



PHOENIX SPORTS CLUB

Safeguarding Children Policy

1. This policy will:
 - a. Set out Phoenix Sports Club's commitment to safeguarding the welfare of children.
 - b. Set out how Phoenix Sports Club will approach disclosures and allegations of poor practice and abuse.
 - c. Set out how Phoenix Sports Club will seek to prevent instances of poor practice and abuse, within the football club.
2. It is drafted in line with FA Guidance and relevant legislation.
3. It will be subject to amendments, removals, and additions as agreed upon by the Club Committee, except on matters reserved to the Board who will in such cases hold jurisdiction.
4. It has been absorbed into Club policy and dictates the Club's approach to bullying.
5. It cannot supersede any aspect of the Club's safeguarding policies or statute or instrument binding on the Club and should only be used in conjunction with said policies and legislation.
6. This policy was reviewed on 26th June 2024, and is binding in respect of the 2024/2025 season onwards.

Written by:
Warren Strong, Club Welfare Officer

Section 1 – Reader guidance

1. This policy should be interpreted and applied in conjunction with the Club's wider policies on safeguarding, including;
 - a. Code of Conduct;
 - b. Anti-Bullying Policy;
 - c. Social Media Policy;
 - d. Whistleblowing Policy;
 - e. Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy, where appropriate.
 - f. Safer Recruitment of Volunteers (Youth Section) Policy.
2. Definitions:
 - a. A **child** is a person under the age of eighteen¹;
 - i. this is applicable to the plural of **children**;
 1. and **young person**.
 - b. Ordinary definitions should always be applied to this policy.

Section 2 – Policy statement

3. Phoenix Sports Club ["We" and "Club"] acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of every child and young person who has been entrusted to its care.
4. Phoenix Sports Club is committed to working to provide a safe environment for all members.
5. Phoenix Sports Club subscribe to The Football Association's Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures;
 - a. Phoenix Sports Club endorses and accepts the Policy Statement contained in that document.
6. We believe that every child has the right to protection from the abuse and exploitation.
7. Safeguarding and protection of all children is everyone's responsibility.
8. Phoenix Sports Club believes that it is always unacceptable for any child to

¹ Children Act 1989.

experience abuse of any kind and recognises its responsibility to safeguard and protect the welfare of all children.

9. By adhering to our safeguarding policies, procedures and processes we will do everything possible to safeguard children at our club.

Section 3 – Safeguarding principles

10. Phoenix Sports Club recognises and is committed to the following principles:

- a. The child's welfare is, and must always be, the paramount consideration.
- b. All children and young people have a right to be protected from abuse regardless of their age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, faith, or belief.
- c. All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- d. We will work in partnership with other organisations, children and young people and their parents/carers is essential.

Section 4 – Purpose and aim of policy

11. Phoenix Sports Club will always seek to provide protection for the children who receive our services.

12. We will provide all staff with guidance and access to Safeguarding policies and procedures;

- a. which they should adopt should they suspect that a child is at risk of harm.

Section 5 – Scope of the policy

13. This policy applies to all who are involved with Phoenix Sports Club, this includes;

- a. Players;
- b. Parents/carers;
- c. Spectators;
- d. Employed staff, paid or unpaid;
- e. The Club Board;
- f. The Club Committee;

g. Managers, Coaches and Helpers;

h. Visitors;

i. Contractors;

i. This list is not exhaustive.

Section 6 – Abuse

14. **Abuse** is a form of maltreatment of a child².

