



WEIGHTLIFTING WALES
CODI PWYSAU CYMRU

Whistle-Blowing Policy

Approved: February 2018

Renewal: February 2021

Who or what in general terms is a “Whistle-blower” or “Whistle-blowing”?

The term whistle-blower comes from “blowing the whistle” about something that you have seen in the past, are seeing now or you believe is likely to happen, usually but not always related to your employment. The wrong doing that you expose, to be classed as a whistle-blower must be in the public interest, i.e. it affects others not just yourself. It cannot be a personal grievance, such as bullying, discrimination or harassment unless the particular circumstances would be **in the public interest**.

Background to Whistle-blowing

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects “workers” but does not apply to self-employed contractors. Sections 17-20 of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013 have introduced a series of changes to the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998:-

Section 17 narrows the definition of 'protected disclosure' to those that are made in the 'public interest'.

Section 18 removes the requirement that a worker or employee must make a protected disclosure 'in good faith'. Instead, tribunals will have the power to reduce compensation by up to 25% for detriment or dismissal relating to a protected disclosure that was not made in good faith.

Section 19 introduces protection for whistle-blowers from bullying or harassment by co-workers.

Section 20 enables the Secretary of State to extend the meaning of 'worker' for the purpose of defining who comes within the remit of the whistleblowing provisions.

Complaints that count as whistleblowing

You’re protected by law if you report any of the following:

- a criminal offence, e.g. fraud
- someone’s health and safety is in danger
- risk or actual damage to the environment
- a miscarriage of justice
- the company is breaking the law, e.g. doesn’t have the right insurance
- you believe someone is covering up wrongdoing

Considerations when Setting a Policy for your NGB/Organisation

A whistle-blowing policy should:

- make clear the importance attached to the identification and rectification of malpractice
- define malpractice and identify the standard of conduct required of employees and volunteers etc.
- be specific to whom individuals should report suspected malpractice
- set out procedures for investigating alleged malpractice that sit alongside the policy statement

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- allow whistle-blowers, where possible, to disclose information in confidence and remain anonymous
- stress that no disciplinary action will be taken against whistle-blowers in respect of genuine disclosures
- consider whether an external body should be identified as an alternative to the following the agreed procedure

As with all other major policies the overarching responsibility to set a suitable policy about raising concerns in the manner of a whistle-blower lies with the Board. There is considerable merit in an identified Board member having a role overseeing the whistleblowing policy as such an oversight role would readily lend itself to be part of the annual review of internal controls required by the Board. This could also help the Board view its whistleblowing policy as a “cultural issue” rather than as one of “tick-box compliance”. [N.B. The “Governance and Leadership Framework for Wales” highlights in the fifth principle under Board member INEFFECTIVE BEHAVIOURS (I DO NOT) – *“Keep quiet if I have concerns about the organisation”*.]

Direct Board involvement in this way could help the Board show its accountability downwards through the employees and to members and stakeholders as well. Having a policy that links to a named individual means that for example in a case where the concern relates to the conduct of a senior manager/CEO or senior management’s failure to deal with a serious matter, the whistleblowing policy signals that there is a safe alternative to silence other than an external disclosure. (This inclusion in a policy or procedure can be beneficial both for the whistle-blower and the organisation.)

Example Policies

1. The Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd is committed to setting and upholding the highest possible standards with regard to our corporate governance, behaviour at work, service to members and the general public and in all our working practices. To ensure this, Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd encourages employees to report their concerns about poor or dishonest practice, illegal acts or failures to comply with our required standards of work, without fear of reprisals or victimisation. Malpractice includes: insert complaints list as per example above or as required

This policy has a procedure that should be followed when reporting such concerns (or ‘blowing the whistle on concerns’). This policy is not contractual, but is intended as a statement of Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd policy which can be amended from time to time. Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd does not tolerate unfair treatment, harassment or victimisation of a whistle-blower and will consider such conduct by an employee or member as gross misconduct which (if proven, may) result in dismissal without notice or payment in lieu of notice or disciplinary procedures for a member.

2. Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd encourages employees** and members who have genuine concerns about malpractice to raise them at the earliest Whistle-Blowing Policy

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opportunity. Malpractice within the Company is taken very seriously and might include: insert complaints list as per example above or as required

Employees or key volunteers can often be the first to realise that there may be something wrong within Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd practices; however, individuals may be very reluctant to express their concerns for fear of appearing disloyal or for fear of subsequent harassment or victimisation. Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd's whistle-blowing policy and procedures are intended to provide a safety net to enable individual to raise their concerns. The policy aims to provide a rapid mechanism under which genuine concerns can be raised internally without fear of repercussions or the need to pursue external disclosure (although the latter cannot be prevented by this policy). Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd seeks to balance; the need to provide safeguards for individuals who raise genuine concerns about malpractice; the need to protect other members of staff and/or key volunteers, and Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd; with potential uninformed or vexatious allegations which could cause serious difficulties for innocent parties.

