



SAFEGUARDING: Reporting Low-level Concerns

Ensuring Best Practice & Implementing Lessons Learned

Introduction: A Safeguarding Culture

The Club prioritises the safety, welfare and wellbeing of all, and relies on all staff to behave in ways befitting of our values, and in line with the Safeguarding Code of Conduct.

Creating a culture in which all safeguarding practice concerns are shared responsibly and with the right person, and recorded and dealt with appropriately, is crucial, because – as noted by Gruenter and Whitaker – ‘The culture of any organisation is shaped by the worst behaviours the leaders are willing to tolerate.’

The Club has a legal and moral duty to keep adults at risk safe and protect them from harm.

The raising of low-level concerns is an opportunity for training and process improvement in line with the ‘near miss’ reporting applied in the broader approach to ensuring the health and safety of our community.

Individuals raising a concern do not need to determine if it meets the harm threshold, but they do have an obligation to raise any safeguarding observation as part of the Club’s proactive safeguarding culture.

Safeguarding breaches can occur in any organisation and escalating low-level behaviour concerns for discussion is an important element of the duty of care. This reporting would include a discussion on concerns that have been brought to our attention, even if they are taking place outside of our own community.

If implemented well, this will:

- encourage an open and transparent culture;
- enable the Club to identify inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour early;
- minimise the risk of abuse;
- and ensure that adults working in or on behalf of the organisation are clear about professional boundaries and act within them, in accordance with the ethos and values of the Club.

Definitions

- **The Club:**
Tottenham Hotspur Football and Athletic Co. Limited, its Group Companies, Tottenham Hotspur Foundation (a registered charity known as the “Foundation”) and Tottenham Hotspur Women’s Football Club Limited – together the “Club”.
- **Staff:**
Any person acting for or on behalf of the Club in an official role whether as an employee, volunteer, casual workers or staff, consultant or otherwise

Who is this guidance for?

All staff whose work will involve contact with children and adults at risk.

Underpinning principles:

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- Staff and all other adults should understand their responsibilities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and adults at risk
- Staff are responsible for their own actions and behaviour and should avoid any conduct which would lead any reasonable person to question their motivation and intentions.
- Staff should work, and be seen to work, in an open and transparent way including self-reporting if their conduct or behaviour falls short of these guiding principles
- Staff should acknowledge that deliberately invented/malicious allegations are extremely rare and that all concerns should be reported and recorded
- Staff should discuss and/or take advice promptly from their line manager if they have acted in a way which may give rise to concern
- Staff should apply the same professional standards regardless of culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and sexual orientation
- Staff should be aware that breaches of the law and other professional guidelines could result in disciplinary action being taken against them, criminal action and/or other proceedings including barring by the Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) from working in regulated activity.

Low-level concerns and Managing Allegations Against Staff

This policy should be read alongside the Managing Allegations Against Staff policy.

The low-level concerns policy complements the Allegations against staff policy. The Reporting of low-level concerns:

- 1) Enables the Club to respond to any concerns in the behaviour and suitability of staff, where the harm' threshold is not met.
- 2) Ensures that staff learn from errors in judgment and poor outcomes, in real time.
- 3) Ensures that staff can report and learn without fear of punitive action or judgement.
- 4) Enables the Club to continually improve the standards of practice.
- 5) Encourages the Club to be a safe, reflective and learning environment.

Purpose of a Low-level Policy

The purpose of the policy is to create and embed a culture of openness, trust and transparency in which the clear values and expected behaviour which are set out in the Safeguarding code of conduct are constantly lived, monitored and reinforced by all staff.

In order to achieve this, the Club will:

- Ensure that staff are clear about what appropriate behaviour is and are confident in distinguishing expected and appropriate behaviour from inappropriate, problematic or concerning behaviour – in themselves and others, and the delineation of professional boundaries and reporting lines (see Safeguarding Code of Conduct).
- Empower staff to share any low-level concerns with the relevant individual(s) in the Safeguarding Team, and to help all staff to interpret the sharing of such concerns as a 'neutral act' (Low-level concerns policy).

- Address unprofessional behaviour and support the individual to correct it at an early stage (Low-level concerns policy).
- Identify inappropriate, problematic, or concerning behaviour – including any patterns – that may need to be consulted upon with the LADO (see Allegations against staff).
- Provide responsive, sensitive, and proportionate handling of such concerns when they are raised.

