WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY (SAFEGUARDING)

1. Introduction

This policy outlines the procedures that Aston Villa Football Club (the '**Club**') has put in place to allow individuals to raise any safeguarding concerns individuals may have.

The Club is committed to conducting its business with honesty and integrity and we expect all employees and volunteers to maintain the same high standards. It is always possible, however, for things to go wrong or for organisations to unknowingly harbour illegal or unethical conduct. The Club promotes a culture of openness and accountability and this policy is intended to (i) encourage individuals to report any safeguarding concerns and/or suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible; (ii) provide guidance on how individuals can raise those concerns; and (iii) reassure individuals that they are able to raise genuine concerns in good faith without fear of reprisals.

Although individuals may share information with public authorities, the Club urges individuals to report any concerns to the Club, in the first instance.

2. Scope

This policy sets out how individuals can raise concerns about the safety and welfare of children or adults at risk who participate or engage in any services and activities conducted by the Club. It will also provide a method of raising concerns and will detail how feedback may be received, in relation to any action(s) taken.

An individual raising a concern may also be referred to as the 'Whistleblower'.

This policy applies to all individuals within the Club including players/parents/employees/directors/volunteers/casual staff.

3. Purpose

Individuals, including parents, players, coaches, other Club employees, volunteers, officials and/or team supporters are often the first to recognise concerns that potentially compromise the welfare or safety of those engaged in the Club's activities. However, individuals may not express their concerns because they feel that speaking up could be too difficult or may cause them to be harassed or victimised.

In these circumstances individuals may be tempted to ignore the concern rather than report it. However, the Club urges everyone to come forward and voice their concerns. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.

It is in the interests of all concerned that safeguarding concerns or allegations of potential poor practice or wrongdoing are responded to and managed appropriately and without delay.

The Club will aim to create an environment where individuals feel able to raise concerns and feel confident that their concerns will be managed effectively.

Furthermore, the Club will ensure that individuals who raise concerns about the safety and welfare of children, or adults at risk who participate or engage in any services and activities conducted by the Club:

- get a response to their concerns;
- are made aware of how to pursue their concern further if they are not satisfied with the response; and
- are reassured that they will be protected from reprisals or victimisation for raising those concerns (whistleblowing) in good faith.

4. Confidentiality

The Club will do its utmost best to keep a whistleblower's identity confidential when an allegation/concern is raised. If allegations are made in accordance with this policy, it should be noted that a statement may be required to form part of the evidence in any subsequent investigation.

If is the whistleblower is required to be identified or it becomes apparent that they may be identified because of any subsequent investigation, they will be given notice by a Club representative (usually the Club's Head of Safeguarding) so that an opportunity is provided to discuss any likely consequences and support required.

5. Raising a Concern or Making an Allegation relating to Safeguarding

If an individual wishes to raise a concern or allegation they should do so either verbally or in writing to the Club's Head of Safeguarding. The concern should be as specific as possible including any names, dates and locations (where possible).

The Club's Head of Safeguarding can be contacted either by phone 07827300798 or via email - safeguarding@avfc.co.uk

All Safeguarding investigations will initially be undertaken by the Club's Head of Safeguarding with support from the Club's safeguarding team and/or other external statutory or safeguarding expertise.

If, after an investigation, it has been found that the concerns or allegations are untrue or have not been substantiated, then no action will be taken. If, however, it is established that an individual has made malicious allegations, further action may be taken.

6. Anonymous Allegations

Concerns or allegations may be raised anonymously, but it should be noted that a concern that is raised anonymously is much less credible and more difficult to investigate effectively. Concerns raised anonymously may be considered at the discretion of the Club. In exercising this discretion, the following factors will be taken into account:

a. the seriousness of the issues raised, and any potential safeguarding risks indicated.

b. the credibility of the concern.

c. the likelihood of confirming or clarifying the concern/allegation from attributable sources; and

d. statutory agency advice e.g. LADO, Children's Social Care or the Police.

If an individual feels unable to disclose their identity, the Club encourages individuals to report any safeguarding concern through external agencies such as the NSPCC Helpline (0808 800 5000).

The NSPCC Helpline for Whistleblowing can be contacted for support and advice by telephone (T: 0800 028 0285) or email (help@nspcc.org.uk).

Useful Contacts/Support

Premier League
Jessica Addicott
Head of Safeguarding
jaddicott@premierleague.com

- NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000
- ChildLine 0800 1111 / www.childline.org.uk
- Kidscape www.kidscape.org.uk
- Anti-Bullying Alliance www.antibullyingalliance.org
- Contact the Ann Craft Trust safeguarding adult's advice helpline by calling 0115 951 5400.
- Whistleblowing for employees: What is a whistleblower - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

In an emergency or if someone is in immediate danger, call the Police on 999 (101 for non-emergencies).

7. Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Safeguarding Team each year, or sooner where new developments in guidance and legislation necessitate such a review, where factual clarification is required or changes to operational practices take place.

Review Date: October 2025
Next Review Date: October 2026