ROCHDALE AFC POLICY AND RELATED PROCEDURES FOR SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN



Rochdale AFC are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults and expects all staff, coaches, and volunteers to share this commitment. Rochdale AFC staff recognise their duty of care to safeguard the welfare of children and young people by creating a safe environment that protects them from harm, allows children and young people to have a voice and is proactive and vigilant in the implementation of welfare processes. The club's standards of practice ensure all staff are fully aware and understand their responsibilities under safeguarding legislation and are required to take relevant training and education courses in conjunction with football governing bodies.

Through the application of this policy, we will develop a positive, vibrant, and proactive welfare programme to enable all children and young people to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment.

The club regularly refer to government documentation, such as Children Act 1989, Children Act 2004, Children and Social Work Act 2017, Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 update, to keep updated on best practice and current legislation on safeguarding and welfare.

Rochdale AFC accepts its responsibility in the belief that the welfare and protection of children and young people is paramount.

Cameron Ogden
Simon Gauge
Co-Chairman

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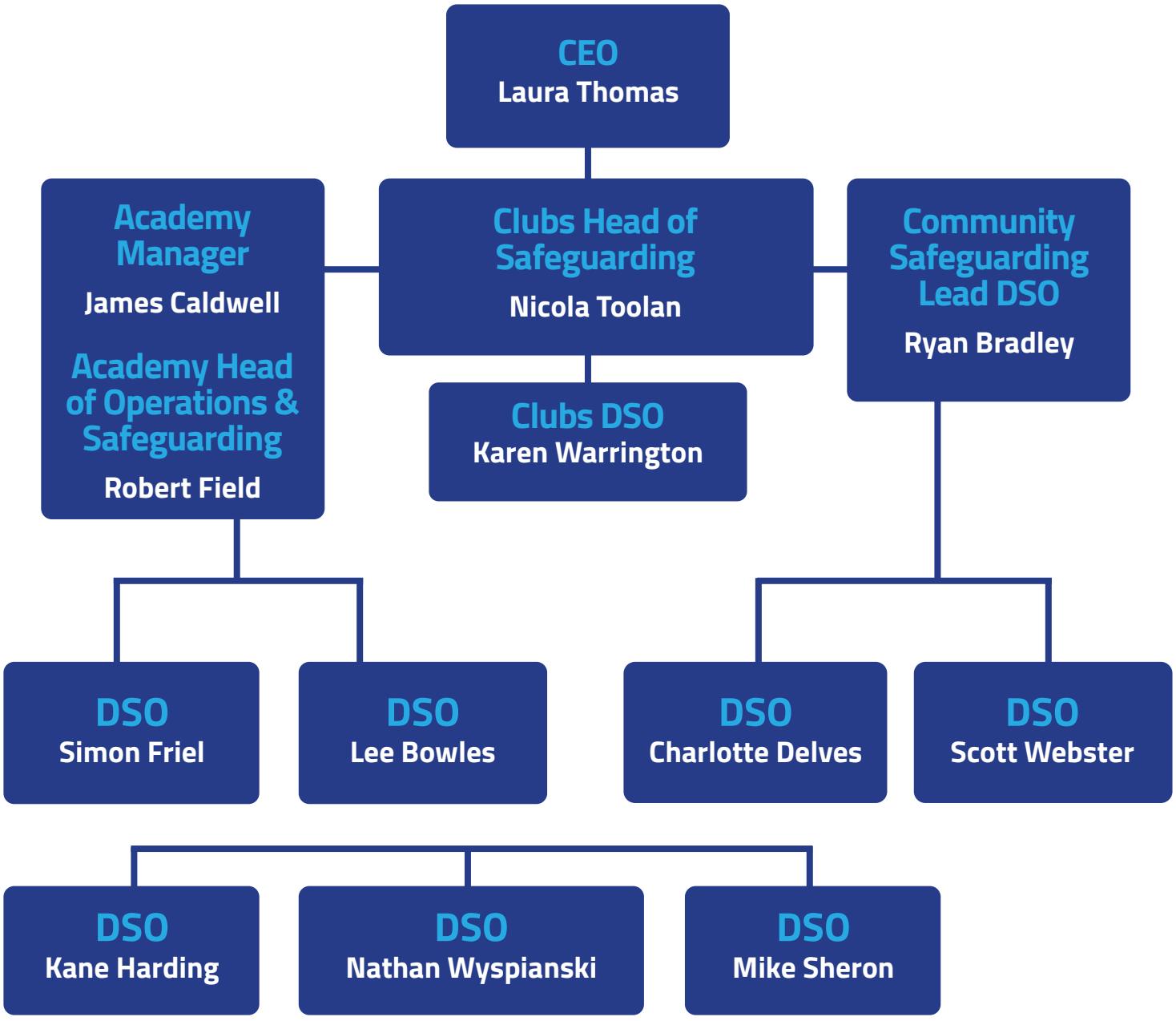
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APPENDIX 1

Safeguarding Accountability Chart

RAFC SAFEGUARDING TEAM



Members of the clubs Safeguarding Team, to ensure support for staff and the flow of information is consistent through the correct channels.

APPENDIX 2

INTERNAL CONTACT DETAILS

Laura Thomas
Senior Safeguarding Manager
laura.thomas@rochdaleafc.co.uk | Tel: 01706 644648

Nicola Toolan
Head of Safeguarding / Match Day Safeguarding Officer
nicola.toolan@rochdaleafc.co.uk | Tel: 07734961927

Ryan Bradley
Community Trust Director
ryan.bradley@rochdaleafc.co.uk | Tel: 01706 643836

Scott Webster
Program Manager – Education & Employability
scott.webster@rochdaleafc.co.uk | Tel: 07591 834516

Charlotte Delves
Strategic Head - Neighbourhoods & Communities
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Damian Hall
Rochdale AFC Safety Officer
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Karen Warrington
Club Welfare Officer
karen.warrington@rochdaleafc.co.uk | Tel: 01706 644648

James Caldwell
Academy Manager
james.caldwell@rochdale afc.co.uk | Tel: 07511 283088

Robert Field
Head of Academy Operations & Safeguarding
robert.field@rochdaleafc.co.uk | Tel: 07879 022487

Academy

Simon Friel - DSO
simon.friel@rochdaleafc.co.uk

Lee Bowles - DSO
lee.bowles@rochdaleafc.co.uk

Kane Harding - DSO
kane.harding@rochdaleafc.co.uk

Mike Sheron - DSO
mike.sheron@rochdaleafc.co.uk

Nathan Wyspianski
nathan.wyspianski@rochdaleafc.co.uk

APPENDIX 3

EXTERNAL CONTACT DETAILS

The Football Association
David Gregson
Professional Game Safeguarding Manager
david.gregson@thefa.com - T: 0800 169 1863 Ext:6838

The EFL
Helen T Smith
Regional Safeguarding Manager
htsmith@efl.com - Tel: 07966 206427 / 01772 282964

Alex Richards | *EFL Head of Safeguarding*
Tel: 01772 325940

Lancashire FA Safeguarding Team
Tel: 01772 624000

Greater Manchester Police
Tel: 101 non-emergency / Tel: 999 Emergency

Rochdale Children's Social Care
Tel: 0300 303 0440 – Office hours
Tel: 0300 303 8875 – Out of office hours
Email: ehash@rochdale.gov.uk

Rochdale Adult Social Care
Tel: 0300 3038886
adult.care@rochdale.gov.uk

Louise Hurst
Rochdale LADO & SARS Team Manager
Tel: 0300 3030350
lado@rochdale.gov.uk

NSPCC Helpline
Tel: 0808 800 5000 / Text: 88858
Text phone for Deaf Users: 0800 056 0566
Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
Online: help@nspcc.org.uk/reportconcern

CEOP
(Child Exploitation and Online Protection)
www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/

APPENDIX 4

SAFEGUARDING

CODE OF Conduct – STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Everyone plays a role in safeguarding the welfare and development of children, and the protection of other vulnerable people. As an individual responsible for children or other vulnerable people taking part in a Rochdale AFC activity you have a duty to:

1. Ensure the safety and welfare of vulnerable groups is a priority and taken into consideration when planning any activity or session
2. Respond quickly and appropriately to any concerns about a child or vulnerable person
3. Report safeguarding concerns or allegations to your Line Manager, Safeguarding Officer or the Head of Safeguarding
4. Ensure high standards of propriety and behaviour and maintain professional boundaries at all times
5. Ensure that staffing ratios are adhered to, taking into account additional vulnerabilities
6. Challenge unacceptable behaviour including rough play and bullying and report any issues, complaints or concerns
7. Carry out and check risk assessments as appropriate and ensure you are familiar with the emergency action and first aid procedures
8. Ensure the correct permission has been received for the taking of images and video recording of vulnerable groups, and only use authorised equipment
9. Listen to, encourage & praise vulnerable groups and involve them in decision making, take their ideas seriously and give constructive feedback
10. Treat children and other vulnerable people with respect, regardless of their gender, ethnic or social background, language, religious or other beliefs, disability, sexual orientation or other status and encourage them to treat others the same way. Always consider the age, maturity, understanding and emotional condition of participants when working with them

