**East Stirlingshire Football Club** – Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy

**Child wellbeing & protection officer**

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**CONTENTS**

1. INTRODUCTION
   - 1.1 OVERARCHING AIM
   - 1.2 DEFINITIONS
   - 1.3 CHILDREN'S WELLBEING IN SCOTLAND
   - 1.4 RISKS TO CHILDREN'S WELLBEING IN SCOTTISH FOOTBALL
   - 1.5 EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITIES
   - 1.6 REVIEW

2. POLICY STATEMENT

3. SET THE STANDARDS – BEHAVIOURS, EXPECTATIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### *1.1 Overarching Aim*

***OUR VISION***

Children flourish because we put their safety, wellbeing, rights and enjoyment at the heart of every level of Scottish football

***OUR MISSION***

To make football a safe and fun environment where children's rights are championed by everyone

### 1.2 *Definitions*

*Definition of the Club's Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy includes:*

- Introduction — Overarching Aim, Definitions, Children's Wellbeing in Scotland, Risks to Children's Wellbeing in Scottish Football, Everyone's Responsibility and Review
- Policy Statement
- Set the Standards — Behaviours, Expectations and Requirements
- Procedures — Appointment and Selection, Responding to Concerns and Case Review
- All associated Practice Notes

Herein all the documents listed above will be referred to as the 'Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy' or 'this policy'.

*Definition of Child*

Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states that everyone under 18 has the rights set out in the Convention. Within the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, a child is defined as anyone who has not reached the age of 18.[1]

For the purpose of this policy "children", "child", "young person" and "young people" refer to any persons under the age of 18.

The Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy applies to all children and young people regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion, nationality, socio-economic status or family circumstance.

[1] Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 section 97(1)

*Definition of Adult*

For the purpose of this policy an "adult" is any individual aged 18 and over or any individual under the age of 18 years old but who is in a 'position of trust'. For further information on positions of trust see Practice Note – Relationships.

*Definition of Child Abuse*

Child abuse is the act or omission that harms a child or young person.

An individual may abuse a child or young person directly or may indirectly be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person from harming that child or young person, or their inaction leads to harm or risk of harm. Abuse can be physical, emotional, sexual or by neglect. Abuse can take place in person or online. Although typically thought of as when an adult is mistreating a child or young person, children and young people can also be perpetrators of abuse against other children or young people.

*Definition of Safeguarding*

Safeguarding is taking action to ensure that all children and young people are safe from harm when involved in football. It means proactively doing everything possible to minimise risk and prevent abuse of children and young people.

*Definition of Child Protection*

Child protection refers to the actions in response to a specific concern for a child or young person who is at risk or suffering from abuse. Child protection is an essential part of safeguarding if there is a concern that a child or young person is being abused or their safety is compromised.

### *1.3 Children's Wellbeing in Scotland*

*Getting It Right for Every Child*

The Scottish Government's Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) is based on children's rights, and its principles reflect the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The GIRFEC approach is child focused, based on an understanding of the wellbeing of a child or young person in their current situation, and based on tackling needs early in a collective way. As part of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the concept of wellbeing and the GIRFEC approach is now enshrined in law in Scotland.

The GIRFEC approach supports children and young people so that they can grow up feeling loved, safe and respected, and can realise their full potential. Children and young people should be: Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included. These are the eight wellbeing factors and are commonly known as SHANARRI Indicators.

A child or young person's wellbeing is influenced, both positively and negatively, by everything around them and the different experiences and needs they have at different times in their lives. There is no set level of wellbeing that a child or young person should achieve, but ***each child should be helped to reach their full potential as an individual***. The wellbeing indicators make it easier for everyone to be consistent in how they consider the quality of a child or young person's life at a particular point in time.

By having a universal language and understanding for everyone who works with children and young people, collectively we can contribute to promoting, supporting and safeguarding a child's wellbeing whether they are in an educational, health, community or sporting setting. It is essential that in Scottish football the wellbeing indicators are understood and if worried that something is impacting a child or young person's wellbeing, Club members of staff and volunteers know how to respond and with whom to share that information.

