

Tiptree Heath Youth Football Club Safeguarding Children Policy

This policy has been created by the Joint Tiptree Heath Club Welfare Officers in accordance with the following documents and guidance:

- The Football Association's 2024-2028 safeguarding strategy, 'An Ever-Safer Culture'
- The Football Association policy on 'Grassroots Safeguarding Policies and Procedures'
- The Football Association's policy on 'Affiliated Clubs Safeguarding Policy and Procedures'
- The NSPCC guidance on best practice for youth sports clubs
- Essex County Football Association's 'Grassroots Football Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedure'
- Links to these documents are available in Appendix B of this policy document.

"The true success of a club is not just measured in trophies, but in how safe and respected every child feels while wearing its shirt." - The Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU), a specialist unit within the NSPCC

Tiptree Heath Youth Football Club (THYFC) is a Charter Standard football club committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and positive environment for children and young people to participate in football. At the heart of our ethos are the principles: Enjoy, Improve, and Play the Right Way. We aim to put every child's development first, both as an individual and as a footballer. Our approach emphasises the importance of sportsmanship, teamwork, and confidence with the ball. We promote values that prioritise personal growth and fair play above results, enabling children to thrive both on and off the pitch. Safeguarding is at the heart of our club's operational culture, aligns directly with our core values and is fundamental in all interactions we have with young people.

This policy outlines the safeguarding measures we implement in accordance with The Football Association's Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures. It provides a structured framework for all members of the club, including coaches, volunteers, parents and players.

1. Policy Statement

THYFC acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of every child and young person entrusted to our care and is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and enjoyable environment for all. This policy applies to everyone involved in our club, whether in a child-facing or operational capacity. A "child" or "young person" is defined as anyone under the age of 18 involved in any club-related football activity. This is predominantly, but not limited to, players and youth coaches. We subscribe to and adopt in full The FA's Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures, accessible via www.TheFA.com/Footballsafes.

2. Core Principles

Tiptree Heath Youth Football Club (THYFC) is fully committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of every child and young person involved in its activities. The following safeguarding principles underpin all aspects of the club's practice, governance, and culture:

- The welfare of the child is, and must always be, the paramount consideration.
- ALL children and young people have the right to enjoy football in a safe, inclusive and supportive environment.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Every individual involved in the club, including, but not limited to, coaches, volunteers, officials, players, and parents, has a duty to protect children and promote their welfare.
- A culture of openness, accountability, and proactive engagement is encouraged throughout the club.
- All safeguarding concerns, allegations or suspicions will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately and without delay.

THYFC operates within a multi-agency safeguarding framework. The club works in partnership with the Police, Children's Social Care, the Essex County FA Welfare Officer, and other relevant bodies to share information and escalate concerns where required. Respect, equality, inclusion and dignity are embedded into every aspect of the club's operations. Safeguarding measures are both preventative and reactive. Children and young people are actively listened to and given a voice in the club.

3. Safeguarding Culture at THYFC

The safeguarding commitment of THYFC is fully aligned with both The FA's Safeguarding Strategy and our club's own values and Code of Conduct. It underpins our wider mission to promote a culture of inclusion, respect, and personal development. We foster a culture where children can:

- **Enjoy:** Children feel safe, valued and included. Every player has the right to enjoy football in an environment free from harm, pressure or discrimination. Their happiness, welfare and confidence are always our priority.
- **Coaches are trained, DBS-checked,** and dedicated to helping players develop both on and off the pitch. Sessions are structured, age-appropriate and delivered in a positive, supportive way to promote learning, growth and self-belief.
- **Play the Right Way:** Everyone (coaches, players, parents and spectators) agrees to uphold the highest standards of behaviour. We follow The FA's Respect Codes of Conduct, communicate openly and respectfully, and always act in the best interests of the child. Adults modelling healthy behaviours is a key component of this.

Safeguarding at THYFC is a shared responsibility. By embedding these values into everything we do, we ensure football is a safe, rewarding and inspiring experience for all involved.

4. Club Welfare Officers (CWOs)

THYFC has appointed Joint Club Welfare Officers in line with The FA's requirements. Together, our Club Welfare Officers have over 35 years of experience in the active safeguarding of young people through teaching ages 4 to 19, in addition to specialist enhanced safeguarding training provided by the FA.

Our Club Welfare Officer:

- **Emma Jones:** 07896 295962 | tiptreeheathwelfare@gmail.com

Our CWOs are the first point of contact for any safeguarding concerns and liaise regularly with Essex County FA and The FA, as required.

5. Adult-to-Child Ratios

At Tiptree Heath Youth Football Club, ensuring appropriate levels of supervision is a key part of safeguarding our players and youth coaches. We follow guidance from The FA and NSPCC regarding minimum adult-to-child ratios during all football activities.