Staff should follow guidance for safe working practice and maintain a clear boundary between professional and personal life.
Staff should protect themselves from compromising situations:

1. Do not give lifts to vulnerable people except when organised by the club and in line with club policies
2. Do not have inappropriate physical and verbal or written contact with vulnerable people or take part in rough or physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
3. Do not have personal direct electronic communication with a vulnerable person (e.g. email, text, Facebook) All Contact should be professional and in line with club policy
4. Do not engage in sexual activity, betting, gambling or related activities or have discussions about these activities in front of vulnerable groups except in a clear educational context
5. Do not allow inappropriate language, always challenge unacceptable behaviour
6. Do not reduce a vulnerable person to tears as form of control
7. Do not allow allegations made by a vulnerable person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon, report all concerns to your Line Manager or Designated Safeguarding Officer
8. Do not do things of a personal nature for a vulnerable person that they can do for themselves
9. Wherever possible, ensure that more than one member of the workforce is present when working in the proximity of children or other vulnerable people. It is inappropriate to spend excessive time alone with those children you supervise or care for or to take them to your home
10. Do not accept bullying, rule violation or the use of prohibited substances
11. Do not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs when vulnerable groups are in your care
12. Do not smoke in front of vulnerable groups or at a time when it will detract from your responsibilities
13. Do not take or use unauthorised images or video footage of vulnerable groups. This includes uploading images or video footage to social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, X (formerly Twitter) etc.
14. Do not use personal devices to take photos or videos of vulnerable people
15. Ensure you maintain healthy, positive and professional relationships with all Vulnerable Groups. Staff in positions of authority and trust in relation to aged 16 and 17 years or adults at risk must not engage in sexual relationships.

A Breach of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, possibly leading up to dismissal. Serious breaches may result in a referral to the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service), Police and Local Authority.

Cases of poor practice will be reported to the relevant Football authorities.

Discriminatory # Offensive and violent behaviour are unacceptable and complaints will be acted upon.

*The term "child" or "children" applies to anyone under 18 years of age.

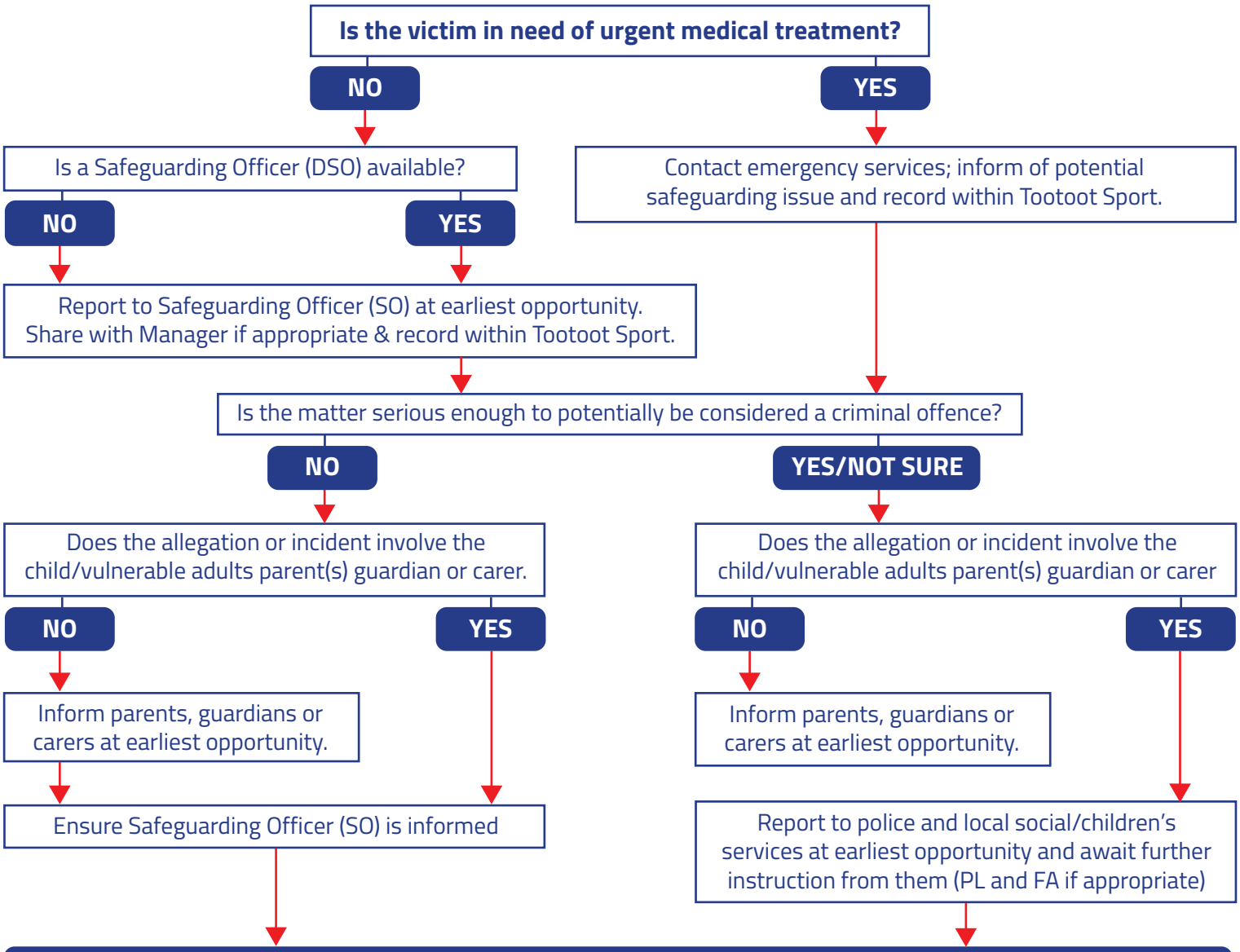
** An "Adult at Risk" is any person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness; and who is or may be unable to take care of himself or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

Discrimination: prejudice, unacceptable oppressive or offensive behaviour or language in relation to age, culture, disability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, religion, or belief, transgender status.

Signature of member of staff/volunteer:		**Date:**
Print of member of staff/volunteer:		

APPENDIX 5 Reporting Flow Chart

A child or adult at risk has disclosed concerning information to your or you have witnessed or had reported to you an incident or complaint involving a child or vulnerable adult* which maybe be considered as abuse or poor practice.



Whatever the circumstances the person receiving and reporting the complaint/incident must record a written statement and submit it to the Head of Safeguarding at the earliest opportunity.

In any case and without fail the matter will be recorded within Tootoot Sport at the earliest opportunity.

2 - INFORMATION

2.1.1 Policy Statement(s) Covered in this Document

All statements relating to the Rochdale AFC, Rochdale Academy and Rochdale Community Trust. (These are referred to as associated companies within this policy) policy for Safeguarding children.

2.1.2 Other Relevant Policies

See page 22 for other relevant policies.

2.1.3 Information/Data Security Considerations and Controls

In producing this Policy and Related Procedures Document, careful consideration has been given to the following:

- Applying appropriate permissions regarding who is able to read and modify the document.
- Reviewing employment legislation and codes of practice requirements and applying the appropriate actions to ensure necessary compliance.

2.1.4 Adherence to Policies and Related Procedures

Failure to comply with this Policy and Related Procedures Document may result in disciplinary action being taken.

3 - POLICY STATEMENT(S)

3.1.1 Safeguarding children and Adults at Risk (Vulnerable Groups)

Rochdale AFC acknowledge and accepts it has a responsibility for the wellbeing and safety of all vulnerable groups who are under its care or using the facilities. It is the duty of all adults working at the Club to safeguard the welfare of children by creating an environment that protects them from harm.

The wellbeing of vulnerable groups is paramount for all staff and accordingly, they will be made aware of the 's Safeguarding children and Adults at Risk Policy as part of the induction process. Where appropriate, the following guidelines will be supplemented by in-service training and additional guidance.

3.1.2 Child Protection V Adults at Risk Protection

Both Children and Adults at Risk can experience the same types of harm and the causes can often be the same. The difference between child protection and adult protection is the right to make a choice.

