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Charlton Athletic Football Club

Match Day Safeguarding Policy

2025 - 2026





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Version Control

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Document Review

Last Review	By
01/07/2025	Ken Palmer, Senior Safeguarding Manager

Version History

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1.0		Dean Jarman Kishan Parmar		First Release

Introduction

Charlton Athletic Football Club (here on in known as The Club) is committed to protecting and promoting safeguarding and welfare of all supporters and staff on matchdays. The scope of this policy covers both CAFC Men's first team and CAFC Women's first team. As well as all CAFC boy's and girl's academy teams, when playing at The Valley.

This policy compliments the existing safeguarding policies and procedures held by the Club. This Safeguarding Policy applies to all matchdays and summarises the arrangements specifically relating to safeguarding.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that effective Club specific procedures are agreed, to safeguard all involved in the matchday event, whether as staff, participant, spectator or player. It is important to have procedures in place to ensure a clear, effective and consistent response for dealing with concerns of abuse and harm to all mentioned above.

Age of a Child

A 'child' is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. The term 'children' therefore means 'children and young people' throughout.





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Unaccompanied Children

The age limit for unaccompanied minors is 14 years old. Any child under the age of 14 should not be granted access to the stadium, unless accompanied by a responsible adult over the age of 18. This is in alignment with the NSPCC guidelines which states, children under the age of 12 are rarely mature enough to cope in an emergency.

Where children are close to the age of 14, staff may exercise professional judgement and discretion to allow entry, particularly where it is deemed necessary for the child's safety and wellbeing. This decision should be supported by appropriate checks and confirmation with the child's parent or carer.

Multiple junior tickets can be sold if all the group are 14 years and over. A responsible adult is required to accompany any child under the age of 14; even when attending with a group of children who are otherwise over 14. Anyone below the age of 18 cannot be considered a responsible adult and in charge of someone under the age of 14.

In accordance with NSPCC guidance, there are recommended ratios to help keep children safe. Please see these recommendations below, these may vary depending on the needs and abilities of children:

- Under 2 years - one adult to three children.
- 2-3 years - one adult to four children.
- 4-8 years - one adult to six children.
- 9-12 years - one adult to eight children.
- 13-18 years - one adult to ten children.

Children at Match Day Events

During match day there are often groups of children who are visiting the stadium with parents or other professionals in organised groups. If the Club or CACT are providing an event such as themed match days, the Club or CACT are not primarily responsible for these children.

The Club and CACT will however always have a minimum of 2 members of staff who will have an enhanced DBS, to every group of 20 children. For organised groups where other professionals or parents are not in attendance, the Club or CACT are primarily responsible for the children in attendance for any activity. The minimum ratio for children over 5 years of age is 2 adults (who have valid DBS checks) for every 16 children. This is reduced to 12 for children under 5 years of age. The Club and CACT will take full responsibility for these children whilst in our care and will follow standard protocols such as completing risk assessments, registration, and dispersal.

All children who attend The Valley for an activity or event including mascots and ball retrievers must be accounted for on a register. Parental consent must be documented prior to any event, which agrees to their participation, photography and how their child will be collected at the end of their experience. All parents/carers are required to sign the register on collection of their children. No children below the age of 14 should be a ball retriever, this is in regulation with the local authority. If there are ball retrievers between the age of 14-16, a child working permit must be sourced before





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any participation. Ball retrievers must not be left unattended at the away end; a member of staff must be present to oversee any issues/concerns that may arise. The ratio to this should be one adult to ten children.

Children within Hospitality

Where children or young people are being hosted within our hospitality suites it is essential that the following code of conduct is enforced:

Children or young people:

- should not be lifted up above balcony railings.
- should remain seated on the balconies i.e. no running or jumping.
- should not be served alcohol; and
- should not be left alone without other adults within the party.

Lost/Missing Children

Although, it is rare for a child to become separated from the adult that they have attended with. Stewards are instructed to stay with the child (in pairs) for 15 minutes and wait for the parents, after that they escort the child to security and an announcement is made within the stadium. Please refer to lost and found child procedure.

