

Code of Conduct for NEWCASTLE FRONTRUNNERS

Adopted 16th May 2018



1. Background

This policy sets out Newcastle Frontrunners' (NFR) commitment to being an open and inclusive Club, via our behaviour, ethics, safety focus, promotion of well-being and respect for all.

The policy was drafted using available guidance from England Athletics, Charities Commission, and other best practice guides.

2. Organisation aims

NFR is welcoming to all prospective members who share our values. Our primary focus is on inclusivity and this should be at the heart of all our activities.

The objectives of the Club as stated in our constitution are:

- to promote physical and mental health, and well-being, through running for the benefit of the public among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender + (LGBT+) individuals aged 16 and above regardless of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or physical ability;
- to combat discrimination and homophobia in sport, and to encourage LGBT+ involvement in the local and sporting community.
- In pursuit of these objectives the Club shall promote equal opportunities.

3. Our Code of Conduct supports this through:

- Promoting a culture of inclusivity and mutual respect between members and towards those outside the club;
- Treating club members fairly and with respect;
- Not tolerating bullying, harassment, discrimination, or victimisation of any kind;
- Dealing with any concerns in a fair and robust manner.

4. Scope of this policy

The scope of this code of conduct applies to:

- Activities organised by NFR including training sessions, competitive events, and socials;
- Events or socials not organised by NFR but where NFR members may be seen to be representing NFR, including when wearing club colours;
- NFR social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) and other communications;
- Social interactions that have the potential to bring the Club into disrepute;
- Behaviour or actions that do not respect the personal boundaries or feelings of other Club Members.

5. Membership agreement

On admission to the club, and at renewal of membership, our Members will be asked to confirm that they agree to:

- Ensure they have read, understood and abide by this Code of Conduct, our Constitution, and other associated policies;

- Familiarise themselves with the UKA Code of Conduct for Athletes (Appendix 1);
- Treat Members and others outside the Club with dignity, respect and fairness;
- Help promote a culture of diversity and inclusivity within the Club;
- Be open and honest in dealings with others and respect their confidentiality;
- Avoid behaviour which could be perceived as unreasonable, infringe public decency or bring the Club into disrepute and/or put the club's reputation at risk;
- Raise issues of concern in an appropriate and timely way in line with the code of conduct complaints procedure.

Committee members shall in addition to the requirements of Members, follow the Charity Governance Code (<https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en>), and Executive members (Trustees) the duties of a Trustee (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/charity-trustee-whats-involved#trustees-6-main-duties>).

6. Confidentiality

The Club has a Data Protection Policy which outlines the proper use of personal data and data security. Members should be mindful of the personal and sensitive data of others which may at times be shared with them for the purposes of administering the club. Good data protection principles should be followed, and an assumption made that data should not be shared or is confidential unless explicit consent is given by a member.

7. Guests

NFR welcomes guests to its events. Members are expected to ensure their guests adhere to this code of conduct and other club policies whilst at Club events.

8. Limits to authority

Newcastle Frontrunners gains useful publicity through press exposure and websites/social networking sites. Members are requested not make statements on behalf of the club unless authorised to do so. Members may not commit the club to any expenditure unless specifically authorised to do so.

9. Breaches of this Code of Conduct

If a breach or potential breach of this Code of Conduct is discovered the Committee will be informed. The Committee will then follow the steps as outlined in Appendix 2 (Complaints Procedure).

10. Principles for dealing with breaches of this Code of Conduct

- Confidentiality is an important part of this policy. Everyone involved in this policy - whether making a complaint or involved in an investigation - is responsible for maintaining the high level of confidentiality required;
- Details of an investigation and the names of those involved must only be disclosed on a 'need to know' (i.e. If you tell people something on a need-to-know basis, you only tell them the facts they need to know at the time they need to know them, and nothing more) basis;
- Any investigation will be thorough, impartial and objective and carried out with sensitivity to the rights of all involved;
- Members who make complaints or who participate in good faith in any investigation must not suffer any type of victimisation or retaliation as a result;
- Members who deliberately provide false information or raise issues maliciously will themselves be open to investigations as part of the code of conduct policy;

- Members who are found to have retaliated against or victimised someone for making a complaint or assisting in good faith with an investigation under this policy will be dealt with under the Code of Conduct policy.
- When the club's resources cannot meet the needs of an investigation, we reserve the right to seek third party advice/assistance/authorities.