Where a child is at risk it is likely that Statutory Services would be involved to protect them whether or not this was in agreement with the parents/guardians.

Adults at Risk may not want Statutory Services to protect them from harm, and taking action against their will can cause dilemma. Staff should consult with the Safeguarding Team to ensure the correct action is taken.

Definitions

Under the Children Act 1989, a child is anyone under the age of 18.

An Adult at Risk: within the Care Act 2014, Safeguarding duties apply to any adult aged 18 years and older who:

- **Has needs for care and support (whether or not the Local Authority is meeting any of those needs); and**
- **Is experiencing, or at risk or 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 or neglect.**

3.1.3 Rules and Regulations

Rochdale AFC is governed by current legislation and FA Safeguarding policies and EFL Rules.

Rochdale AFC is fully committed to ensuring that the best practice recommended by these bodies is employed throughout.

Rochdale AFC also has a responsibility to maintain regular dialogue with the local safeguarding partnerships.

3.1.4 Aims and Key Principles

Rochdale AFC is committed to sport and physical activity being inclusive and providing a safe and positive experience for everyone involved in the Club.

Whilst it is hoped that the proactive preventative work, including training, vetting and the provision of clear policies are sufficient to safeguard all adults at Rochdale AFC, the Club recognises that it has a responsibility to safeguard Adults from abuse and harm, and to respond where abuse and harm are perceived to have occurred.

The aim of Rochdale AFC s' Children's Safeguarding Policy is:

- To promote a safe and welcoming environment for all vulnerable groups who interact with the 's activities.
- To demonstrate and promote a culture where safeguarding practice is widely understood, openly discussed and where the workforce recognises the role, they play in keeping vulnerable groups, themselves and their colleagues safe from any harm.
- To develop a positive and pro-active welfare program to enable all vulnerable groups to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment.
- To promote high ethical standards throughout the 's activities.
- Address the additional vulnerabilities of some participants and the extra barriers they may face such e.g. those in care, looked after children, those with mental health issues, disabilities, living in substitute accommodation etc.
- Rochdale AFC wish to deliver and promote the club's safeguarding values & ethos to reduce the potential of safeguarding incidents & implement best practice safeguarding.

The key principles underpinning this policy are:

- The vulnerable person's safety and welfare is paramount.
- All vulnerable groups have a right to be protected from abuse, exploitation, and poor practice regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual identity or sexual orientation. All allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to efficiently and appropriately.
- To encourage parents and other members of the vulnerable persons family to be involved in a relationship with Rochdale AFC.
- To ensure that coaches, parents and other adults who come in contact with vulnerable people provide good role models of behaviour. All individuals and organisations involved with our club have the responsibility for the welfare of vulnerable groups and are bound by this policy and must act in accordance with the law in relation to such matters

Promotion of the policy and supporting procedures:

Where possible participants and beneficiaries (and their Parents/carers where they are children) will be made aware of this policy and supporting procedures upon commencement of any activity or event and will be advised to refer to the club website for more information or if required request a printed copy of this policy.

4 - ROCHDALE AFC - SAFEGUARDING VISION

Rochdale AFC is committed to being inclusive and providing a safe and positive experience for everyone involved in the activities at the club. The welfare and safety of vulnerable groups is paramount and the club recognises its responsibility to protect them by embedding Safeguarding practice through proactive, preventative work, training, vetting and the provision of clear policies and guidance.

Rochdale AFC is committed to Recognise, Respond, Report Record and Review all safeguarding concerns.

Rochdale AFC is committed to creating a culture where children, young people, adults at risk, staff and volunteers feel safe to raise concerns without fear of reprisal.

5 - PROCEDURES

5.1.1 Overview of Documentation

Safeguarding children Procedure

5.1.2 Departments Responsible

The following departments are responsible for administering this policy:

• Safeguarding

6 - SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN

A Child: Under the Children Act 1989, a child is anyone under the age of 18. The fact that a child has reached 16 years of age; is living independently; is in further education; is a member of the armed forces; is in hospital; or in custody in the secure estate for children and young people, does not change his/her status or entitlement to services or protection.

The Children Act 1989, 2004 Children & Social Work Act 2017, and subsequent statutory guidance within Working Together to Safeguard places a responsibility on Rochdale AFC to have a policy in place, which gives clear guidance and can be easily accessed by all within the organisation to inform practice in day to day work. It also places a duty on all staff to ensure that they cooperate and share information with partner organisations to safeguard children.

For the purpose of this policy, all of those under the age of eighteen are referred to as 'children'.

This policy applies to members of the club from both the paid and volunteer workforce including Work Experience, and all partner organisations including contractors, consultants and Trustees. It also applies to individuals not included in this list who may be conducting related work that involves the children in our care.

All staff and volunteers must ensure that they read the safeguarding policy and procedures and understand what is required of them and their responsibilities, including how to take the correct steps to ensure the safety of all vulnerable groups and to report any concerns immediately.

Laura Thomas is the CEO for Rochdale AFC and its Associated Companies and is the Senior Safeguarding Manager. Her role as Senior Safeguarding Manager is to support the Safeguarding Team to deliver effective safeguarding provision across the Club and it associated companies

Nicola Toolan is the Head of Safeguarding and is responsible for the overall implementation of safeguarding, case management, and safer recruitment process across the Club and its associated companies

Robert Field is the head of Academy Operations and Safeguarding and Simon Friel is the Academy Head of Player Care.

In addition to this the Club has a team of Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO's) who work within different areas. These Officers have special responsibilities, and are the focal point, for safeguarding children in their nominated area.

- The Board have oversight on all responsibility
- Safeguarding is reported to the board each month
- Annual safeguarding review presented to the board

An accountability chart for the Safeguarding Team can be found at appendix 1
The details of the team and their contact details can be found in appendix 2
External Agencies contact details can be found at appendix 3

Anybody with concern about a child's welfare can contact the Head of Safeguarding or a DSO for advice and/or they can make a referral to the external agencies themselves.

SAFEGUARDING ADULTS

All adults, regardless of age, ability or disability, gender, race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, marital or gender status have the right to be protected from abuse and poor practice and to participate in an enjoyable and safe environment. Rochdale AFC will seek to ensure that our activities are inclusive and make reasonable adjustments for any ability, disability or impairment, we will also commit to continuous development, monitoring and review. The rights, dignity and worth of all adults will always be respected. We recognise that ability and disability can change over time, such that some adults may be additionally vulnerable to abuse, for example those who have a dependency on others or have different communication needs. We recognise that a disabled adult may or may not identify themselves or be identified as an adult 'at risk'. We all have a shared responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of all adults and will act appropriately and report concerns whether these concerns arise within our Club's activities for example inappropriate behaviour of a coach, or in the wider community. All allegations will be taken seriously and responded to quickly in line with the Club's Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures. Rochdale Football Club recognises the role and responsibilities of the statutory agencies in safeguarding adults and is committed to complying with the procedures of the local safeguarding partnerships.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Rochdale AFC are committed to providing a safe environment for all its employees free from discrimination on any ground and from harassment at work including sexual harassment. Rochdale AFC will operate a zero-tolerance policy for any form of sexual harassment in the workplace, treat all incidents seriously and promptly investigate all allegations of sexual harassment. Any person found to have sexually harassed another will face disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment. All complaints of sexual harassment will be taken seriously and treated with respect and in confidence. No one will be victimised for making such a complaint.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of unlawful discrimination under the Equality Act 2010. The law says it's sexual harassment if the behaviour is either meant to, or has the effect of:

- violating your dignity.
- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment
- unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated.

It includes situations where a person is asked to engage in sexual activity as a condition of that person's employment, as well as situations which create an environment which is hostile, intimidating or humiliating for the recipient. Sexual harassment can involve one or more incidents and actions constituting harassment may be physical, verbal and non-verbal. Examples of conduct or behaviour which constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- Unwelcome physical contact including patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, fondling, or inappropriate touching
- Physical violence, including sexual assault
- Physical contact, e.g., touching, pinching
- The use of job-related threats or rewards to solicit sexual favors /Verbal conduct
- Comments on a worker's appearance, age, private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories and jokes
- Sexual advances
- Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy
- Insults based on the sex of the worker
- Condescending remarks
- Sending sexually explicit messages (by phone or by email)
- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material
- Sexually suggestive gestures
- Whistling
- Leering

6.1.1 Who are we responsible for?

Below is a list of a number of examples across the club where we need to consider the welfare of people within our care. This list is not exhaustive

- Players involved in the academy or associated programs
- Under 18 players who are part of the senior squad
- Children and adults at risk taking part in community activities
- Disabled supporters and other adults at risk visiting the club
- Young players on tour or living away from their families
- Children visiting the stadium for matches, tours or concerts
- Ball assistants, mascots and flag bearers
- Every child, young person or adult at risk that comes into contact with the club and its facilities

6.1.2 Safeguarding and the workforce

Safeguarding is also about ensuring that all staff, volunteers and partners understand the role that they play in protecting vulnerable groups

6.1.3 Position of Trust and the workforce

Those who have responsibility for, and authority or influence over vulnerable groups are in relationships of trust in relation to the vulnerable groups in their care. A relationship of trust can be described as one in which one party has power and influence over the other by virtue of their work or the nature of the activity.