Minimum Supervision Requirements:

Age Group	Recommended Ratio
4-8 years	1 adult to every 6 children
9-12 years	1 adult to every 8 children
13-18 years	1 adult to every 10 children

A minimum of two FA-DBS-checked adults must be present at all sessions, matches or events, regardless of group size or age. If an activity includes mixed-gender groups, it is strongly recommended that both male and female staff be present. Young leaders or coaches under 18 years old cannot count as supervising adults. Their presence increases the number of adults required.

Additional Considerations:

- If any children have additional support needs (e.g. medical, disability, behavioural), the ratio will be adjusted accordingly to ensure their safety and inclusion.

- All supervising adults must be FA safeguarding-trained, understand their responsibilities, and be inducted into the club's safeguarding procedures.
- Activities with increased risk (e.g. travel (see section 13), tournaments, unfamiliar venues) may require a higher adult-to-child ratio, and this should be checked with the club welfare officers.

THYFC is a safe and supportive environment. By meeting or exceeding these ratios, we ensure that every child is properly supervised and safeguarded at all times.

6. Safe Recruitment of Volunteers

All volunteers at THYFC will be clearly informed of their role and responsibilities before beginning their duties. Each volunteer will be signposted to key resources available on the club website, including:

- Tiptree Heath's Code of Conduct
- The Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Procedures for reporting concerns
- Contact details for the Club Welfare Officers

Volunteers are expected to familiarise themselves with these documents and always uphold the club's values and safeguarding standards.

a) Recruitment Process

1. **An Initial Discussion with Team Manager:** Any prospective volunteer, particularly those interested in coaching, should first speak to the manager of their child's team. The manager will conduct an informal discussion to explore the volunteer's interest, outline the role and responsibilities, discuss the volunteer's suitability and experience, and set clear expectations around behaviour, safeguarding, and club values.
2. **Information is shared with the Club Welfare Officer:** If the team manager agrees the individual is a suitable candidate, they will forward the volunteer's information to the Club Welfare Officer (CWO) to begin the safeguarding checks and onboarding process.
3. **Completion of FA Safeguarding Training:** Before progressing, the volunteer must complete the FA Safeguarding Children course, which is available online. This training is mandatory for all volunteers working with or around children.
4. **DBS Check through the FA and Club Induction with the CWO:** Once safeguarding training is completed, the CWO will carry out an FA Enhanced DBS Check and provide a basic induction to the volunteer. This includes key safeguarding contacts, how to raise or report concerns, club policies and The FA's Respect Code of Conduct, and expectations around communication, conduct, and social media. Only once these steps are completed and approved will the volunteer be formally added to the club's official volunteer register and allowed to begin their role.

b) Ongoing Monitoring and Support

- Volunteers will be supported by the Club Committee and/or designated mentors.
- The Club Welfare Officer will remain a consistent point of contact.
- The club will provide opportunities for ongoing safeguarding and role-specific training.
- Any safeguarding concerns or breaches of conduct will be taken seriously and managed in accordance with FA and club procedures.

c) Concerns About a Volunteer If a concern is raised about a volunteer's behaviour, suitability or safeguarding practice, it will be reported immediately to the Club Welfare Officer. Appropriate steps will be taken in line with The FA's safeguarding procedures, which may include temporary suspension from duties, investigation by the club or external agencies, and referral to the County FA Safeguarding Team and/or statutory authorities.

7. Bullying and Abuse

THYFC recognises bullying as a form of abuse and will not tolerate it in any form whatsoever. All safeguarding concerns are treated with the utmost seriousness and dealt with appropriately.

8. Respect Codes of Conduct

All members involved in youth football (including players, coaches, parents, officials, and volunteers) are required to fully comply with The Football Association's Respect Codes of Conduct. These codes promote a positive and respectful environment both on and off the pitch, emphasising sportsmanship, fair play, and mutual respect.

The Respect Codes outline clear expectations, such as:

- Players must always demonstrate respect towards teammates, opponents, referees, and coaches, and play fairly and abide by the rules.
- Coaches and team officials are expected to lead by example, encouraging positive behaviour, managing emotions, and supporting officials' decisions.
- Parents and spectators should provide encouragement without undue pressure or criticism, maintaining a supportive atmosphere.

Failure to adhere to these codes undermines the integrity and enjoyment of the game and may result in formal sanctions. These can include warnings, suspensions, or referrals to the County Football Association for further disciplinary action. For full details and guidance, please refer to The FA's Respect Codes of Conduct here: [The FA Respect Code of Conduct](#).

By respecting these codes, everyone contributes to a safer, fairer, and more enjoyable football experience for everyone. Further information on how Tiptree Heath Youth Football Club use the Code of Conduct in practice can be found here: [Tiptree Heath YFC Code of Conduct](#).

9. Reporting Concerns

If you are concerned about a child:

1. Contact a Club Welfare Officer (Emma) by message, phone, email, or in person at thyfcwelfare@gmail.com.
2. If unavailable, contact Essex County FA Welfare Officer: 01245 393098, CountyWO@essexfa.com.
3. In emergencies, contact NSPCC (0808 800 5000), Police, or Social Care.