Create an Open Culture:

- Maintain culture of openness, trust and transparency
- Staff know that Safeguarding will respond in a sensitive, proportionate manner to low-level concerns, with a focus on learning and improving practice
- Enable staff to get things wrong and learn from mistakes, without feeling penalised

Clarity of Expectations:

- Ensure staff are confident and clear about expected behaviours and practice
- Ensure staff are excited to drive practice improvement as a team

Embed a Learning Culture around Working with Children and Adults:

- Ensure that staff feel confident to report any concern, no matter how small, for the purpose of learning and improving practice
- Ensure that staff feel empowered to challenge practice that that unprofessional, concerning and inappropriate behaviour is addressed at an early stage
- Supporting all staff to reflect and learn from concerns, misunderstandings.

Low level concerns

What is a low-level concern?

Low-level concerns are behaviours which falls below the standard required by the Club as set out in our Code of Conduct, within your job description and in our values & behaviours.

To assist you we have detailed a non-exhaustive list of examples of low-level concerns:

- When insufficient care is taken to avoid injuries (e.g., by excessive training or inappropriate training for the age, maturity, experience and ability of players).
- Allowing abusive or concerning practices to go unreported (e.g., a coach who ridicules and criticises players who make a mistake during a match).
- Allowing hazing practices to go unreported.
- Placing children or young people in potentially compromising and uncomfortable situations with adults (e.g., unprofessional use by a coach on social media with young players).
- Unprofessional use of their own or the Professional Club's social media accounts.
- Ignoring health and safety guidelines (e.g., not wearing seat belts in club transport).
- Using foul and abusive language towards or around children or other adults (e.g., abusive language towards match officials).
- Giving continued and unnecessary preferential treatment to certain individuals on a regular basis;
- Failure to provide safe and appropriate coaching sessions whilst taking into consideration the ages of the players (e.g., overtraining and exerting undue influence over players).
- Putting performance over the safety and wellbeing of players.

- Lack of respect for other individuals, such as match officials, opposition coaches, players, managers and spectators/parents.
- Allowing rough and dangerous play, bullying, the use of bad language or inappropriate behaviour by players.
- Using punishments that humiliate or harm children.
- Pitting children against one another.
- Showing favouritism (even if only perceived favouritism).
- Providing one to one coaching without any supervision or the presence of other club officials.
- Allowing children to discriminate on the grounds of religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, sexual identity, ability, or footballing ability.
- Not encouraging children to accept responsibility for their own performance and behaviour.
- Not challenging low-level behaviour / conduct / suitability concerns in other Club Officials.
- Allowing allegations of abuse to go unchallenged, unreported, or unrecorded and failing to report these concerns (e.g. bystanders of abuse).
- Not recording incidents or accidents, or respond appropriately.
- Not making reasonable adjustments to address the additional needs of disabled players or other vulnerable groups.
- Allowing confidential information to be shared inappropriately.
- Not respecting or listening to the opinions of children.
- Not considering the rights and responsibilities of children.
- Smoking and consuming alcohol during coaching sessions.
- Using illicit drugs.
- Consuming alcohol whilst an official Club trip with children and young people.
- Taking children to their own home.
- Not adhering to safety guidance when transporting children, including travel abroad.

Improving Standards of Practice

The Club is committed to reducing the possibility of abuse of children by those in positions of trust, by ensuring that low-level concerns are dealt with effectively and swiftly across the Club.

Whilst low-level concerns and behaviour may not be immediately dangerous or intentionally harmful it does set a poor example and may lead to harm or put a child or adult at risk in danger.

- To allow low-level concerns to continue unchallenged may result in an environment developing in which abuse may be able to take place.
- It can also normalise behaviour which is unacceptable and should not be condoned.
- Where individuals display low-level concerns and hold positions of trust, have elevated roles and act as role models, children and/or adults at risk may mirror this behaviour and breed an unhealthy culture.

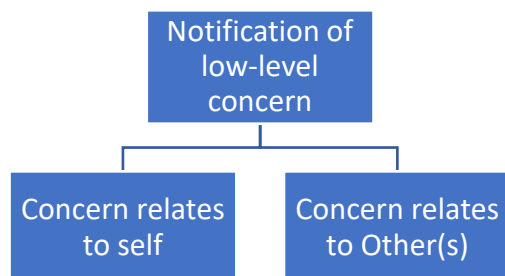
Research shows that where an organisation effects a policy of responding to low-level concerns, more serious allegations against staff are more likely to be responded to appropriately within the organisation and referred to relevant agencies, including social care and police.