All staff in a position of trust must understand the responsibility they must exercise as a consequence of being in this position. Those in a position of trust must not;

- Use their position to gain access to information relating to vulnerable groups for their own or others' advantage. Information should only be shared to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.
- Use their power to intimidate, threaten or coerce or undermine vulnerable groups.
- Use their status and standing to form or promote inappropriate relationships; professional boundaries must be maintained at all times.

6.1.4 Staff Training

The club has produced a workforce development plan for safeguarding training. All staff working in direct contact with children will be required to complete the relevant training in line with the plan.

6.1.5 Health and Safety

Where a child or young person is participating in a club activity a risk assessment must be undertaken and take account of their particular vulnerabilities which will include the safeguarding of children. The risk assessment should set out what arrangements are in place for their care and supervision.

6.1.6 Safer Working Practice

Guidance for safer working practice is issued to all employees at commencement of employment along with the Clubs Codes of Conduct. Whenever possible staff should avoid situations where they are in one-to-one contact with children. When physical intervention is necessary to restore safety, restraint should not continue longer than absolutely necessary. The Code of Conduct is part of this policy and all employees and volunteers sign to confirm their understanding during their induction. Appendix 4

6.1.7 Disclosure and Barring service

Rochdale AFC is registered with the Disclosure and Barring Service ("DBS") under the umbrella body of The EFL & The Football Association.
The DBS provides a disclosure service for organisations. DBS disclosures enable employers to undertake more thorough recruitment and selection procedures for positions which involve working with children and adults at risk. The Club has a separate policy for Safer Recruitment and DBS Procedures.

All staff requiring a DBS will be rechecked every 3 years.

6.1.8 New Appointments & Safer Recruitment

All staff who are offered a position which involves working with children and adults at risk and will be required to undertake an enhanced DBS check and supply 2 references. All employment offers are subject to the outcome of the screening process and when applicable, this is set out in their Offer of Employment. Until such time as a satisfactory Disclosure certificate and 2 references have been received, the member of staff will not commence employment.

Further Information with regards to DBS can be found in the Clubs DBS policy and Procedure .

Rochdale AFC Safer Recruitment Policy - Example questions asked at interview:

- Give an example of how you have gone about establishing clear boundaries and expectations in your relationship with a child or young person?
- Tell us about a time when you had to deal with a child or young person who was behaving in a difficult or challenging way?
- Describe an occasion when you had concerns about a child but felt that your power was limited?

6.1.9 Temporary Staff and External Consultants

Rochdale AFC will ensure that all temporary staff and external consultants sign a Self-Declaration form and will not have unsupervised access to vulnerable groups during their employment with the club. A Service Level Agreement will be in place which outlines their Safeguarding Responsibilities'

6.1.10 Data Protection

The Data Protection policy adopted by Rochdale AFC is in line with current legislation.

The **Data Protection Act 2018 contains 'safeguarding of children and individuals at risk' as a processing condition that allows practitioners to share information**. This includes allowing practitioners to share information without consent, if it is not possible to gain consent, it cannot be reasonably expected that a practitioner gains consent, or if to gain consent would place a child at risk.

Consent: Be open and honest with the person (and/or their family where appropriate) from the outset about why, what, how and with whom information will, or could be, shared, and seek their agreement, unless it is unsafe or inappropriate to do so. All practitioners should aim to gain consent to share information, but should be mindful of situations where to do so would place a child at increased risk of harm. Information may be shared without consent if a practitioner has reason to believe that there is good reason to do so, and that the sharing of information will enhance the safeguarding of a child in a timely manner. When decisions are made to share or withhold information, practitioners should record who has been given the information and why.

Information shared must be:

- **Necessary and Proportionate** – Consider how much information to release and the impact of disclosing information. It must be proportionate to the need and the level of risk.
- **Relevant** – Only information which is relevant to the purpose for which it is being shared with others.
- **Adequate** – Must be adequate for the purpose and of the right quality to ensure it can be understood and relied upon.
- **Accurate** – Information must be accurate and up to date and should clearly distinguish between fact and opinion.
- **Timely** – Information must **be shared in a timely fashion to reduce the risk of missed opportunities to offer support and protection to a child.**

Recording: Decisions should be recorded, whether or not the decision is taken to share. If the decision is to share information then the reasons should be cited including what information has been shared and who with. If the decision is not to share it is good practice to record the reasons for this decision.

Practitioners should not assume that someone else will pass on information that they think may be critical to keeping a child safe. If a practitioner has concerns about a child's welfare and considers that they may be a child in need or that the child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm, then they should share the information with local authority children's social care and/or the police. All practitioners should be particularly alert to the importance of sharing information when a child moves from one local authority into another, due to the risk that knowledge pertinent to keeping a child safe could be lost.

Practitioners must have due regard to the relevant data protection principles which allow them to share personal information, **store and share information for safeguarding purposes**, including information which is sensitive and personal, and should be treated as 'special category personal data'

Members of staff may have reasonable grounds for concern about the welfare or safety of a child as a result of:

Information given by a child, a parent, another professional, or a member of public; Or

On-going work with a child, adult or family.

Agreement to refer to Children's Social Care should be sought as far as is possible from the parent/carer, through discussion about their child / children so that a referral is made with the parent/carer's knowledge. When a staff member becomes concerned about a child's safety, he/she must inform the parent that the club will be contacting the local Children's Social Care Department.

6.1.11 Parental/Guardian Consent

- Club Activities - Rochdale AFC will make every effort to obtain consent for all activities using the Club's own template for consent. Rochdale AFC will do everything it can to safeguard children in its care. If we do not have consent, the child will not be able to take part in the activity.
- School Activities - It is the responsibility of the school to obtain parental consent and carry out the relevant risk assessments before an activity takes place and Rochdale AFC will carry Public Liability Insurance. The above information is set out in a written agreement with the school which is signed prior to the event taking place.

6.1.12 Poor Practice

Poor practice occurs when staff or volunteers fail to fulfil the highest standards of care in their working practice. If allowed to continue poor practice can cause harm and become abuse. Poor practice is unacceptable and will be treated seriously by the club taking appropriate action. All concerns or complaints against any member of staff who has behaved in a way that has harmed or may have harmed a child (Under 18) will be referred instantly to the LADO officer.

Examples of poor practice:

- Allowing Hazing to go unreported
- Allowing abusive or concerning practice to go unreported (e.g., ridiculing a player)
- Ignoring Health and Safety guidelines
- Failing to adhere to the Clubs Code of Conduct

7 - CATEGORIES OF ABUSE - CHILDREN

'Child abuse and neglect' are generic terms encompassing all ill treatment of children as well as cases where the standard of care does not adequately support the child's health or development. Children may be abused or suffer neglect through the infliction of harm, or through the failure to act to prevent harm. Abuse can occur in a family or an institutional or community setting. The perpetrator may or may not be known to the child.

Recognition – Signs of Abuse
Should you have any concern that abuse is occurring you should contact a DSO immediately.

Physical Abuse - Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. A person might do this because they enjoy or need the attention, they get through having a sick child. Physical abuse can be caused through omission or the failure to act to protect.

An example of this could be where training is inappropriate for the age group, players are expected to play with an injury or where drugs or alcohol are offered or accepted.

Sexual Abuse - Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of, or consents to, what is happening. The activities may involve inappropriate touching or physical contact. Sexual abuse may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet) Boys and girls can be sexually abused by males and/or females, by adults and by other children.

An example in football is sexual abuse through inappropriate touching, or sexually explicit jokes between adults and children.

Neglect - Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs. Likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, shelter and clothing
- failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care givers; or
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

An example of this could be if a child or young person does not have proper supervision, clothing or are allowed/encouraged to play whilst injured.

Emotional Abuse - Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve making a child feel or believe that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. In addition, it includes racist or sexist behaviour and demeaning initiation ceremonies. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or "making fun" of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children, over protection and limitation of exploration and learning or preventing the child participation in normal social interaction.

It can be inflicted by other children and as well as adults and can include serious bullying or cyberbullying causing children to feel frightened or in danger.