*Wellbeing Concern*

A wellbeing concern is if a child's wellbeing (measured using the 8 SHANARRI indicators) is, or is at risk of being, adversely affected.

A range of experiences can have a negative impact on children and young people. These can range from harmful or abusive behaviour to a family bereavement or social economic factors, such as poverty. The nature of a wellbeing concern will influence how to support the child or young person.

Behaviour which is abusive or neglectful and is, or is likely to cause harm, will often be referred to as a 'child protection concern'. Regardless of whether a concern is a wellbeing or child protection concern, it must be responded to in line with the Responding to Concerns Procedure.

### *1.4 Risks to Children's Wellbeing in Scottish Football*

The protection and wellbeing of all children and young people involved in Scottish football must be a priority for everyone working, volunteering or participating in the game, including spectators. For children and young people involved in football there may be risks associated with their involvement whether it be injury, the despair of their team losing, or exposure to poor practice or abusive behaviour. It is essential that those working or volunteering with children and young people are alert to the associated risks and take steps to prevent, minimise or respond to the risks.

In addition to recognising risks to all children and young people, it is important to understand that some children and young people may be more vulnerable to particular risks associated with taking part in football.

*Increased vulnerability*

The Club is committed to ensuring the safety of all children and young people in football across all levels of the game. Children and young people who have additional care needs or who come from a minority ethnic group may face a range of additional challenges. Club staff and volunteers will be encouraged and supported to challenge, and address any behaviour or attitudes which compromise a child or young person's wellbeing, or acts as a deterrent to the participation of some children and young people.

*Children in elite football*

For many children and young people it is their dream to play football professionally. When they have the talent, skill and dedication to realise this dream they will pursue it. Unfortunately this can lead to a number of increased risks for children and young people involved in football at an elite level. For example, rivalry among their peers, inappropriate or detrimental relationships with their peers, pressure from their family, friends and the wider public, or, in some cases, exploitation by a trusted adult who can, or who they perceive can, help them 'achieve' this dream.

Research by Celia H. Brackenridge in 2010[4] highlighted the following about the risk to children and young people at an elite level:

- The greatest risk of emotional and sexual abuse occurs among the highest ranked athletes
- Poor practice, emotional abuse and bullying are probably more prevalent in sport than sexual abuse
- Athletes perpetrate more sexual harassment on their peers than coaches
- Athlete-athlete bullying is widespread
- Coach perpetrators are often very highly qualified and very highly respected which acts as a mask for their poor practice and abuse

*Children and young people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities*

The UNCRC sets out the general principle of non-discrimination and that children should be protected from all forms of discrimination. It also states that children have the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, whether or not these are shared by the majority of people in the country where they live[3]. Unfortunately within wider society and football, discriminatory behaviour still exists therefore children and young people from black and ethnic communities are additionally vulnerable because they may:

- Experience racism and racist attitudes
- Experience people in authority ignoring or not responding to racist abuse or comments
- Experience no action being taken by others for fear of upsetting cultural norms
- Be afraid of further abuse if they challenge others
- Want to fit in and not make a fuss
- Be using or learning English as a second language

*Children and young people who are deaf and disabled*

In line with Article 23 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), a child with a disability "should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community".

Children and young people who have a disability have the same needs as other children and young people, but may also have additional needs associated with their disability. For example, additional steps may be needed to promote their wellbeing or they may be at an increased risk of abuse due to their vulnerability. Research has shown that children with a mental or physical disability are more likely to be abused than non-disabled children.[2]

Children and young people who are deaf, disabled or have a learning disability can be additionally vulnerable because they may:

