



Hartlepool Sport Toolkit – Governance & Compliance

Keeping your club safe, legal and sustainable — without drowning in paperwork — in Hartlepool

“Governance” scares people off.

It sounds like:

- committees
- constitutions
- policies
- meetings
- admin

But here’s the reality for small community clubs:

**You only need enough structure to protect people and keep things fair.
Nothing more.**

Too little structure → chaos

Too much structure → volunteers quit

The sweet spot is:

👉 *lightweight, proportionate, practical*

This guide shows you the minimum you need — and when to add more.

1. Start With This Principle

Governance exists to:

- protect children and adults
- protect volunteers
- protect money
- keep decisions fair
- make the club sustainable

Not to:

✗ impress funders
✗ create bureaucracy
✗ feel “official”
✗ slow everything down

If paperwork makes it harder to run sessions, something’s wrong.



Delivery always comes first.

2. The “Minimum Viable Club” Setup

For most small Hartlepool clubs, this is enough.

Essentials

- Named lead organiser
- Safeguarding lead
- Bank account (not personal)
- Simple income/expense record
- Public liability insurance
- Basic constitution or rules
- Contact list of volunteers
- Clear decision-making process

That's it.

You don't need 20 policies.

You need clarity and common sense.

3. Roles & Responsibilities (keep it simple)

Don't over-title.

Just make sure jobs are covered.

Typical light structure

- Lead/Coordinator – overall direction
- Treasurer – money
- Safeguarding lead – welfare
- Helpers/Coaches – delivery

One person can hold two roles.

But never:

- one person controlling everything
- or money handled alone without oversight

Shared responsibility = safer club.



4. A Basic Constitution (1–2 pages is fine)

This doesn't need to be complex.

It just explains:

- who you are
- what you exist for
- how decisions are made
- how money is used
- how roles are chosen
- what happens if you close

That's enough for:

- bank accounts
- venues
- most small grants

Avoid copying 30-page templates.

Nobody reads them.

Simple documents get used.

5. Money Governance (protect yourself)

Money worries destroy trust fast.

Simple safeguards

- separate club bank account
- two people aware of finances
- record all income/expenses
- receipts where possible
- no personal accounts
- no cash disappearing home

Monthly habit

5 minutes:

- check balance



- note costs
- share with team

Transparency prevents drama.

Drama kills clubs.

6. Decision-Making (keep it human)

You don't need formal boards for small groups.

For most clubs:

- quick chats after sessions
- WhatsApp discussion
- simple majority agreement

Works perfectly.

Only formalise when:

- handling larger money
- employing staff
- signing leases
- applying for bigger grants

Don't hold meetings for the sake of meetings.

Action beats minutes.

7. Insurance (non-negotiable)

This is one area not to skip.

At minimum:

- public liability insurance

Sometimes also:

- personal accident
- equipment cover
- professional indemnity (if coaching/instruction)

Often available through:



- national governing bodies
- community sport schemes
- umbrella policies

This protects:

- you
- volunteers
- families
- venues

Cheap insurance. Expensive mistakes otherwise.

8. Policies (only what you actually use)

Policies should fit in a small folder.

Most clubs only need:

- safeguarding
- code of conduct
- basic health & safety/risk assessment
- equality/inclusion statement

Optional later:

- complaints
- finance
- volunteer agreement

If it's longer than needed, nobody follows it.

Policies should guide behaviour, not gather dust.

9. Keep Things Fair & Open

Good governance = trust.

Practical habits

- explain decisions
- rotate opportunities



- avoid favouritism
- involve volunteers
- ask for feedback
- celebrate contributions

Clubs fall apart from “inside politics”, not external issues.

Fairness keeps people committed.

10. When to Add More Structure

Grow governance only as you grow activity.

Add structure when you:

- handle larger funding
- employ staff
- manage your own building
- deliver multiple sessions
- have lots of volunteers
- work with schools/partners formally

Then you might add:

- small committee
- annual review/AGM
- clearer reporting
- more defined roles

Structure should follow complexity — not lead it.

11. Avoid the Common Traps

Don't:

- ✗ over-formalise too early
- ✗ copy big charity models
- ✗ create endless meetings
- ✗ let one person hold all power



- ✗ drown volunteers in admin
- ✗ delay delivery waiting for paperwork

Remember:
You're a community club, not a corporation.

Proportion matters.

12. Annual “Light Touch” Review (30–45 mins)

Once a year, sit down together and ask:

- Are we still serving the right people?
- Is money stable?
- Are volunteers OK?
- Any safeguarding issues?
- What should we stop/start?
- Do roles still make sense?

Update anything simple.

That's your governance review.

Done.

13. Governance as Place Leadership

In Hartlepool especially, good governance means:

- trusted locally
- transparent
- inclusive
- community-owned
- not gatekept

If families feel they could step in and help run things, you've got healthy governance.

If everything feels controlled and closed, something's off.

Ownership builds sustainability.



Governance Health Checklist

- Roles clear
- Money transparent
- Bank account separate
- Insurance active
- Safeguarding lead named
- Simple policies only
- Decisions feel fair
- Admin manageable

If yes → your governance is right-sized.

One-line philosophy

Use the minimum structure needed.

Protect people and money.

Share responsibility.

Stay transparent.

Keep it human.