An example of this could be, coaches or parents emotionally abuse children if they constantly criticise, abuse their power, or impose unrealistic pressure to perform.

Bullying & Hazing - anyone can be the target of bullying, but children or perceived as different may be at greater risk; this may include children from minority groups, or children with a disability.

Bullying can include:

- Physical – hitting, kicking, theft
- Verbal – name calling, teasing, sarcasm, racist or homophobic taunts, threats
- Emotional – tormenting, text messaging, ridiculing, humiliating and ignoring
- Sexual – unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments

Although bullying can take place anywhere it is more likely to take place in an unsupervised area. This would include changing rooms, or on the way to the pitch or training sessions

Hazing - is the practice of rituals and other activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group. Hazing is seen in many different types of social groups, including gangs, sports teams and schools.

Grooming - is when someone builds an emotional connection with an individual to gain their trust for the purposes of abuse or exploitation.

Many children or other vulnerable people don't understand that they have been groomed, or that what has happened is abuse. Grooming happens both on line and in person. Groomers will hide their true intentions and may spend a long time (this could be years) gaining an individual's trust. They may also try to gain the trust of the whole family so they can be alone with the person.

Grooming activity may include:

- Offering advice or understanding
- Buying gifts
- Giving the child attention
- Using their professional position or reputation
- Taking them on trips, outings or holidays
- Using secrets and intimidation to control children

Once they have established trust, groomers will exploit the relationship by isolating the individual from friends or family and creating a dependent relationship. They will use any means of power or control to make the individual believe they have no choice but to do what they want.

Groomers may introduce "secrets" as a way to control or frighten the individual. Sometimes they will blackmail them or make them feel ashamed or guilty to stop them telling anyone about the abuse.

8 - SIGNS AND INDICATORS

Children are reluctant to tell someone when they are being abused so it is essential that every member of the workforce is aware of the possible signs, and that there may be many pieces of information that piece together and alert you that something is not right. It is not the individual's responsibility to decide if a child or young person is being abused, however it is essential that all concerns are escalated to a member of the safeguarding team.

There is no clear dividing line between one type of abuse and another. The following section is divided into four areas to help categorize what may be seen or heard. Children/may show signs or symptoms from one or all of the categories. This should not be used as check list. All staff should be aware of anything unusual displayed by the child.

Physical Signs of Abuse	• Bruise marks consistent with either straps or slaps • Undue fear of adults – fear of going home to parents or carers • Aggression towards others • Unexplained injuries or burns-particularly if they are recurrent and especially in non-mobile babies • Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them • Injuries that occur to the body in places which are not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc. • Reluctance to change for, or participate in games or swimming • Bruises, bites burns, fractures etc. which do not have an accidental/satisfactory explanation • Cuts/scratches/substance abuse • Hitting (with the hand or implement) smacking, punching, kicking, slapping, twisting/pulling ear, hair or fingers, holding/squeezing with tight grip, biting, and burning • Fabricated illnesses
Neglect Signs of Abuse	• Exposure to danger/lack of supervision • Neglects – under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care etc. • Injuries that have not received medical attention# • Constant hunger • Poor standards of hygiene • Untreated illnesses • Persistent lack of attention, warmth or praise
Emotional Signs of Abuse	• Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clingy. Also, depression/aggression/extreme anxiety • Nervousness, frozen watchfulness • Obsessions or phobias • Sudden under achievement or lack of concentration • Attention seeking behaviour • Persistent tiredness • Running away/stealing/lying • Humiliating taunting or threatening a child whether in form of others or alone • Persistent lack of attention warmth or praise • Shouting/yelling at a child • Radicalization- use of inappropriate language, possession of violent extremist views, advocating violent actions and means, association with known extremists, seeking to recruit others
Indicators of Possible Sexual Abuse	• Child with excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour • Regularly engages in inappropriate sexual play • Sexual knowledge inappropriate for their age • Wariness of being approached • Bruises on inner thigh/buttock • Any allegation made by a child concerning sexual abuse • Sexual activity through words/play or drawing • Child who is sexually provocative or seductive with adults • Unaccounted sources of money • Telling you about being asked to "keep a secret" or dropping hints or clues about abuse

Remember – signs and symptoms often appear in a cluster, but also many of the indicators above may be caused by other factors – if in doubt report your concerns.

The most important factor is a report by the child.

9 - ADDITIONAL SAFEGUARDING CATEGORIES OF ABUSE

9.1.1 Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

A type of abuse in which children in exploitative situations and relationships receive something such as gifts, money or affection as a result of performing sexual activities or others performing sexual activities on them.

Children or young people may be tricked into believing they are in a loving, consensual relationship. They might be invited to parties and given drugs and alcohol. They may also be groomed on line. Some children and young people are trafficked into or within the UK for the purpose of sexual exploitation. Sexual exploitation can also happen to young people in gangs.

9.1.2 Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM involves procedures that intentionally alter or injure female genital organs for non-medical reasons. The Female Genital Mutilation Act 2015 makes it illegal to practise FGM in the UK or to take girls who are British nationals or permanent residents of the UK abroad for FGM whether or not it is lawful in another country. It also makes it illegal to aid, abet, counsel or procure the carrying out of FGM abroad

There are no health benefits to FGM and it is likely to cause severe immediate medical effects (such as bleeding, shock, wound infections, serve pain) as well as longer term medical consequences (such as abnormal periods, damage to the reproductive system including infertility, complications in pregnancy and new born deaths) Longer term consequences also include psychological damage such as low libido depression and anxiety. FGM is a very complex issue and should be dealt with sensitively. Issues will likely involve a number of agencies working together including specialist police officers, health and social care and education.

9.1.3 Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both of the parties are married without their consent or against their will. It is recognised as a form of violence against women, men or children and is a serious abuse of human rights.

A forced marriage differs from an arranged marriage where family members take the lead in choosing the partner but both parties are free to choose whether they marry the chosen partner or not.

Forced marriage is illegal in England and Wales. The Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 made it a criminal offence from June 2014 to force someone to marry.

In a situation where there is concern that an adult is being forced into marriage they do not or cannot consent to, there will be an overlap between action taken under the forced marriage provisions and the adult safeguarding process. In this case action will be co-ordinated with the police and other relevant organisations. The police must always be contacted in such cases as it involves a criminal offence and urgent action may need to be taken.

9.1.4 Honour Based Violence

Honour based violence is a violent crime or incident which may have been committed to protect or defend the honour of the family or community.

It is often linked to family members or acquaintances who mistakenly believe someone has brought shame to their family or community by doing something that is not in keeping with the traditional beliefs of their culture. For example, honour-based violence might be committed against people who:

- become involved with a boyfriend or girlfriend from a different culture or religion
- want to get out of an arranged marriage
- want to get out of a forced marriage
- wear clothes or take part in activities that might not be considered traditional within a particular culture

Women and girls are the most common victims of honour-based violence however it can also affect men and boys. Crimes of 'honour' do not always include violence. Crimes committed in the name of 'honour' might include:

- domestic abuse
- threats of violence
- sexual or psychological abuse
- forced marriage
- being held against your will or taken somewhere you don't want to go
- assault

9.1.5 Cyber & Online Abuse

Online abuse can happen over long periods and escalates over time.

It can include:

- monitoring of social media profiles
- monitoring of emails
- abuse over social media, such as Facebook or X (formerly Twitter)
- sharing intimate photos or videos without your consent
- using GPS locators or spyware

9.1.6 Child Trafficking and Modern Slavery

Child trafficking is the movement of a young person for the purpose of exploitation. This includes:

- A young person being bought or sold for money.
- A young person being tricked into leaving home.
- A young person who is given away by their family because the family need money.
- A young person who is made to leave their home because of war.
- A young person who chooses to leave home, thinking they are going to a better life.

The move of the young person can be international or within the same country. There could be lots of reasons the person has moved including:

- Sexual exploitation
- Forced labour
- Domestic servitude
- Organ harvesting
- Child related crimes such as child sexual exploitation, forced begging, illegal drug cultivation, organised theft, related benefit frauds etc.
- Forced marriage and illegal adoption (if other constituent elements are present)

The reasons for the move generally benefit the people who take the young person and the people who exploit or abuse them. The young person does not benefit from the move. In fact, in most cases the young person suffers because they have been forced or tricked into moving.

9.1.7 What are the signs of someone being trafficked?

One or two of these signs might not necessarily mean a person has been trafficked, but if you have any concerns about a vulnerable person please contact a safeguarding officer.

