BOLTON TOWN FC

Anti Bullying Policy

Preventing and responding to bullying in football

Bolton Town FC does not tolerate bullying. This policy explains how we prevent bullying, how concerns can be reported and how we will respond fairly and promptly.

Policy information	Details
Status	Approved
Policy owner	Chairperson and Club Welfare Officers
Children's Welfare Officer	Laura Lunt
Adults' Welfare Officer	Andrew Wood
Affiliation	Manchester FA
Applies to	Players, parents, carers, coaches, managers, officials, volunteers, committee members and spectators
Review cycle	At least annually and whenever FA guidance or club arrangements change
Version	1.0

Purpose and commitment

Bolton Town FC is committed to a football environment in which everyone is safe, welcomed, respected and able to take part without fear of bullying. We will take reports seriously, listen to the people involved, protect anyone at risk and respond in a fair, proportionate and timely way.

This policy supports the club's Safeguarding Children Policy, Social Media Photography and Digital Communications Policy, relevant codes of conduct and The FA's safeguarding framework and anti-bullying guidance.

What bullying means

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group that causes physical or emotional harm, fear, humiliation, isolation or distress. It may involve a real or perceived imbalance of power. It is often repeated, but a serious single incident or a pattern of lower-level behaviour may also require action.

Form	Examples
Physical	Hitting, kicking, pushing, damaging belongings, unwanted physical contact or threatening violence.
Verbal	Name-calling, insults, threats, mocking, offensive comments or repeated criticism intended to humiliate.
Social or emotional	Excluding someone, spreading rumours, coercion, intimidation, deliberately embarrassing someone or encouraging others to isolate them.
Online	Abusive messages, posts or group chats, sharing images without consent, impersonation, harassment, exclusion or threatening content.
Prejudice related	Targeting someone because of disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age, appearance, background or another actual or perceived characteristic.
Football related	Targeting someone because of ability, selection, position, mistakes, match results, kit, family circumstances or another aspect of participation.

Reasonable coaching feedback, team selection and proportionate management of behaviour are not bullying when delivered respectfully and consistently. They may still become a concern if they are humiliating, discriminatory, threatening or persistently targeted.

Scope

This policy applies during matches, training, tournaments, trips, social events, meetings and any other activity connected with Bolton Town FC. It also applies to conduct in team communication channels, social media and other online spaces where the behaviour affects a club member or the football environment.

Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Chairperson and Welfare Officers	Own, approve and review this policy and ensure concerns receive an appropriate response.
Laura Lunt	Leads the response to bullying involving a child or young person and seeks advice from Manchester FA or statutory services where required.
Andrew Wood	Leads the response to bullying involving adults and seeks external advice where required.
Committee	Supports prevention, resources and proportionate action where club standards are breached.
Coaches managers and volunteers	Set clear expectations, challenge harmful behaviour, record concerns and report them promptly.
Players parents carers and spectators	Treat others with respect, avoid retaliation and report concerns rather than attempting to resolve serious matters through team groups or social media.

Preventing bullying

- Communicate and apply the relevant FA and club codes of conduct.
- Create a welcoming environment in which children and adults know who they can speak to.
- Use age-appropriate coaching and avoid humiliation, favouritism, discriminatory language and punishment through embarrassment.
- Supervise changing, travel, social and online environments appropriately.
- Act early on lower-level behaviour before it develops into a pattern.
- Encourage bystanders to seek help safely and never require a child to confront somebody who is bullying them.
- Review patterns of exclusions, complaints and conduct concerns to identify wider problems.

Possible signs of bullying

No single sign proves that bullying is taking place. Changes may have many causes, but adults should listen and seek help if a player becomes unusually anxious, withdrawn, distressed or reluctant to attend; has unexplained injuries or damaged belongings; experiences a decline in confidence; loses possessions or money; or shows concerning changes in sleep, mood, behaviour or online activity.

Reporting a concern

Anyone may report bullying. A person does not need proof and should not delay a report while trying to investigate the matter themselves.

