



# **SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY**

**DATE IMPLEMENTED: JUNE 2024  
REVIEW DATE: JUNE 2026**

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The welfare of children and young people is paramount to Ballymena United Football Club. We endeavour to provide an environment which values and protects all children and young people in all aspects and every level of football at Ballymena United Football Club, regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs, or sexual orientation. It is the policy and commitment of Ballymena United Football Club to protect children and young people from inappropriate behaviour and all forms of abuse. Ballymena United Football Club will endeavour to safeguard all children and young people in its care by:

- Communicating to all staff and volunteers that children and young people have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse and harm.
- Appointing a Child Welfare Officer to oversee and implement policies and procedures throughout the club.
- Following proper procedures and selecting staff and volunteers and providing support and training for all staff and volunteers.
- Distribute the required code of behaviour for everyone involved at Ballymena United Football Club and ensuring the code is always adhered to.
- Sharing information about safeguarding best practice with everyone involved at Ballymena United Football Club.
- Sharing information about concerns with safeguarding agencies that need to know and involving children and young people and their parent/guardians if appropriate.
- Reviewing Ballymena United Football Clubs Safeguarding Children and Young People's Policy every 3 years and making sure it has all the current statutory requirements.

## **KEY PRINCIPLES**

This policy will help to embed and promote the following principles:

- The safety and welfare of every child and young person is of paramount importance and must always take precedence over all other considerations.
- Children and young people have the right to be always treated equally. To be believed and protected from all types of abuse and harm regardless of their age.
- All staff and volunteers have a duty of care towards children and young people in their care.
- Ballymena United Football Club will continuously work to ensure that all children and young people can enjoy a safe and free from harm environment whilst participating in any football related activities at Ballymena United Football Club. Any behaviour that compromises the safety and wellbeing of children and young people must be reported immediately to the Child Welfare Officer. All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and acted upon in line with all statutory guidelines.

Any staff member or volunteer who interacts with children and young people are deemed to be in a position of trust and influence. All staff and volunteers are responsible in making sure all children are treated with integrity and respect. Staff and volunteers must never use their position of trust for their personal gain or inappropriate influence. Any form of abusive behaviour towards a child or young person is unacceptable. All staff and volunteers will be required to challenge and report any inappropriate behaviour with or towards a child or young person.

The Children (NI) Order 1995 is based on five key principles of best practice:

1. **PARAMOUNTCY.**
2. **PARENTAL/GUARDIAN RESPONSIBILITY.**
3. **PREVENTION.**
4. **PARTNERSHIP.**
5. **PROTECTION.**

The same principles apply in football. Ballymena United Football Club recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of children and young people in their care by creating a safe, positive, fun, and positive environment where they can continue to thrive and be protected from any form of abuse or harm.

All staff and volunteers will be required to participate and undertake any safeguarding training that will help to develop their skills and give a better understanding of child protection of children and young people.

Ballymena United Football Club has recruitment and selection procedures to help select the right people and to block out and deter those who are not suitable to work with children and young people in football.

As part of this process all staff and volunteers will be required to:

- Complete an Access NI Enhanced Disclosure Vetting Check before commencing employment/volunteering, to assess their suitability to work with children and young people.
- Complete a Disclosure of Criminal Convictions Application form detailing past convictions or impending cases.
- Attend any Safeguarding Children and Young People Child Protection Training.
- Abide by the Irish FA's Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers, and sign a pro – forma agreeing to the Code of Conduct.

The Child Welfare Officer must **ALWAYS** be informed when any new person commences a role whether it be as Staff or Volunteer in a role involving children and young people.

## **SAFEGUARDING TRAINING FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

Education and training in the basics of safeguarding is necessary for all staff, volunteers and management committee members engaging in regulated activity with children and young people at Ballymena United Football Club and is provided through the Irish FA's safeguarding Children and Young People in Football Awareness Course.

Safeguarding training covers:

- Basic awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues
- Recognising a child protection concern and guidance on how to respond to, record and report the concerns in line with statutory requirements.
- Staff and volunteer's responsibility to safeguard children and young people who participate in Football Programmes.
- Awareness of the Irish FA's Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures – including its Code of Conduct.

