

Essex Spartans A.F.O Welfare Policy

The Essex Spartans A.F.O is committed to ensuring all children who play Football, have a safe, positive, and fun experience, whatever their level of involvement. The following points list the aims of the organisation's welfare policy.

- The welfare of all children is paramount
- All children within Football, regardless of age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, ability or disability, have the right to enjoy the game in an environment safe from abuse of any kind
- The Essex Spartans A.F.O recognises the importance of safeguarding children within the game and is committed to developing, and implementing, policies and procedures which ensure that everyone knows, and accepts, their responsibility in relation to a duty of care for children
- The Essex Spartans A.F.O is committed to ensuring there are correct and comprehensive procedures for responding to, recording and reporting child safeguarding concerns
- The Essex Spartans A.F.O will endeavour to ensure all suspicions and allegations will be taken seriously, managed and dealt with swiftly and appropriately in line with the club's policy and procedures
- The Essex Spartans A.F.O recognises that appropriate safeguarding is not just about preventing abuse but providing the best environment for children to enjoy themselves and the game of Football
- The Essex Spartans A.F.O recognises the responsibility of the statutory agencies and is committed to working with Local Safeguarding Children Boards and Local Authority Designated Officers and complying with their procedures and the statutory guidance "Working Together to Safeguard Children" April 2010
- The Essex Spartans A.F.O is committed to promoting sound recruitment procedures and good practice for all individuals working within Football whether in a paid or voluntary capacity
- The Essex Spartans A.F.O will ensure that individuals will receive support through education and training, to be aware of, and understand, best practice and how to manage any safeguarding issues which may come to light
- The Essex Spartans A.F.O recognises that it is not the responsibility of the organisation or its individuals to determine if abuse has taken place, but it is their responsibility to act upon and report any concerns

Key Policy Points

1. All participants should recognise and follow a Code of Conduct

The Essex Spartans A.F.O provides a code of conduct for all participants. This code of conduct provides participants with details of acceptable, and unacceptable behaviour, and the expectations of others in relation to good operational practices.

2. All junior Football sessions require adequate supervision

A minimum of two adults are required at every session and additionally the appropriate ratio of adults and children must be met.

3. All adults who work with children in the organisation must be recruited appropriately which includes being vetted for their suitability to work with children

Vetting Procedures include the use of Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks.

4. Physical contact should always be intended to meet the child's needs not the adult's

Never touch a child inappropriately. A responsible adult should only use physical contact if its aim is to:

- Develop sports skills or techniques
- Treat an injury
- Prevent an injury or accident from occurring
- Meet the requirements of the sport

The adult should seek to explain the reason for the physical contact to the child, reinforcing the teaching or coaching skill. Unless the situation is an emergency, the adult should ask the child for permission.

The organisation's commitment to the welfare of children

In addition to providing a safe environment for Football activities the club is committed to ensuring the general well being of the children it is involved with and will monitor for signs of abuse of children outside the football environment and report such incidents as necessary.

Indications that a child may be being abused can include physical and/or behavioural signs which may include the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries

- An injury and the explanation for it seem inconsistent
- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her
- Someone else (a child or adult) expresses concern about the welfare of another child
- Unexplained changes in behaviour (for example, becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper)
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- Has difficulty in making friends
- Stops, or is prevented from, socialising with other children
- Displays variations in eating patterns, including overeating or loss of appetite
- Loses weight for no apparent reason
- Becomes increasingly dirty or unkempt
- Excessive fear of making mistakes

It should be recognised that this list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place, but may be indicative of a need to report concerns.

Some changes in behaviour can be caused by changes at home, for example, if a bereavement occurs. Parents/carers are strongly encouraged to inform the coach or Club Welfare Officer of any significant changes which may affect the behaviour of their child. It is reminded that it is not the responsibility of the organisation or its individuals to determine if abuse has taken place, but it is their responsibility to act upon and report any concerns

Safeguarding Policy Statement

Essex Spartans A.F.O (The Club) is committed to ensuring all Children(*) participating in American Football have a safe and positive experience.

(*The word “Children” should be taken to mean all persons under the age of 19 as per the league’s age criteria.)

