

AFC PORTCHESTER YOUTH ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Objectives of this policy

AFC Portchester is committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our members, so they can participate in football in a secure and happy atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our club.

The purpose of this policy is that everyone volunteering and playing at the club (including parents/carers of children) should be:

- 1) Able to identify what bullying is.
- 2) Know who to report it to.
- 3) Know what action will be taken by the club.

1) What is bullying?

Bullying is an act of aggression with the intention of hurting another person, either physically and/or emotionally. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim. Bullying can occur in many different ways, including:

- **Emotional** being unfriendly, excluding (emotionally and physically) sending hurtful text messages, tormenting, (e.g. hiding football boots/shin guards, threatening gestures).
- **Physical** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence.
- **Sexual** unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.
- **Verbal** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.

Cyberbullying

Bullying can occur in both the physical environment, and/or the digital environment. Cyberbullying and trolling is when one or more persons uses technology i.e. mobile phones or the internet (social networking sites, chat rooms, instant messenger, Tweets), to deliberately upset someone. The actions of the bullies can be magnified by bullying online preventing a victim having respite from being targeted when they should be safe at home. Other people sharing images and content from bullying can make victims feel even worse, like everyone is targeting them.

Our commitment

AFC Portchester Youth Football Club commits to ensure our website and social networking pages are being used appropriately and any online bullying will be dealt with swiftly and appropriately in line with procedures detailed in this policy.

The signs and effects of bullying

Bullying hurts and can have a lasting negative impact on victims, creating such issues as anxiety. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying, and everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Individuals who are bullying need to learn appropriate behaviour.

A child **may** indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- Says he or she is being bullied.
- Is unwilling to go to club sessions.
- Begins to doubt their value or ability.

- Becomes withdrawn anxious or lacking in confidence.
- Continually feels ill before training sessions.
- Comes home with clothes torn or training equipment damaged.
- Has possessions go “missing”.
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay the bully).
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises.
- Is frightened to say what’s wrong.
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above.

In more extreme cases:

- Starts stammering.
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares.
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable.
- Is bullying other children or siblings.
- Stops eating.
- Runs away from home or school.
- Attempts or threatens.

These signs and behaviours may indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Bullying as a result of any form of discrimination

Bullying because of discrimination occurs when it is motivated by a prejudice against certain people or groups of people. This may be because of their gender, age, race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability or ability.

Generally, these forms of bullying look like other sorts of bullying, but in particular it can include:

- **Verbal abuse** – derogatory remarks based upon the aforementioned characteristics.
- **Physical abuse** – including hitting, punching, kicking, sexual assault, and threatening behaviour.
- **Cyberbullying** – using digital forums to spread rumours about someone or exclude them. It can also include text messaging, including video and picture messaging.

Discrimination is often driven by a lack of understanding, which only serves to strengthen stereotypes and can potentially lead to actions that may cause women, ethnic minorities, disabled people, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people, or people who follow specific religions or beliefs, to feel excluded, isolated or undervalued. This is against the ethos of the club, which is inclusive of all.

Our commitment

The club will actively promote equal opportunities for all players and volunteers. This includes appropriate terminology and representation in its promotional materials, both print and media. Coaches will challenge any form of discriminatory behaviour by players, and anyone associated with the club, including spectators; this will include challenging inappropriate language and behaviour.

2) Who to report bullying to

Any act of bullying should be notified immediately to the Club Welfare Officer (CWO). Their details are available from the club website, by contacting the club, or from any member of the coaching or

volunteer staff working for the club. The CWO will ensure that all incidences are correctly recorded and the appropriate course of action taken. All reports will be dealt with sensitively, and neither victims, nor witnesses should have any concerns about making reports. For bullying to be stopped it takes everyone who witnesses it to act.

3) Club action

Positive action will be taken on all incidents of bullying to ensure the welfare of the victim is prioritised and incidents do not escalate or spread. The courses of action to be taken include:

If an incident of bullying/discriminatory language and/or behaviour occurs coaches should challenge this behaviour and explain that it will not be tolerated. If they continue, explain in detail the effects that discrimination and bullying has on people. If it is a young person making the remarks their parents/carers should be informed.

If a member makes persistent remarks, they should be removed from the training setting in line with managing challenging behaviour and the club welfare officer (or club officials) should talk to them in more detail about why their behaviour is unacceptable.

If the club decides it is appropriate for it to deal with the situation, it will follow the procedure outlined below:

- Reconciliation by getting the parties together. It may be that a genuine apology solves the problem.
- If this fails, or is not appropriate a small panel (made up from Chairman, Club Welfare Officer, Club Secretary, and relevant committee members) should meet with the adult and child alleging bullying to get details of the allegation. Minutes should be taken for clarity, which should be agreed by all as a true account.
- The same club representatives should meet with the alleged bully and their responsible adult and put the incident raised to them to answer and give their view of the allegation. Minutes should again be taken and agreed.
- If it is the view of the club representatives that bullying has taken place the individual should be warned and put on notice of further action i.e. temporary or permanent suspension if the bullying continues. Consideration should be given as to whether a reconciliation meeting between parties is appropriate at this time.
- In some cases, the parent/carer of the bully or bullied player can be asked to attend training sessions, if they are able to do so, and if appropriate. The club committee should monitor the situation for a given period to ensure the bullying is not being repeated.
- All coaches involved with both individuals should be made aware of the concerns and outcome of the process i.e. the warning.

In the case of adults reported to be bullying anyone within the club under 18

- The County Welfare Officer should always be informed and will advise on action to be taken where appropriate. This may include action by The FA Safeguarding Team.
- It is anticipated that in cases where the allegation is made regarding a team manager, official or coach, the FA's Safeguarding Children Education Programme may be recommended.
- More serious cases may be referred to the police and/or Children's Social Care.

If the problem persists, the member should be made to understand the sanctions that will apply.

In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be referred to the County FA Welfare Officer for advice and possibly to The FA Case Management Team. Parents/carers should be informed and will be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem.

If necessary and appropriate, the police will be contacted.

The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated, and the bullying stopped quickly. An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour.

If mediation fails and the bullying is seen to continue the club will initiate disciplinary action under the club constitution.

Our commitment

- The club maintains Code of Conducts, which include what is acceptable and proper behaviour for all members, of which the anti-bullying policy is one part.
- All club members and parents will sign to accept the Code of Conduct upon joining the club.
- The Club Welfare Officer will raise awareness about bullying and why it matters, and if issues of bullying arise in the club, will consider meeting with members to discuss the issue openly and constructively.

This Policy was reviewed by The Club Committee on 02nd April 2021.