No concern is too small to be reported to the Safeguarding team. It's always better to check a concern that is not a problem, than to fail to report. It's important to remember that you do not need 'proof' in order to report. It may be that you just feel uncomfortable about something.

Notification of Low-level Concerns Procedure

Whenever a member of staff identifies concerning behaviours in staff, volunteers, third parties, and other adults, they must report them. Concerning behaviours may just make staff feel uncomfortable.

Reporting may take two forms:

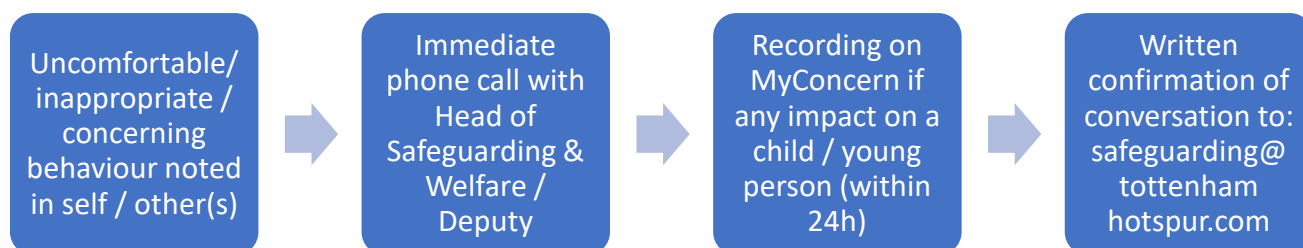


Where possible, those reporting concerns about colleagues will be protected as per whistleblowing policy.

No one is above being reported, regardless of reputation, expertise, qualification, seniority, and tenure at the Club.

If the concerns relate to the Head of Safeguarding & Welfare, they should be reported to the Director of HR, or Matthew Collecott, as the Strategic Safeguarding Lead.

Low-level Concern Notification

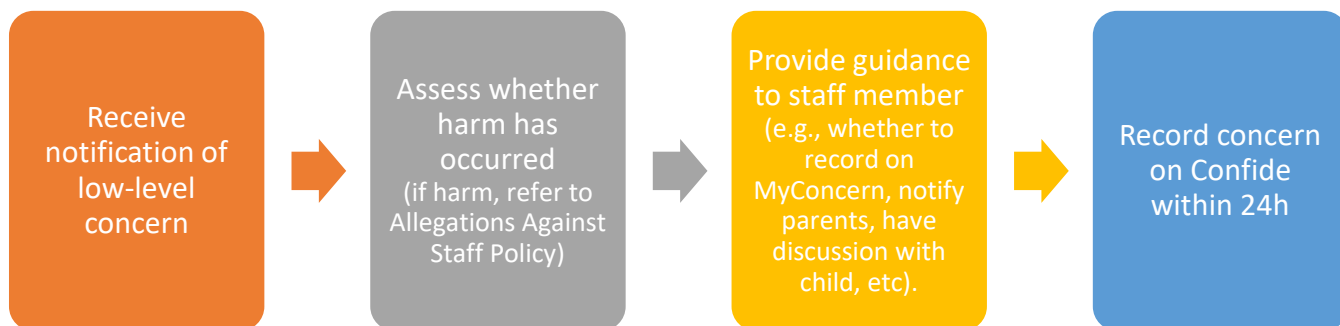


To achieve an open, learning culture of safeguarding, the Club relies on all staff to report their own and colleagues' behaviours.

Failing to report concerns lets everyone down; silence harms victims and it protects abusers and abusive cultures.

Response by Safeguarding Team

The safeguarding team will record low-level concerns on the confidential Confide recording system within 24h.



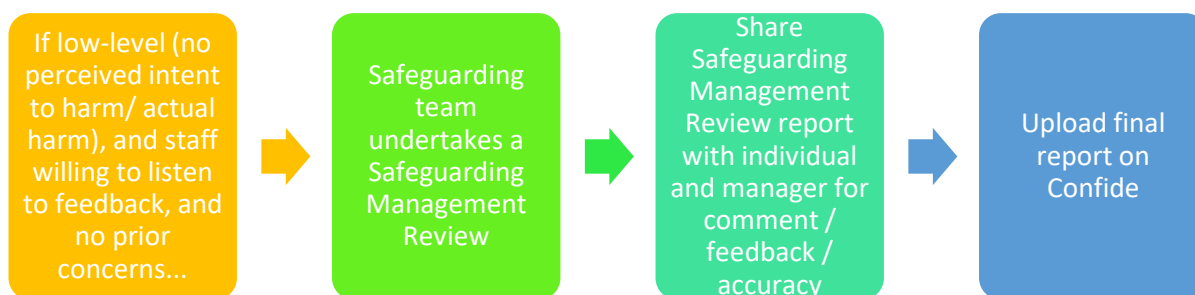
Behaviour which is not consistent with the Club's values and the Club's Safeguarding code of conduct needs to be addressed via this policy in the first instance.