- Physical signs that someone has tried to hurt them (bruises/cuts).
- Does not come into school all the time.
- Has different adults around them quite a lot.
- Often seems tired or worn out.
- Does not often speak to other people or seems withdrawn.
- Seems to be afraid of people in authority (teachers/adults).
- Gets angry easily or can be violent.
- Looks like they find it difficult to concentrate or focus on something.
- Have moved to the UK a while ago, but still don't really know the language.
- Have suggested they don't live with family or have a bad time at home.

Child exploiters and traffickers are targeting both boys and girls.

Modern Slavery is the term used within the UK and is defined within the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The Act categorises offences of Slavery, Servitude and Forced or Compulsory Labour and Human Trafficking. These crimes include holding a person in a position of slavery, servitude forced or compulsory labour, or facilitating their travel with the intention of exploiting them soon after.

Although human trafficking often involves an international cross-border element, it is also possible to be a victim of modern slavery within your own country.

It is possible to be a victim even if consent has been given to be moved.
Children cannot give consent to being exploited therefore the element of coercion or deception does not need to be present to prove an offence.

9.1.8 Peer-on-Peer Abuse

Peer-on Peer abuse is any form of physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse, and coercive control exercised between and within children's relationships (both intimate and non-intimate).

It can take many various forms including serious bullying (including cyber bullying), physical abuse, teenage relationship abuse, domestic violence, sexting, child sexual exploitation, youth and serious youth violence, harmful sexual behaviour and/or gender-based violence.

9.1.9 Non-Recent Historic Abuse

Non recent historic abuse is the term used to refer to disclosures of abuse that were perpetrated in the past.

It can also be about a disclosure of neglect physical sexual or emotional abuse from someone who is now 18 years or over, relating to an incident that took place when the alleged victim was under 18 years old.

Allegations of abuse can be received by anyone and can be made against relatives, friends, carers, people in the public eye or in a position of trust, or any other person who currently has or previously had contact with vulnerable groups.

All concerns or disclosure relating to no recent historic abuse must be reported.

10 - REPORTING CONCERNS

It is not the responsibility of Staff or Volunteers to decide if abuse has taken place, it is their responsibility to take appropriate steps to ensure that all suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice are taken seriously and reported immediately and appropriately together with recording the matter within Tootoot Sport (see Recording allegations or suspicions below).

If a member of the Club's workforce has a concern about a child it is their "duty to refer" these to a Safeguarding Officer who will in turn report it to the Head of Safeguarding.

With regards to adults at risk, there is no requirement to gain consent to refer it to the Head of Safeguarding, however consent must be obtained to refer it to an outside agency. The member of staff should record whether consent was given or not.

If there is immediate risk of harm, a serious injury or a criminal offence may have been committed, then the police or other emergency services must be involved at the earliest opportunity.

Recognise

It is important to recognise possible abuse or poor practice and act when it is first suspected and not wait. Do not ignore any concerns. All concerns must be reported to the safeguarding team who can find out more information.

Respond

When abuse or harm is disclosed or suspected it is important to report the basic facts to the safeguarding team or statutory agencies to take action, you may receive a direct disclosure or is may be a suspicion. Is important to ask open questions:

- Tell me....
- Explain to me.....
- Describe to me.....

Make sure you listen to the person making the disclosure and reassure them that they are doing the right thing.

Refer

Once you have the initial facts it is important to refer it immediately to the DSO or Head of Safeguarding. If referring to the Safeguarding Officer they will immediately refer it to the Head of Safeguarding.

The Head of Safeguarding may refer the case to The EFL and The Football Association, the local safeguarding partnerships referral team or the Police before setting up an internal inquiry and takes their advice.

10.1.1 Recording allegations or suspicions

The Club will keep a record of all incidents and concerns reported to its Safeguarding team within its electronic recording system Tootoot Sport. The person reporting the concern will be asked to provide written details for our records on an internal referral form, which must be entered onto Tootoot Sport within 24 hours, it is important to capture all the information as above i.e., who, what, where etc. Where possible always record the vulnerable persons wishes. All reports will be taken seriously, carefully recorded and acted upon.

Any details taken from a child should be reported in their own words. These reports should be confined to facts and should not include any opinion, interpretation or judgment.

A flow chart showing the course of action can be found at appendix 5

10.1.2 Confidentiality

There is always tension and caution around issues of confidentiality. The advice for all staff at Rochdale AFC is that no guarantee of confidentiality can be given to a child or adult at risk. All staff have a professional responsibility to share information with other agencies to safeguard a child.

There are actions which staff have to and are obliged to take once we are aware of a problem. Undertakings of confidentiality should not be given either to the person making the allegations or to the person being interviewed. A matter is confidential on a need-to-know basis and nobody should have any reservations about referring a safeguarding children issue to a Club DSO. The key issue is that the welfare of the child is protected.

11 - ALLEGATIONS AGAINST A PERSON IN A POSITION OF TRUST

Any situation in which an allegation or concern arises about the conduct of a member of staff or volunteer will be managed by the Rochdale Safeguarding children's Board using their policy for dealing with allegations against a person who works with children.

Allegations and concerns will be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) within 24 hours the allegation being made.

In the first instance the process is to make contact with the First Response Team and Duty LADO who will advise as the next stage of referral if required.

12 - MANAGING LOW LEVEL CONCERNS

It has been recognised by the club there is a need to manage issues that fall under the umbrella of safeguarding yet which are of a minor nature. These matters are classified as 'Low Level Concerns'. Handling such concerns appropriately and proportionately will strengthen confidence of staff and volunteers in the Club.

Where Low Level concerns are shared with a designated safeguarding member of staff in accordance with the Clubs' safeguarding policy, these must be recorded as per the normal process for managing Safeguarding issues.

What is a Low-Level Concern?

A low-level concern for this purpose is any concern, no matter how small and even if no more than a 'nagging doubt', that a person may have acted in a manner inconsistent with the Club's Code of Conduct or simply – even if not linked to a particular act or omission – a sense of unease as to their behaviour.

Low Level Concerns where no emergency actions are required, should be managed internally and recorded within the Tootoot Sport electronic Safeguarding management system.

Low Level Concerns do not in any way override or replace the Clubs 'Whistle Blowing Policy' but compliment and work alongside that process.
Two Examples of Low-level Concerns:

Physical

Staff error causing no/little harm, e.g., skin friction mark due to ill-fitting bib during football/PE session

Psychological

This could be an isolated incident where and adult, adult at risk or child is spoken to in a rude or inappropriate way – respect is undermined but little or no distress caused.

This list is not limited to the above but is extensive and any uncertainty should be discussed with the Head of Safeguarding or Club Safeguarding Officers.

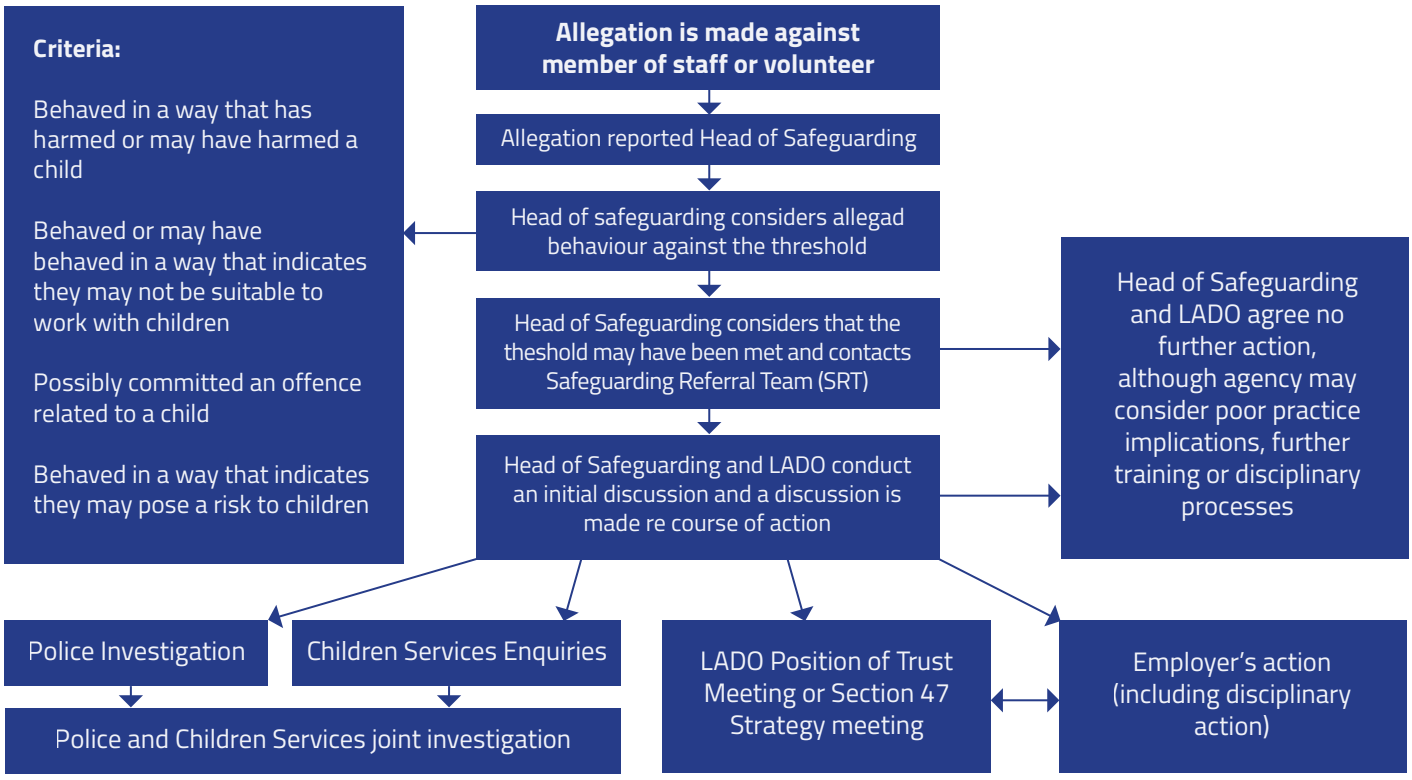
Contact Details for Rochdale Children's Social Care