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| • Depend on a number of people for care and handling, some of which can be intimate care<br>• Depend on the abuser for their involvement in sport<br>• Fear disclosing abuse<br>• The signs of abuse can be misinterpreted as a symptom of the disability<br>• Have a reduced capacity to resist either verbally or physically | • Lack a wide network of friends who support and protect them<br>• Lack access to peers to discover what is acceptable behaviour or to understand the inappropriateness of actions<br>• Not be believed due to negative attitudes towards children and young people with disabilities or possible failure to recognise the impact of abuse on children and young people with disabilities |

| | |
|---|---|
| • Have significant communication differences — this may include very limited verbal communication, the use of sign language or other forms of non-verbal communication | |

[2] Source: Jones, L et al Prevalence and risk of violence against children with disabilities: a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies (NSPCC) (2012)

[3] Article 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

[4] Brackenridge, C.H (2010) 'Myths and evidence — learning from our journey', keynote address to the conference 'How Safe is Your Sport' held at the Excel Sports Centre, Coventry on 25 Feb, hosted by the Coventry Sports Foundation and the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit. Available at http://bura.brunel.ac.uk/handle/2438/4177

### *1.5 Everyone's Responsibility*

The responsibility to safeguard, promote, support and protect a child or young person's wellbeing does not rest on one person. **We are *all* responsible.**

Football can contribute in many different ways to a child or young person's positive wellbeing including health benefits of being active, the achievements they can make in gaining new skills and their experiences of being included and respected as part of a team. Supporting and promoting a child or young person's wellbeing at all times includes forming positive relationships, understanding their circumstances and responding appropriately to any concerns about their wellbeing. To ensure we can respond when a child or young person needs help or support, we must firstly understand their rights and the meaning of wellbeing. Secondly, we must recognise and acknowledge the risks that exist for children and young people in football and put in place a range of safeguards that minimise these risks. Leadership is essential to ensure that these safeguards are managed and promoted, and this will be done by club staff and volunteers within particular roles who receive specific training for their level of responsibility. However, everyone must understand the risks associated for children and young people, and the appropriate processes which are in place should a child or young person's wellbeing be at risk or they are in need for protection.

Everyone has the responsibility to recognise the concern, to ensure the child or young person is safe if they are at risk of immediate harm, and to report the concern to the Child Wellbeing and Protection Department. Thereafter the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer can respond appropriately in line with the Responding to Concerns Procedure.

The Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy combined with relevant training, mentoring and support will give us the confidence and support needed to fulfil our role and responsibility to keep children and young people safe in football. In addition to this, advice can be sought at any point from the Child Wellbeing and Protection Officer.

No matter your role or involvement in Scottish football, *you* have a responsibility to safeguard, promote, support and protect the wellbeing of all children and young people involved in Scottish football.

If you have any concerns about the wellbeing of a child or young person or about the conduct of any adult then you must report the matter to **Alan Schofield 07919 440789 or eaststirlingshire@slfl.co.uk**

Full information on how to record and report a concern can be found in the Responding to Concerns Procedure.

***1.6 Review***

The Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy will be regularly reviewed and will include children and young people's participation and feedback on the content and actual experience of implementation as part of the review.

This policy will be reviewed:

- In accordance with changes in legislation and guidance on children's wellbeing, protection or rights
- Following the review of an issue or concern raised about the wellbeing or protection of children within the Club, when the case review suggests that this policy should be reviewed
- In all other circumstances, at least every three years.

**2. POLICY STATEMENT**

East Stirlingshire Football Club is committed to ensuring that every child who takes part in football, in any capacity, is able to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment, which promotes inclusion and protects them from harm, poor practice, exploitation, bullying or abuse. The Club values a rights-based approach within our sport, and our child wellbeing and protection policy is based on the fundamental rights of children as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy is based on the following principles:

1. We will act in the best interests of children and young people
2. The protection and wellbeing of all children in our care is everyone's responsibility
3. A child or young person's rights, wishes and feelings should be respected and promoted. For example:
    - A child or young person, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, socio-economic status, religious belief and/or sexual identity has the right to protection from all forms of harm, abuse and exploitation

