



**IGAT**

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# **WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY**

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Version 1.0



### Version History

Version	Summary of amendments/changes	Published Date
Version 1.0	Document Created	March 2025

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## Introduction

The Independent Gymnastics Association (IGA) is committed to fostering a culture of openness, integrity, and accountability. It is essential that all individuals affiliated with IGA, including club members, coaches, employees, volunteers, and parents, feel safe to report any concerns about wrongdoing without fear of retaliation. This policy provides a structured process for raising concerns, ensuring they are thoroughly investigated and appropriately addressed. Whistleblowing serves as a crucial safeguard in maintaining the integrity of our organisation and the safety of all participants.

IGA recognises that individuals may be reluctant to report misconduct due to concerns about confidentiality, job security, or personal safety. Therefore, this policy provides a clear framework that guarantees whistleblowers will be protected and supported throughout the process. Transparency is vital in maintaining trust within the gymnastics community, and we are committed to addressing concerns fairly, consistently, and in compliance with the law.

IGA acknowledges the importance of creating a safe environment where individuals are empowered to raise concerns about misconduct, regardless of the nature of the issue. This includes protecting children, vulnerable adults, and ensuring a healthy and safe environment for all participants.

## Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that individuals who become aware of misconduct or wrongdoing within IGA or its affiliated clubs have a safe and effective means of reporting their concerns. This policy outlines a structured and secure process that enables whistleblowers to disclose concerns without fear of victimisation or other adverse consequences. It also ensures that all reports are properly investigated and addressed in accordance with legal and ethical standards.

Furthermore, this policy serves to reinforce accountability and ethical practices within IGA by encouraging individuals to come forward with information that can help prevent harm, promote transparency, and uphold the highest standards of governance. It assures whistleblowers that their concerns will be investigated impartially and that corrective actions will be implemented where necessary.

This policy also supports the identification and prevention of incidents of child protection concerns, safeguarding issues, and abuse. It is particularly relevant for whistleblowers who wish to disclose violations related to the well-being of gymnasts or other participants under the IGA's care

## Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all individuals associated with IGA, including employees, volunteers, contractors, coaches, parents, gymnasts, and club officials. It covers any disclosures related to misconduct, including but not limited to criminal activity, breaches of legal or regulatory obligations, miscarriages of justice, risks to health and safety, financial mismanagement, abuse of power, bullying, and harassment. Additionally, any attempts to conceal such wrongdoing are also covered under this policy.

Whistleblowing differs from personal grievances, which should be addressed through internal grievance procedures. However, if an employee believes that their grievance also constitutes a whistleblowing matter—such as exposing systemic discrimination or unlawful conduct—they should refer to this policy.



This policy also covers disclosures related to potential conflicts of interest, breaches of confidentiality, failure to adhere to safeguarding standards, and violations of ethical practices by IGA officials, staff, and volunteers. It also applies to concerns about non-compliance with IGA's Code of Conduct.

## Legal Regulatory Framework

This policy aligns with key UK laws and regulations designed to protect whistleblowers. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA) is the primary legislation that protects individuals who report wrongdoing in the public interest. It ensures that whistleblowers who disclose information in good faith are legally protected from unfair dismissal or other detriment. Additionally, the Employment Rights Act 1996 supports whistleblowers by providing further protections against retaliation.

Other relevant legal frameworks include the Acas Whistleblowing Guidance, which outlines best practices for handling disclosures, and the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, which protects employees and members of the public from unsafe practices. The UK Safeguarding Guidelines are particularly important in cases involving the welfare of children and vulnerable adults. Finally, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) ensures that whistleblower reports are handled securely and that personal data is processed lawfully.

This policy is compliant with the UK Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA), the Employment Rights Act 1996, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and where applicable, international laws related to whistleblowing, such as the EU Whistleblower Protection Directive (2019/1937) and local laws in jurisdictions where IGA affiliates operate. All disclosures involving personal data will be handled in accordance with GDPR provisions to ensure the lawful processing and protection of sensitive information.

## Recruitment Procedure

Individuals who wish to report concerns should first raise the issue internally by reporting it to the designated safeguarding or whistleblowing officer within their affiliated club. If the individual does not feel comfortable reporting the issue at the club level, they may escalate their concerns to IGA's central whistleblowing team. Reports can be made through multiple channels, including email, a confidential phone line, or an online reporting form available on the IGA website.

