



Durham Women FC Whistleblowing Policy

Policy Version: 1.0 (July 2026) / Approved by: Board of Directors / Review Date: Annually

The Policy Statement

Durham Women Football Club, Durham Professional Games Academy, and Durham Cestria (together known as “Durham Women Football Club” or “The Club”) acknowledge the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

This Policy outlines the procedures that Durham Women FC has put in place to allow individuals to raise concerns about the safety and welfare of volunteers, children, young people or adults at risk who participate or engage in any services and activities conducted by Durham Women FC. It will also provide a method of raising concerns and will detail how feedback may be received in relation to any action(s) taken.

Durham Women FC is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and expects all employees and volunteers to maintain the same high standards. It is always possible, however, for things to go wrong or for organisations to unknowingly harbour illegal or unethical conduct. As a club we promote a culture of openness and accountability and this policy is intended to:

- (i) Encourage you to report any safeguarding concerns or suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible;
- (ii) Provide guidance on how you can raise those concerns; and
- (iii) Reassure you that you are able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals.

Although you can make a disclosure to certain public authorities, Durham Women FC urges you to make any disclosures in the first instance to the club directly. We strongly recommend that you seek advice from the club before reporting a concern to anyone external.

The Principals of the policy

Durham Women will aim to ensure that individuals who raise concerns about the safety and welfare of volunteers, children, young people or adults at risk who participate or engage in any services and activities conducted by the club:

- get a response to their concerns;
- are made aware of how to pursue their concern further if they are not satisfied with the response; and
- are reassured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for raising those concerns (whistle blowing) in good faith.

Individuals, including parents, players, coaches, other Durham Women FC employees, volunteers, officials and / or team supporters are often the first to recognise concerns which potentially compromise the welfare or safety of those engaged in club activities. However, individuals may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up could be too difficult for them to handle or may cause them to be harassed or victimised.

In these circumstances it may be easier for individuals to ignore the concern rather than report it. However, the club would urge anyone with an issue to come forward and voice their concerns. #

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Doing nothing is not an option.

This policy details how individuals can raise concerns without fear of victimisation, subsequent discrimination or disadvantage and is intended to encourage and enable individuals to raise their concerns within the club rather than overlooking a concern. It is in the interests of all concerned that disclosures of safeguarding concerns or allegations of potential poor practice or wrongdoing are responded to and managed appropriately and without delay.

Safeguarding

The club realises that raising and reporting concerns is often difficult to do though fear of reprisals. This policy is designed to offer protection to you if you raise a concern provided that your disclosure is made:

- in good faith; and
- you believe what you say to be true and you are not being malicious.

The Club will support you if you whistle blow and will not tolerate any bullying, harassment or victimisation. If any bullying, harassment or victimisation does occur, then the club will deal with it according to our internal disciplinary policy and procedures.

Confidentiality

Durham Women FC will do its upmost best to keep your identity confidential if you make an allegation/disclosure. If you make an allegation in accordance with this Policy, you should note you may need to give a statement that maybe needed to form part of the evidence. If you need to be identified for any reason or it becomes apparent that you may be identified because of any subsequent investigation, you will be given notice, by a club representative (usually the Company's Director or Head of Safeguarding) so that an opportunity is provided to discuss any likely consequences and to offer support if required.

Raising a concern or making an allegation

If you wish to raise a concern you should do so either in writing or by speaking to the Club Director or Head of Safeguarding. Your concern needs to be as specific as possible including any names, dates, times and locations (where possible).

Contact Details are:

Lee Sanders (Club Director) lee.sanders@durhamwfc.co.uk 07760 331421

Marc McPhillips (Head of Safeguarding) marc.mcphillips@durhamwfc.co.uk 07528 552582

If, after the course of an investigation, it has been found that your concerns or allegations are untrue or have not been substantiated then no action will be taken against you. If, however, it is established that you have made malicious allegations disciplinary action may be taken against you. In such cases, the Clubs disciplinary policy and procedures will apply.

All investigations of a safeguarding nature will initially be undertaken by The Head of Safeguarding with support if necessary, from another member of the safeguarding team. However, should you feel that you have not received a satisfactory response to your concern you can approach the following people or organisations:

Dawn Hepple (Board Level Safeguarding Champion) dawn.hepple@durhamwfc.co.uk 07792 164781

Katy Hawkins (Safeguarding Officer) katy.hawkins@durhamwfc.co.uk 07753 599892

Durham FA Safeguarding Officer Neil Churcher – Neil.churcher@durhamfa.com 07396 681103

Sandy Gill (Safeguarding Manager- Womens Game) sandy.gill@wsffootball.com 07966 375896

Useful Contacts/Support

- NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000
- ChildLine 0800 1111 / www.childline.org.uk
- Kidscape www.kidscape.org.uk
- Anti-Bullying Alliance www.antibullyingalliance.org
- Contact the Ann Craft Trust safeguarding adult's advice helpline by calling 0115 951 5400.

In an emergency or if someone is in immediate danger, call the Police on 999 (101 for non-emergencies).

Anonymous Allegations

You may raise a concern anonymously (without identifying yourself), but you should consider that a concern that is raised anonymously can be more difficult to deal with. The Club will make the decision to investigate a concern raised anonymously based on:

- the seriousness of the issue and any safeguarding risks;
- the credibility of proving the allegation(s); and
- advice from the local authorities.

Any adult or young person with concerns about a colleague can also use whistle-blowing by calling 0800 169 1863 and asking for The FA's safeguarding team, or via email on safeguarding@TheFA.com.

Alternatively you can go direct to the Police or Children's Social Care and report your concerns there, or to the Child Protection in Sport Unit via cpsu@nspcc.org.uk or the NSPCC Helpline via 0808 800 5000 or by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk

This policy will be reviewed by the Safeguarding Team each year, or sooner where new developments in guidance and legislation necessitate such a review, where factual clarification is required or changes to operational practices take place.