- We see the child or young person before the player, coach, volunteer, spectator or referee
- Children and young people have the right to express views on matters that affect them, should they wish to do so, and to have those views taken into account
- Children and young people have the right to relax, play, and join in a wide range of sporting activities

4. The best way to promote the wellbeing, health and development of a child or young person is to work in partnership with each other, the child or young person, their parents/carers and other relevant organisations

| **ACCOUNTABLE** | **INCLUSIVE** |
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| We accept responsibility and take ownership of the wellbeing and protection of children in our game. Our collective leadership calls upon integrity, consistency and confidence in our everyday behaviours. | Football is for everyone, irrespective of background. We celebrate what makes us unique and embrace our differences. We create a culture where rights are respected and everyone is treated fairly, with dignity and respect. |
| **OUR VALUES**<br>Our values support our efforts to achieve our vision. They set the tone of our work and will be visible in our decisions and actions. All club members of staff and volunteers, when working or volunteering with children and young people involved in club activities, will be... | |
| **APPROACHABLE** | **EMPOWERING** |
| We are visible, accessible, open and caring. We build respectful and supportive relationships, listening to children's voices, and championing their views in everything we do. | We are forward facing and strive to be the best for children and young people. We are brave, challenging ourselves and others to continually strive for the best outcomes for children and young people. We encourage and support children and young people to express their views. |

## 3. SET THE STANDARDS

*Behaviours, Expectations and Requirements*

Every member of staff and volunteer at the club will be asked to sign up to the following standards, outlining the behaviours, expectations and requirements of club staff and volunteers working or volunteering with children and young people.

Creating an environment where children and young people are respected, their rights are promoted, and they are supported to have fun, learn, and develop in a safe environment is essential to inspire them to love the game.

To achieve this goal the club expects its staff and volunteers to embody the Wellbeing and Protection Values — Inclusive, Empowering, Approachable and Accountable — to create a positive football environment, and by displaying exemplary behaviour and implementing practices that make football a safe, fun, and positive experience for all children and young people involved.

| On and off the pitch, I will: |
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| • Make football a fun and enjoyable experience where everyone is involved<br>• Always show respect to everyone involved in the game<br>• Encourage children and young people to be respectful to everyone involved in the game<br>• Appreciate the importance of everyone involved in the game<br>• Be proud of being part of the same 'team' and encourage others to be proud of their achievements<br>• Be a positive role model by:<br>– leading with enthusiasm and encouragement<br>– never engaging in, or tolerating, offensive, insulting or abusive behaviour whether in person or online<br>– being gracious in victory and defeat<br>– Challenging and reporting behaviour that does not meet the standards expected |

| When working with children and young people, I will: |
|---|
| • Treat all children and young people equally with respect, dignity, honesty, sensitivity and fairness<br>• Promote the best interests of the young person and put their wellbeing before winning or achieving performance goals<br>• Promote and protect the rights of all children and ensure that children and young people are aware of their rights<br>• Never have favourites but praise children and young people that demonstrate commitment, positive attitude and good behaviour<br>• Consult with children and young people allowing them the chance to be heard by having an 'open door' approach |

- Always listen to and act upon any concerns raised by a child or young person
- Allow young people the right of being involved in decisions affecting them

Sign Up

I confirm that I have read and agree to abide by the Club's Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy including the Policy Statement, Procedures and all associated Practice Notes.

I agree to abide and demonstrate the Club's Wellbeing and Protection Values.

I understand that a breach of the Club's Child Wellbeing and Protection Policy will be taken seriously and will be responded to in line with the Responding to Concerns Procedure and, where applicable, the Club's Disciplinary Procedure.

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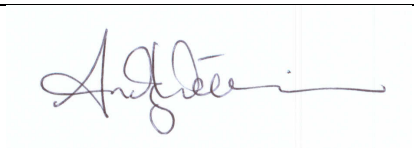
| Name: | **Andy Williamson** |
| Position: | **Club Secretary & Director** |
| Signed: |  |
| Witnessed by: | **Ian Fleming** |
| Date: | **28 September 2026** |