11. Review of this policy

This policy shall be reviewed every 3 years, the next review is due on or before May 2021.

Appendix 1 - UK Athletics Code of Conduct for Athletes (September 2016)

As a responsible athlete you will:

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every athlete, coach, technical official and others involved in athletics and treat everyone equally;
- Uphold the same values of sportsmanship off the field as you do when engaged in athletics;
- Cooperate fully with others involved in the sport such as coaches, technical officials, team managers, doctors, physiotherapists, sport scientists and representatives of the governing body in the best interests of yourself and other athletes;
- Consistently promote positive aspects of the sport such as fair play and never condone rule violations or the use of prohibited or age-inappropriate substances;
- Anticipate and be responsible for your own needs including being organised, having the appropriate equipment and being on time;
- Inform your coach of any other coaching that you are seeking or receiving;
- Always thank the coaches and officials who enable you to participate in athletics.

As a responsible Athlete, when participating in or attending any athletics activities, including training/coaching sessions and competition events you will:

- Act with dignity and display courtesy and good manners towards others;
- Avoid swearing and abusive language and irresponsible behaviour including behaviour that is dangerous to yourself or others, acts of violence, bullying, harassment and physical and sexual abuse;
- Challenge inappropriate behaviour and language by others;
- Never engage in any inappropriate or illegal behaviour;
- Avoid destructive behaviour and leave athletics venues as you find them;
- Not carry or consume alcohol to excess and/or illegal substances;
- Avoid carrying any items that could be dangerous to yourself or others excluding athletics equipment used in the course of your athletics activity.

In addition, athletes, especially young athletes and vulnerable adults, should follow these guidelines on safe participation in athletics

- Notify a responsible adult if you have to go somewhere (why, where and when you will return)
- Do not respond if someone seeks private information unrelated to athletics such as personal information, home life information
- Strictly maintain boundaries between friendship and intimacy with a coach or technical official
- Never accept lifts in cars or invitations into homes on your own without the prior knowledge and consent of your parent/carer
- Use safe transport or travel arrangements
- Report any accidental injury, distress, misunderstanding or misinterpretation to your parents/carers and club Welfare officer as soon as possible.
- Report any suspected misconduct by coaches or other people involved in athletics to the club welfare officer as soon as possible

Appendix 2 - Complaints Procedure

Members need to be able to raise concerns knowing they will be dealt with promptly, sensitively and fairly.

Informal resolution

If a Member believes they are being treated inappropriately, it is often best to try and resolve the situation informally. Raising an issue at the outset may prevent it escalating or being repeated. In many cases the person will be unaware their behaviour is offensive and asking them to stop may be sufficient to resolve the situation.

A member may feel they are unable to deal with the situation personally, this being the case they should approach a member of the Committee who will assist with the informal approach to resolving the situation.

Informal resolution may involve:

- A conversation between the parties involved to raise awareness of the inappropriateness of the situation and/or behaviour;
- Arbitration between parties to ensure the inappropriate behaviour or situation does not re-occur;
- A verbal caution.

Formal resolution

In some cases, an incident may be so serious that it is inappropriate to attempt to resolve it informally. Or an attempt to deal with an issue informally may have failed. In these cases, a Member should raise the issue formally in writing with the club Secretary. If required an advocate can be used to progress a complaint.

A. Submission of formal complaint

A.1. If you are the victim (or third-party witness) to an occurrence or repeated occurrence of bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation, or breaches of the Code of Conduct, Constitution, or other club policies, you should make notes or keep a diary of the events, this will help and assist in the event the club investigates.

A.2. You are required to submit, in writing, your complaint to the Club Secretary at the earliest opportunity. In the event the Club Secretary is the subject of the complaint, then the complaint submission is to be made to the Vice-Chair.

A.3. It is important that as much detail is included in the complaint as possible i.e. subject of the complaint, who, what, where, and when.

B. Initial action of the Club Secretary/Vice-Chair on receipt of a complaint

B.1. Acknowledge receipt of the complaint in writing to the Complainant;

B.2. Appoint a member of the Executive to conduct a preliminary investigation.