The Irish FA's safeguarding training is football specific to best suit the needs of staff and volunteers. Full attendance of the three - hour course is required for staff and volunteers to receive certification.

## **RESPONSIBILITY FOR SAFEGUARDING IN FOOTBALL**

Ballymena United Football Club has a moral and legal responsibility to protect children and young people who participate in the game from abuse and harm. It also has the responsibility to ensure that children and young people have fun and achieve to the best of their ability.

Ballymena United Football Club have in place a Child Welfare Officer who will be on hand to deal with any instances and oversee and support any implementations of safeguarding and best practice within the club. The named person in charge of this is:

**MR. ERIC GILMORE**

**(CHILD WELFARE OFFICER)**

**MOBILE: 07834988501**

**EMAIL: [eric.gilmore@ballymenaunitedfc.com](mailto:eric.gilmore@ballymenaunitedfc.com)**

**REMEMBER!!!**

**IT IS NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO DECIDE IF ABUSE HAS OCCURRED. IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT YOUR CONCERNS TO THE DESIGNATED PERSON WITHIN BALLYMENA UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB.**

## **ABUSE AND POOR PRACTICE**

### WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed, or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings: in a family, in a community or club setting by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse, and a child may suffer more than one of them.

### CATEGORIES OF ABUSE

- **PHYSICAL ABUSE** – occurs when a person deliberately hurts a child or young person or gives a child or young person access to alcohol, drugs, or other dangerous substances.
- **EMOTIONAL ABUSE** – occurs when a person persistently shouts, taunts, or threatens a child or young person. They may also convey to them that they are worthless or inadequate.
- **NEGLECT** – occurs when a person persistently fails to provide a child or young person with the basic needs such as food, water, clothing. The child or young person may be left unsupervised and not cared for.
- **SEXUAL ABUSE** – occurs when a person takes advantage of a child or young person to gratify their own sexual needs.

## **RECOGNISING ABUSE**

Child abuse can be an exceedingly difficult and emotional subject for staff and volunteers. Ballymena United Football Club will endeavour to make sure that all staff and volunteers feel confident in recognising the potential signs and symptoms of abuse and know how to respond and follow the club's policy and procedure's and also in line with the Irish FA and statutory guidelines.

By creating a better understanding for our staff and volunteers Ballymena United Football Club also endeavours to deter those who may wish to use football as a way of gaining access to children and young people for inappropriate reasons.

Therefore, it is imperative that all allegations and suspicions are taken seriously and acted upon immediately to prevent further harm to children and young people.

## **GROUNDS FOR CONCERN**

The possibility of child abuse should be considered if there are reasonable grounds for concern. Reasonable grounds for concern exist when there is

- A specific indication from a child or young person that they have been abused.
- An account by the person who saw the child or young person being abused.
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way.
- Consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

## **ADDITIONAL VULNERABILITY OF THOSE WITH A DISABILITY**

Safeguard for children and young people with a disability should be the same as those for other children and young people; however, special input may be required if the child or young person has severe or multiple disabilities.

Disabled children and young people have the same needs as other children and young people, but they may have additional needs associated with their disability that may increase their vulnerability to abuse.

For example:

- Children and young people with disabilities may be unable to recognise abusive behaviour, because they may have learning difficulties or a lack of awareness or information, and because they may have reduced exposure to the norm of adult – children interactions.
- A child or young person with disabilities may have difficulty in differentiating between appropriate and inappropriate touching.
- Many children and young people particularly those with physical disabilities, have a poor and/or incomplete body image therefore may not recognise inappropriate behaviour.

If you suspect any behaviour of this type, make sure that you follow the right protocol and contact the Child Welfare Officer immediately and pass on all relevant information to the correct authorities.

## **BULLYING**

Although Bullying has not been defined as a form of abuse within the Children (NI) Order 1995, The Irish FA & Ballymena United Football Club deems it as an abusive behaviour and will not be accepted by any individual engaging in football related activities at the club. Any forms of bullying that takes place will be taken very seriously and an investigation will take place which could end in suspension/expulsion from Ballymena United Football Club.

