

Surf Lifesaving Association of Wales (SLSA Wales)

Policy Review Section

Policy Title: Whistleblowing Policy

Organisation: Surf Lifesaving Association of Wales (SLSA Wales)

Version: 1.0

Approved By: Board of Trustees

Approval Date: 12th April 2026

Policy Owner: Chair of SLSA Wales

Next Scheduled Review: April 2029 (Every three years, or earlier if required)

Review Cycle:

This policy will be reviewed **every three years**, or sooner if:

- There is a significant change in charity law or Public Interest Disclosure guidance
- Governance structures within SLSA Wales change
- A whistleblowing incident highlights the need for policy amendments
- Best practice guidance for volunteer-led charities is updated

Record of Reviews and Amendments:

Version	Date	Reviewed By	Summary of Changes	Approval Signature
1.0	12 th April 2026	BOM	Initial policy issue	DM

Whistleblowing Policy

(For Volunteer Trustees, Volunteers, and Members)

1. Introduction

Surf Lifesaving Association of Wales (SLSA Wales) is committed to the highest standards of openness, integrity, and accountability. As a volunteer-led charity with **no employees**, all Trustees and volunteers share responsibility for ensuring that our actions uphold the law, protect people, and maintain the reputation of the organisation.

This policy provides a transparent mechanism for Trustees, volunteers, club representatives, and members to raise legitimate concerns about wrongdoing or risks without fear of victimisation.

Although the legal whistleblowing protections under the **Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998** apply mainly to employees, SLSA Wales chooses to **extend the same principles of protection** to volunteers and members.

2. What is Whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is reporting a concern in the **public interest** about wrongdoing that affects others or the organisation as a whole.

It includes concerns such as:

- Criminal activity (e.g., theft, fraud, embezzlement)
- Safeguarding concerns involving children, young people, or vulnerable adults
- Breaches of health and safety that put people at risk
- Serious misuse of charitable resources
- Conflicts of interest or governance misconduct
- Breach of legal obligations
- Serious breaches of SLSA Wales policies
- Deliberate concealment of any wrongdoing

Whistleblowing **does not** include:

- Personal complaints
- Disputes between individuals
- Dissatisfaction with decisions unless they involve wrongdoing

These should instead follow the appropriate **complaints, disciplinary, or safeguarding** procedures.

3. Principles of This Policy

SLSA Wales will ensure that:

1. **Any volunteer or member can raise concerns without fear of retaliation.**
2. Concerns are taken seriously and investigated sensitively and fairly.
3. Confidentiality is respected wherever possible.
4. Concerns can be escalated outside the organisation if necessary.
5. No one who raises a concern in good faith will suffer disadvantage or victimisation.

Malicious or knowingly false allegations are a serious matter and may result in appropriate action.

4. Who Can Use This Policy?

This list is not exhaustive but includes:

- Members of SLSA Wales
- Club officers and committees
- Parents/guardians of members
- Volunteers
- Trustees
- Members of the public with legitimate cause to complain

5. Raising a Whistleblowing Concern

5.1 Internal Whistleblowing Contacts

Concerns should be raised with:

The Whistleblowing Officer (Secretary):

Gavin Newman whistleblowing@slsawales.org.uk

or, if the concern relates to the Whistleblowing Officer:

The President of SLSA Wales:

Phil Rees philrees@slsawales.org.uk

If the concern is about the Chair, raise it with **any Trustee**.

5.2 How to Raise a Concern

You may raise concerns:

- In writing
- By email

Where possible, include:

- What happened (details, dates, locations)
- Who was involved
- Whether anyone is at immediate risk
- Any evidence you may have

Anonymous reports will be reviewed, but may limit the organisation's ability to investigate thoroughly.

6. Confidentiality

Your identity will be kept confidential as far as possible. It may need to be shared only if:

- Required by law
- Required for safeguarding referrals
- Essential for a fair investigation

If confidentiality cannot be fully guaranteed, this will be discussed with you before any action proceeds.

7. How SLSA Wales Will Respond

Within **10 working days**, you will receive acknowledgment of:

- The concern being received

- How SLSA Wales intends to handle it
- Expected timescales
- Support available
- Whether further information is required

Investigation Process

The investigating Trustee or appointed person will:

- Gather information and evidence
- Interview relevant volunteers or members
- Consult external bodies if necessary
- Ensure fair, impartial review

Investigations will normally be completed within **30 working days**, where reasonably possible.

Possible Outcomes

- No further action
- Internal improvements or governance changes
- Safeguarding referral
- Referral to the police
- Referral to Charity Commission
- Disciplinary or sanctions under SLSA Wales governance (where applicable)

You will receive a summary of the outcome unless legal or safeguarding restrictions apply.

8. Escalation Outside SLSA Wales

If you believe your concern has not been properly addressed, or cannot be raised internally, you may contact:

- **The Police** – for criminal matters
- **The Charity Commission** – for governance, serious misconduct or mismanagement
- **NSPCC / Social Services** – for safeguarding concerns
- **HMRC** – for tax-related wrongdoing
- **Action Fraud** – for fraud or cyber-crime

Raising a concern externally should normally occur **after** exhausting the internal process unless immediate serious risk exists.

9. Additional Guidance for Members of SLSA Wales

How Members Can Speak Up or Whistle blow

Members play a vital role in strengthening transparency across SLSA Wales. Members may raise concerns through:

9.1 Local Club Level (If Appropriate)

- Speak to your **Club Chair** or **Club Safeguarding Lead** first, unless they are implicated.

9.2 Directly to SLSA Wales

Members may go straight to SLSA Wales if:

- The club has not responded
- The issue involves the club committee
- The matter is serious or sensitive
- The safety of a person is at risk

Members should contact:

Whistleblowing Officer – SLSA Wales

Gavin Newman whistleblowing@slsawales.org.uk

or any Trustee if unsure.

9.3 What Members Should Expect

Members will receive:

- Acknowledgment within 10 working days
- Fair and impartial review
- Confidentiality to the maximum extent possible

- Protection from retaliation by clubs or individuals

Members are encouraged to raise concerns **in good faith**. There will be no negative consequences for doing so, even if concerns later prove unwarranted.

10. Protection Against Victimisation

No volunteer, Trustee, or member will be treated unfavourably for raising a concern in good faith.

Any volunteer, club officer, or Trustee found to victimise someone who raised a concern may face governance consequences, including:

- Suspension from volunteer duties
- Removal from committees
- Temporary or permanent membership sanctions
- Formal notification to clubs or the Charity Commission

11. False or Malicious Allegations

Knowingly making false allegations is a misuse of this policy and may lead to:

- Governance sanctions
- Membership action
- Reporting to external authorities, if appropriate

12. Review of the Policy

This policy will be reviewed every **three years**, or earlier if:

- Legal requirements change
- Governance structures change
- A significant safeguarding or whistleblowing case requires revision