



ESSINGTON RUGBY CLUB: WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

1. PURPOSE

ERUFC encourages members to raise concerns about misconduct, poor practice, safeguarding issues or unlawful behaviour.

ERUFC is committed to the highest standards of integrity, openness, accountability and safeguarding. The Club recognises that individuals are often the first to become aware of concerns regarding poor practice, misconduct, safeguarding failures or unlawful activity.

ERUFC encourages all members, volunteers, coaches, officials and committee members to raise concerns where they believe wrongdoing has occurred or where there is a risk to individuals or the Club.

All concerns raised in good faith will be taken seriously and handled appropriately.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- Players
- Parents and guardians
- Coaches
- Volunteers
- Match officials
- Committee members
- Contractors
- Visitors participating in club activities

The policy applies regardless of whether concerns arise during club activities, events, tours, online activities or within club administration.

3. MATTERS COVERED

Concerns may include:

- Safeguarding failures.
- Poor practice involving children or adults at risk.
- Abuse or neglect.
- Discrimination or harassment.
- Bullying.
- Fraud or financial misconduct.
- Health and safety breaches.
- Criminal behaviour.
- Serious breaches of club policies.
- Attempts to conceal wrongdoing.

Individuals do not need proof that wrongdoing has occurred before reporting a concern. Concerns should be raised where there is a genuine belief that wrongdoing may have taken place.

4A. REPORTING

Concerns should normally be reported to:

Sophie Lockley

Club Safeguarding Officer

Email: safeguarding.erufc@gmail.com

Alternative Reporting Route

Where a concern relates to the Club Safeguarding Officer, the Club Safeguarding Officer is unavailable, or an individual does not feel comfortable reporting directly to the Club Safeguarding Officer, the concern may be reported to:

Phil Breakwell

Mental Health Lead and Inclusion & Diversity Officer

Alternative Reporting Contact

Where a concern relates to the Alternative Reporting Contact, or an individual does not feel comfortable using either club reporting route, the concern may be raised through the appropriate external reporting route set out in Section 5.

4B. WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A REPORT

Investigation and Response

Following receipt of a concern, the Club will:

- Acknowledge the concern where appropriate.
- Assess the information provided.
- Determine whether immediate action is required.
- Maintain appropriate records.
- Seek advice from the RFU, Staffordshire Rugby or relevant agencies where necessary.
- Refer matters to statutory agencies where required.

The Club will not investigate safeguarding matters independently where statutory agencies are involved.

5. ALTERNATIVE EXTERNAL REPORTING

External Reporting

Where an individual does not feel comfortable reporting a concern within the Club, concerns may also be reported to:

- Staffordshire Rugby
- RFU Safeguarding Team
- Children's Social Care
- Adult Social Care
- Police
- Relevant regulatory or statutory bodies

Individuals are encouraged to use appropriate external reporting routes where concerns involve serious safeguarding risks, criminal activity or conflicts of interest.

6. PROTECTION

No individual will suffer victimisation, detriment or adverse treatment for raising a genuine concern in good faith. ERUFC will take appropriate action where retaliation against a person raising a concern is identified.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY

Reports will be handled sensitively and confidentially wherever possible. Information will be shared only with those who have a legitimate need to know in order to assess, manage or respond to the concern. Where possible, the wishes of the person raising the concern regarding confidentiality will be respected; however, absolute confidentiality cannot be

guaranteed where safeguarding action, legal obligations or disclosure to relevant agencies is required.

7A. GOVERNANCE NOTIFICATION

The Club Chairman may be informed that a matter is being managed where this is necessary for club governance, risk management or operational action. Details will only be shared where there is a legitimate need to know. Where a concern involves the Chairman, it must not be routed through the Chairman and should instead follow the appropriate club or external reporting route.

8. RECORD KEEPING

Whistleblowing concerns will be documented and retained securely in accordance with the Club's safeguarding and data protection procedures.

Access to records will be restricted to those with a legitimate need to know.

Document Title: Whistleblowing Policy

Version: 2.0

Policy Owner: Club Safeguarding Officer

Approved By: ERUFC Committee

Effective Date: September 2026

Review Date: Annually

Next Review Due: September 2027