



Internal Club Misconduct Policy and Procedure

Alton Football Club

For use alongside the Club Complaints Procedure, Safeguarding Children Policy, Adult Safeguarding arrangements, Anti-Bullying Policy, Equality/Diversity/Inclusion policies, Selection and Game Time Statement, Codes of Conduct and The FA/England Football behaviour guidance

Item	Details
Policy owner	Club Committee / Club Welfare Officer where safeguarding or lower-level concerns are involved
Approved by	Executive Committee
Date approved	July 2026
Review date	July 2027
Applies to	Players, parents/carers, spectators, coaches, managers, committee members, volunteers, members and anyone acting on behalf of the Club

Important safeguarding note

Any allegation or concern that a child or adult at risk has been harmed, may be at risk of harm, or where statutory agencies may need to be involved must be referred immediately to the Club Welfare Officer and/or County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer. If someone is in immediate danger, contact the Police or emergency services.

Purpose and Principles

The purpose of this policy is to help the Club respond consistently, fairly and proportionately when the behaviour of a player, parent/carer, spectator, coach, manager, committee member, volunteer or club member may fall below the standards expected by the Club, The FA, England Football, the County FA, league rules, club rules or Codes of Conduct.

This policy should be used alongside the Club Complaints Procedure. A complaint is usually raised by someone who is dissatisfied or concerned. Misconduct is behaviour that may require the Club to take action because it breaches expected standards, even where no formal complaint has been made.

- Empathy: everyone involved should be treated with respect and sensitivity.



- Impartiality: decisions should be made fairly and without conflicts of interest.
- Integrity: concerns should be recorded, investigated where needed and managed in line with Club and FA expectations.
- Proportionality: action should reflect the seriousness, context, risk and impact of the behaviour.
- Safeguarding first: the welfare of children and adults at risk must remain central to decision-making.
- Prompt action: concerns should not be ignored simply because they appear minor.

Scope

This policy applies to behaviour connected with the Club, including behaviour that takes place:

- at training, matches, tournaments, festivals, meetings, presentations or social events;
- online or through social media, messaging apps or digital platforms;
- while travelling to or from club activities;
- while acting as, or being perceived to act as, a representative of the Club;
- in any situation that could affect the welfare of children, the reputation of the Club, or the safe and positive running of football.

This policy may also apply to behaviour that takes place away from football, including in public, online, at school, at work, in the community or in private settings, where the behaviour may:

- call into question an individual's suitability to hold a club role, volunteer role or position of trust;
- affect the safety, welfare or confidence of players, parents/carers, volunteers, officials or club members;
- impact the club's ability to safeguard children, adults at risk or other members;
- damage trust and confidence in the individual's role within the club;
- bring the club, County FA, The FA or the game into disrepute;
- amount to behaviour that would breach expected standards if it occurred within football;
- involve criminal, violent, threatening, discriminatory, abusive or safeguarding-related behaviour.

The Club will not seek to regulate members' private lives unnecessarily. However, where behaviour outside football raises a genuine concern about safety, suitability, trust, reputation, safeguarding, discrimination, violence, intimidation or the individual's ability to represent the Club appropriately, the Club may consider action under this policy.

For lower-level concerns, this includes inappropriate behaviour outside of football, work, volunteering or being an athlete where the behaviour raises concerns about conduct, suitability, judgement, boundaries, safeguarding practice or ability to meet the standards expected by the Club, The FA, County FA, league or relevant Codes of Conduct.



Related Standards & Policies

This policy is designed to sit alongside, and should not replace, the following documents and requirements:

- Club Complaints Procedure and supporting appendices;
- Club Safeguarding Children Policy and Adult Safeguarding arrangements;
- Club Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Club Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy;
- Club Codes of Conduct for coaches/managers, players, parents/carers, spectators, officials, volunteers and committee members;
- Player Recruitment, Selection and Game Time Policy where the concern relates to selection, game time or development pathways;
- The FA Rules and Regulations, County FA rules, league rules and competition rules;
- The FA/England Football Grassroots Code / Respect Standard, including the standards: Enjoy the Game, Give Respect, Be Inclusive, Work Together and Play Safe;
- FA safeguarding guidance, including safe use of social media, appropriate communication with children, acceptable behaviours when working with children, supervision ratios, DBS and safeguarding education requirements.

When another route applies

This policy does not replace FA discipline processes, match official reports, County FA Safeguarding referrals, statutory safeguarding referrals, police matters, league rules or FA regulatory action. The Club may still take internal action to manage immediate risk or uphold standards but must not interfere with external investigations or formal discipline processes.

FA Linked and Club Policy Framework

The Club will ensure that this policy is read alongside any club policies, statements or codes of conduct that are in place, including safeguarding, adult safeguarding, anti-bullying, equality/diversity/inclusion, complaints, selection and game time, and all relevant Codes of Conduct. Where a club policy refers to FA, England Football, County FA, league or competition requirements, the Club will use the current version of those requirements and seek County FA advice where needed.

Where a concern falls under more than one policy, the Club will use the route that best manages risk and protects those involved. Safeguarding concerns, discrimination matters, match discipline and statutory agency matters must not be downgraded or managed solely as internal club misconduct where external referral or advice is required.

The Club should adopt or refer to the most up-to-date versions of relevant FA, England Football, County FA, league and club policies. Where a club has its own policy or statement, this misconduct policy



should be read alongside that local policy. Where a club policy is missing, outdated or inconsistent with FA requirements, the club should seek to update it and should follow FA / County FA guidance in the meantime.

Clubs should not rely only on this misconduct policy. It should operate as the internal decision-making route, while the subject-specific policy or FA framework provides the expected standard, reporting route or escalation requirement.

For behaviour and conduct matters, clubs should treat the FA / England Football Grassroots Code / Respect Standard as the current primary behaviour framework. References to older Respect Codes of Conduct should be read as references to the current Grassroots Code / Respect Standard and any current FA, County FA, league or club Codes of Conduct in force at the time.

- Safeguarding children and adults at risk: use the Club Safeguarding Children Policy, Adult Safeguarding arrangements, FA Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures, FA Safeguarding Children Regulations and County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO guidance. Serious safeguarding matters must not be managed solely as internal misconduct.
- Bullying, cyberbullying and discriminatory bullying: use the Club Anti-Bullying Policy and FA anti-bullying guidance to define bullying, identify signs/indicators, support the affected person and decide whether the concern is also safeguarding, discrimination or formal misconduct.
- Equality, diversity, inclusion and discrimination: use the Club Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, The FA Equality Policy and The FA Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination reporting guidance. Discrimination concerns may require County FA/The FA reporting as well as proportionate club action.
- Behaviour, respect and Codes of Conduct: use the England Football Grassroots Code / Respect Standard, current FA/England Football behaviour guidance, Club Codes of Conduct, league rules and competition rules to decide whether behaviour falls below the required standard and what outcome is proportionate. References to older Respect Codes of Conduct should be read as references to the current Grassroots Code / Respect Standard and any current FA, County FA, league or club Codes of Conduct in force at the time.
- Selection, recruitment and game time: use the Club Selection and Game Time Statement/Policy and the FA Selection and Game Time guidance/template where a concern relates to selection, player recruitment, rotation, playing time, development pathways or communication with parents/carers. Complaints about recruitment, selection or playing time should normally be managed internally in line with the Club's Selection and Game Time Statement/Policy and would not, on their own, usually be treated as a lower-level safeguarding concern. However, if the concern involves possible discrimination, bullying, favouritism, emotional harm, poor



practice, repeated unfair treatment, breach of club policy or wider welfare concerns, the Club should consider whether another route also applies.

