

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

BURNLEY 

Date	Version	Name	Next Review Date
Oct 2023	1.0	Gary Russell	June 2024
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FOREWORD AND POLICY INTRODUCTION

Burnley Football Club and Burnley FC in the Community are committed to ensuring the welfare, wellbeing and safety of children, young people and adults and believe that it is unacceptable for anyone to experience abuse of any kind.

All children, young people and adults have the right to protection from all forms of abuse and exploitation. It is the duty of all staff and volunteers, paid or unpaid at the Club or Community Organisation to safeguard these groups by creating an environment that protects them from harm. This policy extends to all players, participants and staff of the Club and Community Organisation.

The wellbeing of children, young people and adults is paramount for all staff and accordingly, they must make themselves aware of this Bullying Policy. Where appropriate, the policy will be supplemented by in-service training and additional guidance. All suspicions, complaints or observations of bullying will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

For the purposes of this policy, references to "Burnley FC" should be taken to include Burnley Football Club and Burnley FC in the Community, and all associated programmes, staff, volunteers and activities.

DEFINITIONS

A **child** is defined by UK laws and United Nations as someone under the age of 18 years.

An **'adult at risk'** is defined as someone who is over the age of 18 and who may have needs for care and support, is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect, and as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of or the experience of abuse and or neglect.

Activity/session covers any matches, events, coaching or community activities for which BFC or BFCitC has responsibility for the care of attendees.

Attendees refers to anyone who attends an activity as either a participant or player at a match or activity, academy or community event.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY AIMS:

Bullying can have devastating effects on individuals if left unaddressed. It can be a barrier to learning, having fun, developing social interactions and at worst can have serious impact on an individual's mental health.

Burnley Football Club and Burnley FC in the Community have a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and any reported incidents of bullying will be taken seriously. Both Burnley Football Club and Burnley FC in the

Community have a clear set of values, and our participants, parents and players are all made aware of our code of conduct during inductions to sessions.

Bullying has no place within the Club and to combat any forms of Bullying we aim to:

- Respond swiftly and quickly to minimise the impact on all individuals
- Provide workshops and briefings for all of our players and participants on how to maintain positive attitudes, develop their knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity, empathy and the impact bullying can have on someone
- Develop a range of strategies for people to protect themselves from being bullied should people feel they can act in this manner towards others.
- Ensure that all staff and volunteers understand that Bullying is not acceptable, and that support is available should this behaviour take place.
- Record all incidents of bullying and will ensure that any identified patterns or trends emerging are addressed firmly but sensitively
- Share information about concerns with the Board/Trustees to have senior management oversight of concerns within the Club.

If anyone feels that they are being bullied, they must talk to someone.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

All staff should ensure that they have read and understand this policy. The Head of Safeguarding will advise on, and manage all cases of bullying with the Safeguarding Team to ensure that all incidents of bullying are taken seriously and responded to consistently, appropriately and in a timely manner.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Burnley Football Club and Burnley Football Club in the Community recognise bullying as behaviour that intentionally or unintentionally causes harm, distress, fear, humiliation, intimidation or exclusion to another person.

In line with guidance from the NSPCC and current safeguarding best practice, bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else and may include name-calling, physical aggression, threats, intimidation, spreading rumours, exclusion, manipulation, harassment or undermining another person.

Bullying often involves a real or perceived imbalance of power between individuals or groups and is usually repeated over time. However, a single serious incident may be considered bullying where the impact on the victim is significant.

Bullying can occur between children, between adults, between children and adults, and online through digital platforms. It can take place in any environment, including training and community sessions, matches, educational settings, changing rooms, transport, residential trips, host family arrangements, social activities and online spaces to name but a few.

Bullying can take many forms, including:

- Physical bullying, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, tripping or damaging property.
- Verbal bullying, such as name-calling, mocking, teasing, threatening or insulting someone.
- Emotional or psychological bullying, such as intimidation, humiliation, manipulation, coercion or deliberate embarrassment.

- Social bullying, such as exclusion, isolation, spreading rumours or encouraging others to reject an individual.
- Non-verbal bullying, such as offensive gestures, intimidating looks or inappropriate messages.
- Cyberbullying, which takes place through online platforms, social media, messaging applications, gaming platforms or other digital technologies.
- Prejudice-based bullying, which targets an individual because of an actual or perceived protected characteristic. Discriminatory bullying relating to race, ethnicity, religion or belief, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age or any other protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

Burnley FC recognises that behaviour described as "banter" can sometimes constitute bullying. Behaviour that causes distress, humiliation, intimidation or harm will not be accepted simply because it was intended as a joke or part of team culture.

