



SOLENT SEAHAWKS AMERICAN FOOTBALL ACADEMY

Child and Vulnerable Adult Welfare and Safeguarding Policy

Welfare and Safeguarding Policy

Introduction

This policy is for the information of everyone in our club working with children and/or vulnerable adults, as well as our players, coaches and parents.

Note: a child is anyone under the age of 18, as defined in The Children Act 1989.

Solent Seahawks American Football Academy (The Academy) will ensure that:

- The welfare of the child/vulnerable adult is paramount in all circumstances.
- All children/vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse and harassment whilst participation in American Football or outside of the activity.
- All suspicious incidents and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Confidentiality will be upheld in line with Data Protection Act 1994 and the Human Rights Act 2000.
- The Safeguarding Policy is reviewed annually.

Policy Statement

The Academy has a duty of care to safeguard all children/vulnerable adults involved in the organisation from harm. All children/vulnerable adults have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children/adults and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account.

The academy has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, coaches, volunteers and officials provide them with the highest possible standard of care. The Academy will maintain the professionalism and safeguards of good practice that are associated with the game.

The academy aims to ensure that all children and/or vulnerable adults regardless of age, gender, religion or beliefs, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation or socio-economic background have a positive and enjoyable experience of sport at the Solent Seahawks in a safe and child friendly environment.

Policy Aims

The aim of the Academy's Safeguarding Policy is to:

- Provide the children/vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection whilst partaking in Academy activities.
- Provide a framework to allow coaches and volunteers to make informed choices when dealing with child/vulnerable adult protection issues.

Club Best Practice

We operate and use the following good practice throughout the club.

Recruitment of coaches and volunteers

- All coaches and volunteers who have contact with players in teams with young people under the age of 18 must undertake a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (formerly a CRB check) to ensure they don't have a history of harmful behaviour.
- All coaches ensure that they are registered and insured with the British American Football Association to undertake training sessions.

All members of the Academy should demonstrate the highest possible behaviour standards. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate within American Football:

- Always work in a publicly open environment. Avoid being in private/unobserved situations with a child/vulnerable adult.
- Encourage an open environment (e.g. no secrets)
- Ensure that at least one other adult is present during training sessions.
- Situations may occur when in order to teach or coach certain techniques it is necessary to make contact with a player. In such instances the following must apply:
 - The players and parents must be made aware of the context in which this may happen when joining the Club / activity.
 - Physical contact should only be used when there is no other alternative of coaching a technique, or in an emergency.
 - Avoid inappropriate or unnecessary contact.
- If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms ensure that the adults work in pairs, and that gender is appropriate.
- If a team includes mixed ages, i.e. the junior squad which includes over 18s, ensure that no over 18s team members are in the changing rooms when under 18s are present without an accompanying club official or coach.
- Ensure that if mixed teams are taken away, male and female adult members accompany them.
- Keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Place the welfare of each person before winning or achieving goals.
- Only work within the limitations of your knowledge and qualifications.
- Keep up to date with knowledge and technical skills.
- Recognise the developmental needs and capacity of children/vulnerable adults, avoiding excessive training or competition and not push them against their will.
- Give enthusiastic and constructive feedback; avoid negative criticism.
- Build balanced relationships based on trust empowering children/vulnerable adults or vulnerable adults to share in the decision making process
- Behave in an exemplary manner; be an excellent role model.

- Make sport fun and enjoyable and encourage fair play, and never condone the use of prohibited substances.
- Team communications by emails or texts must be in a group format.

Emails should be addressed to another coach and all team members only by bcc. Parental/guardian permission must be obtained for you to communicate with their under 18s in this manner.

- Teams may have a closed social media site but parental permission must be obtained to communicate with children/vulnerable adults in this manner and if parent/guardian wishes to also have access this permission must be given.
- Coaches and Welfare Officers should attend the Safeguarding & Protection Children/vulnerable adults Course.

Practises to be avoided

The following should be avoided *except in emergencies*. If the cases arise where these situations are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of the NGB's or Club's head official or Welfare Officer or the child/vulnerable adult's parent/guardian:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with a child/vulnerable adult away from others.
- Avoid taking children/vulnerable adults on a car journey where you will be alone with them.
- Avoid having 'favourites' - this could lead to resentment and jealousy by other people and may lead to false allegations.
- Avoid, where possible, doing things of a personal nature for young people that they can do for themselves unless you have been requested to do so by their parents.

Please note: It may sometimes be necessary to do things of a personal nature for some people, particularly if they are young or have a disability. Such tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the person and where possible their parents / guardians. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with them about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child/vulnerable adult to carry out particular

activities. Never take on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

Practises never to be sanctioned

The following should never be sanctioned. The academy will never:

- Take a child/vulnerable adult to your home or secluded places where you will be alone with them.
- Have one to one friendship/communication on any social media including text and email messages
- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games such as horseplay.
- Have adults participate in any games or training sessions with young people. If there is a need for an adult to facilitate learning through the use of coaching aids it should be done with the utmost care, with due regards given to the safety and well-being of the young participants.
- Share a room with a child/vulnerable adult or invite or allow children/vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home unsupervised.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to people, even in fun.
- Use inappropriate language, or allow inappropriate language to go unchallenged.
- Allow allegations made by a child/vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded, or not acted upon.
- Depart premises until all child/vulnerable adult have been dispersed safely.
- Resort to bully tactics or verbal abuse.
- Cause a child/vulnerable adult to lose self-esteem.
- Allow the use of alcohol or illegal substances.