- Club-specific policies: where a club has additional local policies, such as social media, photography, transport, trips/tours, changing rooms, medical/first aid, behaviour agreements or volunteer agreements, those should also be considered when relevant.

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Misconduct	Behaviour, action or omission that breaches Club rules, Codes of Conduct, FA/England Football expectations, safeguarding standards, league rules or the values of the Club.
Lower-level concern	A concern, doubt or sense of unease, no matter how small, that someone may have acted in a way that is inconsistent with the Club's Codes of Conduct, FA/County FA expectations or the standards required by the Club. This may include inappropriate behaviour within football or outside football, including outside work, volunteering or being an athlete, where the behaviour raises concern about suitability, judgement, boundaries, safeguarding practice or expected standards.
Code of Conduct breach	Behaviour that falls below the Club's published expectations for a specific role, such as player, parent/carer, coach, manager, official, volunteer or spectator.
Safeguarding concern	Any concern that a child or adult at risk has been harmed, may be at risk of harm, or that someone's behaviour may present a safeguarding risk.
Serious misconduct	Behaviour that causes, or could cause, significant harm, distress, reputational damage, unsafe practice, discrimination, intimidation, bullying or serious disruption to club activity.
Gross misconduct	Behaviour so serious that it may justify immediate suspension, removal from role, exclusion from club activity or referral to the County FA, The FA, Police, LADO/children's services or other statutory agencies.
Provisional action	Temporary action taken to manage risk while a concern is being considered. It is not a finding of misconduct.
Subject of concern	The person whose behaviour, action or omission is being considered under this policy.



Roles & Responsibilities

Role	Responsibilities
Club Committee	Owns the policy, appoints suitable non-conflicted people to manage concerns, makes or ratifies decisions in line with the Club constitution, ensures learning is acted upon.
Club Welfare Officer	Receives and manages safeguarding and lower-level concerns involving children/adults at risk, advises the committee on welfare issues, liaises with the County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO where required.
Chair/Secretary	Ensures concerns are acknowledged, recorded and routed correctly; supports fair process and communication.
Investigation Lead/Panel	Gathers information, records evidence, speaks with relevant parties, considers Youth Voice where appropriate and reports findings to the decision-maker.
Decision-maker/Panel	Considers findings, decides whether misconduct is substantiated and determines proportionate outcomes.
Appeal Panel	Considers appeals using people who were not involved in the original decision wherever possible.
All club members and participants	Follow Codes of Conduct, report concerns promptly, cooperate honestly and avoid interference, intimidation or retaliation.

Committee Member Involvement and Decision Making

Where a committee member, officer, coach who sits on the committee, Club Welfare Officer, Chair or Secretary is involved in a misconduct concern, the Club must manage conflicts of interest carefully. A committee member who is the subject of a concern, a complainant, a witness, closely connected to any party, or otherwise conflicted, must not investigate, decide the outcome, hear an appeal, influence the process, or access confidential case records beyond what is necessary for them to provide their own account.

- The conflict of interest should be recorded at the start of the process and in the committee's decision record.
- The conflicted committee member should step out of any meeting or agenda item where the matter is discussed.
- If the Chair is conflicted, the Vice Chair, Secretary or another non-conflicted officer should coordinate the process.



- If the Secretary is conflicted, correspondence and records should be managed by the Chair, CWO or another non-conflicted officer.
- If the CWO is conflicted or is the subject of the concern, safeguarding or lower-level concerns should be referred to the Chair/Secretary and County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO for advice.
- If the concern involves more than one committee member, or the Club cannot form an independent panel, the Club should seek County FA advice and consider using independent people from outside the Club.
- The Club should not allow friendship groups, family links, team loyalty, seniority or committee status to affect the process or outcome.

Scenario	Who should coordinate?	Who should investigate?	Who should decide?	When to seek County FA/DSO advice
Concern about a player, parent/carers, spectator or non-committee volunteer	Chair/Secretary or CWO if welfare-related	One or more non-conflicted committee members; CWO included for child/welfare matters unless conflicted	Non-conflicted committee/panel, normally 2-3 people	If safeguarding, discrimination, serious misconduct, repeat concerns or uncertainty
Concern about a coach/manager who is not on the committee	Chair/Secretary and CWO if children are involved	Non-conflicted committee members and/or suitable independent club official	Non-conflicted misconduct panel; CWO input on welfare where appropriate	If children are affected, concern is repeated/escalating, or role removal is being considered
Concern about a committee member	Non-conflicted Chair/Secretary/Vice Chair or appointed officer	At least two non-conflicted people; consider one independent person if the matter is serious	A non-conflicted panel. The subject must not take part in decision-making or vote.	If independence is difficult, the allegation is serious, or removal from role/committee may be considered



Concern about the Chair	Vice Chair, Secretary, CWO or another non-conflicted officer	Non-conflicted panel, preferably including an independent person for serious matters	Non-conflicted panel/committee members only. Chair must not influence or chair the item.	Early advice recommended, especially if the Chair is central to club governance
Concern about the Secretary	Chair, Vice Chair, CWO or another non-conflicted officer	Non-conflicted panel; appoint someone else to handle correspondence/r ecords	Non-conflicted panel/committee members only	If records, membership, correspondence or constitutional process may be affected
Concern about the Club Welfare Officer	Chair/Secretary and County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO	Do not manage as a welfare / safeguarding matter without DSO advice. Appoint non-conflicted people as advised.	Non-conflicted panel, taking County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO advice into account	Always seek County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO advice children/adults at risk or safeguarding practice are involved
Majority of committee conflicted or split	A non-conflicted officer if available; otherwise seek County FA advice	Independent people from outside the matter where possible	Independent/non -conflicted panel or route advised by County FA/league/constitution	Always seek advice before progressing

Decision-making principle

The person or people who investigate should not be the only decision-maker where a significant sanction is possible. For lower-level or minor matters, the same person may gather information and propose a proportionate action, but for formal misconduct, role restrictions, suspension, removal from role or committee action, a separate non-conflicted decision-maker or panel should review the evidence and reasons.



Misconduct Categories and Examples

The examples below are not exhaustive. Clubs should consider context, severity, impact, previous concerns, whether children were involved, whether there is immediate risk, and whether external referral is required.

Category	Examples	Usual route
Minor conduct issue	Single low-level incident of poor tone, frustration, isolated inappropriate comment, minor failure to follow club process, sideline behaviour that can be corrected quickly.	Informal management, reminder of standards, record locally if relevant.
Lower-level concern	Favouritism; humiliating punishments; poor supervision ratios; inappropriate digital communication; rough/dangerous play not challenged; failing to record accidents; first aid without another adult present except in an emergency; putting performance over wellbeing; smoking/vaping/alcohol while supervising children.	CWO/committee triage, record, investigate proportionately, consider County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO advice.
Code of Conduct breach	Abusive or disrespectful behaviour; refusing to follow reasonable club instructions; repeated dissent; poor behaviour towards match officials; discrimination or exclusion; online comments that bring the Club into disrepute.	Internal misconduct process and/or County FA/league discipline route depending on context.
Safeguarding concern	Any risk of harm, abuse allegation, sexualised communication, concerning adult behaviour around children, unsafe practice creating risk, grooming indicators, breach of barred/suspended status.	Immediate CWO/County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO referral; Police/social care/LADO where required.
Serious misconduct	Threatening behaviour, intimidation, harassment, bullying, aggressive confrontation, repeated lower-level concerns, significant breach of role requirements, misuse of confidential information.	Formal misconduct process; consider provisional action and County FA advice.
Gross misconduct	Violence or attempted violence; serious discrimination; sexual misconduct; criminal activity connected to club activity; deliberate safeguarding breach; serious dishonesty; retaliation against complainants/witnesses; acting despite suspension.	Immediate escalation; provisional suspension/removal from activity; formal process or external process as appropriate.



