



Crewe Alexandra Football Club

Managing Staff and Volunteers Allegations Policy

Approved by	Version	Issue date	Review date	Contact person
Board	2	July 2023	July 2024	Paul Antrobus

Introduction

Crewe Alexandra Football Club (CAFC) is committed to providing the best care for its supporters, players and staff (including part time and casual). Therefore, it is extremely important that all and any allegations of abuse made against a staff member or a volunteer, are dealt with thoroughly and efficiently, whilst maintaining the highest level of safeguarding and protection for the person(s) involved.

This policy is designed to ensure that all supporters, staff, volunteers, players and parents are aware of the procedure that CAFC will follow for the investigation of allegations made against staff and / or volunteers. The policy is also to ensure that all complaints are dealt with consistently and efficiently. Having a clear and transparent policy outlined, we hope will help people to feel comfortable to voice and raise any concerns about any members of staff or volunteers.

Purpose

The procedure for managing and investigating allegations made against members of staff and / or volunteers will be dependent upon the situation and circumstances surrounding the allegation. This policy will be followed when dealing with allegations, but will be adapted for each investigation. This policy will be reviewed annually by the DSO and CAFC Board. This policy will be used alongside CAFC's Complaints Policy and Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy, which can be located on the Club's website.

This Policy is applicable to be used in any situation where it is suspected or alleged that a member of staff or volunteer at CAFC has:

- behaved in a way that has caused harm or could have caused harm to a child or adult (please see the Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy which outlines what constitutes harm)
- alleged or suspected to have committed a criminal offence against or related to a child or adult at risk; or
- behaved inappropriately towards a child or adult at risk in a way which indicates that he or she may pose a risk of harm.

Timescale

It is imperative that all allegations against staff are dealt with immediately or as quickly as is possible to:

- minimise the risk to the child or adult at risk of harm
- minimise the impact on the child's academic progress
- minimise the stress potentially caused to the employee who has been alleged to have caused harm
- ensure a fair and thorough investigation for all parties

To enable a thorough, transparent and efficient investigation, it is important that all staff, volunteers, players and parents are aware of the procedures as detailed in this Policy.

Procedure – Reporting an allegation

All allegations made against staff should be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), Paul Antrobus. If the DSO is subject to an allegation, then the allegation should be reported to the Board of Directors Safeguarding Representative, Andrew Blakemore. If the allegation relates to a member of staff or volunteer within the Community, this should be reported to the Community Safeguarding Officer, Ray Walker. If an allegation relates to a member of Match Day Staff, this should be reported to the Matchday Designated Safeguarding Officer, Bev Dyer. All allegations will be taken seriously and immediately investigated objectively and thoroughly.

CAFC understand that staff and / or volunteers who are concerned about the conduct of a colleague towards a child or adult at risk, are placed in a very difficult position. Whilst this is appreciated by CAFC, staff and / or volunteers must remember that the welfare and safety of a child or adult at risk is imperative and any concerns must be reported, without delay.

The DSO or Board Member, will respond to the report of a concern by contacting both the Football Association (FA) and the English Football League (EFL) Safeguarding department to discuss the concerns and to decide whether:

- more information is required; or
- no further actions are required; or
- a strategy discussion needs to be held; or
- there should be immediate involvement of the Police and / or Social Care

CAFC will share all available information with the FA, EFL and relevant safeguarding authorities about the allegation, including the details of the child or adult at risk of harm and the person whom the allegation has been made against.

Investigation

An investigation into the allegation is usually carried out by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and / or the FA Safeguarding team or by the Club. This is agreed at the initial evaluation stage and will depend upon the context and nature of the allegations made. If the Club is not carrying out the investigation, it agrees to cooperate fully with all investigative agencies. Any internal investigations will be secondary to the safeguarding investigations and could be delayed until an external investigation has been concluded.

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

- **Substantiated** – there is sufficient evidence to uphold the allegation
- **Malicious** – there is sufficient evidence to disprove and therefore the allegation is not upheld, there is evidence that the allegation was 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. This term neither implies guilt, nor innocence
- **Unfounded** – to reflect cases where there is no evidence or proper basis to support the initial allegation made

Supporting those involved

The person(s) who have made the allegation and any parents / carers

Parents / carer carers will be notified by the CAFC DSO if their child makes or is involved in an allegation against staff and / or volunteers, if they are not already aware. If the Police or Social Care are to be contacted, then parents / carers will be contacted following this and CAFC will take advice from these agencies, as to what information can be shared with parents / carers. The DSO will take the lead role of liaising with the parents / carers and child and will ensure that they are kept as fully informed as possible, throughout the investigation. If the allegation has been made against the DSO, then an alternative appropriate member of staff will be allocated to fulfil this role. Parents and carers will be informed of the progress of the investigation and provided there is no criminal prosecution, they will have the outcome of the investigation explained to them. During the investigation, the Local Authority Social Care may need to be involved, as well as the Police and the relevant school will be advised upon any additional support that the child may need.

