



## **Policy 13: Public Interest Disclosure Policy**

Whistleblowing is an early warning system. It is about revealing and raising concerns over misconduct or malpractice within an organisation or within an independent structure associated with it.

### **13.1 Disclosure in the public interest.**

Whistleblowing in the United Kingdom is protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA). Amongst other things, under the Act protected disclosures are permitted even if a non-disclosure agreement has been signed.

If members bring information about a wrongdoing to the attention of their organisation or a relevant organisation, they are protected in certain circumstances under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. This is commonly referred to as 'blowing the whistle'. The law that protects whistle-blowers is for the public interest - so people can speak out if they find malpractice in an organisation. Blowing the whistle is more formally known as 'making a disclosure in the public interest'.

Qualifying disclosures of information are where a member reasonably believes (and it is in the public interest) that one or more of the following matters is either happening, has taken place, or is likely to happen in the future.

- A criminal offence
- Child Welfare issue
- Doping Issue
- The breach of a legal obligation
- A miscarriage of justice
- A danger to the health and safety of any individual
- Damage to the environment
- Deliberate attempt to conceal any of the above.

If a member is going to make a disclosure it should be made to the BAA first, or if they feel unable to use the organisations procedure the disclosure should be made to a prescribed person, so that rights are protected.

### **13.2 Key Element : Welfare**

Abuse is a sensitive and difficult issue, child abuse has occurred within organisations and may occur within other settings, for example, sport or other social activities. This could involve anyone working with children in a paid or voluntary capacity, for example, a volunteer in clubs, club helpers, tutors at training camps, clinics or competitions and coaches. Research indicates that abuse within a public setting, is rarely a one-off event. It is crucial those involved in Sport Aikido are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are taken seriously and appropriate action taken.

It is understood that emotions generated by the discovery that a member of coaching staff or volunteer is, or may be involved in abuse, will raise concerns among other coaches or volunteers, including the barriers inherent in reporting such matters.

It is important that any concerns for the welfare of members arising from abuse or harassment by a coach or volunteer should be reported immediately.

The British Aikido Association will fully support and protect any person, member or volunteer who, in good faith, reports their concern that a colleague is, or may be involved in abuse.



You should be aware that your right to report, in good faith, is protected by the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, i.e. your position in the organisation will not be affected by you reporting your valid concerns.

Alternatively you can go direct to the Police, Children's Social Care/in Scotland Social Services or NSPCC/in Scotland Children 1st and report your concerns there.

### **13.3 Key Element: Doping**

The British Aikido Association is fundamentally opposed to any kind of performance enhancing doping and follows WADA guidelines. Coaches should also be drug and alcohol free whilst coaching. All Coaches should set an example especially to younger members and be drug and alcohol aware at all times.

### **13.4 Key Element: Health and Safety**

Under the associations' Health and Safety requirements, practice should be risk assessed and monitored to ensure a Duty of Care at all times. Coaches must work within the Codes of Conduct and health and safety regulations at all times.

### **13.5 Reporting Procedure**

Any suspicion of transgression by either a coach, member or a volunteer will be reported to the club welfare officer or if they are unavailable, to the person in charge.

Then appropriate action can include :-

- The member or club welfare officer can report the NCPCC and gain advice on next steps.
- The member or club welfare officer or the person in charge can refer the allegation to Social Services, who may involve the police.
- The member or person in charge should notify the British Aikido Associations Lead Child Protection Officer.

If related to Child Welfare issue the parents or carers of the child will be contacted, as soon as possible, following advice from Children's Social Care/in Scotland, Social Services and/or the Police.

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned and to protect the integrity of the investigation process. All referrals must be reported to the British Aikido Association as soon as possible.

### **13.6 Next Steps**

Where there is a complaint against an Aikido volunteer, coach, official or member of staff, there may be three types of investigation:

1. A criminal investigation
2. A child protection investigation
3. A disciplinary investigation by the BAA Case Management Team.

The Case Management Team will decide if an individual accused should be temporarily suspended from membership pending Police and/or Children's Social Care/in Scotland,



Social Services, inquiries. Sometimes the authorities will not wish such action to be taken immediately so that their inquiries are not jeopardised.

The results of the Police and Children's Social Care/in Scotland, Social Services, investigation will inform the disciplinary investigation.

If the investigation shows that the allegation is clearly about poor practice then the Case Management Team will follow the British Aikido Association's internal Procedures.

Irrespective of the findings of the Police or Children's Social Care/in Scotland, Social Services, BAA will assess all individual cases under the appropriate complaints or disciplinary procedure to decide if a member, coach or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the BAA must reach a decision based upon the information that is available which could suggest that on a balance of probability it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of young people should always remain paramount.

Consideration should be given to what support may be appropriate to children, parents, members or coaches.

### **13.7 Allegations of previous misconduct**

Allegations of misconduct may be made some period of time after the event.

For example, by an adult who was abused as a child by a coach who is still currently working with young people. Where such an allegation is made, the same procedure should be followed. This is because other young people, either within the sport or outside it, may be at risk from this person. There are certain offences, which may identify a person as presenting a risk, or potential risk, to young people, which may exclude an individual from holding an award or position within the British Aikido Association.

### **13.8 Providing support**

The BAA will support anyone who, in good faith, reports his or her genuine concern that a colleague is, or may be, guilty of misconduct, even if that concern is proved to be unfounded, in the following ways:

- Via the Lead Child Protection Officer
- Via the Case Management Team
- Provision of specialist independent organisations
- NSPCC Helpline
- NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit.

Consideration will be given to what support may be appropriate for children, young people, parents or carers, volunteers, members or coaches during and after poor practice referrals to the BAA.

Confidentiality is paramount. However, the BAA acknowledges that having received a disclosure, individuals may have a need for some support. Every effort will be made to ensure that any child or young person who has been subjected to poor practice or abuse, and their parents or carers, will be given support from the appropriate agencies and the BAA.



A list of independent support groups and help lines is provided in Appendix 1 for those who have experienced abuse. The BAA will also consider what support with the process may be appropriate for those against whom a complaint of poor practice or an allegation of abuse has been made. Appendix 1 provides information on support groups and help lines.