0300 303 0440 (Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 4.45pm)

In an emergency outside office hours telephone 0300 303 8875 or email: ehash@rochdale.gov.uk

The LADO will advise the Club on the action to take in certain situations whereby a concern or allegation has been received the employee will be removed from working with vulnerable groups until the investigation has been concluded. In all circumstances the allegation details will be reported to the Football Association and EFL.

LADO: Process for Managing Allegations



LADO tracks progress, monitors and records outcomes

advises employer about duty to Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) when appropriate

13 - SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Rochdale AFC follow Regulations, in respect of the supervision of children. These regulations clearly stipulate the ratio of staff to children be no less than 1:10.

However, NSPCC guidance recommended adult to child ratios. These are based on Ofsted guidelines.
Remember that regardless of the overall ratio, a minimum of two supervisors must be present at all times.

It is to be noted that a dynamic risk assessment may well indicate the need for an enhanced level of supervision and staffing for a particular activity.

The following table shows NSPCC recommendations:

Child/Young person's age	Number of adults	Number of children
0 - 2	1	3
2 - 3	1	4
4 - 8	1	6
9 - 12	1	8
13 - 18	1	10

Rochdale AFC will endeavour to follow NSPCC guidance regarding staff to child ratios whenever possible.

If the group is mixed gender, the supervising staff should also include both male and female staff wherever possible.

Where Lone Working is an integral part of a role e.g., Academy Teacher or Driver then additional Risk Assessment Strategies will be put in place e.g.

- Remain visible and/or teach in a communal area
- Ensure a colleague is made aware of when and where you are and why
- Prop a door open (so long as this does not constitute a fire safety hazard)
- When transporting a lone child, they should be seated in the rear of the vehicle

Staff must never work alone if they are concerned about risks to themselves or others in the situation

- Being a risk for abuse
- Being accused of perpetrating abuse

A full policy for the Supervision of Children and Young People is available on request

13.1.1 Late Collection/Non collection of Children

There are a number of reasons why a child may remain uncollected at the end of the day. Some of the possible causes may be a delayed parent, traffic or confusion about finishing times.

Staff must respond sensitively and consistently to ensure the safety and welfare of such children, young people and adults at risk.

Staff should ensure that full contact & emergency information is collected for each young person in advance of the session starting.

For those people that attend weekly sessions contact and emergency information will be updated annually.

Make sure families are aware of this procedure and understand the process that will be followed if children, young people or adults at risk are not collected on time

If a child, young person or adult at risk is not collected within 15 minutes after the end of the session, the following steps should be taken:

1. Any child, young person or adult at risk should be taken to the main reception/entrance at the Club, Academy office or other venue if off site. Their name(s) should be recorded and a member of staff assigned to lead on the late collection .

2. A check should be made for information about changes to collection routines. This should be with the event lead, coach, leader and receptionist.

3. Reasonable attempts should be made to contact:
a. Parents / carers
b. Any other adults authorised to collect the child, young person or vulnerable adult
c. Transport providers where necessary

4. The child, young person or adult at risk should only leave the premises with the person(s) named on their registration documents or a person authorised by a parent / carer.

5. If no-one can be contacted to collect the child one hour after the event has finished, Social Care and the Police will be contacted
a. Social Care: 0300 303 0440
b. Police: 101

6. The child, young person or adult at risk should stay at the setting in the care of two DBS checked staff members until safely collected by the mother, father, a nominated carer, social worker or police officer.

7. Under no circumstances should staff attempt to look for the parents / carers

8. Staff should never take the child, young person or adult at risk home with them

9. A full written report of the incident and outcome must be recorded on the safeguarding incident form and passed to the Designated Safeguarding Officer.

13.1.2 Ball Assistants

The Club will endeavour to ensure the safety and protection of all Ball assistants whilst they are at the club.

- Ball assistants are aged 12+ and will be subject to the Code of Conduct issued by the club which must be signed by the child and their parent/guardian.
- No ball assistant will be able to attend without the completion of written consent forms from parents/guardians, completion of medical information and emergency contact information.
- Ball assistants will be supervised by 2 members of staff who have a DBS certificate and have undertaken the appropriate Safeguarding training.
- Ball assistants will be signed in an out of the stadium.
- The Ball assistants attend a briefing at the beginning of each match which outlines Health and Safety for the match and Safeguarding.

13.1.3 Flag Bearers

As with Ball Assistants the club will endeavour to ensure the safety and protection of all Flag Bearers whilst they are at the club.

The Club accepts Flag Bearers aged 5 to 17 years of age, in groups at least 12, from schools, businesses and sports clubs. All groups are accompanied at all times by their own "Group Leader" who has overall responsibility for their Group.

Group leaders and parents/carers are given the Flag Bearers policy prior to attendance which includes an outline of the Match Day Experience including Health and Safety and Safeguarding.

13.1.4 Mascots

Rochdale AFC is committed to ensuring that all children who carry out the role of Mascot, whilst in the care of the club, can do so in a safe and enjoyable environment through adherence to the club's Safeguarding children Policy and Safer Recruitment Policy and process.

- All staff escorting match day child mascots will be subject of an enhanced DBS check and must have completed the Safeguarding Induction training.
- Child mascots must be accompanied by a parent/carer at all times, other than when in secure areas e.g., the tunnel, when the mascot will be supervised by Club staff.
- If a mascot requires help with dressing this will be done by the parent/carer.
- If an injured or disabled child is used as a mascot a risk assessment will be carried out to establish if that child can safely participate in the Match Day mascot itinerary and to identify what additional safety measures may need to be put in place to allow the child to safely participate.
- Every effort should be made to achieve correct staffing ratios and the best level of supervision of match day mascots at all times.
- Staff should avoid any situations where they may be left alone with a mascot e.g., do not use a lift alone with a child mascot.
- Parents/carers will be informed of the club's Images Policy in information sent to them prior to the game; together with the appropriate mascot itinerary and details of the club's Head of Safeguarding.
- Should a mascot be subject to a Court Order special reference must be made to the Image Permission form.

14 - SAFEGUARDING WITHIN PARTNERSHIPS POLICY

The Club recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all Children and Adults at Risk participating in club activities and when participating in activities arranged in partnership with an external service provider.

The club is committed to working within partnerships to provide a safe environment for all Children and Adults at Risk by utilising the local Safeguarding Policies and Procedures to protect vulnerable groups from physical, sexual or emotional harm, neglect, bullying or exploitation.

The club's commitment to safeguarding is outlined in any partnership agreements, service level agreements or any other agreements that are in place with any service provider or for commissioned services insofar as those services relate to Children or Adults at Risk of Harm.

