



Beechfield United Football Club



Child Protection Policy

Introduction

This document sets out the procedures individuals need to follow to protect children at Beechfield United (the Club) and what they need to do if they have any concerns. All people involved with the Club must follow the policies defined in this document.

Background

Beechfield United provide and sponsor organised football, to all people in the local community irrespective of social background, age, sex, religion, ethnic background, ability, and sexual orientation. Beechfield aim to provide a safe, enjoyable, and secure environment in all matters relating to football coaching, playing, and development.

Beechfield encourage and promote confidence, sportsmanship, team spirit, individual discipline, and skill.

The Principles that Underpin this Policy

This policy is guided by the following principles:

- The welfare of children is the primary concern of every person involved with the Club.
- All children have the right to protection from abuse, regardless of their age, culture, disability, gender, language, ethnic origin, religious belief, sexual orientation, or any other factors.
- All individuals have the responsibility to report concerns of suspected abuse or poor practice to the Club's Child Protection/Welfare Officer (Sue Cottrill 0161 794 4869, 07801 187 233), or other appropriate individual.
- All actual or suspected incidents of poor practice or abuse shall be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Confidentiality shall be upheld in line with current data protection and human rights legislation.



Why These Policies Are Needed

Abuse can occur in many situations including the home, school and the Club. Some individuals will actively seek access to children through football in order to harm them.

Policy Statement

The Club is committed to:

- Making the welfare of children paramount. This means that the protection of children at risk may override the rights and needs of those adults working with them.
- Enabling everyone whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief, and/or sexual identity to participate in football in a fun and safe environment.
- Taking all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination, and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes, and feelings.
- Taking seriously all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse and responding swiftly and appropriately to them in accordance with current procedures.
- Ensuring that all Club members and volunteers who are involved with the children are suitable for that responsibility and are provided with relevant training.
- Ensuring that all its member and volunteers accept responsibility for the welfare of the children in their care in accordance with all the Club's policies and procedures.

Good Practice, Poor Practice and Abuse

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse, whether intentional or accidental.

It is not the responsibility of an individual at the Club to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place, but everyone has a responsibility to:

- Identify poor practice and possible abuse.
- Act if they have concerns, as explained below.

The Club strongly advises that coaches:

- Be a registered member of the FA Coaches Association

The Club insist that all coaches:

- Have as a minimum, an FA Level 1 Coaching Certificate



The Club insist that all Club members, coaches, and volunteers:

- Have completed a Child Protection Basic Awareness course
- Have completed a First Aid Course
- Have been CRB checked
- Ensure that all children have a happy and safe time at the Club

All parents and spectators are requested to follow the Club's Codes of Conduct as set out below.

- Avoid coaching the child during the game.
- Not to shout and scream.
- Respect the referee's decision at all times.
- Give attention to each of the children involved in the team not just the most talented
- Give encouragement to everyone to participate in football.
- Encourage participation but do not force it.
- Teach that honest effort is the victory, not the winning.
- Encourage children to play by the rules.
- Never ridicule mistakes or losses.
- Remember, involvement is for the player's enjoyment, not the parents.
- Remember, children learn best by example. Applaud both teams.
- Recognise positively the contribution of voluntary officials.
- Never publicly disagree with officials. Raise issues privately.
- Support all efforts to remove verbal, racial, and physical abuse from the game.
- Support your Club officials to foster high standards of behaviour for your Club and your League.
- Not tolerate the use of prohibited or illegal substances

Coaches and managers and those working directly with children should:

- Abide by the Laws of the Game, Club Rules, and League Rules.
- Teach the Rules: Rules are mutual agreements which nobody should break.
- Group players competitively.
- Avoid overplaying talented players.
- Maximise fun: Place winning in perspective.



- Always stress safety.
- Consider maturity levels: Devise training programs to suit all levels.
- Develop team respect: For opponents, officials, and coaches.
- Recognise the importance of proper injury treatment.
- Keep up to date with coaching developments.
- Attain coaching accreditation.
- Avoid derogatory language based on gender or race.
- Avoid coaching sessions or meetings where a coach and an individual player are completely unobserved
- Keep parents informed about the content and nature of any direct communications with their children including emails and text messages
- Try to avoid one on one situations in the changing rooms. If children need to be supervised, try to involve parents or helpers
- Maintain an appropriate and open environment, with no secrets
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Physical contact (touching) can be appropriate so long as:
 - as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing
 - the player's permission has been openly given
 - it is delivered in an open environment
- Be an excellent role model by maintaining appropriate standards of behaviour at social events and competitions that young people attend
- Maintain a safe and appropriate relationship with players. It is inappropriate for coaches and others in positions of trust to have an intimate relationship with a child under 18 years. This could be a criminal offence i.e. an 'abuse of trust' as defined by the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Act 2000.
- Gain parents' consent, in writing, to act *in loco parentis* for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises
- Be aware of any medical conditions, existing injuries, and medicines being taken. Keep a written record of any injury or accident that occurs, together with details of any treatment given
- Gain written Club and parental consent for any significant travel arrangements, especially if an overnight stay is involved.



