



Child Protection & Welfare Policy

2024-25

INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR

Bo'ness Athletic Football Club recognises the positive impact that football can have in young people and in the community, as a whole. Not only does it provide enjoyable entertainment, it also encourages exercise, with a chance to develop life skills including confidence, resilience, leadership and teamwork even off the pitch, through volunteering and involvement in the Club's development.

To ensure that the positive effects of football are available to all young people, Bo'ness Athletic Football Club will adopt child friendly processes and practices that supports, protects and empowers.

We recognise that Bo'ness Athletic Football Club has a duty of care towards children and young people and to this end we have developed a Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy.

This policy provides the Club with the tools to ensure the protection of children and young people from harm.

In line with our Equality Policy, Bo'ness Athletic Football Club is a club for all. Promoting inclusivity and treating everyone equally regardless of their background, age, gender, race, religion, sexual identity and/or disabilities. Everyone has the right to protection for all forms of harm and the club is committed to achieving this.

Alex Brown
Chair

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overarching Aim

Our Vision

Children flourish because we put their safety, wellbeing, rights and enjoyment at the heart of every level of Scottish football.

Our Mission

Children are the priority. We lead with confidence taking responsibility to create a culture of safety and wellbeing. We empower children through active promotion of their rights.

1.2 Definitions

Definition of the Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy

The Club's Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy includes:

- Introduction – Overarching Aim, Definitions, Children's Wellbeing in Scotland, Risks to Children's Wellbeing in Scottish Football, Everyone's Responsibility and Review
- Policy Statement
- Set the Standards – Behaviours, Expectations and Requirements
- Procedures – Appointment and Selection, Responding to Concerns and Case Review
- All associated Practice Notes

Herein all the documents listed above will be referred to as the 'Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy' or 'this policy'.

Definition of Child

Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that everyone under 18 has the rights set out in the Convention. Within the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, a child is defined as anyone who has not reached the age of 18.

For the purpose of this policy "children", "child", "young person" and "young people" refer to any persons under the age of 18.

The Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy applies to all children and young people regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, nationality, socio-economic status or family circumstance.

Definition of Adult

For the purpose of this policy an "adult" is any individual aged 18 and over or any individual under the age of 18 years old but who is in a 'position of trust'.

Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse is the act or omission that harms a child or young person.

An individual may abuse a child or young person directly, or may indirectly be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person from harming that child or young person, or their inaction leads to harm or the risk of harm. Abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual or by neglect. Abuse can take place in person or online. Although typically thought of as when an adult is mistreating a child or young person, children and young people can also be perpetrators of abuse against other children or young people.

Definition of Safeguarding

Safeguarding is taking action to ensure that *all* children and young people are safe from harm when involved in football. It means proactively doing everything possible to minimise risk and prevent abuse of children and young people.

Definition of Child Protection

Child protection refers to the actions in response to a *specific* concern for a child or young person who is at risk or suffering from abuse. Child protection is an essential part of safeguarding if there is a concern that a child or young person is being abused or their safety is compromised.

1.3 Children's Wellbeing in Scotland

Getting It Right for Every Child

The Scottish Government's Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is based on children's rights, and its principles reflect the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The GIRFEC approach is child focused, based on an understanding of the wellbeing of a child or young person in their current situation, and based on tackling needs early in a collective way. As part of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the concept of wellbeing and the GIRFEC approach is now enshrined in law in Scotland.

The GIRFEC approach supports children and young people so that they can grow up feeling loved, safe and respected, and can realise *their* full potential. Children and young people should be; Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included. These are the eight wellbeing factors and are commonly known as SHANARRI Indicators.



A child or young person's wellbeing is influenced, both positively and negatively, by everything around them and the different experiences and needs they have at different times in their lives. There is no set level of wellbeing that a child or young person should achieve, but each child should be helped to reach *their* full potential as an individual. The wellbeing indicators make it easier for everyone to be consistent in how they consider the quality of a child or young person's life at a particular point in time.

By having a universal language and understanding for everyone who works with children and young people, collectively we can contribute to promoting, supporting and safeguarding a child's wellbeing whether they are in an educational, health, community or sport setting. It is essential that in Scottish football the wellbeing indicators are understood and if worried that something is impacting a child or young person's wellbeing, members and volunteers know how to respond and with whom to share that information.

Wellbeing Concern

A wellbeing concern is if a child's wellbeing (measured using the 8 SHANARRI indicators) is, or is at risk of being, adversely affected.

A range of experiences can have a negative impact on children and young people. These can range from harmful or abusive behaviour to a family bereavement or social economic factors, such as poverty. The nature of a wellbeing concern will influence how to support the child or young person.

Behaviour which is abusive or neglectful and is, or is likely to cause harm, will often be referred to as a 'child protection concern'. Regardless of whether a concern is a wellbeing or child protection concern, it must be responded to in line with the Responding to Concerns Procedure.

1.4 Risks to Children's Wellbeing in Scottish Football

The protection and wellbeing of all children and young people involved in Scottish football must be a priority for everyone working, volunteering or participating in the game, including spectators. For children and young people involved in football there may be risks associated with their involvement whether it be injury, the despair of their team losing, or exposure to poor practice or abusive behaviour. It is essential that those working or volunteering with children and young people are alert to the associated risks and take steps to prevent, minimise or respond to the risks.

In addition to recognising risks to all children and young people, it is important to understand that some children and young people may be more vulnerable to particular risks associated with taking part in football.

Increased vulnerability

The Club is committed to ensuring the safety of all children and young people in football across all levels of the game. Children and young people who have additional care needs or who come from a minority ethnic group may face a range of additional challenges. Club members and volunteers will be encouraged and supported to challenge, and address any behaviour or attitudes which compromise a child or young person's wellbeing, or acts as a deterrent to the participation of some children and young people.