15. Types of abuse include:

a. **Physical:** a child is physically hurt or injured by an adult, or an adult gives alcohol or drugs to a child or young person;

i. common types of physical abuse include hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, scalding, and burning, inappropriate or unlawful use of restraint.

b. **Sexual:** a child or young person is forced or manipulated into sexual activities.

i. They might not understand that what is happening is abuse or that it is wrong.

ii. They might be afraid to tell someone.

iii. Sexual abuse can happen anywhere – and it can happen in person or online.

iv. It is never a child's fault they were sexually abused – it is important to make sure children know this.

c. **Emotional:** a child is emotionally mistreated. It can sometimes be called **psychological** abuse;

i. Emotional abuse can involve deliberately trying to scare, humiliate, isolate, or ignore a child.

ii. Emotional abuse is often a part of other kinds of abuse, which means it can be difficult to spot the signs or tell the difference, though it can also happen on its own.

d. **Neglect:** a child's basic physical or emotional needs are consistently not met, or they are regularly left alone or unsupervised.

² Working Together to Safeguard Children (Statutory Guidance), 2023.

- i. Neglect can lead to serious harm to the health or development of a child.
 - ii. It can include failing to provide adequate shelter, clothing, or food, not protecting a child from harm or danger as well as failing to access medical care or treatment for a child when it is needed.
- e. **Grooming** is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit, and abuse them.
 - i. Groomers may also build a relationship with the young person's family or friends to make them seem trustworthy or authoritative;
 - 1. anybody can be a groomer, irrespective of their age or gender.
 - ii. Children and young people who are groomed can be sexually abused, exploited or trafficked.
 - iii. Grooming can take place over a short or prolonged period.
- f. **Child sexual exploitation** is a specific type of sexual abuse.
 - i. When a child or young person is exploited, they are given things, like gifts, drugs, money, status, and affection, in exchange for performing sexual activities.
 - ii. Children and young people are often tricked into believing they are in a loving and consensual relationship;
 - 1. This is grooming.
 - iii. They may trust their abuser and not understand that they are being abused.
 - iv. Children and young people who are exploited may also be used to find or coerce others to join groups.
- g. **Trafficking**: children and young people can be trafficked into or elsewhere within the United Kingdom to be sexually exploited.
 - i. They are moved around the country and abused by being forced to take part in sexual activities, often with more than one person.
 - ii. Young people in gangs can also be sexually exploited.
 - iii. Sometimes abusers use violence and intimidation to frighten or force a child or young person, making them feel as if they've no choice.

- iv. They may lend them large sums of money they know cannot be repaid or use financial abuse to control them.
- h. **Bullying** is behaviour that hurts someone else.
 - i. It includes name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening, or undermining someone. It can happen anywhere – at school, at home or online.
 - ii. It is usually repeated over a prolonged period and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally.
- i. **Cyberbullying** is bullying that takes place online.
 - i. Unlike bullying offline, online bullying can follow the child wherever they go, via social networks, gaming, and mobile phone.
- j. **Online** abuse is any type of abuse that takes place on the internet.
 - i. It can happen across any device that is connected to the web, like computers, tablets, games consoles and mobile phones.
 - ii. It can happen anywhere online including social media, text messages, emails, online chats, online gaming and live-streaming sites.
 - iii. Children can be at risk of online abuse from people they know or from strangers.
 - iv. It might be part of other abuse, which is taking place offline, like bullying or grooming, or the abuse might only happen online.
- k. **Criminal exploitation** involves manipulating children and young people into committing crimes.
 - i. **County lines**, is a form of criminal exploitation, and involves urban gangs exploiting young people into moving drugs from a hub, normally a large city, into other markets, typically suburban areas and market or coastal towns, using dedicated mobile phone lines or “deal lines.”
 - ii. Children as young as 12 years old have been exploited into carrying drugs for gangs.
 - iii. This can involve children being trafficked away from their home area, staying in accommodation, and selling and manufacturing drugs.
- l. **Domestic abuse** is any type of controlling, bullying, threatening or

violent behaviour between people who are or have been in a relationship and can happen between related adults.

- i. A child who witnesses domestic abuse is recognised, in law³ as being a victim of domestic abuse.
- m. Female genital mutilation (“FGM”) involves the deliberate altering or removal of a female’s genitals for non-medical reasons;
 - i. it is also known as female circumcision or ‘cutting’.