If any of the following incidents occur it should be reported immediately to the club welfare officer and if appropriate another colleague and a written record made. The parents of the child/vulnerable adult must also be informed if:

- If a child/vulnerable adult is accidentally injured.
- A child/vulnerable adult appears in distress.
- A child/vulnerable adult misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

- Any other incident that you are not comfortable with.

The contact details for the club welfare officer are Becky Birks email: ssa.welfare@gmail.com mobile: 07817412220

Photography

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people, including the use of mobile phones. While this might be rare in American Football, the sport does take place in an open environment; care should be taken to ensure that any such risk to young people is as small as possible. The following will help reduce any potential risk.

- All children featured in recordings must be appropriately dressed.
- The photograph should focus on the activity.
- Where possible images of children should be recorded in small groups.
- Ensure that images of a child, who is under a court order, are not recorded or published.
- Any instances of the use of inappropriate images should be reported to the Club Welfare Officer first, The BAFA Safeguarding Officer, the NSPCC Helpline or the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF).
- Clubs should still be allowed to use video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid. The child and their parents should be aware that this is part of the coaching programme. Care should be taken in the storing of such film, and film should be disposed of when no longer in use.
- Photographs may be taken by or on behalf of the club or other British American Football organisations for use in publicity on the internet or in the press. In all cases the club will ensure that the name and photograph of any child never appear together in such a way that the child may be identified.
- Seek parental permission to use an image of a child. A Parental Consent Form is the best way of achieving this and should be done at the beginning of the season.

The Academy is vigilant in this area, and any concerns raised by a child's parent/guardian, coach or other club official will be dealt with efficiently and appropriately.

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone at the Academy to decide whether or not child/vulnerable adult abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate officer or the appropriate authorities.

The Academy will assure all staff/volunteers that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child/vulnerable adult.

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation
- A child protection investigation
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

Should anyone involved consider the Academy or Welfare Officer to have acted inappropriately or incompetently following an investigation, the matter should be reported to the BAFANL Welfare Officer who will decide how to deal with the allegation.

Sharing concerns with Parents/Guardians

There is always a commitment to work in partnership with parents where there are concerns about their child/vulnerable adult. Therefore, in most circumstances, not involving the abuse of a person, it would be important to talk to parents to clarify any initial concerns. For example if a person seemed withdrawn, there may be a reasonable explanation. The person may have experienced an upset in the family, such as a parental separation, divorce or bereavement. Common sense is advised in these situations. However advice should be sought from the Club Welfare Officer or BAFA Safeguarding Officer if there is any uncertainty about the appropriate course of action.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality is maintained. Information will be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes:

- BAFA Safeguarding Officer
- The Club Welfare Officer
- The parent / carer / other of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation
- Social Services/Police
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the abuser is a child)

Information will be stored in a secured place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

Bullying

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable. We adopt an anti-bullying policy at the academy and ensure that everyone understands that bullying will not be tolerated in any form.

It is important for all to recognise that this form of abuse is not just perpetrated by adults, but the abuser can often be another child/vulnerable adult. Bullying is not easy to define, as it takes many forms and is usually repeated over a period of time. The actions of a bully arise out of a wish to deliberately hurt, threaten, or frighten another.

The Academy is prepared to:

- Take the problem seriously;
- Investigate any incidents;
- Talk to the bullies and victims separately;
- Decide on appropriate action.

Any signs of bullying, any incidents of bullying, should be reported to the designated Club Welfare Officer. Becky Birks email:

ssa.welfare@gmail.com

Reporting concerns from outside the Academy

Report your concerns to the Club Welfare Officer, who should contact social services or the police as soon as possible.

If the Club Welfare Officer is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact social services or the police immediately.

Social Services and the Club Welfare Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.

Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis only.

Team Management /Team Travel

Implicit within this policy is the Duty Of Care that the Head Coach and/or the Academy has to its athletes when travelling to events. The Head Coach (or his representative) should always travel with a full address list and contact number telephone numbers for all players within the team and the permission of the parent/guardian of each child (the inclusion of special instructions, dietary requirements and allergies is also extremely useful). This will allow the Head Coach to take the necessary action in the event of an emergency.

Any other concerns

Should any concerns be raised, which are not specifically dealt with within the Academy Safeguarding Policy; the Club Welfare Officer shall be informed and any action dealt with accordingly.

The Academy's Safeguarding Policy is developed from the BAFA Safeguarding Young People policy, which is available at www.britishamericanfootball.org.