The Club recognises that bullying can have a significant impact on an individual's wellbeing, mental health, confidence, participation, performance and enjoyment of football and community activities. All reports of bullying will therefore be taken seriously and responded to appropriately.

WHAT IS CYBER BULLYING?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place through digital technology, including mobile phones, social media, messaging apps, gaming platforms, email and online forums.

It can occur at any time and in any place, and harmful content can be shared widely, copied and stored, increasing the impact on the individual affected. Burnley FC treats cyberbullying with the same seriousness as any other form of bullying.

Forms of Cyber Bullying may present as:

- Sending abusive, threatening or intimidating messages
- Sharing or spreading rumours, gossip or false information
- Excluding individuals from online groups or activities
- Posting or sharing embarrassing, humiliating or harmful content
- Sharing private or personal information without consent
- Hacking or accessing accounts without permission
- Sharing, editing or manipulating images or videos to cause harm
- The use of AI-generated or altered content to ridicule or intimidate
- Online sexual harassment or inappropriate communication

Individuals should not engage with or share harmful content. Where safe, evidence should be preserved and concerns reported to a coach, safeguarding champion or the Safeguarding Team.

Cyberbullying will be managed in line with the Club's safeguarding procedures, and serious incidents may be referred to external agencies including the Police or Children's Social Care.

OTHER TYPES OF BULLYING (including prejudice-based and harmful behaviour)

Burnley FC recognises that bullying may be motivated by prejudice or directed at individuals because of who they are or are perceived to be. This includes behaviour that is discriminatory, targeted or abusive towards any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

This may include bullying related to:

- Race or ethnicity (racist bullying or abuse)
- Religion or belief
- Sex or gender
- Sexual orientation (including homophobic and biphobic bullying)
- Gender identity (including transphobic bullying)
- Disability or special educational needs
- Age or other protected characteristics

Bullying may take many forms, including verbal abuse, physical behaviour, exclusion, intimidation, harassment, sexual harassment, spreading rumours, online abuse or repeated targeting of an individual.

Burnley FC also recognises that sexualised behaviour, sexual harassment and sexually inappropriate communication between children, young people or adults at risk may constitute bullying and/or child-on-child abuse and will always be treated as a safeguarding concern.

The Club will not accept any behaviour dismissed as “banter” where it causes offence, distress, humiliation or harm, particularly where it relates to protected characteristics or personal identity.

All concerns relating to prejudice-based bullying, sexualised behaviour or harmful conduct will be treated seriously and managed in line with safeguarding procedures. In appropriate cases, this may include referral to external agencies.

PEER ON PEER ABUSE

Burnley FC recognises that bullying may form part of wider child-on-child abuse or harmful peer behaviour. This can include bullying, cyberbullying, physical aggression, emotional abuse, sexual harassment, and other inappropriate or abusive behaviours between children and young people.

Such behaviour may be motivated by a range of factors, including but not limited to prejudice, power imbalance, group dynamics, or wider safeguarding concerns. Incidents may occur in person or online and may not be isolated to Club and/or Community activities.

The Club recognises that bullying and harmful peer behaviour do not always occur in isolation and may be an indicator of wider safeguarding concerns requiring further assessment.

All concerns will be taken seriously and managed in line with the Club’s safeguarding procedures. This may include referral to the Safeguarding Team, consideration of child protection thresholds, and escalation to external agencies where appropriate.

Where incidents occur, staff must:

- Challenge and address the behaviour where safe and appropriate to do so
- Record and report concerns in line with safeguarding procedures
- Seek immediate advice from the Safeguarding Team where there is any uncertainty

The Club will ensure that appropriate support is offered to all individuals involved, including those who have experienced harm and those responsible for the behaviour, where appropriate and proportionate.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Club’s Safeguarding Policy.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO RESPOND

All players, participants and staff have the right to take part in a safe, respectful and inclusive environment free from bullying and harassment.

Bullying, including low-level or repeated inappropriate behaviour, should never be ignored, minimised or dismissed. Early intervention is essential to prevent behaviour escalating and to ensure clear expectations are maintained across the Club and Community programmes.

Behaviour that is dismissed as “banter” can still cause harm and may discourage individuals from reporting concerns in the future. All concerns must therefore be taken seriously and addressed appropriately.