The DSO should be notified and requested to attend as soon as a missing child is identified. If the circumstances of the child being lost and/or missing raise a potential safeguarding concern the DSO should escalate their concerns through 'Control' and take further advice from either the Police or where necessary Social Services.

Some examples of this might be:

- if the parent/carer is intoxicated and the child has been lost due to the actions of the parent/carer,
- if a child is lost, U14 and no contact details for parents, and
- if a child is lost and in need of urgent medical attention.

Babes in Arms

Babes in arms must be in a front carrier – buggies, prams and carry seats are not permitted within the stadium. Parents or carers bringing young babies should notify the ticket office when purchasing a ticket so you can be allocated a seat in a safe area of the stadium. In instances where parents or carers arrive at the turnstiles or the match without prior notification to the ticket office, every effort should be made to offer them a safe and appropriate seat, subject to attendance levels and seating availability within the stadium.

Noise Levels

The noise levels go up and down throughout a match. Small children have thinner skulls and more sensitive hearing and thus are more prone to hearing damage than adults. Ear defenders, plugs or muffs may help to protect their hearing.





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A football stadium is a busy environment, and the singing and chanting can be overwhelming, you may also hear adult language, if you or your child is struggling, speak to a Steward about what action can be taken or about accessing our Sensory Room, where the noise of the crowds is reduced.

Mascots & Ball Retrievers

The Club will only allow children to be match day mascots or ball persons once parental consent has been obtained. A signed image consent form is also required before any images featuring that child are published in the Club's match day programme.

The Club will ensure that a co-ordinator will oversee the ball retrievers. The co-ordinator will have access to a database that will be supplied by the Club. When arranging ball retrievers, parents, carers or guardians must be included within the allocation process. At no point should the child or young person be contacted directly. The member of staff appointed in the role of ball retriever co-ordinator will have an in-date DBS and up to date safeguarding training.

Evening match days will be covered by The Club's U18's academy team. The co-ordinator will have a list of players who will be in attendance. They will be placed around the stadium, two in front of each stand. U18 players must meet at the player's entrance of the stadium, up to 45 minutes before kick-off, where they will be registered and presented with a brief of the evening.

Normal match days will be covered by children above the age of 13. They will be co-ordinated a week in advance; with a back-up list should any drop out for whatever reason. They will be placed around the stadium, two in front of each stand. When placing ball retrievers around the stadium, the away stand must have two children allocated that are aged 16 or above. Children must meet at the player's entrance of the stadium, up to 45 minutes before kick-off, where they will be registered and presented with a brief of the evening.

No photographs of mascots or ball retrievers featured in Club or CACT publications will be accompanied by personal information about the child, such as their full name school, home address or local sports team.

Whilst at The Valley, mascots and ball retrievers are always accompanied by at least 2 members of staff who have a valid DBS check. Staff who are responsible for mascots and ball persons on a match day are also required to have a good level of understanding and awareness of safeguarding children.

Searching of U18's

The decision to conduct searches of U18's will be made by the Safety Officer. Where a child is identified, Control should be informed where a Designated Safeguarding Officer will attend the area of the search, observing the search taking place.

An incident card should be completed for any search on an U18 even if the outcome is negative. Name and contact details should be collected and card should be given to the Safety Officer at the end of the match. Protocols and the process of searching children should promote mutual respect to and from all parties.





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Stewards should always identify themselves and provide proof that they are an authorised event steward with the Club.

Good practice is to have two stewards present for the search, who should both give their name and job title. Stewards should not need to touch the child during the search, as the procedure is to guide the child or young person to demonstrate that they are not carrying/hiding any dangerous or prohibited items.