Section 7 – Responding to concerns or allegations

- 16. It is not the responsibility of anyone employed by Phoenix Sports Club, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to decide whether the alleged harm or abuse has taken place.
- 17. However, it is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers to act, by reporting any concerns or allegations of abuse of an adult at risk to the Club Welfare Officer or by contacting the appropriate authorities.

Section 8 – When to report suspicions or incidents

- 18. Staff are not expected to be experts in recognising abuse; however, staff should be vigilant and respond swiftly and appropriately.
- 19. If any of the following circumstances occur, it should be reported to the Club Welfare Officer immediately:
 - a. an adult accidentally hurts a player;
 - i. this particularly applies in a coaching context.
 - b. if a player seems distressed and you are concerned for their emotional state or wellbeing.
 - c. if your own, another adult’s or another child’s actions, intentionally or otherwise, sexually arouses a child.
 - d. if you believe a child or young person has developed an infatuation with you or another member of staff.
 - e. if a player misunderstands or misinterprets an adult’s actions.
 - f. you have had to provide intimate care to a child;
 - i. this could occur because of a toileting accident or invasive first aid.

³ Domestic Abuse Act 2021, s 3(2).

- g. if a child discloses that an adult has been treating them or someone they know in a way that indicates abuse or neglect.
- h. if you suspect a child may be the victim of abuse by any person, including neglect, physical, sexual, or emotional abuse.
- i. if a child appears to have been the victim or perpetrator of bullying, including on-line cyberbullying.
- j. if you observe any injuries or marks on a child which they cannot account for, their explanation for the injury seems unlikely or you have suspicions as to how the injury may have been caused.
- k. if there is a sudden change in behaviour.
- l. if a child voices their intentions to self-harm or if you suspect, he/she may be exhibiting signs or symptoms of self-harm or an eating disorder.
- m. if you suspect a child has been exposed to any inappropriate or indecent images or discloses any inappropriate on-line behaviour.
- n. if you observe an adult hurting a child.

20. Do not worry that you may be mistaken.

- a. Being worried about doing the wrong thing is not a reason not to act.
- b. It is better to have discussed it with somebody with the experience and responsibility to make an assessment.

Section 9 – How to report a concern

21. If the child is in immediate danger or injured, always call the emergency services.

22. If you receive a disclosure or have a suspicion of abuse or poor practice, report it to the Club Welfare Officer.

- a. It is good practice to make a record of the incident or grounds for concern.
- b. This should be done away from the child as note taking can deter a child from speaking.
- c. This should include:
 - i. the child's name, age and team;
 - ii. whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else;

- iii. the nature of the allegation;
- iv. make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay;
- v. a description of any bruising or injuries and any indirect signs, such as behaviour changes;
- vi. any witnesses and their contact details;
- vii. any actions already taken.

d. This must be given to the Club Welfare Officer.

23. The Club Welfare Officer will gather the relevant information and inform the Kent County Football Association's (County FA) Designated Safeguarding Officer, or;

24. The national Football Association's Safeguarding Case Management Team if it meets the threshold.

25. This referral must be made within 24 hours, using the FA's incident form.

Section 10 – Possible outcomes

26. If the concern is considered to be potential abuse, there may be:

- a. criminal or child protection investigation and/or prosecution.
- b. investigation by the FA Safeguarding Case Management Team.
- c. Resolution as poor practice and/or misconduct.

27. If the concern is considered to be poor practice/misconduct, the case may be:

- a. returned to Club Welfare Officer and/or County FA Designation Safeguarding Officer for resolution.
- b. resolved through the Club's disciplinary process;
- c. resolved through other methods available to the Club, as advised by the County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Section 11 – Allegations of historical abuse

28. Non-recent abuse, or historical abuse, is when an adult was abused as a child or young person under the age of 18.

- a. For the purpose of this policy, this definition will be extended to children who have been abused outside of the immediate time.
 - i. For clarity, this will typically be applied to abuse occurring at least

one year before the disclosure or allegation has been made.