Reporting Misconduct or Concerns

Misconduct or concerns may be reported by players, parents/carers, spectators, coaches, volunteers, committee members, match officials, opposition clubs, league officials, County FA representatives or any person affected by club-related behaviour.

Reports should usually be made using the Club's Complaint/Concern Reporting Form or by email to waynealtonfc@outlook.com. However, a concern should still be considered even if it is raised verbally, anonymously, through a child, or through a third party.

The form is intended to support information gathering but non-completion, or a concern being raised in another format, must not prevent the Club from taking appropriate action. Younger children, children/adults with additional learning needs, or individuals for whom English is not their first language may need support to complete the form or share their account in another appropriate way.

- Safeguarding or lower-level concerns involving children should be shared with the Club Welfare Officer as soon as possible.
- Concerns involving the Club Welfare Officer should be reported to the Chair, Secretary and County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO.
- Concerns involving the Chair or Secretary should be routed to another non-conflicted committee member or the County FA for advice.
- Anonymous reports should be recorded and considered, even if they cannot be investigated in the same way as named reports.
- No person should be victimised, intimidated or treated unfairly for raising a genuine concern.

Immediate Triage and Escalation

Misconduct or concerns may be reported by players, parents/carers, spectators, coaches, volunteers, committee members, match officials, opposition clubs, league officials, County FA representatives or any person affected by club-related behaviour.

On receipt of a misconduct report or concern, the Club should complete an initial triage. The purpose is to decide the correct route, identify risk, secure records and determine whether immediate advice or referral is needed.

Question	Action if yes
Is a child or adult at risk in immediate danger?	Contact emergency services/Police immediately and inform the CWO/County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO as soon as possible.



Is there an allegation of abuse, sexualised communication, grooming, serious harm or statutory agency involvement?	Refer to the CWO and County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO immediately. Do not investigate internally unless advised.
Does the matter involve discrimination, hate, harassment or abuse linked to a protected characteristic?	Record and consider The FA/ County FA reporting routes. Take immediate steps to protect those affected.
Is it a match discipline matter already reported to the league/ FA Discipline/ County FA?	Seek advice from FA Discipline/ County FA whether club internal investigation can take place alongside discipline investigation. If there is a risk of interference with discipline investigation, do not take actions that will interfere until discipline investigation has been concluded. However look at possible actions that may need to be taken to protect children/ adults at risk and the individual in the meantime. This could include temporary removal from parts of their role/ entire removal, supervision etc. Consider internal support or risk management only.
Is there a conflict of interest within the Club?	Seek County FA advice or appoint independent/non-conflicted people.
Is this the third separate lower-level concern about the same individual?	Refer to County FA Safeguarding Team. Clubs may seek advice earlier, especially if concerns are escalating.
Has the person resigned, left, or withdrawn from their role during or as a result of a concern or investigation?	Inform the County FA Safeguarding Team where the concern involved behaviour around children, safeguarding risk, lower-level concerns or suitability for a role, so relevant information can be retained and shared where necessary.

Managing Lower-Level Concerns

Misconduct or concerns may be reported by players, parents/carers, spectators, coaches, volunteers, committee members, match officials, opposition clubs, league officials, County FA representatives or any person affected by club-related behaviour.

Lower-level concerns should not be ignored. They should be managed with empathy, impartiality and integrity. Many will be resolved through proportionate action such as discussion, guidance, mentoring or training, but repeated or escalating concerns may indicate a wider risk.

- All lower-level concerns involving children should be reported to the Club Welfare Officer.
- The CWO should raise the concern with appropriate non-conflicted committee members.



- The concern should be acknowledged, recorded and managed in line with the Club Complaints Procedure and Safeguarding Policy.
- The Club may seek advice from the County FA Safeguarding Team at any stage.
- A third separate lower-level concern about the same individual must be referred to the County FA Safeguarding Team. This means three separate concerns, not three reports about the same incident, and includes situations where the Club has dealt fully with, or is dealing with, the previous two incidents. The Club may seek advice earlier, especially where concerns escalate or where a second reported concern arises within 12 months of the first.
- If the concern appears more serious than first thought, the Club should pause internal handling and seek County FA Safeguarding Team advice.

Stage	Expected timeframe	Action
Acknowledge	Within 5 days where possible	Acknowledge receipt, explain next steps and give an indicative timeframe.
Open record and appoint lead	Within 10 days where possible	Open a misconduct/lower-level concern record and identify suitable non-conflicted people to manage it. Include CWO unless conflicted.
Gather information	Normally within 7-21 days	Seek accounts from relevant parties, witnesses and children/parents where appropriate.
Decision/outcome	Aim within 28 days	Review information, agree outcome, record decision and communicate proportionately.
Delay	As soon as known	Tell relevant parties if the timeframe cannot be met and explain the revised position where appropriate.

Managing Formal Misconduct

The Club should use the formal misconduct route where the matter is serious, repeated, disputed, potentially requires a sanction, or cannot be resolved through informal action or lower-level concern management.

- Appoint a non-conflicted investigation lead or panel.
- Notify the subject of concern of the nature of the allegation, unless doing so would create safeguarding risk or prejudice an external process.
- Gather information from the reporting person, subject of concern, witnesses and relevant documents/messages where appropriate.



- Consider the impact on children and whether Youth Voice should be obtained safely and age-appropriately.
- Decide whether the alleged misconduct is substantiated on the balance of probabilities, unless another standard is required by Club rules or external process.
- Determine a proportionate outcome and record reasons.
- Communicate the outcome to relevant parties, sharing only information they need to know.

Investigation Principles

- Fairness: all relevant parties should have a reasonable opportunity to provide their account.
- Consistency: similar concerns should be handled in a similar way, while taking context into account.
- Proportionality: the depth of investigation should reflect the seriousness and complexity of the concern.
- Impartiality: people with conflicts of interest should not investigate, decide or hear appeals.
- Professional communication: all records should be factual, respectful and suitable for disclosure if required.
- No interference: no person should intimidate, influence or retaliate against a complainant, witness, investigator or decision-maker.
- Confidentiality: information should be shared on a need-to-know basis only.
- Separation of roles: where possible, the person receiving the concern, the person investigating, the person deciding the outcome and the person hearing any appeal should be different or at least independently involved.
- Committee member cases: conflicted committee members must be excluded from investigation, decision-making, appeal decisions and confidential records except for information they need in order to respond to the concern.

Youth Voice and Child Centered Practice

Where misconduct or a concern affects a child or young person, the Club should consider how the voice of the child or victim can be heard safely and meaningfully wherever possible. Where the matter directly involves a child, their voice should be considered as a priority. This should be done in an age-appropriate way, with parent/carers involvement where appropriate, and with oversight from the CWO where safeguarding or welfare issues are present.

- Youth Voice should be considered where a child or young person is directly affected by the concern, but it may not be necessary or appropriate in every misconduct case.
- The level of Youth Voice should be proportionate to the child's age, understanding, wishes, welfare needs and the seriousness of the concern.



- Children should not be pressured to provide an account or repeatedly questioned unnecessarily.
- The Club should consider written feedback, a conversation with a trusted adult, parent/carer-supported discussion or another suitable method.
- The child's welfare, safety and wellbeing should be central to any decision.
- Where there is a safeguarding concern, advice should be sought before speaking to a child so that any statutory or FA process is not compromised.
- Outcomes should consider the child's experience and what is needed to restore a safe, positive football environment.