IGA recognises that some whistleblowers may wish to remain anonymous. While anonymous reports will be considered, whistleblowers are encouraged to provide their contact details to facilitate a more effective investigation. All reports will be recorded securely, and whistleblowers will receive an acknowledgment of their report within five working days. If the whistleblower is dissatisfied with the response, they have the option to escalate their concerns to relevant external authorities.

If the whistleblower is dissatisfied with the response or feels their concerns are not being properly addressed at the club level, they should escalate their concerns directly to the IGA central Safeguarding Team.

Reports can be submitted via the IGA website's confidential reporting tool or email the safeguarding team directly. In addition, whistleblowers may choose to submit concerns in writing, with options for both electronic and paper submissions.

## Confidentiality & Protection

IGA is committed to ensuring that all whistleblower reports are treated with strict confidentiality. The identity of whistleblowers will not be disclosed without their explicit consent unless required by law. Any attempts to retaliate against whistleblowers will be treated as a serious offence and may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment or membership.

Protection measures include ensuring that whistleblowers are safeguarded from harassment, intimidation, or victimisation. In cases where a whistleblower feels they are being treated unfairly as a result of their disclosure, they are encouraged to report their concerns to IGA's safeguarding team or an independent advisory body. Legal guidance and support will be made available where necessary.

IGA recognises that whistleblowers may fear retaliation or negative consequences for raising concerns. In addition to protecting whistleblowers from retaliation by IGA officials or affiliated parties, we also commit to providing guidance and assistance if external retaliation or defamation risks arise.

## Investigation & Outcome

Upon receiving a whistleblowing report, IGA will conduct an initial assessment to determine whether an investigation is warranted. If an investigation is required, it will be conducted by an independent panel to ensure impartiality. The investigation process will include gathering evidence, interviewing relevant parties, and assessing the credibility of the claims.

The whistleblower will be kept informed throughout the process, where legally permissible, and will receive a final report outlining the findings of the investigation. If wrongdoing is confirmed, corrective actions will be implemented immediately. This may include disciplinary measures, policy changes, or reporting the issue to regulatory authorities. A follow-up process will be established to ensure that the corrective measures are effective and that similar issues do not arise in the future.

Upon receiving a report, IGA will acknowledge receipt within five working days. An initial risk assessment will be conducted to determine the severity of the alleged wrongdoing and to prioritise the investigation accordingly. If the matter involves a serious allegation, such as abuse or financial mismanagement, the case will be escalated for investigation.

The findings of the investigation will be shared with the whistleblower, if legally permissible, and appropriate actions will be taken based on the findings. IGA will provide whistleblowers with updates on the outcome and any corrective actions taken.

## External Reporting

If a whistleblower believes that their concerns have not been adequately addressed through internal channels, they may report the issue to an external regulatory body. This includes Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), UK Sport, or local law enforcement agencies. Whistleblowers should seek advice before making an external disclosure to ensure they remain protected under whistleblower laws. IGA will not penalise individuals for making external disclosures if they have acted in good faith and have reasonable grounds to believe their concerns are legitimate.



Whistleblowers are encouraged to make reports internally first, but if they are dissatisfied with the internal process or feel that their concerns have not been adequately addressed, they may choose to report externally to IGA or government agency. These include Protect, UK Sport, Health and Safety Executive (HSE), Ofsted, and local law enforcement authorities, where applicable.

Individuals seeking guidance before making an external disclosure can contact Protect, a specialist whistleblowing charity, to receive free advice and support about external reporting options.

## Responsibilities & Training

IGA and its affiliated clubs have a duty to promote awareness of this policy and ensure that all staff, volunteers, and affiliates understand their rights and responsibilities regarding whistleblowing. Regular training sessions will be provided to reinforce the importance of ethical reporting and to ensure that individuals know how to report concerns effectively.

A central database of whistleblowing reports will be maintained to monitor trends, identify recurring issues, and assess the effectiveness of the policy. Clubs must ensure that all disclosures are properly recorded and addressed in a timely manner.

It is the responsibility of all IGA officials, staff, and volunteers to ensure they understand the provisions of this policy and their obligation to report wrongdoing. Specific responsibilities include encouraging a culture of ethical reporting and cooperating with investigations when requested.