1. If somebody is in immediate danger, requires urgent medical treatment or a crime is taking place, call 999.
2. Record what happened using clear facts, dates, times, locations, people involved, witnesses and relevant messages or images. Do not circulate harmful material unnecessarily.
3. For a concern involving a child, use the safeguarding form on the Bolton Town FC website. Submissions currently reach the club inbox and must be passed confidentially and promptly to Laura Lunt, the sole Club Welfare Officer for Children.
4. For a concern involving an adult, use the same route and identify that the report is for Andrew Wood, Club Welfare Officer for Adults.
5. Where a Welfare Officer is involved, the matter is serious, a delay may increase risk or the reporter would prefer an external route, contact Manchester FA, The FA, the Police or another appropriate safeguarding service directly.

Important limits of the club route

The club inbox is not monitored continuously and the website form must not be used for emergencies. Reports should not be posted in team WhatsApp groups or on social media. Nobody will be required to attempt mediation or a face-to-face meeting where this may be unsafe or inappropriate.

How the club will respond

1. Listen to the person reporting and check whether anybody needs immediate protection or support.
2. Make a factual record and decide who needs to know. Information will be shared only where necessary to safeguard someone or manage the concern properly.
3. Consider interim steps, such as increased supervision, changes to communication or temporary separation. These are neutral precautions and do not determine blame.
4. Gather information fairly without asking children leading questions or carrying out an informal investigation that could compromise a safeguarding or criminal process.

5. Seek guidance from Manchester FA or statutory services where the behaviour may amount to abuse, discrimination, a criminal offence or a serious safeguarding concern.
6. Decide proportionate action, communicate the outcome as far as confidentiality permits and monitor whether the behaviour has stopped.

Support for those affected

The club will listen to the wishes and feelings of a child or adult affected by bullying and agree practical support wherever possible. This may include a named trusted adult, changes to supervision, support at training or matches, help with online reporting, referral to specialist support or a planned return to participation. The person affected will not be blamed for reporting or expected to change teams as the automatic solution.

Responding to the person whose behaviour is causing concern

The club will explain the concern and expected standards in an age-appropriate way, while protecting confidential safeguarding information. The response will consider the seriousness, impact, intent, repetition, age and needs of those involved, any power imbalance and previous concerns.

- Possible action includes education, an apology where freely agreed and appropriate, closer supervision, a behaviour agreement, restricted communication, removal from an activity, suspension, club disciplinary action or referral to Manchester FA, The FA, the league, Police or statutory services.
- Restorative approaches may be considered only when safe, voluntary and appropriate. They are not a substitute for safeguarding action.
- Children displaying harmful behaviour may also need support. Understanding their needs does not remove the requirement to protect others or address the behaviour.
- Repeated or serious breaches may result in removal from the club in line with applicable rules and fair procedures.

Online bullying

Online bullying connected with Bolton Town FC is treated as seriously as behaviour in person. Adults should preserve relevant evidence, use platform reporting and blocking tools where appropriate and avoid replying publicly. Club officials must follow the Social Media Photography and Digital Communications Policy. Suspected illegal sexual images of children must not be copied or redistributed; Police or specialist advice must be sought.

False or malicious reports

A report that is not substantiated is not automatically false or malicious. Nobody will be penalised for raising a genuine concern in good faith. Deliberately fabricated allegations may be addressed

under the relevant code of conduct or disciplinary process, but this must never be used to discourage reporting.

Records confidentiality and information sharing

Records will be accurate, factual, dated and stored securely with access limited to people who need the information. The club will share information where necessary to protect a child or adult, comply with a legal obligation or support an authorised safeguarding or disciplinary process. Records will be retained and disposed of in line with applicable law, FA guidance and club arrangements.

Monitoring and review

The Chairperson and Club Welfare Officers will review this policy at least annually and whenever relevant FA guidance, club arrangements or legislation changes. The committee will monitor patterns of reported behaviour, confirm that action has been completed and make the policy accessible to members.

Approval record

Role	Name	Signature	Date
Chairperson	Suzanne Crook		
Club Welfare Officer Children	Laura Lunt		
Club Welfare Officer Adults	Andrew Wood		

Proposed next review date: _____

Related policies and guidance

The FA safeguarding framework and Anti-Bullying Policy Template

Manchester FA Safeguarding and Welfare

Bolton Town FC Safeguarding Children Policy

Bolton Town FC safeguarding information and confidential contact route