Children and young people who are deaf and disabled

In line with Article 23 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a child with a disability "*should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community*".

Children and young people who have a disability have the same needs as other children and young people but may also have additional needs associated with their disability. For example, additional steps may be needed to promote their wellbeing, or they may be at an increased risk of abuse due to their vulnerability. Research has shown that children with a mental or physical disability are *more likely* to be abused than non-disabled children.² Children and young people who are deaf, disabled or have a learning disability can be additionally vulnerable because they may:

- Depend on a number of people for care and handling, some of which can be intimate care
- Depend on the abuser for their involvement in sport
- Fear disclosing abuse
- The signs of abuse can be misinterpreted as a symptom of the disability
- Have a reduced capacity to resist either verbally or physically
- Have significant communication differences – this may include very limited verbal communication, the use of sign language or other forms of non-verbal communication
- Lack a wide network of friends who support and protect them
- Lack access to peers to discover what is acceptable behaviour or to understand the inappropriateness of actions
- Not be believed due to negative attitudes towards children and young people with disabilities or possible failure to recognise the impact of abuse on children and young people with disabilities

Children and young people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities

The UNCRC sets out the general principle of non-discrimination and that children should be protected from all forms of discrimination. It also states that children have the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of people in the country where they live³. Unfortunately, within wider society, and football, discriminatory behaviour still exists therefore children and young people from black and ethnic communities are additionally vulnerable because they may:

- Experience racism and racist attitudes
- Experience people in authority ignoring or not responding to racist abuse or comments
- Experience no action being taken by others for fear of upsetting cultural norms

- Be afraid of further abuse if they challenge others
- Want to fit in and not make a fuss
- Be using or learning English as a second language

Children in elite football

For many children and young people, it is their dream to play football professionally. When they have the talent, skill and dedication to realise this dream they will pursue it. Unfortunately, this can lead to a number of increased risks for children and young people involved in football at an elite level. For example, rivalry among their peers, inappropriate or detrimental relationships with their peers, pressure from their family, friends and the wider public, or, in some cases, exploitation by a trusted adult who can, or who they perceive can, help them 'achieve' this dream.

Research by Celia H. Brackenridge in 2014 highlighted the following about the risk to children and young people at an elite level:

- The greatest risk of emotional and sexual abuse occurs among the highest ranked athletes
- Poor practice, emotional abuse and bullying are probably more prevalent in sport than sexual abuse
- Athletes perpetrate more sexual harassment on their peers than coaches
- Athlete-athlete bullying is widespread
- Coach perpetrators are often very highly qualified and very highly respected which acts as a mask for their poor practice and abuse

1.5 Everyone's Responsibility

The responsibility to safeguard, promote, support and protect a child or young person's wellbeing does not rest on one person. We are *all* responsible.

Football can contribute in many different ways to a child or young person's positive wellbeing including health benefits of being active, the achievements they can make in gaining new skills and their experiences of being included and respected as part of a team. Supporting and promoting a child or young person's wellbeing at all times includes forming positive relationships, understanding their circumstances and responding appropriately to any concerns about their wellbeing. To ensure we can respond when a child or young person needs help or support, we must firstly understand their rights and the meaning of wellbeing. Secondly, we must recognise and acknowledge the risks that exist for children and young people in football and put in place a range of safeguards that minimise these risks. Leadership is essential to ensure that these safeguards are managed and promoted, and this will be done by members and volunteers within particular roles at the Club. However, *everyone* must understand the risks associated for children and young people, and the appropriate processes which are in place should a child or young person's wellbeing be at risk, or they are in need for protection.

Everyone has the responsibility to recognise the concern, to ensure the child or young person is safe if they are at risk of *immediate* harm, and to report the concern to the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer. Thereafter the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer will respond appropriately in line with the Responding to Concerns Procedure.

The Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy combined with relevant training, mentoring and support will give us the confidence and support needed to fulfil our role and responsibility to keep children and young people safe in football. In addition to this, advice can be sought at any point from the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer.

No matter your role or involvement in Scottish football, *you* have a responsibility to safeguard, promote, support and protect the wellbeing of all children and young people involved in Scottish football.

If you have *any* concerns about the wellbeing of a child or young person or about the conduct of any adult then you *must* report the matter to the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer, Andrew McBrierty: CWPO-BAFC@outlook.com

Full information on how to record and report a concern can be found in the Responding to Concerns Procedure.

1.6 Review

The Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy will be regularly reviewed and will include children and young people's participation and feedback on the content and actual experience of implementation as part of the review.

This policy will be reviewed:

- In accordance with changes in legislation and guidance on children's wellbeing, protection or rights
- Following the review of an issue or concern raised about the wellbeing or protection of children within the club, when the case review suggests that this policy should be reviewed
- In all other circumstances, at least every three years.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

Bo'ness Athletic Football Club is committed to ensuring that every child who takes part in football, in any capacity, is able to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment, which promotes inclusion and protects them from harm, poor practice, exploitation, bullying or abuse. The Club values a rights-based approach within our sport, and our child wellbeing and protection policy is based on the fundamental rights of children as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy is based on the following principles:

1. We will act in the best interests of children and young people
2. The protection and wellbeing of all children in our care is everyone's responsibility
3. A child or young person's rights, wishes and feelings should be respected and promoted.
For example:
 - A child or young person, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and/or sexual identity has the right to protection from all forms of harm, abuse and exploitation
 - We see the child or young person before the player, coach, volunteer, spectator or referee
 - Children and young people have the right to express views on matters that affect them, should they wish to do so, and to have those views taken into account
 - Children and young people have the right to relax, play, and join in a wide range of sporting activities
4. The best way to promote the wellbeing, health and development of a child or young person is to work in partnership with each other, the child or young person, their parents/carers and other relevant organisations.