Partnership agreements will include the following:

- All partners will be made fully aware of their areas of safeguarding responsibilities
- In the event of a safeguarding concern arising, local safeguarding policies and procedures will be followed
- An agreement confirming safe recruitment procedures have been followed
- If appropriate level DBS checks and self-declarations have been undertaken
- Agreement on the level of supervision to be provided by the partner during the activity
- If the provider has valid public liability insurance
- What safeguarding training has been undertaken by the deliverers
- Health & Safety, Codes of Conduct etc.
- Who has responsibility for completion of consent forms (e.g., medical and image consent), registration, record keeping and risk assessments
- Details of First Aid arrangements
- Clear guidance on the reporting of Safeguarding concerns or concerns regarding Poor Practice during and outside of normal office hours
- Name and contact details of staff to whom Safeguarding concerns, or concerns regarding poor practice, should be reported
- Whether participants and their parents/carers have been provided with details of how to report a Safeguarding concern
- What evaluation procedures are in place to gain the vulnerable groups' views about the activity
- The period by which the safeguarding arrangements in the agreement will be reviewed

15 - USE OF IMAGES

The club welcomes photographs and images that celebrate the sport, the values and the objectives of the club.

Rochdale AFC take its guidance on the use of images from guidelines issued by the FA and the EFL. All photographs are taken by persons who have been briefed by the Activity Manager responsible for the activity being photographed.

- Before taking photographs of children please refer to the Rochdale AFC policy located on the website.
- Parents/Carers are responsible for informing the person running the activity of any change of circumstances which may affect consent.
- Parents/Carers will be informed of how the image will be used. The person running the activity will not allow an image to be used for something other than that for which it was initially agreed.
- All children and featured in publications will be appropriately dressed.
- Where possible the image will focus on the activity taking place and not of a specific child/young person.
- Where appropriate, images represent the broad range of youngsters participating in football.
- Designated photographers will undertake a DBS check, attend a safeguarding children workshop and will be personally responsible for keeping upto date with the latest guidelines on the photography and filming policy. Identification will be worn at all times.
- Children who are under a court order will not have the images published in any document.
- No images of children and young persons featured in publications will be accompanied by personal details such as their school or home address.
- Any instances of inappropriate images in football should be reported to the Head of Safeguarding and the police without delay.

16 - GUIDANCE FOR ACCOMMODATING UNDER 18'S WITHIN A FIRST TEAM ENVIRONMENT AND WHILST ON WORK EXPERIENCE.

If an academy player or young professional under the age of 18 joins another club on trial, work experience or a Football League Youth Loan the Academy will seek written parental consent (additional to the standard consent of every season) prior to the activity taking place. Consideration will also be given to the players education programme, travel and accommodation arrangements. If the club is not located within a reasonable travelling distance from the players current address, the club will insist that where possible, players are placed in host family accommodation recruited by the receiving club in line with the relevant English Football League (EFL) guidance during their time away from the club and not in hotel accommodation , and as good practice the club should designate a member of Academy Staff to check on the players on a regular weekly basis, not just for game situations but for their general welfare whilst on loan, trial or work experience. The receiving club will also undertake formal visits.

A full risk assessment & suitability should be conducted before any arrangements are made.

For players under the age of 18 who are joining the club on trial (including work experience) parental consent will be sought prior to the trial taking place, along with a full medication history and injury disclaimer. Where accommodation with a host family is required during the trial period, a matching form will be completed by the player to ensure they are placed with the appropriate host family. If the players parent/guardian is also travelling with the player, then a local hotel may be used as an alternative. Transportation will be arranged during the trial period.

All players progress through the academy system, may have the opportunity to train and play with the adult provisions of the club. Obviously, this carries a number of safeguarding concerns as they will be entering an adult provision and be susceptible to adult behaviour and language. The club will support the player (s) during this transition. Parents will be included and consent sought. Separate procedures are available to support this progression. A full policy is available on request.

17 - KEY LEGISLATION, RULES REGULATIONS & GUIDANCE

- Children Act 1989
- Children Act 2004
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 update
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026
- Sexual Offences Act 2003

Please refer to the Safeguarding children website and the FA website for further information:

http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/introduction-to-safeguarding-children

EFL Mandatory Safeguarding Standards

Rochdale AFC will comply with:

- EFL Safeguarding Standards
- FA Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures
- EFL Regulation requirements relating to safeguarding

18 - CODE OF CONDUCT

All staff and employees are expected to uphold the club's values and expectations of behaviour as detailed in the Codes of Conduct.
A breach of the Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action, possibly leading to dismissal. Serious breaches may result in a referral to the DBS.
Cases of poor practice will be reported to the relevant football authorities.

Creating and maintaining a safe safeguarding culture, ensuring that staff understand their individual safeguarding responsibilities, feel confident in challenging unsafe practice, and know how to report concerns.

19 - OTHER SAFEGUARDING CONTACTS IN FOOTBALL

Whilst any safeguarding concern should be raised with the Club Safeguarding contacts in the first instance, we recognise that this may not always be possible or appropriate. Below are the contact details for footballing partners with whom safeguarding concerns in relation to the Club can be discussed:

The English Football League Safeguarding Team
Tel: 01772 325940
Email: safeguarding@efl.com

If the concern regards a person employed in footballs conduct towards a child:

The FA Safeguarding Team
Tel: 0800 169 1863
Email: safeguarding@TheFA.com

19.1.1 Procedures and safety measures for online learning

The Club expects all staff and players to adhere to the relevant policy. Professional boundaries must be maintained at all times. We have put extra measures in place to reduce the risks in relation to online learning. These are fully detailed within the Club Electronic Communication Guidance Policy and the Academy Electronic Communication Guidance Policy.

19.1.2 Mental health

Negative experiences and distressing life events, can affect the mental health of us all. Players who are struggling under the current circumstances should contact the Club safeguarding staff as outlined above. Support can also be accessed through a number of national organisations including:

The importance of effective partnership working is crucial to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people who have mental health problems as a result of abuse and/or neglect.

The Samaritans	**Tel: 116 123**	**www.samaritans.org**	**Available 24 Hours**
ChildLine	**Tel: 0800 1111**	**www.childline.org.uk**	**24 Hours a day, 7 days a week (18 or under)**
NSPCC	**Tel: 0808 800 5000**	**www.nspcc.org.uk**	**10am - 4pm Mon - Fri**
Mind	**Tel: 0300 123 3393**	**www.mind.org.uk**	**9am - 6pm Mon - Fri**
PFA	**Tel: 07500 000 777**	**www.thepfa.com/wellbeing**	

19.1.3 Online safety

It is important that internet safety and security messages are re-enforced during this time when we are expecting young people to be online more often. It is important that both players and parents are aware of the help and support available should they be concerned about something they have seen or experienced online. Social Media Use, Gaming Platforms, Messaging Apps, Livestreaming, Online Grooming, Image Sharing, Cyberbullying.

These include:

UK Safer Internet Centre	**www.reportharmfulcontent.com/**
CEOP	**www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/**
Internet Matters	**www.internetmatters.org/**
NetAware	**www.net-aware.org.uk/**
ThinkuKnow	**www.saferinternet.org.uk/resource/thinkyouknow**

19.1.4 Equality & diversity

Rochdale AFC are proactive and encourage all staff, coaches, volunteers & host families to be sensitive to differing, but safe, parenting styles, lifestyles or family patterns that vary across cultures and groups. They must not discriminate on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and/or sexual orientation.

Staff must also be aware of the broader social factors that serve to discriminate against black and minority ethnic people, different religious groups, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning people (LGBTQ) and people with disabilities.

At the same time, child abuse must never be condoned or ignored for so-called religious, cultural or other reasons. Professionals must guard against stereo-types, both positive and negative. Anxiety about being accused of discriminatory practice must never prevent taking the necessary action to safeguard children.

https://www.gov.uk/children-with-special-educational-needs

20 - OTHER RELATED POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDANCE

- Adults at Risk Safeguarding Policy
- Changing Room & Shower Guidance
- Complaints Procedure
- DBS Policy and Procedure
- Disciplinary Procedures
- Employment of U18's
- Equality and Diversity
- Guidance for Safer Working Practice
- Health & Safety
- Match Day procedures for Vulnerable Groups
- Photography and Filming Policy
- Preventing Radicalisation and Extremism
- Safer Recruitment
- Social Media Policy
- Substitute Accommodation
- Supervision of Children and Young People
- Transport Policy
- Trips and Events for Vulnerable Groups
- Whistleblowing
- https://rochdaleafc.co.uk/club-policies/

21 - DOCUMENT CONTROL

Department Heads Responsible for the Approval and Review of this Policy.

It is the responsibility of the Senior Safeguarding Manager and the Head of Safeguarding to approve and review this policy.

This policy must be reviewed by the person stated in 5.1.1 at least once every 52 weeks.

Department Heads or Managers Responsible for the Approval and Review of these Related Procedures.

It is the responsibility of the Senior Safeguarding Manager and the Head of Safeguarding to approve and review these procedures.

This procedure must be reviewed at least once every 52 weeks.

21.1.1 Author and Approval

Document Author	Approved by	Date Approved (or re-approved on changes)	Signed
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