Should CAFC staff need to raise concerns or allegations against colleagues, they should consult CAFC's Whistleblowing Policy, which can be found on the Club website, as well as the Staff Portal.

The Employee

CAFC takes its duty of care to its employees very seriously and will take all and any actions to minimise the stress and disruption that any allegation and investigation process may cause. The person subjected to the investigation will be informed at the earliest possible point and this is usually following initial discussion with the DSO. The next course of action will then be advised to the employee. If it is required for the Police and Local Authority Social Care to be involved, then they will be informed, prior to the employee and they may provide advice and guidance on what can be disclosed by the Club to the employee under investigation.

The DSO and Safeguarding Director for the Club will keep the employee informed of the progress of the investigation and any other relevant work-related issues, for example, the employee may be placed on restricted duties, for the duration of the investigation. The employee is entitled to seek additional support for themselves and the Club may advise which services are the most appropriate for this. If there are criminal investigations and the Police become involved, then the Police may be the agency to provide the support.

Confidentiality

CAFC will take every action in order to guard the privacy of all parties during and following the conclusion of the allegation. It is important to maintain confidentiality to ensure that a fair investigation is carried out with minimum impact for all involved. A breach of confidentiality by anyone employed or involved with the Club will be taken seriously and this may involve further investigation with consequential outcomes.

Suspensions

CAFC will only suspend an employee following serious and thoughtful consideration, this does not necessarily mean that an employee is suspended automatically, following an allegation. Depending upon the nature and context of an investigation, an employee may be moved departments or alternative arrangements may be made, to allow the employee to continue working, until the investigation has been concluded. Whilst CAFC, as the employer, can use its rights to suspend an employee, with reason, it will listen to and consider the views of the Police, FA, EFL and LADO regarding the suspension of an employee.

In the case of a suspension, the employee will be provided with written confirmation within one working day, notifying and informing of the reasons for the suspension being enforced.

Resignations

If an employee of CAFC decides to resign following an allegation being made against or during an investigation, the investigation will continue until an outcome has been concluded, this will be completed with or without the employee's cooperation. The employee will be given every opportunity in order to answer the allegation.

Record Keeping

If an allegation has been found to be malicious and without foundation, this will be removed from all records of the employee involved. For all other allegations, the records of investigations and the outcomes will be kept on the employees personnel file and they will be provided with a copy. This will be kept on file for a period of 10 years from the date of the allegation made, or until the person reaches retirement age. The record will remain on file, even if the employee leaves the Club. The information relating to the allegation and investigation, will be kept within the Club's Safeguarding Drive, which only relevant Safeguarding Staff are able to access and through a Club laptop.

Action on the conclusion of the case

If the allegation is founded and the resulting consequence is that the employee is dismissed or resigns, or if a volunteer's service is not retained, the Club can consider whether it is appropriate to make a referral to the DBS.

If the decision is made that the employee is able to return to the Club, following a period of suspension, then the Club will put into place provisions to ensure that their return to work is supported and there is a smooth transition period. A phased return may be utilised and additional supervision provided. If the child/adult who made the initial allegation remains at the Club, then it will be considered how to manage any contact between the employee and child/adult.

Action in the case of false or malicious allegations

Where an allegation has been found to be false or not founded, the DSO and Safeguarding Director may consider a referral to the Local Authority Social Care to explore if the child/adult needs any Early Help or further support.

The Club's Disciplinary Policy details any disciplinary action that may be taken against people who are found to have made malicious allegations against employees. The DSO and Safeguarding Director may discuss any further actions to be taken, with the Academy Director. If an allegation is made about someone not employed directly by the Club, the Club may share this information with relevant authorities, such as the Police and the Local Authority Social Care, who may decide to take further action against the person.

After the case

The Club will review and consider all allegations made against employees and this includes learning from and evaluating its processes, even if an allegation is not founded.