Low-level Concerns can exist on a wide spectrum:



Where a concern about an individual's behaviour may meet the harm threshold, clear guidance exists (see the Club's Managing Allegations against Staff policy).

Where a concern or allegation falls below the harm threshold, this policy applies.



The Safeguarding team will take the lead in responding, and will provide a sensitive, proportionate, non-punitive, and reflective response, provided that:

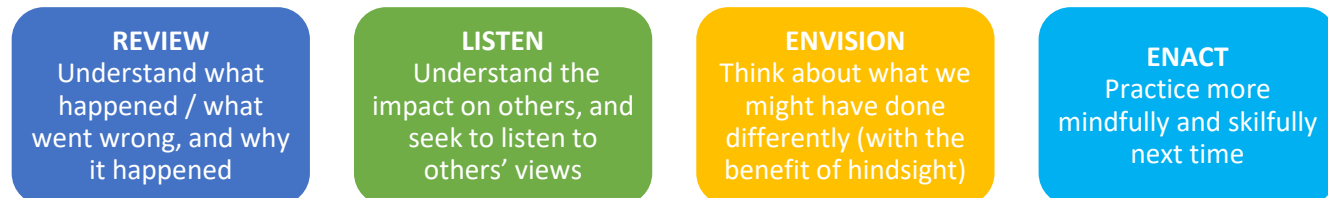
- The low-level concern is understood to be inadvertent / without intent to harm
- Staff are open to hearing feedback and reflecting on behaviours
- The behaviours have not previously been identified

If the above conditions are not met, low-level concerns may be referred to HR for disciplinary action instead.

Safeguarding Management Review

Once a Low-level concern is identified, a member of the Safeguarding Team will undertake a Safeguarding Management Review.

The purpose of this is to:



Self-Reporting

The raising of low-level concerns is a professional dialogue in line with good practice and should provide opportunities for shared learning.

It is an important step if the adult has found themselves in a situation which could be misinterpreted, might appear compromising to others, and/or on reflection they believe they have behaved in such a way that they consider falls below the expected professional standards.

Information to Include in Notifications of Low-level Concerns

The person raising the concern should:

- provide a concise record including a brief context in which the low-level concern arose.
- include details which are chronological, and as precise and accurate as possible of any such concern and relevant incident(s).
- the record should be signed, timed and dated.
- If there was an impact on a child, it should be recorded on MyConcern, alongside a conversation with the Head of Safeguarding & Welfare or their Deputy.

Doubts about Raising Concerns

The issue should be discussed with the Head of Safeguarding & Welfare if there is any doubt as to whether the concern should be raised or how it should be managed.

Safeguarding managers will follow up with the individual no matter how low-level the concern may be perceived to be, to gain their account and to make appropriate records.

Notifications of External Partners

Low-level concerns should be raised, regardless of whether they work for the Club.

The Safeguarding team will liaise with third parties' compliance and safeguarding teams, including suppliers or contractors, to ensure that learning is achieved.

Anonymous Notifications

- Anonymous referrals are not encouraged. They limit the opportunity to discuss further details, if needed, as part of the follow up with the individual against whom the concern has been raised.

- If people raising concerns wish to remain anonymous, the Safeguarding team will assess whether this is appropriate to the given circumstance, and will endeavour to ensure confidentiality where possible.
- All concerns, named or anonymous, will be raised with the individual for comment (unless it meets the harm threshold and police advise otherwise).

Learning from cases of organisational abuse

Abuse of children within organisations is increasingly well-documented and understood. It is rare to find cases where the abuse occurred in the absence of preceding grooming by the offender. In known cases of organisational abuse of children, low-level concerns were typically observed and regarded as questionable at the time by others.

Multiple cases of organisational abuse demonstrate that the potentially protective adults and systems around children are also groomed.

Further rationale for low-level concerns

For the girls' and boys' Academies, KCSIE requires the recording of low-level concerns.

Support for the necessity of low-level concerns recording for the remainder of the Club is found in inquiries and serious case reviews that have identified the importance of raising, sharing and logging this type of information (as well as by analogy with the requirements on schools and colleges in KCSIE).