All members and volunteers, when working or volunteering with children and young people involved in Club activities, will be:

INCLUSIVE

Football is for everyone, irrespective of background. We celebrate what makes us unique and embrace our differences. We create a culture where rights are respected and everyone is treated fairly, with dignity and respect

APPROACHABLE

We are visible, accessible, open and caring. We build respectful and supportive relationships, listening to children's voices, and championing their views in everything we do

EMPOWERING

We are forward facing and strive to be the best for children and young people. We are brave, challenging ourselves and others to continually strive for the best outcomes for children and

young people. We encourage and support children and young people to express their views.

ACCOUNTABLE

We accept responsibility and take ownership of the wellbeing and protection of children in our game. Our collective leadership calls upon integrity, consistency and confidence in our everyday behaviours.

3. SET THE STANDARDS - BEHAVIOURS, EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

Every Board Member and management team member at the club will be asked to sign up to the following standards, outlining the behaviour, expectations and requirements.

Creating an environment where children and young people are respected, their rights are promoted, and they are supported to have fun, learn, and develop in a safe environment is essential to inspire them to love the game.

To achieve this goal the Club expects its members and volunteers to embody the Wellbeing and Protection Values – Inclusive, Empowering, Approachable and Accountable - to create a positive football environment, and by displaying exemplary behaviour and implementing practices that make football a safe, fun, and positive experience for all children and young people involved.

On and off the pitch, I will:

- Make football a fun and enjoyable experience where everyone is involved
- Always show respect to everyone involved in the game
- Encourage children and young people to be respectful to everyone involved in the game
- Appreciate the importance of everyone involved in the game
- Be proud of being part of the same 'team' and encourage others to be proud of their

When working with children and young people, I will:

- Treat all children and young people equally with respect, dignity, honesty, sensitivity and fairness
- Promote the best interests of the young person and put their wellbeing before winning or achieving performance goals
- Promote and protect the rights of all children and ensure that children and young people are aware of their rights

• Be a positive role model by:

- Leading with enthusiasm and encouragement
- Never engaging in, or tolerating, offensive, insulting or abusive behaviour
- whether in person or online
- Being gracious in victory and defeat
- Challenging and reporting behaviour that
- does not meet the standards expected

• Never have favourites but praise children and young people that demonstrate commitment, positive attitude and good behaviour

• Consult with children and young people allowing them the chance to be heard by having a 'door open' approach

I confirm that I have read and agree to abide by the Club's Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy including the Policy Statement, Procedures and all associated Practice Notes.

I agree to abide and demonstrate the Club's Wellbeing and Protection Values.

I understand that a breach of the Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy will be taken seriously and will be responded to in line with the Responding to Concerns Procedure and, where applicable, the Club's Disciplinary Procedure.

Name:

Date:

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 Appointment and Selection

The Club will take all reasonable steps to ensure that its members and volunteers who are working directly with children and/or young people in football, have been recruited appropriately and that the individuals work in a way that reflect the Wellbeing and Protection Values – Inclusive, Approachable, Empowering and Accountable.

As part of this process, we aim to select the best possible candidate for the role.

The following procedure will be completed for all members and volunteers who will be working in a role which requires them to be in contact with children and young people.

1. Pre-application Information

Individuals who are applying for a position with the Club will be provided with pre-application information for the positions available and will include:

- A role description outlining the roles and responsibilities of the position
- A person specification, stating qualifications or experience of working with children required
- An application form

2. Application Form

Applicants will be requested to complete an application form. The purpose of the application form is to obtain relevant details for the position and referee contact details.

3. Review Applications and Interviews / Recruitment Conversations

The Club will review application forms and consider which applicants to take forward. Successful applicants will be invited to a recruitment conversation, which may take the form of an interview. Interviews or recruitment conversations will then be carried out.

4. Offer of Position

Once a decision has been made to offer appointment, the applicant will be notified either in writing or verbally. The applicant will be given details of the position, any special requirements and any obligations e.g. agreement to the Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy, a probationary period and responsibilities of the role.

The applicant will be asked to provide a Basic Disclosure.

5. References

References will be sought for all new members and volunteers who, by virtue of their role, will be working directly with children and/or young people within the Club. Two references will always be requested and checked. Where possible, at least one of these references will be from an employer or a voluntary organisation where the position required working with children and/or young people. References from relatives will not be accepted. If the applicant has no experience of working with children or young people, specific training requirements may be agreed before their appointment commences.

Suitability for position

Should the Club receive any information via the self-declaration form and/or PVG scheme record that needs risk assessed, this will be carried out by the Club's Secretary and Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer. This risk assessment considers any criminal conviction(s) or other information that would be considered relevant to the role. The outcome of the decision contributes to the final decision of the applicant's appointment as mentioned at point 4 above.

6. Induction and Training

Newly appointed members and volunteers will complete an introduction to Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy. Further training, where the role works directly with children and young people, is then provided.

8. Probation

Newly appointed members / volunteers will complete an agreed period of probation.

9. Review of ongoing suitability

Relevant new members or volunteers will have a performance review on a regular basis by the Board. Performance reviews will include an evaluation of progress and identification of training needs. This ensures we are continually risk assessing members and volunteers to keep children safe.

4.2 Responding to Concerns

RECOGNISE – RECORD – REPORT – RESPOND

In all cases where there are concerns about a child or young person and/or the conduct of an adult which affects, or may affect, a child or young person, the best interests and wellbeing of the child or young person will be the paramount consideration.