Good Practice when searching a Child

1. Explain the reason for the search.
2. Ask the child for permission to undertake the search, explain that the person has a right to refuse, but doing so can lead to non-admittance; if an adult is present with the child, obtain their permission to conduct the search, ensuring the adult is present for the duration of the search.
3. Ask the child if they are carrying anything which may be dangerous, prohibited or that they plan to use to celebrate during the match.
4. Ask if anyone else has asked them to carry anything into the ground for them.
5. Explain what they think they may find in the search.
6. Ask the child to empty and turn out their pockets.
7. Ask the child to take off any outer jacket(s) and pass them over to the other steward for searching.
8. Ask the child to roll up their trousers to the knees and roll down their socks.
9. If wearing trousers, ask them to pull out the shirt at the waist and visually ensure there is nothing in the trouser belt area; and
10. Request that they replace all clothing before moving on.
11. Only search people of the same gender as themselves.
12. Follow the correct Stadium procedure when finding unauthorised items and explain these procedures to the people involved; and
13. Keep people only for as long as necessary, releasing the child back to the adult to move as soon as reasonably possible.

Recording Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse or Poor Practice





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All Stewards should immediately report any observations, allegation or suspicions of abuse or poor practice by another professional to Control or the Matchday Safeguarding Officer, who will ask for a written factual statement from the person making the report.

Any statement made by the child should be reported in their own words. These reports should be confined to facts. Any opinion, interpretation or judgement should be clearly stated as this, keeping any questions to a minimum and they should be of an open format. No suggestion of who the perpetrator was or how any concern or incident happened should be suggested, unless expressly stated by the child. Notes of the incident should be completed contemporaneously where possible and as soon after the interaction in all other cases, it should be noted on the statement the time and day of the disclosure as well as the time and day the statement is written.

Poor practice represents unsafe working practice and is a cause for concern and staff should feel able to raise concerns about poor or unsafe practice. Where poor practice is considered to have occurred, in the first instance, staff should discuss with their Control or the Matchday Safeguarding Officer. An incident report will then be required to be completed on MyConcern. An internal investigation will be followed, and all relevant information will be assessed and reviewed by the Senior Safeguarding Manager and appropriate Line Manager or HR Manager, to decide about any poor practice that is alleged to have happened.

If you have concerns regarding the Matchday Safeguarding Officer, the Senior Safeguarding Manager should be contacted as appropriate. If the concerns are also with the Senior Safeguarding Manager or the individual considers all routes taken have been ineffective whistleblowing procedures are in place for such concerns to be raised. Please see CAFC Whistleblowing Policy.

Investigations into possible abuse will require careful management. In these cases, the Senior Safeguarding Manager will first seek the advice of the Football Association Safeguarding Children Team, Children's Social Care, a Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) or the Police before setting up an internal inquiry and take their advice on informing the child's parents. In any case of suspected abuse, as soon as the Local Authority or the Police have been informed, the Club must provide a report to the Football Association, the Football League Head of Safeguarding and inform the Club's Chief Executive Officer. Any external local authority provision will naturally take the lead on any case.

Providing it is appropriate to do so the Senior Safeguarding Manager will maintain constant dialogue with all parties involved with the allegation until such time as the matter has reached a reasonable outcome, taking the lead from the external agency. Escalation to inform board level will take place at the Senior Safeguarding Manager's earliest opportunity.

Staff should not assume that someone else will pass on information that they think may be critical to keeping a child safe.





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Feedback should be given by local authority children's social care to the referrer on the decisions taken. Where appropriate, this feedback should include the reasons why a case may not meet the statutory threshold and offer suggestions for other sources of more suitable support. Staff should always follow up their concerns if they are not satisfied with the local authority children's social care response and should escalate their concerns if they remain dissatisfied.

The Club Whistleblowing Policy is available on the CAFC website should any member of staff wish to escalate their concerns beyond the safeguarding structure. The NSPCC whistleblowing helpline is available for staff who do not feel able to raise concerns regarding child protection failures internally. Staff can call 0800 028 0285 and email help@nspcc.org.uk

Reporting Concerns

Charlton Athletic Football Club is a safe and fun environment where children are encouraged to reach their goals. It is therefore important that we have clear processes where parents, staff or children can share any worries or concerns they may have. These concerns are recorded and acted on appropriately, using MyConcern (see appendix 2).

