

## **1 North Sheen Bowls Club Whistle Blowing Policy**

- 1.1 This policy aims to enable and encourage members to raise concerns within North Sheen Bowls Club. The committee recognises that members are often the first to realise that there may be something awry within the club.
- 1.2 It is important to the committee and members of North Sheen Bowls Club that any fraud, misconduct or wrongdoing by appointed officers or members of the club is reported and properly dealt with. North Sheen Bowls Club is committed to tackle malpractice and wrongdoing. Everyone should be aware of the importance of preventing and eliminating wrongdoing in the club.
- 1.3 The club encourages members to use the mechanisms listed below for reporting malpractice or illegal acts or omissions by the committee and club members. All reporting will be listened to and serious concerns will be investigated.
- 1.4 The committee will ensure that all members of the club are aware of the whistleblowing policy and that it is reviewed on an annual basis. This policy is available on the club website and in our onsite policy folder.
- 1.5 This policy assures members that they will be protected from harassment or victimisation from other members for raising concerns.

## **2. Definitions and scope**

- 2.1 For the purpose of this policy North Sheen Bowls Club recognises that whistleblowing is the passing on of information about wrongdoing in the club. The whistleblower must reasonably believe that they are acting in the club's interest.
- 2.2 The statutory categories for wrongdoing are:
  - a criminal offence (such as insurance fraud or illegal tax evasion)
  - a breach of any legal obligation
  - a miscarriage of justice
  - endangering an individual's health and safety
  - damage to the environment
  - deliberate concealment of information about any of the above.
- 2.3 Examples of wrongdoing might include (but are not restricted to) :
  - unsafe conditions within the club
  - lack of, or poor, response to a reported safety incident

- suspicions of fraud
  - a bullying culture
- 2.4 It is not necessary for the member to have proof that wrongdoing is being, has been, or is likely to be committed. A reasonable belief is sufficient to disclose the concern. The member has no responsibility for investigating the wrongdoing. It is the committee's responsibility to ensure that an investigation takes place.
- 2.5 A member who makes such a protected disclosure has the right not to be subjected to any other detriment, or victimised, because they have made a disclosure.

### **3. Roles and Responsibilities**

- 3.1 The committee is responsible and accountable for this Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure. They will:
- demonstrate commitment to developing an open culture within the club, through actions and report
  - share protected data regarding whistle blowing matters in annual reports with members
  - appoint designated officers to investigate any whistleblowing matters that are raised
- 3.2 All members have a duty to report wrongdoing (whistleblow) under the circumstances set out in section 2 of this policy.
- 3.3 Committee members are responsible for:
- ensuring all members are aware of this policy and procedure and their responsibilities
  - investigating issues raised promptly and thoroughly
  - fostering an open culture within the club
  - ensuring any whistleblower is not subject to detriment
  - appointing appropriate officers in the event that matters raised pertain to a committee member.
  - oversee and review the whistleblowing policy and procedure
  - ensure learning from whistleblowing cases is taken forward within the clubs constitution
  - investigating issues raised with them directly promptly and thoroughly

## **Designated officers**

All members of the North Sheen Bowls Club Committee act as designated officers. This allows for members to approach a committee member that they consider appropriate to deal with the question in hand.

4.1 The designated officers have the responsibility for:

- treat the concern confidentially unless otherwise agreed
- ensure the member receives timely support to progress their concern
- escalate as needed
- remind the committee of the need to give the club member timely feedback on how their concern is being dealt with
- ensure the club member has access to personal support as it is recognised that raising such a concern may be stressful.

## **5. How to raise a concern**

5.1 In many circumstances, the easiest way a club member can get their concern resolved will be to discuss with any member of the committee, the safeguarding officer or the president who will raise with one of the designated officers.

5.2 If, for any reason, the club member does not feel comfortable raising their concern internally, they can raise concerns externally with 'prescribed bodies' (see section 8 below) if they feel this is necessary and in the public interest.

5.3 Concerns should be raised in writing (including email). The letter should set out the background and history of the concerns, giving names, dates and places where possible, and the reason why the member is making the disclosure. If the individual does not feel able to make the disclosure in writing, an interview will be arranged.

5.4 If the member wishes to remain anonymous they may send their concern in writing to North Sheen Bowls Club - addressing the envelope to one of the designated officers, the president or the safeguarding officer who is not associated with the concern being raised.

5.5 The club member raising concerns does not have to prove the allegation but they must demonstrate that there are sufficient grounds for concern.

5.6 If the member wants to raise the matter in confidence, they should say at the outset so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

## **6. How North Sheen Bowls Club will respond**

- 6.1 Any concern raised under this policy will be investigated thoroughly, promptly and confidentially.
- 6.2 Any approach to committee members and designated officers will be treated with the strictest confidence and the member's identity will not be disclosed without their prior consent. All members will be treated with respect at all times and the person raising the concern will be thanked.
- 6.3 There may be a meeting with the member raising the concern to ensure the Bowls club understands exactly the particular worry.
- 6.4 Within five working days of a concern being raised, the designated officer appointed to manage the disclosure will write to the member setting out the following:
  - Acknowledgement that the concern has been received, the date it has been received, whether the person who raised the concern has requested confidentiality, and a summary of the concern
  - Indicating how the matter will be dealt with and by whom and how they can be contacted
  - Telling the member of when an investigation has or is to be started and if further assistance will be needed from them.
- 6.5 The member who raised the concern will be told how long to expect the investigation to take and will be kept up to date with its progress.
- 6.6 The investigation will be objective and evidence-based, and will produce a report that focuses on identifying and rectifying any issues, and learning lessons to prevent problems recurring.
- 6.7 On conclusion of any investigation, the member will be told the outcome of the investigation and what North Sheen Bowls Club has done, or proposes to do, about it. Wherever possible, the designated officer will share the full investigation report with the club member who raised the concern (while respecting the confidentiality of others). If no action is to be taken, the reason for this will be explained.
- 6.8 If an individual is not satisfied with the response received and any subsequent action taken, they should put their concerns in writing to North Sheen Committee who will arrange any further investigation as they consider appropriate and will send a written response to the individual concerned.

## **7 Harassment and victimisation**

North Sheen Bowls Club understands that raising a concern can be difficult especially if there is fear of reprisal from those responsible for the

misconduct. North Sheen Bowls Club will not tolerate harassment and victimisation of anyone raising a concern, and there should be no impact on the continued membership of that person raising a concern. Any such behaviour is a serious breach of our values as a bowls club.

Nor will North Sheen Bowls Club tolerate any attempt to bully anyone into not raising any such concern. Any such behaviour is a breach of our values as an organisation and appropriate action will be taken in line with our code of conduct policy.

- 7.1 If a club member makes an allegation in good faith, but the allegation is not confirmed by the investigation, no action will be taken against that member. Provided the club member is acting honestly, it does not matter if they are mistaken or if there is an innocent explanation for their concerns.

## **8. Reporting a concern to an external body**

- 8.1 This policy is intended to provide a route by which members can raise concerns internally. However, if unhappy with the outcome of an investigation or if, for any reason they do not feel comfortable raising their concern internally, they are free to take the matter outside of the club to: [surreysecretary@bowlssurrey.co.uk](mailto:surreysecretary@bowlssurrey.co.uk)