The purpose of this Procedure is to safeguard and protect children and young people involved in Scottish football and to respond appropriately to any concerns ensuring they are dealt with in a timely, appropriate and proportionate manner. Following set of published procedures when dealing with concerns helps:

- To avoid those receiving information from engaging in subjective judgements
- Reassure those who report concerns that an appropriate course of action will ensue
- Support those charged with managing concerns by providing them with a step-by-step process to follow
- Safeguard the rights of those against whom complaints or allegations have been made

No member or volunteer in receipt of information that causes concern about a child or young person or the conduct of an adult shall keep that information to themselves, or attempt to deal with the matter on their own. Instead in all cases the following procedure **must** be followed regardless of whether the concerns arise through the adult or child or young person's involvement in football or from outside of football.

REMEMBER:

If you are concerned about the *immediate* safety of the child or young person:

- 1. Take whatever action is required to ensure the child's immediate safety.**
- 2. Pass the information immediately to the police and seek their advice.**
- 3. Report the concern to the club Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer, advising that the matter has been reported to the police**

At any time if you have a concern about the wellbeing of a child or young person, or think you may have a concern, you can contact Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer for advice and support at CWPO-BAFC@outlook.com

1. EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

A concern may range from mild verbal bullying to physical or sexual abuse and occur either through football or outside of it, for example in the child's home. All concerns will be responded to by the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer. If a member or volunteer has a concern it is NOT their responsibility to investigate BUT it is their responsibility to:

- Reassure the person making the report that they have done the right thing in raising the concern
- Listen openly and without judgement
- Record anything that is said
- Report the concern to the club's Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer
- If there is a concern about the immediate safety of the child or young person, take the necessary steps to ensure their safety and contact the police

Everyone has a responsibility to **recognise** a concern, to **record** the concern either on the Concern Recording Form or in email format, and **report** the concern to the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer.

2. RECOGNISE

Members and volunteers may become aware of a concern in different ways.

For example:

- Direct disclosure by the child or young person.
- Observation of the concern, such as a change in the behaviour, appearance or nature of the child or young person or the conduct of an adult.
- Information that is shared from another individual or organisation e.g. an incident observed by another child or young person or adult and reported to them.

All concerns must be reported to the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer on the day the concern arises or as soon as practically possible thereafter.

DO:

- Stay calm – ensure that the child or young person is safe and feels safe
- Listen to the child or young person and take what they say seriously. Do not show disbelief. Show and tell them that you are taking what they say seriously
- Reassure the child or young person that they are not to blame and were right to tell someone
- Be aware of interpreting what a child or young person says, especially if they have learning or physical disabilities which affects their ability to communicate or English is not their first language
- Avoid projecting your own reactions onto the child or young person
- Avoid asking any questions. If necessary only ask enough questions to gain basic information to establish the *possibility* that abuse may have occurred. Only use open-ended, non-leading questions e.g. What? When? Where? Who?
- Do not assume that the experience was bad or painful - it may have been neutral or even pleasurable e.g. the child or young person may think that they are in a consenting relationship with the adult
- Do not introduce personal information from either your own experiences or those of other children.

3. RECORD

Record keeping is of critical importance and all information should be recorded in line with the following:

- Make a written record of the information as soon as possible
- Make the record factual, accurate and legible
- If the concern arises from a disclosure from a child or young person using the child or young person's exact words, where possible
- Include dates, times, locations and contexts, if available, in which the concern occurred together with any other relevant information

Where the child or young person has made a direct disclosure, and when appropriate, it is important that the child or young person understands why we are recording their details. If a child/young person recognises that people can help and support, and that this is the purpose of their details being shared, they will be more included and informed of the processes.

4. REPORT

The Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer can be contacted on:

CWPO-BAFC@outlook.com or via telephone by first contacting Secretary 07802 758 333.

If you are unsure whether the information you have should be a cause for concern advice and support can be sought at any time from the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer by contacting them for advice and support.

This can be done in a confidential manner anonymising the details of the parties involved.

If the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer is not available and an immediate response is required, the police and social work services must be contacted. They have a statutory responsibility for the protection of children, and they may already hold other information about the child or young people. If the information is shared with the police or other agencies, record what information is shared, and any advice given, and actions taken. At the earliest opportunity thereafter the Club's Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer should be informed.

Confidentiality

To maintain confidentiality do not keep any electronic, printed or written versions of the information you have provided. The Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer will maintain a copy of the information in a secure and confidential manner.

Support

The Club recognises that voicing concerns, suspicions or allegations of poor practice, misconduct or abuse can cause great concern and stress – particularly if it relates to a colleague, volunteer or child/parent who is known to you. However, sharing information about the wellbeing of a child or young person is paramount in order to prevent the child or young person from suffering harm or further harm. Any member or volunteer whom, in good faith, discloses information related to a concern will receive full support from the club.

Concern about the conduct of the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer

Where the concern is about the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer it must be reported to the Secretary directly. In this situation, the Secretary will take on the role and responsibilities as listed below of the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer.

5. RESPOND

The following sets out the steps which will be taken by the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer after the concern has been reported.

A. The process on receipt of a concern

Once the concern has been reported the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer will:

- Establish the basic facts and conduct an initial assessment of the facts in order to determine the appropriate course of action. The appropriate course of action may differ depending on whether the concern is about the wellbeing of a child/young person or about the conduct of an adult.
- Decide who should be informed of the concern, this may include the child or young person, their parent/carer, or external agencies.
- Consult external agencies such as the police and social work services for advice at any time, if required. This is important because they may hold other important information which, when considered alongside the current concern, builds a significant picture of concern.

All subsequent actions taken by the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer shall be recorded, in the order in which they happen, and the records should be signed and dated.

B. Conducting the Initial Assessment

The purpose of the initial assessment is to clarify the nature and context of the concerns. Every situation is unique so guidance cannot be prescriptive.