Provisional Actions and Restrictions

The Club may take temporary action while a concern is being considered. This is not a finding of wrongdoing. It is a risk management step to protect individuals, the Club and the integrity of the process.

Possible temporary action	When it may be appropriate
No contact instruction	Where contact could cause distress, intimidation or interfere with an investigation.
Temporary change of duties	Where a coach/volunteer can continue safely in a different role or with supervision.
Increased supervision/mentoring	Where concern is lower-level but risk can be managed with oversight.
Temporary exclusion from training/matches/events	Where behaviour poses a risk of disruption, harm, intimidation or reputational damage.
Provisional suspension from role	Where the allegation is serious, safeguarding-related, repeated or requires County FA advice.
Referral to County FA/statutory agencies	Where the Club should not manage the matter internally or needs external guidance.

Outcomes, Sanctions and Support Measures

Outcomes should be proportionate, fair and aimed at restoring safe, positive football standards. More than one outcome may be appropriate.



Examples of Club Actions and Outcomes

The Club should respond to misconduct, lower-level concerns and breaches of expected standards in a way that is fair, timely, proportionate and focused on creating a safe, respectful and positive football environment.

The action taken will depend on the seriousness of the concern, whether a child or adult at risk is affected, whether there has been previous similar behaviour, whether the person accepts responsibility, and whether the matter needs to be referred to Hampshire FA, The FA, a league, statutory agency or other relevant body.

Possible actions may include informal discussion, reminder of expectations, apology, mediation, education or training, mentoring, supervision, behaviour agreement, written warning, matchday attendance restrictions, temporary suspension from Club activity, removal from a role, removal from membership, referral to Hampshire FA, referral to The FA, referral to a league or competition, or referral to statutory agencies.

Clubs should not treat safeguarding concerns, discrimination, serious bullying, threats, violence, criminal matters or repeated lower-level concerns as informal matters only. These should be escalated in line with the relevant FA, County FA, league, safeguarding or statutory process.

Action ladder

The following action ladder can help clubs choose a proportionate starting point. The Club may move directly to a higher level where the concern is serious, repeated or involves risk of harm.

- Level 1 - Informal guidance: conversation, reminder of expectations, signposting to the Grassroots Code / Respect Standard or Club Code of Conduct.
- Level 2 - Supported improvement: mentoring, supervision, education, communication agreement, or mediation where safe and appropriate.
- Level 3 - Formal club action: written warning, behaviour agreement, review period or requirement to complete training.
- Level 4 - Restrictions: matchday attendance restriction, temporary suspension, or removal from specific duties or role while concerns are managed.
- Level 5 - Removal/referral: removal from role or membership, referral to Hampshire FA, The FA, league/competition, police, LADO or other statutory agency where required.

Safeguarding and escalation note: Clubs should always consider whether a concern is more serious than it first appears. Where there is any possible risk of harm to a child or adult at risk, sexualised behaviour, discriminatory abuse, serious bullying, threats, violence, repeated concerns or a conflict of interest, the Club should seek advice from the CWO, Hampshire FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO, County FA, league or relevant statutory agency before deciding the outcome.



Outcome/action	Examples of use
No further action / unsubstantiated	Insufficient evidence, misunderstanding resolved, allegation not upheld.
Reflective discussion	Minor behaviour issue, early intervention, learning opportunity.
Code of Conduct reminder	Behaviour fell below expectations but can be corrected quickly.
Apology or restorative action	Where appropriate and safe for all parties.
Mediation	Relationship breakdown or conflict, provided safeguarding concerns are not present and parties agree.
Education/training	Poor understanding of safeguarding, behaviour standards, inclusion, communication or role expectations.
Mentoring/supervision plan	Lower-level concern or repeated minor issues where improvement can be monitored.
Written warning	Substantiated misconduct requiring formal record and clear expectations.
Final written warning	Serious or repeated misconduct where future breach may lead to removal/exclusion.
Restriction of duties or attendance	Where risk or behaviour can be managed through limited involvement.
Suspension/removal from role or membership	Serious, gross, repeated or safeguarding-related misconduct; must follow robust and documented process.
Referral/escalation	County FA, FA, league, statutory agency, Police, LADO or other appropriate body.

Key to Club Actions and Outcomes

The examples below are intended to help clubs understand what different actions may look like in practice. The action taken should always be fair, proportionate, recorded and appropriate to the seriousness of the concern. Clubs should seek advice from the Club Welfare Officer, Hampshire FA/



Hampshire FA Safeguarding Team, league or statutory agencies where safeguarding, discrimination, serious misconduct, repeated concerns or conflicts of interest are involved.

Misconduct Levels and Possible Club Actions

Level	Type of concern	Examples	Possible club actions
Level 1 – Early intervention	Minor concern, misunderstanding or first minor breach.	Minor poor tone, isolated frustration, misunderstanding, first minor breach of expectations, inappropriate comment that is not discriminatory or abusive.	Conversation, reminder of standards, apology, local record, no further action, check-in or informal review.
Level 2 – Lower-level concern	Behaviour that falls below expected standards but may not meet the threshold for formal misconduct or safeguarding referral.	Favouritism, poor supervision, minor inappropriate communication, failure to challenge behaviour, failure to record an incident, poor boundaries, low-level sideline conduct.	Code reminder, training, mentoring, supervision, written expectations, review period, behaviour plan, County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO advice where needed.
Level 3 – Formal misconduct	More serious or repeated behaviour that breaches club standards, Codes of Conduct, the Grassroots Code / Respect Standard or other relevant policies.	Repeated Code breaches, aggressive sideline conduct, disrespect towards officials, bullying, unsafe practice, repeated lower-level concerns, failure to follow agreed expectations.	Formal warning, behaviour agreement, restriction of role/activity, education, final warning, temporary suspension, referral to County FA/league/DSO where appropriate.
Level 4 – Serious misconduct	Serious behaviour that may place others at risk, damage trust, or require immediate protective or formal action.	Threats, intimidation, harassment, serious discrimination, significant safeguarding breach, breach of confidentiality, repeated serious behaviour, behaviour that brings the club into disrepute.	Temporary suspension, formal sanction, removal from role/activity, removal from membership, referral to Hampshire FA, The FA, league, statutory agency or police where appropriate.



What the Actions Could Look Like

Informal conversation / early intervention

This may be used for minor, first-time or low-level issues where the person appears willing to listen and improve. It should be a calm, private conversation that explains the concern, reminds the person of expected standards and agrees what needs to change.

Example:

A coach becomes frustrated and speaks sharply to a player during training. A committee member or CWO speaks with the coach, reminds them of the Grassroots Code / Respect Standard and the club's expectations, and records that the conversation took place.

This is not usually a sanction, but it should still be recorded locally in case further concerns arise.

Reminder of standards

A reminder of standards means signposting the person to the relevant expectation, such as the club Code of Conduct, Grassroots Code / Respect Standard, Safeguarding Children Policy, Anti-Bullying Policy, EDI Policy or Selection and Game Time Statement.

This may be done verbally or in writing. The club should explain:

- what standard applies;
- what behaviour fell below that standard;
- what the person needs to do differently;
- what may happen if the behaviour continues

Apology

An apology may be appropriate where there has been poor communication, an inappropriate comment, or behaviour that has upset another person but does not require a formal sanction. An apology should not be forced, and it should only be used where it is safe and appropriate.

An apology may be:

- verbal;
- written;
- given through the club;
- part of mediation or a behaviour agreement.

Apologies should not be used as a substitute for safeguarding, discrimination or serious misconduct action.