10. Social Media & Online Safety

All club communications via social media and online platforms must be conducted publicly and remain professional, appropriate, and respectful at all times. The club requires explicit consent from parents or guardians before sharing any images or videos featuring children. To safeguard the welfare of all participants, private or direct messaging between coaches and players is strictly prohibited. All communication with players should be conducted through official, monitored channels that include parents or guardians where appropriate.

Club members are expected to uphold the club's values online and avoid any posts or comments that could be perceived as harmful, discriminatory, or damaging to individuals or the club's reputation. Coaches, staff, players, and parents should also be mindful of privacy settings and personal information shared on social media. Adhering to these guidelines protects both the individuals involved and the club, ensuring a safe, transparent, and positive online environment for everyone.

11. Whistleblowing

Whistleblowing refers to the act of reporting concerns or suspicions about wrongdoing, unsafe practices, or breaches of safeguarding policy, particularly where it may not be appropriate to report through usual channels. Tiptree Heath Youth Football Club is committed to maintaining a culture of openness, accountability, and safety. All individuals involved in the club (coaches, players, volunteers, officials, and parents) must feel confident and supported when raising concerns about a child's welfare or an adult's conduct.

a) What should be reported? Anyone can raise a whistleblowing concern if they observe or are made aware of:

- Poor safeguarding practice or misconduct by staff or volunteers.
- Neglect, abuse, or mistreatment of a child.
- Failure to follow the club's or FA's safeguarding procedures.
- Attempts to cover up incidents or silence concerns.

b) How to make a report If you have a safeguarding concern but feel unable to raise it directly with a coach or team official, you should contact one of the Club Welfare Officers:

- **Emma Jones:** 07896 295962 | tiptreeheathwelfare@gmail.com

If you feel your concern is not being taken seriously, or wish to speak to someone outside of the club, you can contact:

- Essex County FA Welfare Officer: 01245 393098 | CountyWO@essexfa.com
- NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line: 0800 028 0285
- The FA Safeguarding Team: Footballsafe@TheFA.com

All whistleblowing reports will be treated seriously and in strict confidence. Individuals raising genuine concerns will be protected from victimisation or retaliation, even if the concern turns out to be unfounded. Whistleblowing is not disloyal, it is a vital part of keeping children safe. THYFC encourages everyone to speak up if they see something that doesn't seem right.

12. Equality, Inclusion & Opportunity

We oppose all forms of discrimination. Our club environment is inclusive, welcoming and safe for all.

13. Safeguarding on Tours and Trips (U13+ Players)

When organising any trip, tournament, or overnight tour involving children playing in an Under 13s team or above, THYFC ensures that additional safeguarding measures are in place to protect all participants. These include:

- Parental consent must be obtained in writing for all players, with full details of the itinerary, accommodation, travel arrangements, and emergency contacts.
- Adult-to-child ratios will be age-appropriate and, if the group is mixed, include at least one DBS-checked adult of each gender.
- Room-sharing arrangements will be carefully planned. Under no circumstances will adults share rooms with children. Children will only share with others of a similar age and the same gender.
- Supervision will be active and ongoing at all times, including during travel, free time, and overnight stays.
- Safeguarding measures will be both proactive and reactive.
- Medical and dietary information must be shared in advance, with appropriate plans in place for any medical needs.
- All tours will be risk assessed, and a designated Tour Safeguarding Lead will be identified for the duration of the trip.
- All adults involved in supervising tours will be briefed on safeguarding responsibilities, communication protocols, and the club's behaviour expectations.
- THYFC will follow best practice from The FA and NSPCC regarding safe events and overnight stays.

There is a full overnight/trips procedure document currently in production. Relevant coaches and managers will be notified when it is completed and are expected to read and follow the guidance in that document.

14. Policy Review and Ongoing Development

This policy is reviewed annually by the Club Committee and the Club Welfare Officers to ensure continued compliance with FA regulations, legislative updates, and the club's own safeguarding standards. All relevant personnel are required to undertake safeguarding training and refreshers in accordance with The FA regulations. It is the responsibility of all individuals volunteering with Tiptree Heath to ensure they comply with this safeguarding policy, with support and guidance from the THYFC Club Welfare Officer(s) and the committee.

Appendix

A. Useful Contacts

- **The FA Safeguarding Website:** www.TheFA.com/Footballsafes
- **Email:** Footballsafes@TheFA.com
- **NSPCC 24-hour Helpline:** 0808 800 5000
- **FA General Enquiries:** 0845 210 8080

B. Reference Links

- <https://www.thefa.com/news/2024/nov/25/new-fa-safeguarding-strategy>
- <https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/policy-downloads>
- <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/safeguarding-child-protection/safer-activities-events>
- <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/away-from-home/sports-clubs/>
- <https://essexfa.com/about/strategy/safeguarding-and-welfare>