## **EFFECTS OF BULLYING ON CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

The effect of bullying on a child or young person's development must never be underestimated. Bullying can cause considerable physical, emotional and psychological distress, the effect of which can carry over into adult life. In some cases, bullying can lead a child or young person to self-harm or decide that their only option for escape is death by suicide.

## **YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES**

Everyone at Ballymena United Football Club - staff, volunteers, children and young people, parents and guardians, officials, and representatives is responsible for working together to prevent bullying, and for responding to any bullying behaviour that may occur.

Staff and volunteers should always encourage children and young people in their care to share their concerns if they are the victim of bullying and must take any disclosure regarding bullying behaviour seriously.

Any form of bullying behaviour; whether it is from adult to child, child to child or child to adult; is unacceptable and against the ethos and positive values that the football club promote.

## **DISCLOSURE**

A disclosure may occur when:

- A child or young person directly voices concerns about the behaviour of a staff member or volunteer towards them.
- Where harmful behaviour of a staff member or volunteer towards a child or young person is brought to your attention through your own observations or through a third party.

The Child Welfare Officer must be made aware of all abuse cases that occur within the Football Club, to ensure consistency of approach and to offer support to those affected.

Should a child or young person voice concerns about the behaviour of a staff member or volunteer towards them, the person receiving the disclosure must:

- Deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to the young person and let them tell you about the problem and the details of what happened.

- Always stay calm and never show any extreme reactions to what the child is saying.
- Take what the child or young person is saying seriously.
- Be honest with the child or young person and make them aware that it is not possible to keep information a secret.
- Not make any judgemental statements about the person whom the allegation is made.
- Not ask leading questions.
- Check out concerns with the parents/guardians before making a report unless doing so would endanger the child or compromise any further investigation.
- Give the child or young person some indication of what you aim to do next, such as informing parents or guardians or Health and Social Care Trusts. Please also bear in mind that the child or young person may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.
- Carefully record all the details.
- Pass on all information to the clubs designated child welfare officer.
- Reassure the child or young person that they have done no wrong and have done the right thing in speaking out.

**NEVER:**

- Question unless for clarification.
- Make promises about confidentiality that you cannot keep.
- Assume that someone else will take the necessary action.

- Jump to conclusions, speculate or accuse anybody.
- Rush into actions that may be inappropriate.
- Make or pass judgement on the alleged abuser.

## **THE RECORDING PROCESS**

Record keeping is of critical importance and should be:

- Factual, accurate and legible
- Written in the best interests of the child or young person rather than in a way which protects the reputation of the football club or the individual who the concern relates to.
- Record using the child or young person's exact words where possible.
- Include dates, times, locations, and contexts in which disclosure occurred along with any other relevant information.
- Always sign and date the report.

When recording you should avoid:

- Use of judgemental language.
- Giving your personal opinion unless it is backed up by substantial evidence.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

When dealing with concerns relating to abuse, staff and volunteers are required to apply discretion and always maintain confidentiality. This places an obligation on all staff and volunteers to share information on a "need to know basis" only in order to safeguard the welfare of the child or young person whom the concerns relate to.

Information can and must be shared with the relevant authorities in order to help and assist them with the referral/ investigation process.

Everyone involved in the safeguarding process is entitled to confidentiality.

Information pertaining to each case must be stored in a secure place in accordance with data protection requirements.

Ballymena United Football Club will take any breach of confidentiality seriously and respond to it in accordance with disciplinary procedures.

### **VEO TECHNOLOGY**

Ballymena United Football Club have incorporated the use of Veo technology into their training ground sessions and on match days. Please see below the points on how Veo should be used.

1. The use of Veo Technology at matches is only to be used for the sole purpose of Coaches and Players of Ballymena United Football Club to help enhance their training.
2. Footage from Veo should never be shared with any other clubs and remains the sole responsibility of Ballymena United Football Club to ensure this does not happen.
3. Parental Consent should be in place for Videos/pictures to take place during games. Please keep this in mind also as you may have kids who have no consent.
4. In the event of using Veo at any underage games you must seek consent from the opposing team that the recording is going to be in place and that they are ok with the recording to take place. Please keep in mind that some teams may have no consent for players to have their pictures etc taken.
5. If consent has not been given by the opposing team, then the use of Veo will not be allowed at that game.