Mediation

Mediation is a structured, voluntary conversation to help resolve misunderstandings, repair communication and agree future expectations. It is not an investigation, disciplinary hearing or safeguarding process.

Mediation may be suitable where there has been:

- a breakdown in communication;
- disagreement about expectations;
- tension between adults;
- a parent/coach disagreement;
- a volunteer relationship issue;
- a concern that can be safely resolved through discussion.

Mediation should normally be facilitated by a neutral person, such as a non-conflicted committee member, Club Welfare Officer, league welfare officer, Hampshire FA representative or other suitable independent person.

The mediator does not decide who is right or wrong. Their role is to help everyone:

- explain their concerns calmly;
- listen to each other;
- clarify expectations;
- agree practical next steps;
- avoid further escalation.

Mediation may result in:

- an agreed communication plan;
- an apology;
- a behaviour agreement;
- clarification of club expectations;
- a review meeting;
- agreement about how future concerns will be raised.

Mediation should not be used where there is a safeguarding concern, possible risk of harm, serious bullying, discrimination requiring formal action, harassment, intimidation, violence, criminal concern, significant power imbalance, or where one party does not wish to take part.



Behaviour agreement / behaviour plan

A behaviour agreement or behaviour plan is a written agreement that sets out what behaviour is expected, what support will be offered, how long the agreement will last and what may happen if expectations are not met.

It may be used for parents, spectators, coaches, volunteers, committee members or players, depending on the circumstances.

A behaviour agreement should include:

- the concern or behaviour that needs to change;
- the relevant club/FA standard or policy;
- what the person agrees to do differently;
- any restrictions or conditions;
- any support, training or mentoring to be provided;
- the review period;
- who will review it;
- what may happen if the agreement is not followed.

Example:

A parent agrees not to shout instructions from the sideline, not to approach the coach immediately after matches, and to raise any concerns by email or at an agreed meeting time. The agreement is reviewed after six weeks.

For children, any behaviour plan should be age-appropriate, supportive and involve parents/carers where appropriate.

Supervision

Supervision means putting additional oversight in place for a period of time to support safer and more appropriate practice. It may be used where the club believes someone can continue in their role, but only with support and monitoring.

Examples of supervision may include:

- an experienced coach attending sessions;
- the CWO or committee member checking in regularly;
- a coach not working alone with a group for a period of time;
- reviewing communication with parents/carers;
- monitoring sideline behaviour;
- checking that incidents are being recorded properly;
- reviewing compliance with a behaviour agreement.



Supervision should be recorded, time-limited and reviewed. It should not be used where there is a safeguarding risk that requires referral or where the person should be removed from activity pending advice.

Mentoring

Mentoring is support from a more experienced person to help someone improve their conduct, communication or practice. It may be appropriate for a coach, volunteer or committee member who needs guidance rather than a formal sanction.

Mentoring could include:

- observing sessions and giving feedback;
- helping a coach manage behaviour positively;
- supporting communication with parents;
- helping a volunteer understand safeguarding boundaries;
- helping a committee member understand confidentiality or conflict of interest expectations.

The mentoring arrangement should be agreed, recorded and reviewed.

Club training / education

Training or education may be required where the concern suggests that the person needs to improve their knowledge, awareness or practice.

Examples of training or education may include:

- FA safeguarding training;
- Welfare Officer or committee safeguarding awareness;
- equality, diversity and inclusion awareness;
- anti-bullying guidance;
- Grassroots Code / Respect Standard refresher;
- appropriate communication with children and parents;
- social media and online communication guidance;
- positive coaching practice;
- managing sideline behaviour;
- selection and game time expectations;
- confidentiality and data protection;
- first aid or incident recording processes.

The club should record what training has been requested, when it should be completed, and how completion will be confirmed.



Verbal warning

A verbal warning is a formal warning given in a meeting or conversation. It should still be recorded by the club.

A verbal warning may be appropriate where:

- behaviour has breached expectations;
- the matter is not serious enough for a written warning;
- the person accepts the concern and agrees to improve;
- the club needs to make clear that further behaviour may lead to formal action.

A verbal warning should include:

- what behaviour caused concern;
- what standard was breached;
- what improvement is required;
- the review period, if applicable;
- what may happen if the behaviour is repeated.

The club should confirm the warning in a short-written record, even if it is not sent as a formal letter.

Written warning

A written warning is a formal written outcome. It should be used where behaviour has clearly breached expected standards or where previous informal action has not resolved the issue.

A written warning should include:

- the concern or allegation considered;
- the evidence or information reviewed;
- the policy, Code of Conduct or Grassroots Code / Respect Standard expectation breached;
- the decision reached;
- what the person must do differently;
- any support, training, supervision or behaviour agreement required;
- how long the warning will remain active;
- what may happen if there is further misconduct;
- whether there is a right of appeal.

A written warning should be factual, proportionate and professional in tone.



Final written warning

A final written warning may be used where misconduct is serious, repeated, or where a previous warning has not led to improvement.

A final written warning should make clear that further misconduct may result in restriction, suspension, removal from role, removal from membership or referral to the relevant body.

Restriction of role or activity

A restriction may be used where the club needs to reduce risk or manage behaviour without immediately removing someone from the club.

Examples include:

- parent/spectator not attending matches for a defined period;
- parent/spectator attending only if they remain in a designated area;
- coach not leading sessions alone;
- volunteer not using club social media accounts;
- committee member not accessing confidential records;
- person not attending meetings about a particular matter due to conflict;
- temporary removal from a specific role while support or investigation takes place.

Restrictions should be proportionate, time-limited, recorded and reviewed.

Temporary suspension

Temporary suspension may be used where the concern is serious, there is a possible risk to others, the person's continued involvement may affect the investigation, or Hampshire FA/County FA/DSO advice is being sought.

Suspension is normally a neutral protective measure, not a finding of guilt.

The club should confirm:

- the reason for the temporary suspension;
- what activity it applies to;
- how long it will last or when it will be reviewed;
- who the person may contact;
- whether they should avoid contacting witnesses or those involved;
- whether Hampshire FA/Hampshire FA Safeguarding Team advice is being sought.



Removal from role

Removal from role may be appropriate where the person is no longer suitable to continue in a specific role, for example as a coach, team manager, committee member, volunteer, social media admin or welfare support role.

Removal from role should follow a fair process and should be recorded. Hampshire FA/ Hampshire FA Safeguarding Team advice should be sought where the concern involves safeguarding, children, adults at risk, repeated lower-level concerns, discrimination, serious misconduct or removal from a regulated/eligible role.

Removal from membership

Removal from membership should usually be reserved for serious or repeated misconduct, or where continued membership would not be in the interests of the club or would pose a risk to others.

The club should follow its constitution, rules and complaints/misconduct procedure. The person should usually be told:

- the reason removal is being considered;
- the evidence relied upon;
- their opportunity to respond;
- who will make the decision;
- any right of appeal.

Referral to Hampshire FA, County FA, The FA, league or statutory agencies

The club should not manage all matters internally. Referral or advice should be sought where there is:

- possible risk of harm to a child or adult at risk;
- safeguarding concern or poor practice concern;
- sexualised communication or behaviour;
- serious or repeated bullying;
- discrimination;
- threats, violence or intimidation;
- misconduct towards a match official;
- criminal or statutory concern;
- repeated lower-level concerns;
- removal from role due to safeguarding or welfare concerns;
- serious conflict of interest within the club;
- uncertainty about the correct process.



Where immediate risk is present, emergency services or statutory agencies should be contacted without delay.

Children and Young People Who Breach Codes of Conduct or Expected Standards

Where a concern relates to the behaviour of a child or young person, the Club will respond in a way that is child-centred, proportionate, safeguarding-aware and focused on learning, welfare, accountability and safe participation.

