Team. This will be agreed at the initial evaluation stage of the investigation process.

3.2 Where the club is not conducting the investigation, it will cooperate with the investigative agencies. The investigation will be overseen by the LADO who will record and be reported in to by all other relevant agencies involved.

3.3 Internal investigations must be second to any safeguarding investigation and may need to be delayed until the external investigation is complete.

3.4 The following definitions should be used when determining the outcome of the investigation:

Substantiated: there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation

Malicious: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive

False: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation

Unsubstantiated: there is insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence



Unfounded: to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis which supports the allegation being made.

4. Supporting those involved

The person(s) making the allegation and their parents/carers

4.1 Parents and carers will be notified if their child makes or is involved in an allegation against staff if they are not already aware. However, if the police or social services are to be involved, they will be contacted first to assess what information may or may not be disclosed to the parents/carers. [There will be a staff member designated to the role of liaising with parents/carers and child about the case and ensuring that they are fully informed as far as is possible].

4.2 Parents/carers will be made aware of any progress in the investigation and where there is no criminal prosecution, the outcome will be explained to them. This may be a disciplinary outcome. During a disciplinary hearing the deliberations and information used for making a decision are usually confidential, but parents/carers will be told the outcome in confidence.

4.3 Police or the social services may be involved and will provide the school (if relevant to the case) with advice on what type of additional support may be required by the child.

4.4 The Whistleblowing Policy of the club enables staff to raise concerns or allegations against their colleagues in confidence and for a sensitive enquiry to take place.

The Employee

4.5 The club has a duty of care to its employees and will take steps to minimise the stress of any allegation and the investigation process.

4.6 The employee who is the subject of the investigation will be informed as soon as possible and usually after the initial discussion with the LADO. The employee will then be advised on what the next course of action will be. However, if the police or social services are to be involved, they will be contacted before the employee, where advice will be sought as to what information may be disclosed to the person under investigation.

4.7 The SSM/OD or other nominated senior staff member will keep the employee informed of the progress of the case and any other work related issues.

4.8 The employee may require additional support and the club will consider what may be appropriate to best accommodate this. If it is a criminal investigation with the police involved they may provide this additional support.



5. Confidentiality

5.1 The club will make every effort to guard the privacy of all parties involved, this during and after the investigation into an allegation. It is in everyone's best interest to maintain this confidentiality to ensure that a fair investigation, with minimum impact upon all parties, is undertaken.

6. Suspensions

6.1 The club will not suspend an employee without serious consideration and will not do it automatically once an allegation has been received. Depending on the nature of the allegation, it may be possible for alternative working arrangements to be put into place so that the employee can continue their employment whilst the allegation is investigated.

6.2 The club holds the power to suspend an employee but will listen to the views of the police, and/or the FA and LADO regarding suspension.

6.3 In the case of a suspension, the employee will receive written confirmation within one working day and will be informed of the reason for the suspension.

7. Resignations

7.1 If an employee resigns when the allegation is made against them or during an investigation, the investigation will continue until an outcome is achieved, this with or without the cooperation of the employee. They will be allowed the opportunity to answer the allegation.

8. Record Keeping

8.1 Where an allegation is found to be malicious, it will be removed from the record of the employee concerned.

8.2 For all other allegations, records of investigations and outcomes will be kept upon the employees personal file and they will be allowed the opportunity to receive a copy. The record will be kept, including for employees who leave the club, at least until that employee reaches normal retirement age or for 10 years if that is anticipated to be longer, this from the date of the allegation.

8.3 All allegations falling under this policy will be recorded upon the "MyConcern" recording platform currently used at the club. All documents held will be set to "transferable" status should a different recording platform be utilised in the future.

9. Finalisation of an Allegation

Action on conclusion of the investigation of an allegation



9.1 If the allegation is substantiated and the employee is dismissed or resigns, or we cease to use the services of the volunteer, the club will consider whether a referral is made to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), this giving due consideration to the nature of the allegation.

Action in the case of false or malicious allegations

9.2 Where an allegation is proven to be false, the HoS may refer to social services to determine whether the complainant requires any additional support or has been abused by another person.

9.3 If the allegation has been made by a complainant who is not a member of the club consideration will be given to providing the information to the police who may take further action against that person.

Learning Outcomes

9.4 No matter the outcome of an allegation of abuse against staff, the club will review the case to see if there are any improvements that can be made in its policy and procedures that may help to deal with allegations made in the future.

10. Associated Policies

Other associated policies linked directly or indirectly to this Policy include:

- Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy & Procedures 2023-24
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy & Procedures 2023-24
- Child Friendly Safeguarding Children Policy 2023-24
- Guidance to bringing a Child to a Match Policy & Procedures 2023-24
- Safeguarding Whistleblowing Policy & Procedures 2023-24



Appendix A – INTERNAL & EXTERNAL CONTACT DETAILS

List of Internal & External Contacts

Senior Safeguarding Manager (SSM)(Board Member)

Matt Hancock

(E): matt.hancock@port-vale.co.uk / (M): 07841 669182

Head of Safeguarding & Lead Disclosure Officer

Rich Talbot

(E): rich.talbot@port-vale.co.uk / (M): 07703 753688

Operations Director

Claire Halket

(E): claire.halket@port-vale.co.uk / (T): 01782 655830

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) (*Stoke on Trent ONLY*)

John Hanlon (T): 0800 561 0015 / (T): 01782 234234 (*Emergency Only*)

Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) (Staffordshire)

Linda Hancock (T): 0300 111 8007 / (T): 0345 604 2886 (*Emergency Only*)

Football Association (FA) Safeguarding Team

(T): 0800 169 1863 / (E): safeguarding@TheFA.com

English Football League (EFL) Safeguarding Team

(T): 01772 325490 / (E): safeguarding@efl.com

Staffordshire Police

(T): 999 Emergency / (T): 101 Non-Emergency / (W): www.staffordshire.police.uk (Live Chat)



Authority from Port Vale Board and Acceptance of Policy

Board Member:	Claire Halket
Signature:	Claire Halket
Date:	02/02/2024 (Review)

CEO/Senior Safeguarding Manager:	Matt Hancock
Signature:	Matt Hancock
Date:	02/02/2024 (Review)

This policy will be reviewed by the Head of Safeguarding regularly and annually or following learning outcomes as a result of a significant incident or when legislation or statutory guidance changes are implemented.