B.2.1. This preliminary investigation is to establish whether the complaint can be dealt with by the Executive.

B.3. Once the Executive have reached a decision, the NFR Committee will ratify the decision on whether the nature of the complaint is of such a serious nature it requires the instigation of a full investigation.

B.4. If the complaint is deemed to warrant a full investigation:

B.4.1. The Committee shall appointment two individuals (one to be a Committee Member, the second to be a Club Member) to investigate the complaint. In the event it is deemed inappropriate for any member of the Committee to undertake the investigation, the Club Secretary will appoint two Club Members to carry out the investigation, at least one of these members should have some experience in dealing with this type of case wherever possible.

B.4.2. The Committee shall consider whether individuals should be suspended temporarily from carrying out Club roles or attending Club activities until the process has concluded. Any suspension at this time should not be regarded as a pre-judgment of the investigation or formal process outcome.

B.4.3. The Secretary/Vice-Chair shall write to the subject of the complaint informing them that there has been a complaint against them, provide them with a copy of the complaint, and notify them of the process the Club are to follow. In the event of the Committee deciding a suspension being required, the Member should be informed of the temporary suspension and outline the constraints of the suspension.

B.5. In the event the preliminary investigation is deemed sufficient for the Executive to deal with the complaint, a report will be provided to the NFR Committee, with a recommendation of the next step, this to be ratified by majority vote of the NFR Committee. The Secretary shall write to the Complainant to explain the reasons for this decision, and if there are unresolved issues to encourage an informal resolution.

C. Conducting an investigation

C.1. The investigation should be commenced as soon as possible.

C.1.1. It is appreciated that this will be a difficult process due to the relationships and friendships that may be involved.

C.1.2. Whilst it is the desire to conduct the process as swiftly as possible, it also needs to be accepted that those involved have professional and personal commitments outside of club activities.

C.2. The investigation is conducted with the sole purpose of establishing the facts.

C.3. The purpose of having two investigators is to enable one person to ask pertinent questions whilst the second person can keep an accurate record of notes and responses. This will assist in the composition of the investigation report and ensure the investigation remains unbiased.

C.4. A record of the questions and answers obtained should be kept, with a copy of this being provided to the interviewee for approval of the content at the earliest possible opportunity after the interview. This should be done for all interviews conducted.

C.5. Make initial contact with the Complainant to seek details of the complaint and allegation(s) being made. You should also establish any possible witnesses to the event(s) and obtain the contact details for these witnesses.

C.6. Meet with the subject of the complaint to obtain their version of alleged events, ask any questions pertinent to the investigation and request a list of any potential witnesses. Investigators may wish to meet with this person again following interviews with witnesses and prior to writing their investigation report. A copy of the notes taken should be provided as soon as possible for approval by the subject of the complaint.

C.7. Witnesses should be given a verbal outline of the complainant's allegations and then be invited to comment on them.

C.8. Once all interviews have concluded, the lead investigator will need to write their investigation report, setting out:

- The subject of the complaint
- Who has been interviewed
- When they were interviewed
- What was said, referring to all documents attached to the report

C.9. The final investigation report should be signed by the investigation team, dated and sent to the Club Secretary (or Vice-Chair).

D. Consideration of an investigation by the Committee

D.1. On receipt of an investigation report the Club Secretary (or Vice-Chair) shall:

D.1.1. Distribute a copy of the report to both the Complainant and the person who is the subject of the complaint, inviting them to provide any further comment in writing, to the Club Secretary, to be received within 7 days.

D.1.2. Distribute a copy of the investigation report, and any additional information received to the members of the NFR Committee.

D.1.3. Convene a Committee meeting, at the earliest possible opportunity, to consider the complaint.

D.2. At the Committee meeting the complaint shall be the only item of business

D.2.1. Only Members of the NFR Committee should attend the meeting

D.2.2. The Committee shall consider the facts as outlined in the report, and any additional comments and documents submitted in support of the report.