Everyone has a responsibility to act when they witness or become aware of bullying. This includes challenging behaviour where safe to do so and reporting concerns promptly to a member of staff or the Safeguarding Team.

Failing to act on known or suspected bullying may allow harmful behaviour to continue and increase the risk to those affected. Staff and volunteers are expected to respond appropriately and report concerns in line with safeguarding procedures.

The Club is committed to a culture where concerns can be raised safely and without fear of repercussion. Individuals who report concerns in good faith will be supported and protected in line with the Club’s Whistleblowing Policy.

SIGNS AND INDICATORS

Signs of bullying can be detected in many ways, changes in behaviour such as the following should be identified as a cause for concern:

- Unwillingness to attend training, work, or programme session.
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet.
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that has been copied or interfered with.
- Bags, football boots and other belongings suddenly go missing or are damaged
- Change to established habits (giving up things they enjoy, or significant changes to friendship groups)
- Low levels of self confidence
- Frequent visits to the medical unit with symptoms such as headaches or stomach pains
- Unexplained cuts or bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival
- Choosing the company of adults all of the time rather than peers
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping and/or experiencing nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away

PREVENTION

Our staff will always demonstrate excellent role modelling to ensure that standards are set from those overseeing sessions, our staff will not participate in any type of communication or activity that may cause harm to someone and will actively challenge and behaviours they are aware of which they may cause harm.

The preferred way to deal with Bullying would be to prevent it in the first place, to do this we will provide all players/ participants with a Code of Conduct as part of their induction and staff will receive training to understand how to manage a one-off behaviour incident to prevent them becoming a pattern, this may include talking to individuals or groups about the issues of difference or education workshops. If the 'one off' incident is deemed to be serious it will be recorded on MyConcern to ensure behaviours are recorded to demonstrate the ongoing nature should this be necessary.

This culture extends to all areas of our business, including but not limited to changing rooms, transport, activities, canteens, trips, tours, and tournaments and beyond the training sites including any away matches.

Players, participants, and staff must understand that initiation ceremonies designed to cause pain, anxiety or humiliation are not acceptable.

We encourage parents, participants, players and carers to speak with us about any concerns they may have and will inform them at the start of each session/season of the procedures to follow if they are worried about their child.

WHAT TO DO IF AN INCIDENT OF BULLYING IS REPORTED/NOTICED?

Staff, coaches and volunteers must take immediate and appropriate action where bullying or harmful behaviour is reported or observed during any Club or Community activity.

Where safe to do so, staff should:

- Challenge the behaviour and make it clear it is not acceptable
- Take steps to ensure the immediate safety and wellbeing of those involved
- Separate individuals involved where necessary to prevent escalation
- Provide reassurance and support to anyone affected

Staff must not ignore, dismiss or minimise concerns, including behaviour perceived as “banter”.

Once the immediate situation has been managed, staff must:

- Record the incident on MyConcern as soon as possible
- Ensure factual details are recorded, including who was involved and any witnesses

Staff must not attempt to investigate the incident or determine outcomes. This will be managed by the Safeguarding Team.

The Safeguarding Team should be contacted promptly where:

- The behaviour is serious, repeated or escalating
- There is any concern about risk of harm
- The incident may involve child-on-child abuse or safeguarding concerns
- Staff are unsure how to proceed

In some cases, individuals may need to be removed from the activity to maintain safety.

WHAT THE SAFEGUARDING TEAM WILL DO?

On receipt of a report or concern relating to bullying or harmful peer behaviour, the Safeguarding Team will assess the information in line with the Club's safeguarding procedures and relevant statutory guidance.

The Safeguarding Team will determine the most appropriate response based on the nature, severity, context, and risk associated with the concern. This may include internal management, safeguarding intervention, disciplinary action, or referral to external agencies such as the Police or Children's Social Care where appropriate. Where appropriate, the Safeguarding Team will liaise with HR in cases involving staff or disciplinary processes.

Initial actions may include:

- Reviewing all available information and recording the concern on MyConcern
- Speaking to the individual(s) involved, where appropriate and proportionate
- Gathering further information from relevant staff or witnesses
- Considering immediate safeguarding actions to protect those involved

Where required, the Safeguarding Team may:

- Contact parents or carers, taking account of age, risk and individual circumstances
- Put immediate protective measures or support arrangements
- Separate individuals involved to ensure safety and wellbeing
- Seek advice from statutory agencies where thresholds may be met

The Safeguarding Team will ensure that both the person experiencing harm and the person responsible for the behaviour are supported appropriately, which may include wellbeing support, behaviour management plans, or safeguarding interventions.