Where the concern relates to the conduct of an adult, pending the outcome of any investigation, precautionary suspension will be considered in all cases where there is significant concern about the conduct of a member and volunteers towards children and/or young people.

In all cases, the initial assessment may involve:

- Speaking to the member or volunteer who raised the concern; and/or
- Speaking to other members or volunteers who may have information related to the concern; and/or
- Speaking to the member or volunteers whose conduct has been reported – this will be subject to the nature and seriousness of the situation and should not be done if the concern

suggests that the conduct may be criminal behaviour; and/or

- If the concern involves a named child or young person, it may be appropriate to speak to the child or young person. This should never be done in cases where there is a suggestion of criminal conduct without first seeking the advice of the police. If it is appropriate to speak to the child or young person all questions should be basic, open-ended, non-leading and asked *solely with a view to clarifying the basic facts*. When speaking to a child or young person another adult should always be present. It is recommended that this other adult is known to the child or young person and the meeting is pre-arranged so the child or young person will be aware that you are going to speak to them about a concern; and/or
- Speaking to other children and/or young people and/or other individuals to establish the basic facts. As above, all questions should be basic, open-ended, non-leading and asked *solely with a view to clarifying the basic facts*.

Best practice advice

Questioning of children by those conducting an initial assessment should be avoided, if possible. If it is necessary to speak to the child in order to clarify the basic facts, best practice suggests that consent from the parent/carer be obtained unless obtaining that consent may place the child at risk.

Views of the Child

Children and young people have the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them and to have their views taken seriously (Article 12, UNCRC). This must be at the forefront of any concerns that are raised. The nature of the concern will impact on the decision as to whether it is appropriate to discuss the concern directly with the child or young person. The views of the child or young person must be considered based on the age and maturity.

An initial assessment of basic facts may require the need to ask a child or young person some basic, open-ended, non-leading question solely for with a view to clarifying the basic facts. It may also be necessary to ask similar basic questions of other children and young people, or other appropriate individuals who may have information.

It will not always be appropriate to speak directly with the child or young person about the concern.

Advice should be sought from the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer if there is any uncertainty about the appropriate course of action.

If the information indicates that a criminal offence has been committed against the child or young person it would not be appropriate to ask the child or young person questions about the incident or speak to them directly about the incident(s), unless it is a disclosure directly from the child. Interviewing children and young people about possible abuse or criminal offences is the sole remit of specially trained police officers and social workers.

Where the concern about a child's wellbeing suggests they are in need of protection, the information must be passed on with or without their consent for the purposes of their protection. Allegations of abuse must always be taken seriously. *No member of the Club shall investigate allegations of abuse or decide whether or not a child has been abused. False allegations are very rare. If a child says or indicates they are being abused or information is obtained which gives concern that a child is being abused, the information must be responded to on the same day in line with this procedure.*

Fairness and natural justice

In the event of an investigation into the conduct of a member or volunteers all actions will be informed by the principles of natural justice:

- They will be made aware of the nature of concern; and
- They will be given an opportunity to put forward their case; and
- The Club will act in good faith, ensuring the matter is dealt with impartially and as quickly as possible in the circumstances.

C. Concluding the Initial Assessment

Decisions reached on conclusion of the Initial Assessment may differ depending on whether the concern relates to the wellbeing of a child or young person or to the conduct of an adult. Sometimes, the concern may relate to both the wellbeing of a child and the conduct of an adult in which case two sets of conclusions should be reached.

A concern about the wellbeing of a child/young person

At the end of the initial assessment one of the following conclusions should be reached:

- The facts do not substantiate the concern, therefore no further action will be taken
- The concern has been successfully addressed by the child or young person, their parent and/or club member or volunteers and no further action is needed
- The concern has not been successfully addressed and further support is needed for the child or young person

Information should be shared with statutory services, for example Police Scotland or the Social Work Department due to the gravity of the concern

- Information should be shared with the child's Named Person, if applicable, for consideration. In all cases consideration should be given as to what support, if any, is required for the child or young person and whether there is a need to share information with the Scottish FA in terms of a Data Sharing Agreement.

Sharing Concerns with Parents/Carers

The Club is committed to working in partnership with parents/carers whenever there are concerns about a child or young person. Parents/carers have the primary responsibility for the safety and wellbeing of their children. Where concerns are raised about a child or young person this will be considered in line with the wellbeing indicators and *may* be discussed with parents/carers. For example, if a child seems withdrawn, he/she may have experienced an upset in the family, such as a parental separation, divorce or bereavement. Common sense is advised in these situations and the best interests of the child will be considered as to what is the best support for them. Children and young people will be asked who they feel is suitable to be informed and when relevant, consent gained from the child or young person.

Where there are concerns that the parents/carers may be responsible for or have knowledge of the abuse, sharing concerns with the parents/carers may place the child or young person at further risk. *In such cases advice must always firstly be sought from the police/social work services or Named Person as to who informs the parents/carers.*

Sharing Information with Police and statutory agencies

Where the concern about a child or young person's wellbeing suggests that they are in need of protection or that a criminal offence has been committed against them the concern must be reported to the police and/or social work services. The police and local authority have a statutory duty of care for all children.

A concern about the conduct of an adult

At the end of the initial assessment one of the following conclusions should be reached:

- The facts do not substantiate the concern, therefore no further action will be taken
- Information supports concern of poor practice
- Information supports concern of serious poor practice and/or misconduct
- Information supports concern of possible criminal behaviour

Initial Assessment Supports concern of poor practice

If the initial assessment supports a concern that the conduct of an adult amounts to poor practice, the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer will share the findings of the initial assessment with the relevant member at the Club, who has responsibility for the member or volunteer whose conduct has amounted to poor practice, who will respond in line with the Club's procedures.

The Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer will carry out any further investigation, as necessary and take appropriate action depending on the nature and seriousness of the conduct.

Initial Assessment supports concern of poor practice and/or misconduct

If the concern relates to the conduct of a member or volunteer, the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer will share the findings of the initial assessment with the Secretary, who will respond in line with the club's Disciplinary Procedures.

Initial Assessment supports concern of possible criminal behaviour

Where the initial assessment of information gives reasonable cause to suspect an adult's behaviour has been a criminal offence, the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer will:

- report the concern to the police as soon as possible on the day the information is received, along with supporting information; and
- make a written record of the name of the police officer to whom the concerns were passed together with the crime reference number, time and date of the call, in case any follow up is required; and
- on request, provide the police with a copy of the Concern Recording Form; and
- following the advice of the police, inform the parents/carers of the child involved as soon as possible unless the police advice is not to do this; and
- if appropriate, share the information with the child's Named Person if there is any impact on a child's wellbeing caused by an adult's possible criminal behaviour unless the police advise not to do this.

Advice will firstly be obtained from the police about informing the member or volunteer involved in the concerns. If the advice is to inform them, they will be told that information has been received which may suggest an allegation of abuse or possible criminal offence. As the matter will be *sub judice* (i.e., under judicial consideration) no details will be given unless advised by the police. All actions will ensure the best evidence is preserved for any criminal proceedings while at the same time safeguarding the rights of the member and volunteer.

The club will take all reasonable steps to support a member or volunteer whom a concern has been raised about, as well as others who may be involved as witnesses.

Possible outcomes include one or more of the following:

- Police investigation – may involve a child protection investigation jointly by police and social work services
- Criminal proceedings
- Civil proceedings (by the child/family who raised the concern)
- Disciplinary Proceedings

6. PRECAUTIONARY SUSPENSION

Suspension is not a form of disciplinary action. The member involved may be suspended whilst an investigation is carried out. Suspension will be carried out in accordance with the Club's Disciplinary Procedures.

7. CRIMINAL PROCEEDINGS

An ongoing criminal investigation does not necessarily rule out disciplinary action by the club or investigation by the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer. However, any action taken must not jeopardise the criminal investigation. Advice must be taken from the police on this. Sufficient information should be available to enable the club to make a decision whether to go ahead with disciplinary action/response under this concerns procedure.

In any event, once criminal proceedings have concluded the Club will consider the matter and the outcomes in line with this procedure.

8. FALSE OR MALICIOUS ALLEGATIONS

In exceptional circumstances where an investigation establishes an allegation or concern raised is false, unfounded or malicious:

- The member and volunteers involved will receive an account of the circumstances and/or investigation and a letter confirming the conclusion of the matter. They may wish to seek legal advice; and
- All records pertaining to the circumstances and investigation shall be kept confidentially; and
- The Club will take all reasonable steps to support the individual in this situation; and
- In these circumstances the Club will review the participation or continued involvement in club activities of the individual who made the false or malicious allegation. If the false or malicious allegation has been made by a child or young person, it will only be appropriate to have a discussion with the child or young person to determine their views and opinions with parental/carer permission; and

- Data collected for the investigation will be destroyed in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998.

9. ALLEGATIONS OF NON-RECENT ABUSE

The Club recognises that sharing personal experience of abuse can be difficult, challenging and sensitive. Therefore, allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event e.g. an adult who was abused as a child by someone who is still currently working with children. These procedures will be followed in the event of an allegation of non-recent abuse, including the club's responsibility to refer to Disclosure Scotland.

10. MEDIA

All media enquiries relating to concerns under this procedure must be referred to CWPO: CWPO-BAFC@outlook.com and Secretary: Secretary@BonessAthletic.com

4.3 Case review Procedure

1. PURPOSE OF CASE REVIEW

Case reviews take place to establish whether there are lessons to be learned about the ways in which a concern has been investigated and responded to. Reviewing a concern allows the Club to consider:

- How the Responding to Concerns Procedure was implemented; and
- The effectiveness of the Responding to Concerns Procedure; and
- Informing policy and improving practice with regards to wellbeing & protection matters.

2. DECIDING TO CONDUCT A REVIEW

The Club will follow the criteria set out below when considering and establishing a case for review.

1. The harm or risk of harm to a child was high; and/or
2. Views expressed by those involved in the case have raised concern about the way it was handled; and/or
3. There was a clear failure of procedure in handling the case: and/or
4. The case attracted a significant amount of media interest; and/or
5. The case concerned an unusual practice or behaviour; and/or
6. The case took a significantly long period of time to resolve; and/or
7. The Board decides a review is appropriate.

A case deemed eligible for review may be a particular concern or matter or, in some cases, may be cumulative concerns.

From time to time the Club may, internally, take a sample of cases to review to ensure the level of service provided in case management is consistent and to highlight any learning to take forward into future cases.

3. IDENTIFYING WHO UNDERTAKES THE REVIEW

The Club will appoint a case reviewer, this may be internal or external to the club. The case reviewer, whether internal or external, will have expertise in the area of the concern. These skills may differ according to the circumstances of each case and the agreed role of the case reviewer.

External Case Reviewer

The following criteria will be considered when deciding whether the case review should be external to the club.

- Are the recommendations likely to influence and/or change practice across the whole of Scottish football?
- Was the risk of harm to the child high?
- Has the case attracted a significant amount of media interest?
- Is there a lack of experience and knowledge internally regarding the nature of the case?
- Have the Board expressed a preference towards an external reviewer as being more appropriate?

Where the answer has been **yes** to one or more of the criteria above, there is a presumption that an external case reviewer will be appointed by the club. The club continue to have an overview of the review and will set out clear expectations in respect of timescales (see section below), milestones in the process and deadlines for completion of reports but will not have any input into the findings or recommendation of the review.