D.3. Following full consideration of the facts and evidence provided in the investigation report, the NFR Committee will make a decision on the outcome of the complaint. The findings could be:

- No case to answer, complaint not upheld
- Complaint upheld, verbal caution
- Complaint upheld, written warning (held on record for a specified period)

- Complaint upheld, temporary suspension from club activities for a limited period
- Complaint upheld, expulsion from club with time limit and/or conditions for re-application to re-join
- Complaint upheld, expulsion from club with no ability to re-join in the future

D.4. Following the final decision of the NFR Committee, the Club Secretary will write to the individual who is the subject of the complaint informing them of the decision of the NFR Committee.

D.4.1. Information on the appeal process should also be included in the letter to the individual who has been the subject of the complaint, if this is applicable.

D.5. The Secretary will notify the Complainant that the complaints process has been concluded and whether their complaint has been upheld. The matter is now complete unless the investigated individual chooses to appeal the decision.

E. Actions of the Club Secretary (or Vice-Chair) on receipt of appeal letter

E.1. Check the validity of the appeal request, which must:

- Be received within 2 weeks of the Appellant being informed of the decision to uphold the complaint
- An appeal can only be made if the sanction is to suspend or expel a member
- The letter of appeal should outline the grounds for appeal, providing any new or additional evidence that was not available to the NFR Committee during their deliberations.

E.2. Acknowledge receipt of the appeal in writing to the Appellant, confirming whether the appeal is valid and outlining the appeal process.

E.3. Inform the NFR Committee of the appeal.

E.4. A dialogue should take place with the Committee regarding if and how new evidence should be collected further to that contained in the appeal request letter.

E.5. Appoint an Appeal Panel, in dialogue with the Appellant, consisting of three Members of the Club to consider the appeal. These Members to be independent of the initial process and be willing to participate in the process. One Member to be appointed Panel Chair.

E.6. Set a date and book a venue for the appeal hearing

F. Appeal Hearing

F.1. Those invited to attend the appeal hearing:

- Appeal Panel
- Executive Committee Member to present the club case
- Appellant to present their appeal (can be accompanied by a friend/colleague for support)

- Club Secretary as note taker/record keeper

F.1.1. The Complainant should not be at the meeting as the matter is between the Appellant and the Club.

F.2. Hearing procedure:

F.2.1. Panel Chair to conduct introductions, outline process and clarify answers to any questions.

F.2.2. Executive Committee Member will present the Club case for the original decision outcome.

F.2.2.1. Appellant will be given opportunity to ask any questions or seek clarification.

F.2.2.2. Panel will ask questions and seek clarification of Club case.

F.2.3. Appellant to present their case for appeal.

F.2.3.1.1. Executive Committee Member given opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification of Appellant.

F.2.3.1.2. Panel will ask questions or seek clarification of any points made by Appellant.

F.2.4. Hearing will be closed.

F.2.5. Appeal Panel will deliberate their findings and their final decision will be notified to the Club Secretary (or Vice Chair) within 3 days of the appeal hearing.

F.2.6. The Club Secretary (or Vice Chair) will notify the Appellant of the appeal decision in writing, within 7 days of the appeal hearing.

F.3. Whilst the Appeal Panel can decide to uphold the original decision or reduce the sanction, they cannot increase the severity of the original sanction.

F.4. The decision of the Appeal Panel will be final.

F.5. Once a decision has been made and communicated, the formal process is over and the outcome is the Appellant's information. Should they wish to share this information the confidentiality of the Complainant and the details of the complaint should be upheld.

Appendix 3 - Glossary

In general terms bullying and harassment means that something has happened to someone that is unwelcome, unwarranted and causes a detrimental effect.

Bullying

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour. Bullying may be an abuse or misuse of power through means that undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure an individual or group of individuals.

Harassment

Harassment is unwanted conduct affecting the dignity of people or any other club-related environment or situation. It may be related to a 'protected characteristic' (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation), or any personal characteristic of the individual, and may be persistent or an isolated incident. The impact on an individual may be unintended, but nevertheless be unwelcome and cause offence.

Discrimination

Discrimination is where an individual is treated less favourably because of a 'protected characteristic' (i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).

Victimisation

Victimisation (i.e. to treat someone in an intentionally unfair way and Victims i.e. someone or something that has been hurt, damaged, or has suffered, either because of the actions of someone or something else) occurs when an individual is treated less favourably because they have made a complaint or allegation, intend to complain or have given evidence or information about a situation involving discrimination.