Poor Practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided

- Communicating directly to a child without the parents' knowledge, this includes phoning, texting and emailing
- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allowing or engaging in inappropriate touching of any form
- Using inappropriate language to a child or allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control
- Letting allegations made by a child go unchallenged, unrecorded, or not acted upon
- Doing things of a personal nature that children can do for themselves
- Taking children alone in a car on journeys, however short (see note)
- Inviting or taking children to a home or office where they will be alone with you (see note)
- Sharing a room with a child

Note: At times it may be impractical to avoid some of these particular examples of poor practice. In which case, to protect both the children and yourself, you must seek parental consent and also make sure that the Child Welfare Officer is aware of the situation and gives approval.

If during your care of a child you accidentally hurt them, the child seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions, or misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another adult and make a brief written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.



Abuse

Abuse in all its forms can affect a child at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated, they may follow an individual into adulthood.

An individual who has been abused may:

- Find it difficult, or impossible to maintain a stable trusting relationship
- Become involved with drugs or prostitution
- Attempt suicide or self-harm
- Go on to abuse another child

Children with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as:

- Stereotyping
- Prejudice
- Discrimination including ethnic or racial
- Isolation
- Powerlessness to protect themselves
- Inability to communicate that abuse has occurred

Indicators of Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. It is not the responsibility of those at the Club to decide that child abuse is occurring, but it is their responsibility to act on any concerns.

Indications that a child is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- An injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her
- Someone else, a child or adult, expresses concern about the welfare of a child
- Unexplained changes in a child's behaviour, e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn, displaying sudden outbursts of temper or behaviour changing over time
- Inappropriate sexual awareness



- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- Difficulty in making friends
- Being prevented from socialising with other children
- Displaying variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite
- Losing weight for no apparent reason
- Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt

Abuse may take a number of forms, and may be classified under the following headings:

Neglect

"Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs."

At the Club this could include:

- A coach not keeping children safe by exposing them to undue cold, heat or the unnecessary risk of injury e.g. allowing players under their supervision to train or play inappropriately clothed for the prevailing conditions
- A parent consistently leaving a child without adequate provisions e.g. food, water, clothing, sun block

Physical Abuse

"Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical abuse, as well as being a result of a deliberate act, can also be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect".

At the Club this could include:

- A coach disregarding the individual requirements of each child's growing body or needs when setting a training programme.



Sexual Abuse

"Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative acts such as rape, buggery, or oral sex or non-penetrative acts such as fondling. It may also include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways."

At the Club this could include:

- A coach engaging in unnecessary and inappropriate physical contact e.g. massaging the legs or shoulders of players in a suggestive manner
- A coach making suggestive comments to their players
- An inappropriately close relationship developing between a player and a coach
- An individual spending an unnecessary amount of time in the changing area when children are present

"Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve making the child feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children."

At the Club this could include:

- A parent or coach subjecting a player to constant criticism, name-calling, sarcasm, bullying, racism
- A parent or coach putting a player under unrealistic pressure in order to perform to high expectations.



"Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves"

Bullying can be:

- Being unfriendly, sending hurtful text messages, tormenting, e.g. hiding kit or equipment, threatening gestures.
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist taunts, graffiti and gestures
- Sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic, focussing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing

Anti-Bullying Policy

The Club is committed to fostering a caring, friendly, and safe environment for everyone involved in football so they can participate in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at the Club. If bullying does occur, all players, coaches, volunteers, and parents should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

Bullies come from all walks of life; they bully for a variety of reasons and may even have been bullied or abused themselves. Typically bullies can have low self-esteem, be excitable, aggressive or jealous.

Bullies can be boys or girls, men or women. Although bullying often takes place in schools, research shows it can and does occur anywhere where there is inadequate supervision – on the way to and from school, at a sporting event, in the playground or changing rooms.

Competitive sports such as football are an ideal environment for the bully.

The bully at the Club can be a:

- Parent who pushes too hard
- Coach who adopts a win at all costs philosophy
- Player who intimidates inappropriately
- Club official who places unfair pressure on a person
- Spectator who constantly shouts abuse



Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Players who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

Everyone involved at the Club has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Responding to Suspicions and Allegations of Abuse

Although most cases of child abuse take place within the family setting, abuse can and does occur in football. It is essential that all allegations are taken seriously and appropriate action is taken.

- It is not your responsibility to decide if child abuse is taking place.
- It is your responsibility to report your concerns to the appropriate agencies (see below).

Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse

You may have concerns about abuse / poor practice because:

- You see it happening
- You recognise signs such as those listed above
- Someone reports it to you
- A child approaches you directly

If a child says or indicates that they are being abused, or you have concerns about their welfare you should:

- React calmly so as not to frighten them
- Tell them they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- Take what they say seriously
- Recognise that there may be inherent difficulties in interpreting what is said by someone who has a speech disability and/or differences in language
- Keep questions to the absolute minimum necessary so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said
- Reassure them, but do not promise to keep the matter secret – explain that to resolve the problem it will be necessary to inform other people as appropriate.



Recording information

All concerns that you may have or receive should be recorded.

You are recording this information for:

- Yourself, so you have a record of what happened
- The Child Welfare Officer or other designated welfare person within the Club, who will co-ordinate any action that needs to be taken
- The relevant league or the FA's Child Protection Officer so that they can advise you
- The Police/Children Services if appropriate

It is not appropriate to share sensitive and confidential information with other people, e.g.:

- The Club Committees
- Other Members of the Club

Any information relating to child protection should be held under secure conditions and made available on a need-to-know basis.

When recording information you should:

- Confine yourself to the facts
- Distinguish between what is your own personal knowledge and what you have been told by other people
- Not include your own opinions on the matter, to minimise the possibility of libel.

Reporting the Concern

The discovery that someone you know may be abusing a child will raise feelings and concerns at the Club. Although it can be difficult to report such matters, you must remember that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- Being vigilant helps to protect children
- Everyone has a duty of care to report any concerns they have immediately

The Club's Whistle-blowing Policy assures all members and volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone who, in good faith, reports a concern that a colleague is or may be abusing a child.



When Reporting to the CWO is Not Possible

If the Child Welfare Officer (CWO) is unavailable or is implicated, talk directly to a senior Club official or go directly to the FA's Child Protection Officer for advice.

Involving Parents or Carers

The Club is committed to working in partnership with parents. In most situations, it is important that the CWO involve parents to clarify any initial concerns e.g. if a child seems withdrawn, they may have experienced a recent bereavement.

Where a parent or carer may be responsible for the abuse or may not be able to respond to the situation appropriately they should not be involved, as it may place the child at greater risk.

Involving Officers of the Club

The CWO must be informed of all allegations of abuse and persistent poor practice as soon as possible in order to decide the following:

- What further action should be taken by the Club
- Whether further action, advice or investigation is needed by/from the Police, Children Services or NSPCC

Passing on this information is important because the matter may be just one of a series of other instances which together cause concern. It enables the FA and league to analyse trends and improve existing policy and guidance.



Involving Statutory Agencies

In any case of physical or sexual abuse or where the child's safety is at risk, the Club or an individual can contact one of the following statutory agencies:

- The Local Police Child Protection Team. In an emergency the Club will dial 999.

The police would be involved if the apparent abuse is of a criminal nature or if the incident involves a person outside the child's family. A record should be made of the crime reference number.

- Local Authority Children Services (formerly known as Social Services).

This body has a statutory duty for the welfare of children, especially where the alleged person is a member of the child's family. When a referral is made its staff has a legal responsibility to investigate. This may involve talking to the child and family and gathering information from other people who know the child. In an emergency the Club will call the Samaritans (08457 909090) who will hold the Duty Officer's contact number.

- NSPCC (24 hour Helpline 0808 800 5000). You do not have to give your name but it is helpful if you can.

If possible, telephone referrals to any of the above bodies should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. You should record the following:

- Name and job title of the member of staff to whom the concerns were passed
- The time and date of the call.

Allegations of Previous Abuse

Allegations of abuse are occasionally made some time after the event, for example by an adult abused as a child by a member of the Club who is still involved with children. Where such an allegation is made, you should follow the procedures given above and report it to the Club's CWO or other senior Official. The Club will report the matter to the police and/or Local Authority Children Services and the FA. This is because other children, either within the sport or outside it, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to child abuse is automatically excluded from working with children.



Additional Advice

The following sections offer additional advice and information.

Changing Rooms

- Where practical children should be supervised in changing rooms by two adults.
- Where possible adult coaches or volunteers should not shower or change at the same time as the children they have been working with.
- No volunteers should be present when players of the opposite sex are showering or changing (for example a male coach working with a female players).
- If a child is uncomfortable showering or changing in public no pressure should be put on them to do so, they should be encouraged to change and shower at home.
- If children with disabilities are involved, their carers should be involved in deciding how best they can be assisted. Always ensure the children consent to the assistance that is offered.
- No photographic equipment should be used in the changing room environment. This includes cameras, video cameras, camera phones etc.

