

MERLEY FOOTBALL CLUB



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

LAST UPDATED: MAY 2026

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CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Merley Football Club recognises that because coaches / volunteers are in regular and frequent contact with children they are particularly well placed to observe signs of abuse. The club is aware of the responsibilities which the coaches / volunteers have with regard to the protection of children from abuse and from inadequate and inappropriate care.

The Club have a designated Child Protection Welfare Officer, where initial concerns should be raised (contact details can be found on the club's website www.merleyfc.com or at the bottom of this policy).

All coaches / volunteers have been made aware of the above and realise that if they suspect any wrong doings towards any of the children connected to the club that they must bring it to the attention of the Welfare Officer immediately. Where coaches / volunteers see signs which cause them to have concerns they should seek information from the child with tact and sympathy. It is not however the responsibility of the coach / volunteer to investigate suspected abuse.

All records and witness statements relating to child protection concerns will be marked confidential and kept on the premises belonging to the Welfare officer. All coaches / volunteers connected to Merley Football club will be subject to a DBS Enhanced Procedure and required to complete an FA safeguarding course.

Child Protection Principles:

Principles on which Merley Cobham Sports Youth Football club procedures are based:

- Children have the right to protection
- Everyone working with or in contact with children has a responsibility for their protection
- Responsibility relating to concern for a child's safety must be shared
- Child protection depends on all coaches/volunteers and all agencies working together.

Child protection over-rides:

- Confidentiality
- Relationship with family
- Agency hierarchy and objectives

Merley Football club responsibilities and those of the FA are determined by the following legislation:

- Police Act 1997
- Sex Offenders Act 1997
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Children Act amended 1990
- Protection of Children Act 1999
- Sexual Offences Act revised 2000
- Youth Evidence and crime Evidence Act 1999

It is vital that these steps are followed to ensure the safety of the children. Other points to be reminded of include:

1. Do not guarantee confidentiality to the child.
2. Take what the child says very seriously.
3. Typical signs of abuse include:
 - unexplained bruising or injuries
 - sexually explicit language/actions
 - sudden changes in behaviour e.g., withdrawn
 - something a child has said
 - a change observed over a long period of time / loss of weight for no apparent reason
4. Remember these signs may not constitute abuse, but if you are unsure, contact the Merley Welfare Officer.

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Categories Of Abuse:

Physical Abuse:

Physical abuse implies physically harmful action directed against a child; it is usually defined as any inflicted injury such as bruises, burns, head injuries, fractures, abdominal injuries or poisoning. Possible physical abuse in football includes:

- inappropriate training methods
- overtraining/overplaying
- knowingly playing players who are already injured or ill

Emotional Abuse:

Emotional abuse includes a child being continually terrorised, berated or rejected.

Possible emotional abuse in football includes:

- Frequently taunting, criticising or bullying children to attain standards that they are clearly not able to reach
- Continuous criticism and lack of praise from the coach/parent
- Pressure from the parent for their child to play football against their wishes

Sexual Abuse:

Sexual abuse is defined as the involvement of dependant developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities they do not truly comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent, or that violate the social taboos of family roles. Possible sexual abuse in football includes:

- Inappropriate physical contact e.g., supporting, touching or inappropriate medical treatment
- Showing young people pornographic books, photography or videos.

Neglect:

Neglect can be a very insidious form of maltreatment, which can go on for a long time. It implies failure of the parents to act properly in safeguarding the health, safety and well-being of the child. It includes nutritional neglect, failure to provide medical care or to protect a child from physical and social danger. Possible neglect in football includes:

- Failure to ensure that the child is safe or to expose them to undue extremes of weather or risk or injury.
- Fail to meet the child's basic physical needs for food and warm clothing.
- To constantly leave children alone or unsupervised.

Bullying:

Emotional and verbal bullying are more common than physical violence. Possible bullying in football:

- Players ganging up against one individual and threatening them verbally or physically.
- A coach wanting to "win – at – all – costs" forcing players to the limit.
- Young players threatening and stealing from teammates

For more information on photography and filming guidelines, refer to our Photography and Filming of Children Policy.

If you have any concerns, please contact:

- Leanne Burgess (Merley Welfare Officer) / welfare@merleyfc.com / 07900 081001
- Kevin Pike (County Welfare Officer) / safeguarding@dorsetfa.com / 07903 574657
- Justine Mosley (Deputy County Welfare Officer) / safeguarding@dorsetfa.com / 07908 647052
- Police or Children's Social Care
- NSPCC 24-hour Helpline for advice on 0808 800 5000 or text 88858 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

It is important to note that submissions will be treated in confidence and the only person who receives a copy of your submission is the club's Welfare Officer.