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) includes a specific provision which permits organisations to process even the most sensitive personal data where it is necessary for the purposes of protecting children from harm.

Although data protection law is therefore not a barrier to a low-level concerns policy, it is still an important factor to consider.

However, there is no stand-alone 'safeguarding' exemption that trumps the subject access right. Both employment law (in terms of process and decision-making) and data protection law (with its principles of transparency, fairness, accountability and accuracy) support the idea that staff should understand the information held about them and, if appropriate, be able to correct or feed into it.

Recording

- Where low-level concerns relate to children / adults at risk, the concerns must be recorded on MyConcern.
- The low-level concern must also be recorded by the Safeguarding team on 'Confide'. Only the Safeguarding team and the Director of HR, and Senior HR Manager have access to Confide. It is an online system of recording that is GDPR-compliant.

Retention

- Records will be kept confidential (shared only on a need-to-know basis) and will be held securely and comply with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR).
- Retention beyond employment will be in line with the Club's usual retention guidelines.

Information Sharing

Information sharing of low-level concerns will take place if:

- They include safeguarding concerns about young people or adults at risk that must be shared with the local authority or other agencies.
- The concerns meet the threshold for Allegations against staff (i.e. they are not low-level concerns) – see Allegations against staff policy.
- Once an individual accrues three low-level concerns, they must be referred to the FA Safeguarding and PL Safeguarding teams as an allegation within 24h.

Access to records (Subject Access Requests)

KCSIE rightly flags the exemption to the right of access where there is a risk of serious harm, and other exemptions (notably third party privacy rights and, in the case of parental requests, the child's best interests) will likely be applicable too.

References

Only safeguarding allegations that have been substantiated will be included in a reference.

Learning & Development

- Training on low-level concerns will be offered to all staff involved in direct work with children at Global Football development, the Academies and the Foundation.
- Low-level concern training will be delivered to the matchday safeguarding team and to stewarding supervisors.
- Low-level concern training is on offer to any member of staff via LMS.

Key Contacts

Title/Role	Name	Contact Details
Club Safeguarding Team		safeguarding@tottenhamhotspur.com
Out of Hours Safeguarding Contact		safeguarding@tottenhamhotspur.com
Operations and Finance Director – Strategic Safeguarding Lead Board Representative	Matthew Collecott	020 83655322 matthew.collecott@tottenhamhotspur.com
Head of Safeguarding and Welfare	Shauna McAllister	07879 997 839 Shauna.McAllister@tottenhamhotspur.com safeguarding@tottenhamhotspur.com
Safeguarding Manager - Foundation	Natalee Hibbert	07384 258 758 natalee.hibbert@tottenhamhotspur.com
Safeguarding Manager – Women and Girls	Sandra Barratt	07384 818062 sandra.barratt@tottenhamhotspur.com
Safeguarding Manager Academy	Tim Ford	07392080266 Tim.Ford@tottenhamhotspur.com

Appendix 1. Safeguarding Management Review proforma

Safeguarding Management Review report

Key Information

- Report Date
- Report Writer
- Subject of Low-level concern notification (staff)
- Child involved in Low-level concern

Context of Concerns

- Organisational context
- Factual & contextual summary
- Subject of Low-level concern notification (staff)

Interviews undertaken (summary notes)

Chronology

Overall time period

Location(s)

<i>Date</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>What happened</i>	<i>Decisions / Actions / Rationale</i>	<i>Whose records</i>	<i>Who was involved / present</i>	<i>Child's views</i>

Key Professionals and Agencies

List any key professionals and agencies who may be able to share information relating to this concern, dates contacted and information gained. Any interview documentation should be appended to this document.

<i>Name</i>	<i>Role</i>	<i>Agency</i>	<i>Contacted</i>	<i>Evidence</i>

Source documentation

Analysis

Rigorously analyse the evidence gathered. Consider the events that are alleged to have occurred against this evidence. Consider decisions made, and the actions taken and not taken.

Learning

Demonstrate good practice, as well as areas for improvement. What would need to happen to prevent this happening again?

Recommendations & Action Plan

Recommendations should be concise, focussed, and specific and capable of being implemented (SMART).

Action Number	Lead Officer	Action Details	Identifiers that Action is Met	Deadline

Proposed Follow-up

What is the plan to review changes recommended in action plan?

Signed

Report Writer	Signature	Date
Safeguarding Manager	Signature	Date
Individual	Signature	Date
Manager	Signature	Date