29. Where such an allegation is made, the Club will follow the procedure set out in section 9.

Section 12 – Poor practice

30. Some concerns are not within the scope of the County FA.

a. These are commonly known as low-level concerns, or poor practice.

31. Poor practice concerns are behaviours that fall below the standard required by a Club, as set out in their codes of conduct.

32. These behaviours may not be immediately dangerous or intentionally harmful but set a poor example and if it were to continue, it might lead to harm or put a child in danger.

33. Poor practice is a spectrum of behaviours and includes instances such as⁴:

a. failure to provide effective supervision for coaching sessions which should be properly planned;

b. putting performance over the wellbeing and safety of players, or;

i. having a win at all costs mentality and failing to be gracious in defeat.

c. not holding required FA coaching qualifications for the role held;

d. allowing allegations of abuse to go unchallenged or unrecorded and failing to report these to the Club Welfare Officer;

e. spending excessive time alone with children;

f. joining in with training sessions;

i. refer to section 13 of this policy.

34. To allow poor practice concerns to continue unchallenged may result in an environment developing in which abuse may be able to take place by normalising behaviour which is unacceptable and should not be condoned.

a. It may also lead to other people having suspicions about an individual's motivations, even if there was no intention to harm.

35. Phoenix Sports Club's Code of Conduct reflects best practice by stating clearly the acceptable behaviours which the Club wishes to promote.

⁴ [Poor Practice – Kent Football Association.](#)

a. This Code of Conduct applies to:

- i. players;
- ii. coaches;
- iii. club officials;
- iv. match officials;
- v. parents;
- vi. spectators;
- vii. any other club member.

1. This is irrespective of whether it is youth or open-age football.

36. Following a referral to the County FA, if it is decided that the matter is one of poor practice and is to be dealt with by the club then it will need to be referred to the club disciplinary committee to be dealt with as quickly as possible.

a. The disciplinary committee is comprised of:

- i. the Club Chairperson;
- ii. the Club Secretary;
- iii. the Club Welfare Officer;
- iv. the relevant Section Secretary;

1. for clarity, the Club has three sections:

- a. Youth (SELKent);
- b. Youth (Kent Youth League);
- c. Open-age.

2. it is anticipated that some instances will experience a crossover between Club sections.

v. Board members as desired or required.

37. Not all instances of poor practice will be returned by the County FA;

a. some may be identified as such within the Club.

38. Not all instances of poor practice will need to be referred to the County FA.
39. Poor practice should be referred to the County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer if any of the following apply:
- a. the situation involves a repeat offender;
 - b. a child could be at risk of harm;
 - c. there could be a breach of FA Disciplinary Regulations;
 - d. the Club have tried to address the matter but it continues to happen in the Club or with the individual concerned;
 - e. a statutory agency is involved, such as the police, social or children's services or the local authority's designated officer (LADO).

Section 13 – Training poor practice

40. Phoenix Sports Club recognises that coaches and managers joining in a training session or pre-game warm-up is indicative of coaching from a previous era and should not happen.
41. It puts the safety of young players at risk:
- a. there have been numerous incidents of children being accidentally injured nationally.
42. Adults have a duty of care to take reasonable measures to ensure the safety of our young players.
- a. Any involvement in the session breaches this;
 - i. this includes participation in any small sided game or practice.
43. In addition to the safeguarding responsibility adults have, joining in also takes away a learning opportunity for young players.
- a. Every touch the coach has is one that is being taken away from the players.

Section 14 – Club actions

44. The Club Welfare Officer will make an immediate decision as to whether any individual accused of abuse or poor practice should be suspended;
- a. this is especially important should the allegation be made when it is not possible to seek advice from the County FA, such as at the weekend.
45. Phoenix Sports Club will always be guided by the County FA.

46. Irrespective of the findings of the County FA, social services or police enquiries, Phoenix Sports Club's disciplinary committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether an accused individual can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively managed.