Where an external reviewer is commissioned, consideration will be given to any formal contractual arrangements required, appropriate legal advice sought, which agencies will enter into the arrangements (if any) and a contract drawn up covering timescales, fees and confidentiality including data protection.

Internal Case Reviewer

Reviews may also be undertaken internally, and a case reviewer will be appointed from within the club. A case will not be reviewed by any individual who had an involvement in the concern or incident, either as a named individual or witness, in the matter of concern.

4. TIMESCALES FOR REVIEW

It is desirable that the case review should be undertaken as speedily as feasible, and all cases will aim to be reviewed within an 8 week period from the point the case reviewer has been appointed and received all evidence and correspondence relating to the case.

Timescales will be open to change due to particular circumstances relating to each case. Where an extension is necessary a progress report and explanation for the extension must be submitted for approval to the club's Chairman.

5. FIRST STEPS OF THE REVIEW

After an individual has been identified, the Case Reviewer will give consideration where there may be some outstanding investigations or proceedings that are still ongoing. These considerations will be:

1. Is there a Police and/or social work protection investigation still ongoing?
2. Is there a criminal investigation by the police still ongoing?
3. Are there any related legal proceedings in relation to the case?

If the answer to any of these questions is yes, the review cannot proceed until any of the above has concluded.

5. PRACTICE NOTES

5.1 ANTI-BULLYING

***'Bullying is never acceptable; it doesn't make a child better or stronger to get through it and it should never be seen as a normal part of growing up.'* (respectme)**

Children's wellbeing can be seriously impacted by bullying behaviour. Bullying can take some children's rights away from them. Bullying is both behaviour and impact, the impact is on a person's capacity to feel in control of themselves. This is what is termed as their sense of 'agency'. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. This behaviour happens face to face and online. (respectme 2015)

What is bullying?

Bullying behaviour can harm people both physically and emotionally. Something only has to happen once to make a child feel worried, scared, threatened, left out and hurt. The actual behaviour may not be repeated but the threat may be sustained over time, typically by actions, looks, messages, confrontations, physical interventions, or the fear of these. Bullying behaviour is not always deliberate, but that does not mean that the bullying behaviour does not need to be appropriately challenged.

The Club appreciates that bullying behaviour can be difficult to identify because it often happens away from others and young people may be reluctant to tell adults for fear of repercussions or an 'over-reaction' by adults.

This Practice Note provides guidance for members and volunteers to recognise 'signs' of bullying behaviour and understand the impact that it can have on the child or young person who is being bullied. It sets out how members and Associated Persons should respond should they have any concerns about bullying behaviour.

Prejudice-based bullying

Prejudice-based bullying is when bullying behaviour is motivated by prejudice based on an individual's actual or perceived identity and can be based on characteristics unique to a child or young person's identity or circumstance e.g. their ethnicity or religion or sexuality. When the bullying behaviour is as a result of prejudice, there is a need to address the root cause of the prejudice as well as effectively responding to incidents as they arise.

The Club will:

- Seek to prevent, reduce and respond effectively to bullying behaviour, through the implementation of this Policy and by ensuring that children and young people know what to do and who they can speak to if they are worried
- Highlight bullying based on prejudice and perceived differences to ensure our practices are effective in dealing with these issues
- Seek to understand the experiences and address the needs of children and young people who are bullied, as well as those who bully, within a framework of respect, responsibility, resolution and support
- Create an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated and is responded to in the best interests of the children and/or young people involved

5.2 BEHAVIOURS

Football should be an enjoyable activity which allows everyone to take part in a fun and safe manner. At times this will involve managing behaviours in an appropriate way and responding to challenging behaviour in a safe and thought-out manner.

This Practice Note aims to promote best practice that can help support children and young people manage their own behaviour. It also identifies unacceptable actions or interventions which must *never* be used by members or volunteers.

These guidelines are based on the following principles:

- The wellbeing of the child or young person is the paramount consideration
- A risk assessment, by means of planning and preparing for each activity, should be completed dynamically taking into consideration the needs of all children or young people involved in the activity. For further information see Practice Note – Prevention Planning
- Children and young people must never be subjected to any form of treatment that is harmful, abusive, humiliating or degrading and should always be able to maintain their dignity and respect
- No member or volunteer should attempt to respond to behaviour by using techniques for which they have not been trained

MANAGING BEHAVIOUR

It is important to create the right environment and model the behaviour that you expect from children and young people involved in football.

Creating the right environment involves but is not limited to:

- Strong leadership - promoting positive relationships at all levels and a culture and ethos of positive and respectful relationships. Members and volunteers should embody the behaviour expected from the children and young people.
- Constructive communication – communication between the adults and children or young people includes listening to the child or young person without interruption, or trying to solve the problem, and recognising how the child or young person is feeling.
- Behavioural reinforcement - rewards for good behaviour and consequences for negative behaviour.
- Issues of behaviour can be discussed and raised through regular conversations with the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer.

From time-to-time members and volunteers with children and/or young people may be required to deal with a child or young person's behaviour that they find challenging. Managing this behaviour will involve advance planning of activities, responding in an appropriate way to the challenging behaviour and reflecting on how practice can be improved.

Preparation and Planning

Agreeing Acceptable Behaviour

Members, volunteers, children/young people and their parents/carers should be involved in developing an agreed statement of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This is commonly known as a 'Code of Conduct'. All members and volunteers working or volunteering with children and young people will be expected to operate to the '*Set the Standards – Behaviours, Expectations and Requirements*' and uphold the Wellbeing and Protection Values – Inclusive, Approachable, Empowering and Accountable.

