

## **Project Erickson (UK)**

### **Blowing the whistle on doping in sport through evidence-informed policy making**

Revisions to global anti-doping policy and growing evidence of systematic doping in sport means athletes and support personnel are increasingly encouraged to 'blow the whistle' on doping.

Indeed, the introduction of 'report doping in sport' hotlines highlights the growing emphasis on intelligence-driven approaches to anti-doping. This shift in focus is underscored in the revised Code (Article 10.6.1; WADA, 2015), that now includes the possibility for athletes to have the length of their sanctions reduced (and/or removed completely) for providing substantial assistance leading to an anti-doping rule violation (ADRV).

Critically, the same level of attention has not been afforded to developing an evidence-base to inform whistleblowing policy developments. Moreover, there is an urgent need to draw upon the lessons of other sectors who have amassed decades of experience creating whistleblowing frameworks (e.g., financial services), and map current global anti-doping whistleblowing approaches, to inform future advances. Finally, it is necessary to deepen our understanding of the determinants (individual, situational, cultural) that may be associated with whistleblowing behaviors. The research team is well positioned to undertake this work as it will be an extension of research already underway at Leeds Beckett University.

In recognition of the role that whistleblowers can play in the protection and promotion of clean sport, this program of research will provide timely evidence-based guidance to WADA that will enable them to refine and further enhance their whistleblower policy. To achieve our aims, this research will involve five sequential phases with specific objectives assigned to each phase. Specifically:

**Phase 1 - Secondary Data Analysis:** This phase will involve a benchmarking review of whistleblowing policy frameworks used in financial services. The research team will sub-contract Ernst and Young, LLP to conduct this work as they are widely recognized experts in the field. The Financial Services sector has recently (since 7 September 2016) introduced new regulations in relation to whistleblowing, the first industry sector to have taken such a step. Therefore, for the first time, firms have to understand whistleblowing and what makes a framework effective. Historically, whenever the issue of whistleblowing is promoted, organizations have seen a spike in the number of whistleblows made. Accordingly, firms will have to deal with the upsurge in concerns and give consideration to how they will triage and investigate them; crucially, how they will go about affording protection to a whistleblower. Observations from industry experts following the introduction of the new regulations, and the development of whistleblowing frameworks within individual firms who have to respond, provides a unique opportunity to understand the impact that it may have on the type and number of concerns raised.

**Phase 2 - Secondary Data Analysis:** Investigate and map national anti-doping organizations' whistleblowing policies. In particular examine, a) how whistleblowing is currently handled (e.g., which

countries/sports currently facilitate whistleblowing through initiatives such as tip hotlines?) and b) what protections, if any, are in place for whistleblowers (i.e., confidentiality, retaliation).

Phase 3 - Online Survey: Examine the determinants of whistleblowing (individual, situational, cultural) amongst athletes and athlete support personnel (i.e., coaches) using a mixed-methods approach. Phase 3 will recruit a sample of international level athletes and coaches from the US and UK who will be invited to complete an online survey gathering their perceptions and attitudes towards whistleblowing. At this time international athletes and coaches will also be extended an invitation to take part in Phase 4, which involves semi-structured interviews.

Phase 4 - Semi-Structured Interviews: Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with a sample of participants from Phase 3. These interviews will enable the research team to explore in-depth the determinants of whistleblowing emerging from the survey. At the same time, an identified doping whistleblower will be interviewed, with discussion pertaining to their attitudes and experiences before, during, and following their experience of blowing the whistle.

Phase 5 - Data Synthesis and Recommendations: The data gathered during each phase of the research will be compiled to inform the development of an evidence-based whistleblowing policy framework for reporting doping in sport.