- a. This may be a particularly difficult decision where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police.
- b. The disciplinary committee will reach a decision based upon the information available and the civil standard of proof.
- c. The welfare of the child will remain of paramount importance throughout.

47. In cases of poor practice, the Club can;

- a. require the individual to be mentored;
- b. require the individual to be supervised for a period of time;
 - i. this should be a clearly stated time with clear conditions for extension.
- c. require the individual to undertake further training;
- d. require the individual to leave the Club.

Section 15 – Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse

48. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and may help the healing process.

49. Consideration must be given to the kind of support that children, parents, coaches, Club officials and spectators may need following an allegation of abuse.

50. Consideration must be given to the kind of support that may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

- a. This is especially important if the allegations are shown to be false.

Section 16 – Use of photography/filming equipment at sporting events

51. There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate images or footage of young people in vulnerable positions.

- a. All Club representatives should be vigilant and report any concerns to the Club Welfare Officer.
- b. There is no intention to prevent coaches using video equipment as a

legitimate coaching aid.

- i. Players and their parents/carers must be made aware that this will be occurring, and their consent obtained.
- ii. All footage must be stored safely and in accordance with GDPR legislation.

Section 16 – Bullying

52. Phoenix Sports Club are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our participants so they can participate in activities in a relaxed and secure atmosphere.

53. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our club.

54. If bullying does occur, all participants, parents and carers should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively;

- a. We are a TELLING club.
- b. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the Welfare Officer/Designated Safeguarding Officer or lead coach of the session or project.

55. Bullying is not just an issue for children and young people.

56. Our Anti-Bullying Policy is available on our website, and by request.

Section 17 – Safer recruitment

57. Our full Safer Recruitment of Volunteers (Youth Section) Policy is available on our website.

58. It aims to ensure that our recruitment and selection process:

- a. incorporates relevant vetting and checking procedures, including a robust induction;
- b. provides ongoing training and development;
- c. meets the requirements of the FA Safeguarding Operating Standard.

Section 17b – Safer recruitment: DBS checks

59. Some roles⁵ in youth and open-aged football require a DBS Check, with eligibility governed by legislation.

⁵ [Safeguarding, section 3 - The Football Association](#)

60. Anyone aged 16 years or over who undertakes any roles working directly with children and young adults under the age of 18 must have a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Enhanced Criminal Record with Children's Barred List Check.

- a. This includes:
 - i. Managers and coaches;
 - ii. Club Welfare Officer;
 - iii. Referees in youth football;
 - iv. First aiders.

61. It is club policy for managers to ensure that they inform Club management of any assistant coaches so that they can complete a DBS check.

- a. Failure to do so will result in suspension of fixtures and appropriate referrals being made.

Section 18 – Useful contacts

62. Designated Safeguarding Lead (Board):

- a. Warren Strong
- b. warren.phoenixsports@outlook.com
- c. 07532 697 492

63. Club Welfare Officer (Adult and Youth)

- a. Warren Strong
- b. warren.phoenixsports@outlook.com
- c. 07532 697 492

64. If at any time you are not able to contact the Club Welfare Officer, or the matter is clearly serious, then you can contact your County FA Welfare Officer directly:

- a. Kent County Football Association
- b. Designated Safeguarding Officer: Lucy Kidd
- c. safeguarding@kentFA.com
- d. 01622 792 140 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

65. You can also contact the National League Designated Safeguarding Officer, for matters concerning Phoenix Sports Club First Team, playing in the Pitching In Isthmian League (South East):

- a. Martyn Cannon
- b. safeguarding@thenationalleague.org.uk
- c. 01217 142 207

66. The FA Safeguarding Team

- a. safeguarding@theFA.com
- b. 0900 169 1862

67. Bexley Children's Services (commonly known as Social Services)

- a. 020 3045 5440 (Monday to Friday, 09:00 to 17:00)
 - i. 020 8303 7777 or 020 8303 7171 outside of these hours.
- b. Civic Offices,
2 Watling Street,
Bexleyheath
Kent
DA6 7AT