We will do this by:

- Recognising all children participating in Football (regardless of age, gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, ability or disability) have a right to have fun and be protected from harm in a safe environment
- Ensuring individuals working within Football at, or for, our club provide a safe, positive and fun experience for children
- Ensuring all members of the organisation that will have contact with children have been adequately vetted and CRB checked.
- Appointing a Club Welfare Officer
- Ensuring all people who work in Football at, or for, our club (such as staff, officials, volunteers, team managers, coaches and so on) understand this policy applies to them according to their level of contact with children in Football
- Ensuring the name and contact details of the Club Welfare Officer is available:
 - As the first point of contact for parents, children and volunteers/staff within the club
 - As a local source of procedural advice for the club, its committee and members and
 - As the main point of contact within the club for relevant external agencies in connection with child safeguarding
- Ensuring correct and comprehensive reporting procedures exist for raising and managing child safeguarding concerns. Such procedures should recognise the responsibility of the statutory agencies and be in accordance with pre defined child safeguarding procedures as set down by the Statutory Agencies and Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) guidelines and policies
- Providing everyone connected with the club (including parents, children and volunteers) with the opportunity to voice any concerns they have (about possible suspected child abuse, and/or about poor practice) to the Club Welfare Officer
- Ensuring all suspicious concerns and allegations are taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and appropriately
- Ensuring access to confidential information relating to child safeguarding matters is restricted to the Club Welfare Officer and the appropriate external authorities, such as the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO)

Club Welfare officer

The club has created the role of a Welfare Officer who will take the lead role in ensuring the safety of children who take part in activities organised by the Essex Spartans. The job description is as follows:

Job Description – Welfare officer

JOB TITLE: Welfare Officer

RESPONSIBLE TO: The Club Management Committee

SKILLS REQUIRED

- To be aware of the Essex Spartans process for reporting incidents to the Statutory Agencies
- To have a basic knowledge of the different forms of abuse that can occur within, and outside of sport, which are harmful to children
- To have a basic understanding of the Statutory Agencies and their role in child safeguarding
- Preferably have experience of child safeguarding either at work or other volunteering, for example as a teacher, social worker, police officer, charity organiser
- Have empathy with children
- Have excellent communication skills, including the ability to advocate the benefits of safeguarding
- Be able to collate and administrate paperwork and information received in a confidential and secure manner

MAIN DUTIES:

- Promote good practice in safeguarding and protecting children in their club, working with the coaching teams, club committee and club members to create a child centred environment and develop a proactive safeguarding culture within the club
- To help safeguard and protect children by assisting in the promotion and implementation of the Safeguarding Children Policy at a club
- To be the first point of contact for all club child safeguarding issues
- To act as a source of advice on current best practice and provide support to the Club Management Committee and the members of that club on safeguarding issues and procedures
- To attend Club Management Committee meetings as a member of that Committee by right of the role (and not through combining roles of established positions).
- To ensure safeguarding is a mandatory standing item on the committee agenda and that safeguarding is

considered the primary driver in junior American football decisions

- To maintain accurate records and keep all safeguarding nature are reported/referred to the appropriate Statutory Agencies in a timely fashion, and in accordance with Essex Spartan procedures

Training the Club Welfare Officer

The Essex Spartans will provide all required training for the Club Welfare officer in order to equip them for the role in particular:

- A “Safeguarding and Protecting Children”(SPC) workshop every three years. This is a basic awareness course and is required before attending the detailed training for Club Welfare Officers.

Undertaking appropriate training will enable the Club Welfare Officer to:

- Explain the role and responsibility of the Club Welfare Officer and how this relates to other key roles in American football
- Review club processes regarding good safeguarding practice and duty of care
- Identify legislation and government guidance relevant to the Club Welfare Officer role, including the Club Welfare Officer’s need to have a working knowledge of children’s social care, the police, LADO and so on

Reasons for taking appropriate action to report concerns

There may be a number of reasons an individual finds it necessary to report a concern. These include:

- In response to something a child has said
- In response to signs or suspicions of abuse
- In response to allegations made against a member of staff or volunteer
- In response to allegations made about a parent, carer or someone not working within the sport
- In response to bullying
- In response to a breach of code of conduct/poor practice
- Observation of inappropriate behaviour

This is not a definitive list.

There are three steps involved in taking appropriate action. These are known as the three R's. Each is essential.

- **R**esponding to the disclosure/suspicion and/or allegation
- **R**ecording the relevant information
- **R**eporting the relevant information

Each of these steps is covered in more detail below:

Step 1 Responding to disclosure, suspicions and/or allegations

- Anyone responding to disclosure, suspicions and/or allegations must always:
- Stay calm; do not show disgust or disbelief
- Ensure the child is safe and feels safe
- Listen carefully to what is said
- Ask questions only where they are really necessary to clarify what you are being told. (Always avoid asking leading questions)
- Keep an open mind – do not make assumptions or judgments, show disgust or disbelief

- Take the concern seriously
- Reassure the child and stress that they are not to blame
- Be honest and (as soon as you can feasibly mention it) explain you will have to tell someone else to help with the situation. (Do not agree to keep secrets between you and the child)
- Maintain confidentiality – only tell others if it will help protect the child

Never:

- Approach any alleged abuser to discuss the concern
- Rush into actions that may be inappropriate
- Make promises you cannot keep
- Take sole responsibility. Always consult someone else (the person in charge or the designated officer) so you can begin to protect the child and gain support for yourself

Step 2 Recording the incident

Information passed to children's social care, police and/or the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) must be as helpful as possible, which is why it is important to make a detailed record at the time of the disclosure/concern.