Children and young people may breach the Club's Codes of Conduct, team expectations, the Grassroots Code / Respect Standard or other relevant club policies. Examples may include bullying another player, discriminatory language, aggressive behaviour, unsafe conduct, repeated poor behaviour at training or matches, disrespect towards officials, misuse of social media, or behaviour that impacts the safety, welfare or enjoyment of others.

The Club should consider:

- the child's age, understanding and maturity;
- any additional needs, vulnerabilities or relevant welfare considerations;
- the seriousness of the behaviour;
- whether the behaviour is isolated, repeated or part of a pattern;
- the impact on any child, adult or person affected;
- whether the child may also need support, guidance or safeguarding help;
- whether parents/carers should be involved;
- whether the Club Welfare Officer, Hampshire FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO, County FA, league or statutory agency advice is needed.

The Club should avoid using punitive sanctions alone for children. Any action should consider welfare, learning, support and safe reintegration wherever possible. However, the welfare and safety of other children, adults, volunteers, officials and club members must also be considered.

Possible actions may include:

- a conversation with the child to explain the concern and expected standards;
- involving parents/carers in a supportive and proportionate way;
- a reminder of the Player Code of Conduct, team values or Grassroots Code / Respect Standard;
- an apology or restorative conversation where safe, appropriate and voluntary;
- a behaviour agreement or support plan;
- mentoring or additional coach support;
- education around respect, discrimination, bullying, online behaviour or safe conduct;
- temporary adjustment to training, matches or activities;



- increased supervision or monitoring for a defined period;
- referral to the Club Welfare Officer where welfare or safeguarding issues may be present;
- seeking advice from Hampshire FA, The FA, the league or statutory agencies where required.

Suspension, exclusion or removal of a child from football activity should only be used where it is necessary and proportionate. This may include situations where there is a serious or repeated concern, risk to others, refusal to follow agreed expectations, or where temporary protective action is needed while advice is sought. The child and their parent/carer should normally be told the reason for the restriction, the expected length of time it will apply, what needs to happen before return, and whether there is a right of review or appeal.

Child / Player Behaviour Action Guide

Level	Child / player behaviour	Possible Club response
Level 1 – Early guidance	Minor poor behaviour, frustration, not listening, inappropriate tone, first minor breach of team expectations.	Coach conversation, reminder of team values or Player Code of Conduct, parent/carer informed if needed, local note and monitoring.
Level 2 – Repeated or lower-level concern	Repeated disruption, unkind behaviour, poor respect, minor online issue, low-level bullying concern, behaviour affecting enjoyment or inclusion.	Parent/carer discussion, Club Welfare Officer input if needed, behaviour agreement, mentoring, review period, education around respect or team expectations.
Level 3 – Serious or repeated breach	Bullying, discriminatory language, aggressive conduct, unsafe behaviour, repeated Code breaches, refusal to follow agreed behaviour expectations.	Formal meeting with parent/carer, written expectations, temporary adjustment or restriction from activity, education, restorative approach where safe, County FA or league advice where appropriate.
Level 4 – Safeguarding / serious harm concern	Serious violence, sexualised behaviour, serious bullying, threats, harassment, significant discrimination, behaviour indicating possible risk of harm.	Immediate Club Welfare Officer involvement, Hampshire FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO / County FA / statutory agency advice as required, temporary protective action, formal outcome and safe return plan if appropriate.

Where the concern involves a child both as the person causing harm and as a child who may need support, the Club should consider both accountability and welfare. The Club should seek safeguarding advice where there is any uncertainty.



Appeals

A person subject to a formal misconduct outcome should normally have a right of appeal unless an external process determines otherwise. Appeals should be submitted in writing to waynealtonfc@outlook.com within 14 days of the written outcome.

- Appeals should usually be limited to one or more of the following grounds:
- The process was not followed, and this may have affected the outcome;
- The decision was not reasonable based on the evidence available;
- The outcome or sanction was disproportionate;
- New relevant evidence has become available that could not reasonably have been provided earlier;
- There was bias or conflict of interest in the original decision-making.

The appeal should be considered by people who were not involved in the original decision wherever possible. The appeal outcome should be confirmed in writing and recorded.

Records, Confidentiality and Data Protection

All misconduct reports, lower-level concerns, decisions, actions and outcomes should be recorded securely.

Records should be factual, accurate, professional and limited to relevant information.

Information relating to misconduct, complaints and lower-level concerns must be handled lawfully, fairly and securely. Information should only be shared where it is necessary, proportionate, relevant to the concern being managed, and on a need-to-know basis, including with the County FA, The FA, league or statutory agencies where required. Records and communications must be professional in tone and should be stored and shared securely, including using passwords or encryption where appropriate.

Where concerns have been raised about an adult's behaviour around children, records should normally be retained until the subject of the allegation reaches normal retirement age or for 10 years from the date of the allegation, whichever is later. Records should be retained even where the concern is unfounded and even if the person stops working or volunteering for the Club, unless specific advice confirms otherwise.

Where volunteers use personal devices to create or store records, the Club should have guidance and safeguards in place. When responsibility for records changes, a proper handover should take place, including deletion of Club records from personal devices where appropriate.



Review and Learning

The Club should review misconduct cases to identify learning and prevent recurrence. This may include changes to communication, training, supervision, policies, codes of conduct, volunteer support, parent/player briefings or matchday management arrangements.

This policy should be reviewed at least annually, or sooner if FA/County FA guidance, safeguarding requirements, league rules or Club processes change.

Appendices

Using the appendices – These tools are intended to support consistent decision-making. Clubs should adapt them to their constitution, local County FA processes and any existing complaints/safeguarding procedures.



Appendix A – Misconduct Route

Issue reported	First route	Who should lead	Can the Club manage internally?	Key action
General poor behaviour or minor Code of Conduct breach	Informal or internal misconduct route	Chair/Secretary/ Team official as appropriate	Yes, if no safeguarding, discrimination or external discipline issue	Record proportionately; remind standards; monitor.
Lower-level concern involving children	Lower-level concern route	CWO plus non-conflicted committee member(s)	Usually yes, with County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO advice available	Acknowledge, record, gather information, consider Youth Voice, decide outcome.
Repeated lower-level concerns	Escalated lower-level concern route	CWO and committee, with County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO	Seek County FA advice; third separate concern must be referred	Review pattern and risk; consider formal action.
Safeguarding concern/risk of harm	Safeguarding referral route	CWO/County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO/statutory agencies	No, not without advice	Refer immediately; do not investigate internally unless advised.
Discrimination/ hate incident	Internal plus County FA/FA reporting route	Committee/CWO depending on context	May manage immediate club environment, but report/escalate as required	Protect affected person; preserve evidence; seek advice.
Match official report/on-field disciplinary matter	County FA/league discipline route	County FA/league	Not the formal discipline aspect	Do not interfere; club may provide support/education/internal standards action.



Committee conflict of interest	Independent/escalated route	Non-conflicted committee members or County FA	Only with independence	Record conflict and seek advice.
Serious/gross misconduct	Formal misconduct/escalation route	Committee appointed panel	Possibly, but consider County FA/statutory agency advice	Consider temporary restriction and formal investigation.