Coaching Ratios

The FA's guidelines state a maximum 16 players to 1 coach, and a minimum two coaches/supervisory volunteers should be in attendance at all times. This ratio may be lower for U8's

In line with national guidance the level of supervision should take account of the:

- Age and ability of the children
- Type of training session being undertaken
- Children's growing independence
- Environment that the session is taking place in
- Risk assessment

If there is an accident or incident you should ensure there is someone available to supervise the remaining children. Coaches working with children should ensure that they do not work in isolation.

It is advisable to carry out a risk assessment for each group of children and that this is reviewed regularly. The Club's Risk Assessment Officer will help here. Participants under the age of 18, even those qualified as coaches, should also be supervised at all times.



Organising Trips

Even the simplest day trip away from the Club requires planning. The main factors to consider are:

Communication with parents

For a short day trip this may amount merely to details of transport, pick up and return points and times, competition or venue details, Coach contact details, emergency contact details for parents, costs, dietary requirements (if relevant) and any other special requirements or medical details. Strict instructions should be given to parents regarding the drop off and return locations and times.

Transport

Points to consider include vehicle type (e.g. public transport, minibus; coach or private car), any special requirements for players with disabilities, length of journey, competence of driver, journey time, distance and stopping points, supervision during journey and stopping points, legislation regarding seat belts.

Supervision

The volunteers organising the trip will have the duty of care to act *in loco parentis* for the duration of the trip. Anyone in a supervisory role should be appropriately vetted to ensure their suitability to work with children.

Emergency Procedures

The Coach should know how to contact emergency services and have access to at least a basic first aid box. Those in charge of children have a duty to ensure that they are kept safe and healthy and should not hesitate to act in an emergency and to take life saving action in an extreme situation. All adults working with the group should be briefed on the reporting procedure should an emergency occur.

Insurance

All players are covered for public liability and personal accident cover during football activities under the Club's insurance policy. Passengers travelling by motor vehicle should be covered by the insurances required under the Road Traffic Act (1988). When using private vehicles it may be necessary to check the insurance company for any restrictions. Consideration should also be given to accident, breakdown and recovery cover.



The Club Welfare Officer

The CWO is responsible for acting as a source of advice on child protection matters and for co-ordinating action within the Club on receipt of any concerns or referrals. They should endeavour to gain an understanding of child protection policy and keep up to date with the appropriate level of training. They will be a member of the Club's Management Committee.

The Role of the CWO

- To provide information and advice on child protection within the Club.
- To ensure that the Club adopts and follows this policy and its procedures and promote awareness of the policy within the Club.
- Be a confirmation signatory, verifying the identity of individuals completing CRB Disclosure application forms.
- Keep records of all those who have been CRB vetted within the Club to ensure that checks are updated on at least a three yearly basis.
- Receive information from Club staff, volunteers, young people or parents and carers who have child protection concerns and record it.
- Assess the information promptly and carefully, clarifying or obtaining more information about the matter as appropriate.
- Make a formal referral to a statutory child protection agency if appropriate.
- Report any referrals or concerns to the FA's Child Protection Officer as soon as possible in line with these procedures.
- Ensure that appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that the referral is confirmed in writing, and under confidential cover.
- Advise the Club officers regarding the appropriate levels of child protection training and / or guidance for all adults working with children in the Club
- Advise the Club of further child protection training opportunities



Selecting People to work with Children

Anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and it is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. This applies to anyone whether voluntary or paid who is going to have **Significant Access** to children or vulnerable adults or their contact information. The steps that should be taken are the same for volunteers or employees.

Controlling Access to Children

All individuals who will have significant access to children at the Club must first be vetted to establish whether they have any criminal convictions or other past behaviour that suggests they are unsuitable to work with children.

There are three main parts to this process.

1. Obtain contact details and references from previous Clubs or employers to cover:
 - Details of previous experience and any gaps
 - Relevant qualifications
2. Ask the individual to disclose any criminal record or other matter that has a bearing on their suitability to work with children. Make it clear that a failure to disclose relevant information will mean they cannot stay at the Club. It should also be made clear that having a criminal record is not necessarily a barrier to being involved with the Club.
3. Obtain a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure

Note: Completing the above process does not guarantee that the individual is safe to work with children; the Club will need to assess for itself their suitability.

Completing a CRB Disclosure Application is a very confidential and sensitive matter for some people and care should be taken to explain how any information contained on the Certificate will be treated.

The only people involved with children at the Club that do not need to have a CRB check are parents who are irregular helpers



Awareness and Training

To create an enjoyable and safe environment for all children, everyone involved at the Club must be aware of what is good practice and how to deal with poor practice and abuse.

Formal training courses will help people to work safely and effectively with children by:

- Comparing their own practice against what is regarded as good practice and identifying ways to improve
- Ensuring that they are not placing themselves at risk from false allegations
- Recognising their responsibilities and reporting any concerns about suspected poor practice or abuse

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This document was updated in June 2007 by Mike Hill - Club Development Officer