Example Procedures must cover:

- who can raise a malpractice concern
- how a concern should be raised and with whom
- the requirement that the person believes the concern to be true
- what actions follow the raising of a concern
 - that the person raising the concern does not have any influence on the way the malpractice is investigated
- how procedures allow proportionate and independent investigation
- whether or not confidentially can be assured throughout the process
- timeframes for initial actions
- types of outcomes e.g. no action, change of procedures, police informed etc.
- reporting and retention of information in line with NGB secure data control process*

Example Procedure (change order of points and content to suit your NGB)

1. Any employee, key volunteer or member may raise a malpractice concern under the "whistle-blowing policy". This person shall be identified in this procedure as "the whistle-blower" or "other name e.g. discloser"
2. Any malpractice concern should be raised as soon as practicable with "insert named position e.g. CEO/Board Director responsible policy area"
3. The raised concern must not be made for purposes of personal gain and malicious or false allegations will be regarded as a serious disciplinary offence.
4. Following the raising of a malpractice concern a full investigation will be carried out by the person who received the complaint or by another individual appointed by the "insert named position e.g. CEO/Board Director responsible policy area" This

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- person shall be considered “the investigating officer” as far as this procedure is concerned and wherever possible should complete the investigation within x days.
5. A full written record must be kept at each stage of these procedures securely. At the end of the process the record shall be retained by Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd for x years in line with the Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd data management process.
 6. The investigating officer shall carry out an initial investigation which shall, in the first instance, include a meeting with the person or persons who raised the malpractice concern. If an employee has raised the concern then they shall be entitled to be accompanied by a work colleague (co-worker) at the meeting.
 7. Usually the identity of the “the whistle-blower” or “other name e.g. discloser” shall be kept confidential unless they confirm in writing otherwise, or if any of the following apply:
 - a. it is a legal obligation to advise their name;
 - b. the information is already in the public domain;
 - c. identification is to a qualified lawyer for the purposes of obtaining legal advice, or
 - d. where it is necessary as part of the proper investigation
 8. Legal advice may be taken by “the whistle-blower” or “other name e.g. discloser” at their own expense at any time prior or during the process.
 9. Individuals raising a concern, may do so anonymously but it is preferable that the individual puts their name to any disclosure. Their identity will be kept confidential, if so requested, for as long as possible provided that this is compatible with a proper investigation.
 10. Anonymous complaints cannot be covered by this procedure but may be reported, investigated or acted upon as the person receiving the complaint decides.
 11. Sometimes despite all the necessary steps being followed the identity of the “the whistle-blower” or “other name e.g. discloser” might be realised due to the nature of the malpractice, therefore although unfortunate confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
 12. If, despite the Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd policy stating that unfair treatment or harassment is not tolerated, you feel that you have suffered adverse treatment as a result of making a malpractice disclosure, you should submit a formal complaint under the Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd Grievance Procedure.*
 13. Once the investigation has taken place if the investigating officer has found that there is likely to be some form of malpractice concerned they will confirm the

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- action to be taken to the “the whistle-blower” or “other name e.g. discloser” this might include:
- a. the matter is to be reported to the Police
 - b. the matter is to be investigated further internally by Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd, or by external auditors or other specialised investigators appointed by Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd
14. Following investigation the investigating officer may find that there is no further action required if they are:
- satisfied that malpractice has not occurred or is not likely to occur;
 - aware that the matter is already subject to legal proceedings, or has already been referred to the police or to the relevant “Prescribed Persons”, i.e. someone identified by the Secretary of State as prescribed regulators;
 - aware that the matter is already, or has already been, the subject of proceedings, under one of Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd’s other procedures;
 - satisfied that “the whistle-blower” or “other name e.g. discloser” does not have reasonable belief that malpractice within the meaning of the policy/procedure has taken place, is taking place or is likely to occur; or is raising a personal grievance or similar.
15. Depending on the circumstances of the malpractice the person(s) against whom allegations have been made, if an employee, may be suspended during the investigation [*cross reference to HR policies**] and/or may be supported in an appropriate manner.
16. The “the whistle-blower” or “other name e.g. discloser” will be advised of the outcome of the investigation and subsequent action or no action to be taken.
17. If the “the whistle-blower” or “other name e.g. discloser” if having followed this procedure is not satisfied with the action taken, they may raise the matter confidentially with the Police or a relevant prescribed regulator. The relevant prescribed regulator will depend on the nature of the concern but may include the Environment Agency, the Health & Safety Executive and the Information Commissioner.
18. If the prescribed regulator or similar becomes involved at any stage of the process then Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd will comply with their requests; at this stage Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd shall normally take legal advice on the matter.
19. Depending on the outcome of the investigation at 12b recommendations might arise for a change or changes to the way that Wales Weightlifting Federation Ltd works and/or manages the processes that gave rise to the malpractice concern. These recommended changes must be implemented as soon as possible unless the changes themselves might cause future concerns.

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Note: *A malpractice concern can have detrimental effects on the NGB; the way it is managed and outcomes dealt with have potential to be damaging to the good name of the NGB. Therefore, it would be good practice to consider the raising of a malpractice concern as part of the risk register of the NGB.**

Media management can be an important part of the post whistle blowing process to limit the exposure of the NGB to potential ongoing media damage.

*sample templates and policies can be found on the WSA website

**Employee Whistle blowing template can be found in the Employment section on the WSA website