Appendix B – Investigation Plan and Evidence Log

Step	Questions/prompts	Completed/date
Scope	What behaviour/incident is being considered? What policy/code may have been breached?	
People involved	Who raised the concern? Who is affected? Who is the subject? Who may be a witness?	
Safeguarding	Has the CWO/County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO been consulted where appropriate?	
Youth Voice	Is a child affected? How will their views be obtained safely and age-appropriately?	
Evidence	What documents, messages, screenshots, photos, videos, reports or records are relevant?	
Subject account	How will the subject of concern be given an opportunity to respond?	
Witnesses	Who needs to be spoken to and in what order?	
Interim action	Is any temporary restriction, supervision or no-contact instruction needed?	
Analysis	What facts are agreed, disputed or unsupported? What is the impact and risk?	
Outcome	What action is proportionate and why?	



Appendix C – Outcome Matrix

Level	Examples	Possible outcomes
Level 1 – Early intervention	Minor poor tone, isolated frustration, misunderstanding, first minor breach.	Conversation, reminder of standards, apology, local record, no further action.
Level 2 – Lower-level concern	Favouritism, poor supervision, minor inappropriate communication, failure to challenge behaviour, failure to record incident.	Code reminder, training, mentoring, supervision, written expectations, review period, County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO advice.
Level 3 – Formal misconduct	Repeated Code breaches, aggressive sideline conduct, disrespect to officials, bullying, unsafe practice, repeated lower-level concerns.	Formal warning, behaviour agreement, restriction of role/activity, education, final warning, referral.
Level 4 – Serious misconduct	Threats, intimidation, harassment, serious discrimination, significant safeguarding breach, breach of confidentiality, repeated serious behaviour.	Temporary suspension, formal sanction, removal from role/activity, County FA referral, safeguarding referral.
Level 5 – Gross misconduct / external referral	Violence, sexual misconduct, abuse allegation, criminal activity, serious risk of harm, acting while suspended.	Immediate safeguarding/statutory referral, provisional suspension, exclusion/removal, County FA/The FA/Police involvement.



Appendix D – Behaviour Agreement/ Improvement Plan Template

Section	Details
Name/role/team	
Concern or behaviour to address	
Relevant Code of Conduct/policy standard	
Expected behaviour going forward	
Support, mentoring, supervision or training to be provided	
Restrictions or conditions, if any	
Review date and reviewer	
What will happen if there is a further concern?	
Agreement/acknowledgement	Signed/confirmed by subject of concern and Club representative.



Appendix E – Template wording

Acknowledgement of misconduct report

Thank you for raising your concern with the Club. We have logged the information provided and will complete an initial review to decide the appropriate route under the Club Misconduct Policy, Complaints Procedure and Safeguarding Policy. Where possible, we will provide an update on next steps within [INSERT TIMEFRAME]. If any immediate safeguarding risk is identified, this will be referred to the Club Welfare Officer and/or County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer.

Invitation to provide an account

The Club is reviewing a concern relating to [brief neutral summary]. We would like to provide you with an opportunity to share your account before any decision is made. You may provide this in writing or attend a meeting with [names/roles]. You may be accompanied by [insert club approach]. Please do not contact witnesses or any person affected about this matter while it is being considered.

Outcome letter – misconduct substantiated

Following review of the information available, the Club has concluded that [summary of finding]. This is considered a breach of [policy/code]. The Club has decided that the appropriate outcome is [outcome/sanction/support]. The reasons for this decision are [brief reasons]. You have the right to appeal within 14 days on the grounds set out in the policy.

Outcome letter – not substantiated/no further action

Following review of the information available, the Club has concluded that there is insufficient evidence to substantiate the concern / no further action will be taken under the misconduct process. The matter has been recorded and the Club will consider any wider learning or support required.

Appeal acknowledgement

We acknowledge receipt of your appeal. Your appeal will be considered by [name/panel] who were not involved in the original decision where possible. The appeal will consider the grounds set out in your appeal and the relevant records. We will confirm the outcome in writing.



Appendix F – Club Decision and Learning Record

Field	Details
Case reference	
Date decision made	
Decision-maker/panel	
Summary of concern	
Policies/Codes considered	
Evidence reviewed	
Safeguarding/County FA advice sought?	
Youth Voice considered?	
Finding	Substantiated / partially substantiated / unsubstantiated / no finding / referred externally.
Outcome/action	
Reasoning	
Communication completed	Who was informed, when and by whom.
Appeal deadline/outcome	
Learning for Club	Training, supervision, policy update, parent/player communication, matchday process, CWO support, committee review.
Record retention/location	



Appendix G – Committee Member Conflict and Decision Route Checklist

Check	Record / action required
Is the subject of concern a committee member, officer, coach on committee, CWO, Chair or Secretary?	
Is any committee member a complainant, witness, relative/close friend of a party, team colleague, direct line manager or otherwise conflicted?	
Which committee members are excluded from discussion, investigation, decision-making and appeal?	
Who will coordinate the process and hold the records?	
Who will investigate and are they independent of the matter?	
Who will make the decision and are they separate from the investigator where a significant sanction is possible?	
Who will hear an appeal and were they uninvolved in the original decision?	
Does the club constitution require a committee vote, SGM, trustee decision, membership process or other formal step?	
Has County FA/DSO advice been sought where independence, safeguarding or seriousness requires it?	
How will the conflict decision and recusals be minuted without disclosing unnecessary personal information?	



Appendix H – Decision Making Authority Checklist

Decision needed	Recommended decision-maker	Minimum independence expectation	Notes
No further action after triage	CWO/Chair/Secretary or appointed non-conflicted officer	Should not be the subject of concern or complainant	Record rationale and any signposting/support.
Informal reminder or conversation	Team official, Chair/Secretary or CWO as appropriate	Non-conflicted person; CWO for child/welfare matters	Record where relevant, especially if behaviour may form a pattern.
Lower-level concern outcome	CWO plus non-conflicted committee member(s)	Include CWO unless conflicted; seek DSO advice if concern escalates	Third separate lower-level concern must be referred to County FA DSO.
Formal warning / behaviour agreement / training requirement	Misconduct decision panel of normally 2-3 non-conflicted people	Subject/complainant/ witnesses must not take part	Panel should record evidence, reasons and review date.
Temporary restriction or provisional suspension pending investigation	Chair plus one other non-conflicted officer/CWO; if Chair conflicted, Vice Chair/Secretary and another non-conflicted officer	Decision should be risk-based and reviewed regularly	This is not a finding of misconduct. Explain scope and duration.
Removal from coaching, volunteering or committee duties	Non-conflicted misconduct panel recommendation, then constitutional ratification where required	Subject must not vote or influence. Consider independent input.	County FA/DSO must be informed where removal relates to behaviour around children/safeguarding.
Removal from club membership / expulsion	Route required by club constitution, using non-conflicted decision-makers	Follow constitution exactly; consider independent advice	May require SGM or formal membership process.



Appeal against formal outcome	Appeal panel/person not involved in original decision	Must be separate from investigator and decision panel wherever possible	Appeal should consider permitted grounds only.
Safeguarding referral / statutory referral	CWO/County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO/statutory agencies	Club should not substitute its own decision for safeguarding advice	Internal action may be limited to immediate risk management.



Appendix I – Misconduct scenarios, suggested Club actions and escalation routes

This appendix gives practical examples of the types of action clubs can consider. It is guidance only. Clubs should always consider the facts of the case, the Club constitution and policies, relevant FA/England Football, County FA and league requirements, and whether safeguarding, discrimination, discipline or statutory referral routes apply.

