# Northampton Town Football Club

# WHISTLE-BLOWING POLICY

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

## CHANGES HISTORY

## Annual review & coming into line with EFL Standards – Julie Delauney, DSO

**Review dates**

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|---|
| August 2019 |
| September 2020 |
| August 2021 |
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## Approvals

## Policy approved by James Whiting, NTFC CEO & Nick Ancel NTFC Club Secretary & SSM

**Review dates**

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|---|
| August 2019 |
| December 2020 |
| August 2021 |
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## Distribution – to all staff, players, parents and volunteers

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|---|
| September 2019 |
| January 2021 |
| August 2021 |
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# NORTHAMPTON TOWN FOOTBALL CLUB

**Introduction**

Northampton Town Football Club (further referred to as NTFC) is committed to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability.

An important aspect of accountability and transparency is a mechanism to enable staff and other members of NTFC to voice concerns in a responsible and effective manner. It is a fundamental term of every contract of employment that an employee will faithfully serve his or her employer and not disclose confidential information about the employer's affairs. Nevertheless, where an individual discovers information which they believe shows serious malpractice or wrongdoing within the NTFC organisation then this information should be disclosed internally without fear of reprisal, and there should be arrangements to enable this to be done independently of line management (although in relatively minor instances the line manager would be the appropriate person to be told).

The Public Interest Disclosure Act, which came into effect in 1999, gives legal protection to employees against being dismissed or penalised by their employers as a result of publicly disclosing certain serious concerns. NTFC, has endorsed the provisions set out below so as to ensure that no members of staff should feel at a disadvantage in raising legitimate concerns.

It should be emphasised that this policy is intended to assist individuals who believe they have discovered malpractice or impropriety. It is not designed to question financial or business decisions taken by the Boards of both NTFC, nor should it be used to reconsider any matters which have already been addressed under harassment, complaint, disciplinary or other procedures. Once the "whistle blowing" procedures are in place, it is reasonable to expect staff to use them rather than air their complaints outside of NTFC.

**Scope of Policy**

This policy is designed to enable employees of NTFC to raise concerns internally and at a high level and to disclose information which the individual believes shows malpractice or impropriety. This policy is intended to cover concerns which are in the public interest and may at least initially be

investigated separately but might then lead to the innovation of other procedures e.g. disciplinary. These concerns could include

1. Financial malpractice or impropriety or fraud
2. Failure to comply with a legal obligation or Statutes
3. Dangers to Health & Safety or the environment
4. Criminal activity
5. Improper conduct or unethical behaviour, safeguarding or welfare issues
6. Attempts to conceal any of these

**Safeguards within the Policy:**

Protection This policy is designed to offer protection to those employees of NTFC who disclose such concerns provided the disclosure is made:
1. In good faith
2. In the reasonable belief of the individual making the disclosure that it tends to show malpractice or impropriety and if they make the disclosure to an appropriate person (see below). It is important to note that no protection from internal disciplinary procedures is offered to those who choose not to use the procedure. In an extreme case malicious or wild allegations could give rise to legal action on the part of the persons complained about.

**Confidentiality**

NTFC will treat all such disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of the individual making the allegation may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder or frustrate any investigation. However, the investigation process may reveal the source of the information and the individual making the disclosure may need to provide a statement as part of the evidence required.

**Anonymous Allegations**

This policy is designed to encourage individuals to put their name to any disclosures they make. Concerns expressed anonymously are much less credible, but they may be considered at the discretion of the NTFC Board members. When exercising this discretion, the factors to be taken into account will include:
1. The seriousness of the issues raised.
2. The credibility of the concern.
3. The likelihood of confirming the allegation from reliable sources.

**Untrue Allegations**
If an individual makes an allegation in good faith, which is not confirmed by subsequent investigation, no action will be taken against that individual. In making a disclosure the individual should exercise due care to ensure the accuracy of the information. If, however, an individual makes

malicious or vexatious allegations, and particularly if he or she persists with making them, disciplinary action may be taken against that individual.

**Procedures for Making a Disclosure**

On receipt of a complaint of malpractice, or any issues mentioned above in the scope of the policy, the member of staff who receives and takes note of the complaint, must pass this information as soon as is reasonably possible, to the appropriate designated investigating officer as follows:

1. Complaints of malpractice will be investigated by the appropriate SSM/DSO/CEO unless the complaint is against the SSM or is in any way related to the actions of the SSM. In such cases, the complaint should be passed to the Chief Executive for referral.
2. In the case of a complaint, which is any way connected with but not against the SSM, the Chief Executive will nominate a Senior Manager to act as the alternative investigating officer.
3. Complaints against the Chief Executive should be passed to the Chairman who will nominate an appropriate investigating officer.
4. The complainant has the right to bypass the line management structure and take their complaint direct to the Chairman. The Chairman has the right to refer the complaint back to management if he/she feels that the management without any conflict of interest can more appropriately investigate the complaint.

Should none of the above routes be suitable or acceptable to the complainant, then the complainant may approach the following individual who have been designated and trained as independent points of contact under this procedure. They can advise the complainant on the implications of the legislation and the possible internal and external avenues of complaint open to them:

Julie Delauney (Academy Operations Manager, Safeguarding/Welfare Officer)

If there is evidence of criminal activity, then the investigating officer should inform the police. NTFC will ensure that any internal investigation does not hinder a formal police investigation.

**Timescales**

Due to the varied nature of these sorts of complaints, which may involve internal investigators and /or the police, it is not possible to lay down precise timescales for such investigations. The investigating officer should ensure that the investigations are undertaken as quickly as possible without affecting the quality and depth of those investigations. The investigating officer, should as soon as practically possible, send a written acknowledgement of the concern to the complainant and thereafter report back to them in writing the outcome of the investigation and on the action that is proposed. If the investigation is a prolonged one, the investigating officer should keep the complainant informed, in writing, as to the progress of the investigation and as to when it is likely to be concluded. All responses to the complainant should be in writing and sent to their home address.

**Investigating Procedure**

The investigating officer should follow these steps:

1. Full details and clarifications of the complaint should be obtained.
2. The investigating officer should inform the member of staff against whom the complaint is made as soon as is practically possible. The member of staff will be informed of their right to be

accompanied by a representative at any future interview or hearing held under the provision of these procedures.
3. The investigating officer should consider the involvement of the Police at this stage and should consult with the Chairman /Chief Executive.
4. The allegations should be fully investigated by the investigating officer with the assistance where appropriate, of other individuals / bodies.
5. A judgement concerning the complaint and validity of the complaint will be made by the investigating officer. This judgement will be detailed in a written report containing the findings of the investigations and reasons for the judgement. The report will be passed to the Chief Executive or Chairman as appropriate.
6. The Trust / Chairman will decide what action to take. If the complaint is shown to be justified, then they will invoke the disciplinary or other appropriate GTFC procedures.
7. The complainant should be kept informed of the progress of the investigations and, if appropriate, of the outcome.
8. If appropriate, a copy of the outcomes will be passed to the Company Auditors to enable a review of the procedures.

If the complainant is not satisfied that their concern is being properly dealt with by the investigating officer, they have the right to raise it in confidence with the Chief Executive / Chairman, or one of the designated persons described above.

If the investigation finds the allegations unsubstantiated and all internal procedures have been exhausted, but the complainant is not satisfied with the outcome of the investigation, Grimsby Town Football Club recognises the lawful rights of employees and ex-employees to make disclosures to prescribed persons (such as the Health and Safety Executive, the Audit Commission, or the utility regulators), or, where justified, elsewhere.