IGA will ensure that annual whistleblowing and safeguarding training is provided for all staff, coaches, volunteers, and officials. This training will emphasise the importance of whistleblowing, the steps for reporting misconduct, and the safeguards in place to protect whistleblowers from retaliation.

## Reviews & Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed every two years or in response to significant legal or regulatory changes. The IGA Safeguarding and Compliance Team will oversee the ongoing monitoring of whistleblowing reports to ensure that the policy remains effective. Any necessary revisions will be implemented to enhance protection for whistleblowers and improve reporting mechanisms.

The IGA Safeguarding and Compliance Team will conduct regular audits to review the effectiveness of the whistleblowing procedure, ensuring that all concerns are addressed timely and impartially.

## Whistleblower Support Services

IGA is committed to ensuring that whistleblowers have access to emotional, legal, and professional support throughout the process. This may include support through external organisations like:

- **Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work):**

A UK-based charity offering free, confidential advice and support to whistleblowers. Provides guidance on making a disclosure and ensures whistleblowers understand their rights and protections.

Contact: [www.protect-advice.org.uk](http://www.protect-advice.org.uk)



- **Independent Legal Advice:**

Access to professional legal advice for whistleblowers regarding their rights, protections, and options. Lawyers specialising in employment law and whistleblower protection can offer tailored support.

- **Safeguarding and Compliance Team:**

A dedicated team within IGA available to provide support, guidance, and protection for whistleblowers throughout the process. Assists with any concerns about retaliation or adverse consequences.

Contact: [safeguarding@igauk.com](mailto:safeguarding@igauk.com)

- **External Regulatory Bodies:**

Whistleblowers can reach out to regulatory bodies such as UK Sport, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), or Ofsted for additional guidance and support.

- **National Whistleblowing Helpline:**

A hotline for individuals who wish to seek advice anonymously or discuss the process of making a disclosure.

- Helpline: [020 7404 6609](tel:02074046609)
- Email: [help@wbhelpline.org.uk](mailto:help@wbhelpline.org.uk)
- Website: [www.wbhelpline.org.uk](http://www.wbhelpline.org.uk)

## Mental Health Support Services:

- **Mind**

- Provides mental health support and resources for individuals experiencing distress, anxiety, or emotional challenges.
- Contact:
  - Helpline: [0300 123 3393](tel:03001233393)
  - Text: 86463
  - Website: [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)

- **Samaritans**

- Offers 24/7 emotional support for anyone in distress, including whistleblowers who may be experiencing stress or anxiety related to their disclosures.
- Contact:
  - Helpline: 116 123 (free and confidential)
  - Website: [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

- **The Anxiety UK**

- Provides support for individuals suffering from anxiety, stress, or panic, including those who are feeling anxious after making a whistleblowing report.
- Contact:
  - Helpline: [03444 775 774](tel:03444775774)
  - Website: [www.anxietyuk.org.uk](http://www.anxietyuk.org.uk)





- **Relate**

- Offers relationship and emotional support services, which may be helpful for individuals facing personal or professional relationship challenges during the whistleblowing process.
- Contact:
- Helpline: 0300 100 1234
- Website: [www.relate.org.uk](http://www.relate.org.uk)

- **The Mental Health Foundation**

- Provides mental health information, resources, and services to support individuals struggling with their mental well-being during difficult situations.
- Contact:
- Website: [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)

- **Health Assured (Employee Assistance Program provider)**

- Offers a range of mental health support services for employees, including confidential counseling for stress, anxiety, or other mental health concerns.
- Contact:
- 24/7 helpline: 0800 028 0199
- Website: [www.healthassured.org.uk](http://www.healthassured.org.uk)

- **Rethink Mental Illness**

- Provides support for individuals experiencing mental health issues and works to ensure that their mental well-being is supported through various services.
- Contact:
- Helpline: 0808 801 0525
- Website: [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

- **The Charlie Waller Memorial Trust**

- Focuses on raising awareness and providing support for mental health issues, especially related to anxiety, depression, and emotional well-being.
- Contact:
- Website: [www.cwmt.org.uk](http://www.cwmt.org.uk)

- **NHS 111 - Mental Health Support**

- The NHS offers a free, confidential service for people experiencing a mental health crisis or needing emotional support.
- Contact:
- Phone: Dial 111 (choose option 2 for mental health support)
- Website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)