Information recorded must include the following:

- Details of the child including full name, age/date of birth, address and gender
- Details of the parent or guardian and whether they have been informed or not
- Details of the facts of the allegation or observations
- Details of the person alleged to have caused the incident/injury including the name, address and date of birth or their approximate age
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what happened and how
- Witnesses to the incident(s)
- Any times, dates or other relevant information
- A clear distinction between what is (known to be) fact, opinion or hearsay

- A signature, date and time on the report

Step 3 Reporting

Reporting to police or children's social care

Reporting the matter to the police, children's social care department or LADO should not be delayed by attempts to obtain more information.

A record must be made of the name and job title of the children's social care, police or LADO member of staff to whom the concerns were passed, together with the time and date of the call, in case any follow-up is needed. Wherever possible, referrals telephoned to the children's social care department or LADO, must be confirmed in writing within 24-48 hours.

The incident must be reported to the Club Welfare Officer immediately who will notify the relevant authorities. If the Club Welfare Officer is not available a member of the club committee must be notified. In the unusual event that none of these individuals are available guidance must be sought directly from the relevant authorities.

Essex Spartans A.F.O Whistle Blowing Policy

The Essex Spartans A.F.O is committed to developing a culture where it is safe, and acceptable, for all those involved in Football to raise concerns about unacceptable practice and misconduct.

You may be the first to recognise something is wrong but you may not feel able to express your concerns out of a belief that this would be disloyal to colleagues or you may fear harassment, victimisation or disadvantage. These feelings, however natural, must never result in a child continuing to be unnecessarily at risk. Remember, it is often the most vulnerable children who are targeted.

These children need someone like you to safeguard their welfare. Those involved in the sport must acknowledge their individual responsibilities to bring matters of concern to the attention of the club's welfare officer, the committee and/ or relevant agencies. Although this can be difficult, it is particularly important where the welfare of children may be at risk.

The Essex Spartans A.F.O assures all involved in Football that they will be treated fairly and that all concerns will be properly considered. In cases where the suspicions prove to be unfounded, no action will be taken against those who report their suspicions/allegations, provided they acted in good faith and without malicious intent. The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 protects whistle blowers from victimisation, discipline or dismissal where they raise genuine concerns of misconduct or malpractice.

Reasons for whistle blowing

Each individual has a responsibility for raising concerns about unacceptable practice or behaviour:

- To prevent the problem worsening or widening
- To protect or reduce risk to others
- To prevent becoming implicated yourself

What stops people from whistle blowing?

- Starting a chain of events which spirals
- Disrupting work or training
- Fear of getting it wrong
- Fear of repercussions or damaging careers
- Fear of not being believed

What happens next?

- You should be given information on the nature and progress of any enquiries
- All concerns will be treated in confidence.
- During the process of investigating the matter, every effort will be made to keep the identity of those raising the concern unknown, except to the minimum number of individuals practicable
- The Club Welfare Officer and committee have a responsibility to protect you from harassment or victimisation
- No action will be taken against you if the concern proves to be unfounded and was raised in good faith
- Malicious allegations may be considered a disciplinary offence

Safeguarding Whistle Blowing Procedures

Should suspicions be raised via a “tip off”, the person receiving the tip off should attempt to obtain the following information from the informant:

- Name address and telephone number
- Names of individuals involved
- The manner of the alleged incident/s or circumstances

- Whether they will submit any evidence (if applicable)
- How they became aware of the nature of the allegation

You should not attempt to deal with any allegation or suspicion yourself, rather inform

your Club Welfare Officer or the committee. **Specifically do not:**

- Inform the person about whom the concern was raised
- Inform any other members, participants or employees
- Commence your own investigation
- Annotate or remove evidence
- Delay in reporting the suspicion

Also do not assume:

- “All is well, otherwise it would have been spotted earlier”
- “It doesn’t matter” or “no harm will arise”
- “Ignore it as it is not my responsibility”

Who do I tell?

The first person you should report your suspicion or allegation to is your club welfare officer. If for any reason you cannot, or do not wish to report the matter to your Club Welfare Officer, you should refer to the committee. If you cannot, or do not wish to, report the information to either of these, then you must contact the relevant authorities.

Feedback

The amount of feedback relating to the issue will vary depending on the nature and result of the investigations. However, where possible, those who have raised concerns will be kept informed of the progress and conclusion of investigations.

Should you have any questions or queries regarding this welfare policy please contact the club’s welfare officer

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