Scenario	What the Club should consider	Possible Club action	When to escalate
Parent repeatedly shouting negative comments from the sideline	Is it upsetting children? Is it persistent? Has the parent been warned before?	Conversation with parent; remind them of the Grassroots Code / Respect Standard; written expectations; behaviour agreement; restricted attendance if repeated.	Escalate to league/County FA if abusive, threatening, discriminatory or repeated.
Coach regularly giving one child significantly less game time without clear reason	Does it breach the Club Selection and Game Time Statement? Has the child been affected? Is communication poor?	Review against Club statement; speak to coach; seek player/parent views where appropriate; mentoring; require clearer communication; monitor game time.	Escalate if discriminatory, linked to bullying, or repeated despite support.
Coach swearing at players or humiliating them	Is this poor practice or a safeguarding concern? Are children distressed? Is it repeated?	CWO involved; record concern; investigate; speak to children/parents where appropriate; formal warning; training; supervision; removal from coaching if needed.	Seek Hampshire FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO advice, especially if repeated, aggressive, harmful or removal from role is considered.
Player bullying another player	Is there emotional, physical, discriminatory or online bullying? Is there risk of harm?	Follow Anti-Bullying Policy; support victim; speak with parents/carers; behaviour agreement; restorative approach if	Escalate to CWO/Hampshire FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO if serious, discriminatory, repeated,



		safe; sanctions if needed.	sexualised or safeguarding risk.
Committee member subject of complaint or misconduct concern	Are they conflicted? Can the Club form a fair panel? Has the person had access to evidence or decision-making?	Conflicted person steps away; non-conflicted officers manage process; independent panel or external support if needed; document the conflict decision.	Seek Hampshire FA advice if Chair, Secretary, CWO or majority of committee is involved.
Discriminatory language by adult or player	Who said it? Was it targeted? Was it heard by others? Is it repeated? Has the affected person been supported?	Record; investigate; support affected person; consider education, warning, suspension or removal depending on seriousness.	Report through County FA/FA discrimination route. Do not manage as informal only.
Parent threatens coach, referee or another parent	Is there immediate safety risk? Was there intimidation, threat or physical contact? Were children present?	Ask person to leave venue; temporary suspension from Club activity; investigation; written warning, restriction or removal.	Escalate to league/County FA; police if threat/violence; safeguarding if children affected.
Volunteer ignoring safeguarding boundaries, such as inappropriate messaging	Is a child involved? Is communication sexualised? Could this indicate grooming or risk of harm?	Do not manage informally; preserve evidence; restrict contact if needed; seek CWO/DSO advice immediately.	Immediate Hampshire FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO/FA safeguarding referral; police/statutory agency if risk of harm.
Repeated lower-level concerns about the same adult	How many separate concerns have been recorded? Were previous actions completed? Is behaviour escalating?	Review pattern; formal meeting; warning; training; supervision; consider removal from role.	Must refer to County FA on the third separate lower-level concern; seek advice earlier if escalating.
Dispute between coach and parent about communication	Is it behaviour-based or a disagreement? Is anyone at risk? Has	Mediation if safe; communication agreement; clarify expectations; review meeting; reminder of	Escalate if abusive, threatening, discriminatory or safeguarding-related.



	communication broken down?	Club policy and Grassroots Code.	
Adult enters pitch or confronts match official	Is it a matchday discipline issue? Was there threat, intimidation or contact?	Ask adult to leave; record incident; Club sanction; restrict attendance; remind of Grassroots Code / Respect Standard.	League/County FA discipline route; police if violence/threats.
Club official shares confidential information inappropriately	What was shared? Who was affected? Did it include safeguarding, personal or sensitive information?	Investigate; remind confidentiality expectations; warning; training; restrict access to records.	Escalate if safeguarding/data breach is serious; consider County FA/ICO advice.



Appendix J – Quick Action Checklist for Clubs

This checklist is intended to help volunteer committees decide what to do next when they receive a misconduct concern. It should be used alongside the initial triage checklist and the Club Complaints Procedure.

Step	Question	Suggested action
1	Is anyone at immediate risk of harm?	Take immediate protective action and contact the CWO, Hampshire FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO, police or statutory agency as appropriate.
2	Does the matter involve safeguarding, sexualised behaviour, serious bullying or an adult at risk?	Do not manage as an ordinary misconduct matter. Seek safeguarding advice and preserve evidence.
3	Does it involve discrimination or hate-related behaviour?	Record and support the affected person. Consider FA Discipline/County FA reporting routes and do not treat as informal only.
4	Is it a matchday discipline or league matter?	Check whether FA discipline and/ or league procedures apply before the Club takes internal action.
5	Is any committee member, CWO, Chair, Secretary or investigator conflicted?	Require conflicted individuals to step away and seek Hampshire FA advice if a fair internal process cannot be formed.
6	Is it a lower-level concern or breach of expected standards?	Record it, consider CWO involvement, use proportionate action, and monitor whether patterns emerge.
7	Has this happened before?	Review previous records and outcomes. Repeated behaviour may require a higher level of action or referral.
8	Is Youth Voice relevant?	Where a child is directly affected, consider safe and proportionate ways to hear their view, with CWO guidance where needed.
9	What action is proportionate?	Use the action ladder and scenario appendix to choose a proportionate outcome. Record reasons.



10	How will the Club prevent recurrence?	Agree learning actions, communication improvements, training, supervision or policy updates.
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Appendix K- Linked Policy Checklist

Clubs should use this checklist to confirm that this misconduct policy is supported by the relevant FA/ County FA standards and by the club's own local policies or statements. Clubs should link to or attach the most up-to-date versions and review them regularly. Use live/current links rather than saving or relying on older PDF versions, as FA and England Football guidance may be updated.

Policy / standard	FA / England Football source to check	Club document to have in place	Owner	Review / action needed
Safeguarding Children	FA Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures; FA Safeguarding Children Regulations; County FA Safeguarding Team / County FA DSO guidance.	Club Safeguarding Children Policy; CWO details; reporting process; safer recruitment records.	CWO / Committee	
Adult safeguarding / adults at risk	FA safeguarding guidance and County FA advice; statutory agency guidance where relevant.	Adult safeguarding arrangements or statement; reporting route for adults at risk.	CWO/ Committee	
Anti-bullying	FA Anti-Bullying Policy for Football Clubs and safeguarding guidance.	Club Anti-Bullying Policy, including cyberbullying and discriminatory bullying.	CWO / Committee	
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion	FA Equality Policy; FA Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination reporting guidance.	Club EDI Policy and discrimination reporting information.	Committee	
Behaviour / Grassroots Code / Respect Standard	FA Grassroots Code / Respect Standard; current club/league/competiti	Codes of Conduct for adults, coaches, players, parents/carers, spectators,	Committee / Coaches	



	on Codes of Conduct and rules.	volunteers and committee members, aligned to the current Grassroots Code / Respect Standard.		
Selection and game time Complaints about selection, recruitment or playing time should normally be managed internally under the Club Selection and Game Time Statement/Policy. They would not, on their own, usually be treated as a lower-level safeguarding concern, unless there are additional factors such as discrimination, bullying, favouritism, emotional harm, poor practice, repeated unfair treatment, breach of policy or wider welfare concerns.	FA Selection and Game Time Statement guidance and template; England Football Learning equal playing time resources.	Club Selection and Game Time Statement/Policy and parent/player summary.	Committee / Coaching Lead	
Complaints and concerns	Current FA Football complaints and behaviour guidance, including the Grassroots Code / Respect Standard and County FA advice.	Club Complaints Procedure and supporting appendices.	Secretary / Committee	
Lower-level concerns	County FA/FA lower-level concerns guidance once released/adopted.	Club lower-level concerns process embedded in complaints/misconduct policy.	CWO / Committee	



Additional local policies	Use current FA/County FA guidance relevant to the issue, for example social media, photography, transport, trips/tours, first aid, facilities or safer working practice.	Any club policy or procedure already in place for the relevant activity.	Committee / relevant lead	
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