Where behaviour is deemed to be bullying or misconduct, outcomes may be managed under the Club's disciplinary procedures, which may include warnings, suspensions or exclusion in line with the relevant Code of Conduct and/or HR processes.

All decisions will be recorded, proportionate, and based on the best interests and welfare of those involved.

The Safeguarding Team will ensure that concerns are monitored over time to identify patterns, repeat behaviours, or escalating risk, and will escalate to external agencies where there is reasonable cause to believe that a child or adult at risk is suffering or is likely to suffer harm.

This process should be read in conjunction with the Club's Safeguarding Policy and procedures for managing concerns and allegations.

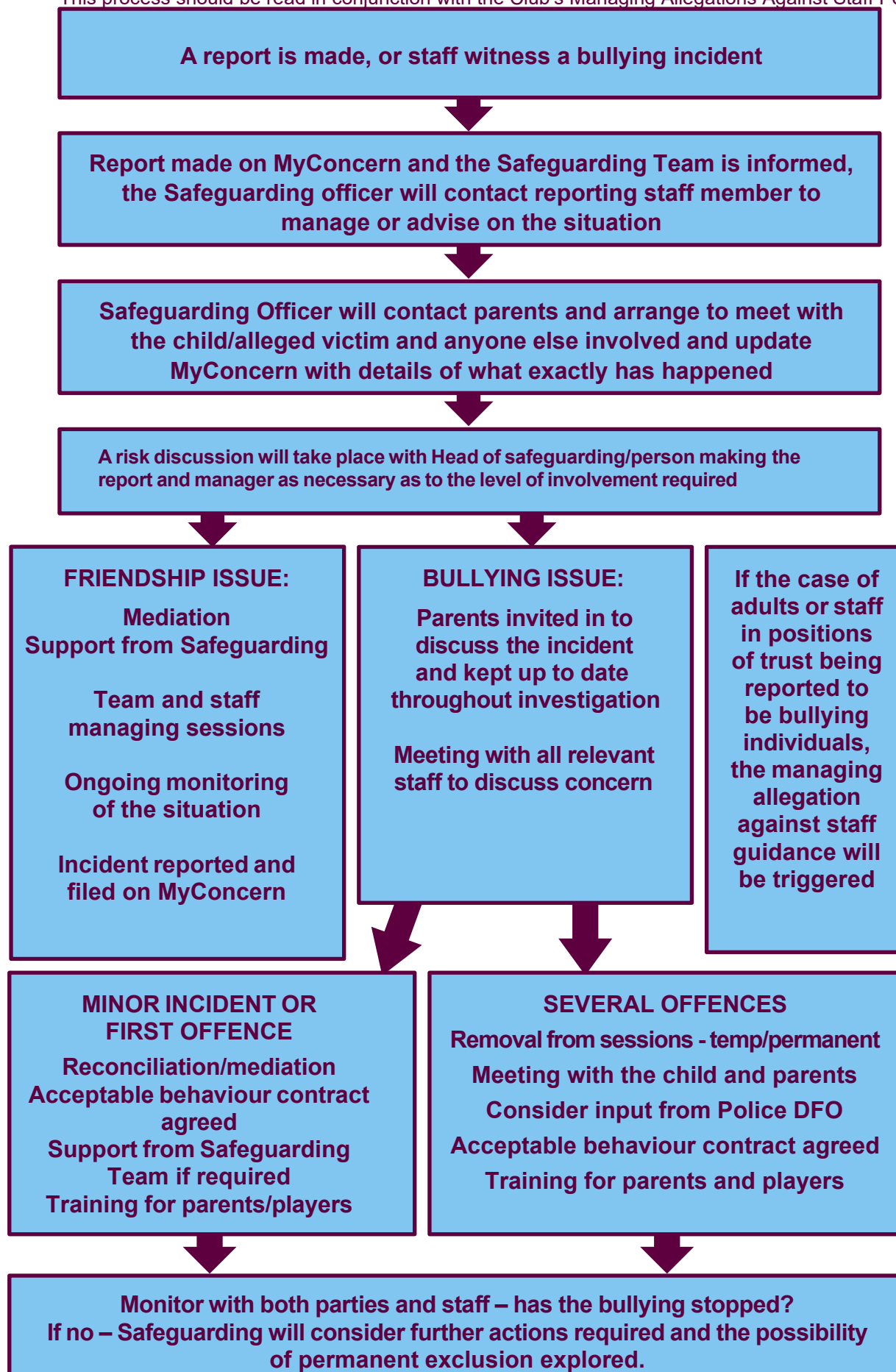
WHAT TO DO IF AN ALLEGATION IS MADE AGAINST A MEMBER OF STAFF, VOLUNTEER OR CONTRACTOR.