Planning Activities

Good practice requires planning sessions around the group as a whole, but also involves taking into consideration the needs of each individual child or young person within that group. Planning sessions involves 'risk assessing' the sessions and those taking the session or activity should consider whether any members of the group have presented challenges in the past or are likely to present any difficulties in relation to the tasks involved, the other participants or the environment.

Managing behaviour during the activity

It is essential that responding to difficult behaviour is always done in a thought out and calm manner.

After each activity

- Reflect on practice – what worked well, what did not work?
- Issues of behaviour and control should regularly be discussed with members, volunteers, the child or young person and their parents/carers in the context of rights and responsibilities.

5.3 CELEBRATION – Photography and filming

Photographs, films and video clips can be used to celebrate achievements, promote activities and keep people updated. Footage can also be recorded for performance development and analysis reasons. It is important not to curb such activity and to remember that the majority of images taken are appropriate and taken in good faith.

The Club will take all reasonable steps to promote the safe use of photography and filming at all events and activities with which it is associated, however the club has no power to prevent individuals photographing or filming in public places.

If there are concerns about the safety and wellbeing of children and young people, the Club reserves the right at all times to prohibit the use of photography or filming at any event or activity with which it is associated and in locations where the club has jurisdiction.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET FORUMS

There has been an increase in the use and abuse of internet forums to target individuals or to engage contributors in debates which can cause upset and embarrassment to children and young people. Sites should be well monitored, and any offending comments removed and reported to the relevant site and the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer, where appropriate.

Any inappropriate or offensive or abusive texts/email/use of social media must be reported to the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer.

Any offensive or abusive comments posted on social media or within a shared group chat must be removed immediately.

5.5 HEALTH

During football there are times when children and young people may sustain an injury which requires treatment. This Practice Note looks at wellbeing and protection best practice in first aid and the treatment of injuries in these circumstances and covers situations where a child or young person has a pre-existing medical condition.

CONSENT FORM

Parents or carers and the young person, if they are aged 13 and over, must complete the Consent Form before participating in any football activity. This ensures that members and volunteers are aware of any pre-existing medical conditions, any medication taken by the participants or existing injuries and treatment required.

For children and young people who play football this form should be completed at the start of every season and will be retained by the Club for the season. Young people and parents/carers **must** update the form should anything change during the season.

5.6 PREVENTION PLANNING

Prevention planning is considering all the risks associated with running football related activities and planning and managing the risks by putting in preventative measures to minimise them. Prevention Planning may take the form of various assessments but for day-to-day activities or one off events this will involve conducting a risk assessment as part of planning and organising the activity or event.

Members and volunteers who provide football activities for children and young people have a duty to undertake a risk assessment of the environment in which they are operating, the activity itself and the group to ensure that the group's requirements are met. Potential areas of risk should be identified at the planning stage and should be recorded in writing. Safeguards should then be put in place to manage the risks identified.

Depending on the nature of the event, activity or trip the risk assessment may be an ongoing process as unexpected situations can arise.

What is a risk assessment?

A risk assessment is an important step to ensure the safe delivery and involvement of everyone participating in football activities, in any capacity e.g. as a player, a coach, a spectator, a referee, a volunteer etc. Completing a risk assessment allows those running day to day football activities or a specific event or activity to focus on the risks that really matter – the ones with the potential to cause significant harm. A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what could cause harm to other people so that the risks are identified and an informed decision be made as to whether enough precautions have been taken or more should be done to prevent harm.

Why is a risk assessment necessary?

The Policy Statement declares that the Club will act in the best interests of children and young people and promote children's rights, including the right to be protected from harm and abuse. To do this effectively, those working with children and young people must first be aware of the areas of risk and be able to adequately assess these risks.

What does the law state?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states that all children have the right to be protected from harm, abuse and exploitation at all times. Section 5 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 states that if you are 16 or over and have children in your care or control then you must do what is reasonable in all circumstances to safeguard their health, development and welfare.

A significant factor in Bo'ness Athletic Football Club is that there is no youth section. All players are aged over 18, with the exception of one player, who turns 18 in January 2025 and is on loan to another Club for the duration of season 2024-25.

5.7 RELATIONSHIPS

Developing good relationships leads to positive behaviour on and off the pitch. Positive relationships are essential for creating the right environment. Unfortunately, there may be occasions where inappropriate relationships with children and young people are formed through football. Within the Club all members and volunteers are expected to be proactive in promoting positive relationships with all children and young people involved in football.

Positive relationships are essential for creating an environment of inclusivity and fun. They lead to effective learning and create place where children and young people feel able to share any worries or concerns. Where children and young people feel included, respected, safe and secure they are more likely to develop self-confidence, resilience and positive views of themselves.

The power and influence a member and/or volunteer has over a child or young person, who they are coaching or looking after in football, cannot be underestimated. Therefore, members and volunteers will be considered to be in a position of trust.

Current sexual offences legislation classifies any sexual activity involving children under 16 years old as unlawful. The Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 2009 defines specific roles and settings where sexual activity between 16- or 17-year-olds and those in a position of trust, responsibility, or authority, constitutes a criminal offence. The legislation does not currently include sports roles (e.g. coaches, instructors or helpers) or sports organisation settings (e.g. clubs, leisure facilities or events) within these definitions. Nonetheless the Club recognises the influence that a member and/or volunteer has over children and young people, and

that by virtue of their role they have the capacity to influence their personal, social and sporting development.

Any concerns that a member and/or volunteer is or has abused their position of trust **must** be reported to the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer.

5.8 TRAVEL

An appropriate Risk Assessment would be carried out ahead of any travel distinct from routine travel. Transport to away fixtures will be considered and assessed, dependent upon the travel needs of the player.