All our staff who work directly with young people are trained to create a safe environment where they can speak up and share any worries. All our staff have a duty of care to respond to any disclosures where the issues is at home, school or within the Club.

All our staff have a responsibility to record and refer any concerns they may have about a young person and inform the Club Safeguarding Manager Parents and carers know their child best and are best placed to notice any significant changes in their behaviour or well-being. If you are concerned about your child, you can contact a member of the Safeguarding Team.

External Stakeholders, Third Parties and Subcontractors

Charlton Athletic Football Club may work alongside external stakeholders, third parties and subcontractors on a match day. It is the Club's responsibility to ensure there are Service Level Agreements in place agreed by both parties. It is the responsibility of external stakeholders, third parties and subcontractors to ensure they have safeguarding procedures in place for their employees. The Club will support and use their safeguarding policies where applicable, however, is not responsible for their employees.





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Match Day Contacts

Mick Everett
Safety Officer
mick.everett@cafc.co.uk

Kishan Parmar
Matchday Safeguarding Officer
kishan.parmar@cafc.co.uk

Ken Palmer
Senior Safeguarding Manager
07385473313
kenneth.palmer@cafc.co.uk

Police Contact
Dean Cuomo
Metropolitan Police Football Officer
dean.cuomo@met.police.uk

Emergency Services - 999

Non-Emergency Services - 101

NSPCC - 0808 800 5000

Royal Greenwich Safeguarding MASH Team
020 8921 3172
mash-referrals@royalgreenwich.org.uk



UNIVERSITY OF
GREENWICH



Christopher
Ward





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Appendix 1

CODES OF CONDUCT



ANYONE AGED 14 YEARS AND UNDER MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A RESPONSIBLE PERSON AGED 18 YEARS OR OVER.



PARENTS OR OTHER RESPONSIBLE PERSON(S) HAVE PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SAFETY OF THEIR CHILD/YOUNG PERSON WHO ACCOMPANIES THEM AND ENSURE THEY ALWAYS KEEP THEM CLOSE.



PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU ARE ALWAYS AWARE OF WHERE YOUR CHILD/YOUNG PERSON IS DURING YOUR VISIT. HAVE A PLAN TO MEET SOMEWHERE SHOULD YOU GET SEPARATED.



ENSURE YOUR CHILD/YOUNG PERSON KNOWS WHO TO CONTACT SHOULD THEY FEEL LOST OR WORRIED.



STEWARDS ARE SITUATED AROUND THE STADIUM AND STANDS IN HIGH VISIBILITY JACKETS FOR YOUR SAFETY AND CONFIDENCE.



ALL OUR STEWARDS ARE TRAINED IN DEALING WITH LOST CHILDREN, PLEASE ENSURE YOUR CHILD KNOWS NOT TO WALK OFF WITH A SPECTATOR THEY DO NOT KNOW.



SEEK A STEWARD IMMEDIATELY AND LISTEN TO ANNOUNCEMENTS OVER THE STADIUM SPEAKERS SHOULD YOU GET SEPARATED FROM YOUR CHILD/YOUNG PERSON.



IN AN EMERGENCY, PLEASE ENSURE YOUR CHILD/YOUNG PERSON IS AWARE WHAT THEY NEED TO DO SHOULD YOU NEED TO EVACUATE THE STADIUM AND WHERE TO MEET YOU.



ON MATCHDAYS A DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING OFFICER WILL BE AVAILABLE TO HELP.





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**IF SOMETHING DOESN'T LOOK OR FEEL RIGHT, IT PROBABLY
ISN'T - REPORT IT**

Appendix 2

What to do in response to an incident or allegation

When a child, young person or adult at risk has disclosed concerning information to you
OR
You have witnessed or had reported to you an incident or complaint involving a child, young person or adult at risk, which may be considered abuse or poor practice.