Where an allegation or concern is raised that involves the conduct of a member of staff, volunteer or contractor, this must be treated as a safeguarding concern and immediately referred to the Head of Safeguarding.

Such concerns will be managed in line with the Club's Managing Allegations Against Staff procedures, which may involve HR, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), and other statutory agencies where appropriate.

Staff must not investigate or attempt to manage such concerns independently.

This process should be read in conjunction with the Club's Managing Allegations Against Staff Policy.



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND SUPPORT CAN BE FOUND HERE:

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

www.bullying.co.uk

[Childnet - Childnet](#)

[UK Council for Internet Safety - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[LGBTQ young people | Barnardo's](#)

[MindEd Hub](#)

[Educate Against Hate - Prevent Radicalisation & Extremism](#)

[Show Racism the Red Card](#)

[Kick It Out](#)

GUIDANCE INFORMATION

Staff should remain alert to early indicators that a child, young person or adult at risk may be experiencing bullying or harmful behaviour. These may include changes in behaviour or presentation such as deterioration in performance or engagement, withdrawal or isolation, unexplained illness, avoidance of activities, frequent lateness, changes in friendships, low self-esteem, or unexplained injuries or damage to belongings. These indicators may have a range of causes but should always be considered alongside other safeguarding information.

Staff should create an environment where individuals feel able to disclose concerns and should be prepared to listen calmly and take concerns seriously.

Where bullying or harmful behaviour is observed or disclosed, staff should:

- Respond in a calm and proportionate way and ensure the immediate safety and wellbeing of those involved
- Record concerns accurately and factually in line with Club procedures
- Report concerns to the Safeguarding Team in accordance with policy
- Ensure appropriate supervision in relevant environments such as changing rooms, transport and communal areas
- Take immediate action to stop harmful behaviour where it is safe and appropriate to do so

Staff should avoid approaches that mirror or replicate bullying behaviour when managing incidents and should always maintain professional boundaries. Where appropriate, restorative or reflective approaches may be considered as part of wider behaviour management, in consultation with the Safeguarding Team.

Staff should also be aware that bullying may occur outside of Club activity, including online, and should report any concerns that come to their attention.

Where cyberbullying is identified, staff may need to support appropriate safeguarding actions, including preserving evidence and escalating concerns. In some cases, external agencies or service providers may be required to assist in managing online content.

GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE, AND ADULTS

If you think you are being bullied, or are worried about someone else, it is important to tell someone as soon as possible. This could be a parent or carer, a coach, a member of staff at the Club, or the Safeguarding Team.

If the behaviour continues, keep telling someone until it is addressed.

You may find it helpful to:

- Stay with friends or people you trust
- Report bullying, including cyberbullying, when you see it happening
- Avoid responding to messages or behaviour that upsets you
- Keep messages, screenshots or evidence of online behaviour where possible
- Block or report individuals online where appropriate
- Adjust privacy settings on social media accounts to help keep yourself safe
- Tell someone if you are aware that another person is being bullied
- Try to remain calm and seek help when you feel safe to do so
- Remember that you are not to blame for being bullied

If you feel threatened or unsafe, move away from the situation and seek help from a trusted adult or member of staff as soon as possible.

GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS/CARERS

Parents and carers play an important role in identifying and responding to possible bullying or harmful behaviour.

Signs that a child, young person or adult at risk may be experiencing bullying can include reluctance to attend activities, changes in mood or behaviour, unexplained injuries, damaged or missing belongings, withdrawal from friends or activities, or distress following use of digital devices.

If you are concerned, it is important to:

- Listen carefully and take concerns seriously
- Remain calm and supportive when discussing concerns
- Contact the Club Safeguarding Team for advice and support
- Avoid encouraging retaliation or direct confrontation
- Work with the individual to support safe and constructive responses
- Seek guidance before contacting other parents or carers involved
- Support safe use of online platforms and familiarise yourself with online safety settings and risks

Where concerns relate to online behaviour, it may be helpful to preserve evidence such as messages or screenshots and share these with the Safeguarding Team to support appropriate action.

Reassurance and consistent support can be an important part of helping individuals feel safe and able to report concerns.

