



## Hartlepool Sport Toolkit – Safeguarding & Welfare

*Keeping children, young people and adults safe, supported and welcomed — every session, every time — in Hartlepool*

Safeguarding can sound heavy and bureaucratic.

Policies.

Forms.

Training.

Checks.

Those things matter.

But here's the truth most experienced clubs learn:

**Safeguarding is mostly culture, not paperwork.**

It's:

- knowing names
- noticing changes
- listening
- being approachable
- acting early

The safest clubs don't feel strict.

They feel **warm, visible, and attentive**.

This guide keeps things **simple, practical and human** — while still meeting basic responsibilities.

---

### 1. Start With the Right Mindset

Safeguarding isn't about:

- ✗ avoiding blame
- ✗ ticking boxes
- ✗ protecting the organisation first

It is about:

- ✓ protecting people
- ✓ building trust
- ✓ creating safe spaces
- ✓ acting early when something feels off

If a child feels safe with you, most problems surface sooner — and are easier to handle.

## **2. Your Minimum Setup (the basics every club needs)**

You don't need a huge policy folder.

Just make sure these are in place:

### **Essentials**

- ☐ Named safeguarding lead
- ☐ DBS checks where required
- ☐ Emergency contacts
- ☐ First aid kit
- ☐ Clear sign-in/out process
- ☐ Basic risk assessment
- ☐ Simple code of conduct
- ☐ Way to record concerns

If you have these, you're already ahead of many groups.

---

## **3. The Safeguarding Lead (one trusted adult)**

Every club needs one clearly identified person.

Not "everyone".

Someone specific.

### **Their role**

- first point of contact for concerns
- keeps records
- knows local referral routes
- supports volunteers
- escalates when needed

### **Choose someone who is:**

- calm
- trusted
- approachable
- organised
- good listener



Not necessarily the head coach.

Sometimes a parent or helper is better suited.

Make sure families know who this is.

---

#### **4. Everyday Behaviours That Keep People Safe**

These matter more than any document.

##### **Before sessions**

- arrive early
- set up safely
- greet families
- know who's present

##### **During sessions**

- supervise actively
- avoid isolated 1:1 situations
- keep doors open where possible
- notice behaviour changes
- listen when children talk

##### **After sessions**

- safe collection
- no child left alone
- quick debrief if needed

Simple visibility prevents most issues.

Hidden spaces create risk.

---

#### **5. Codes of Conduct (short and clear)**

Don't write 10 pages.

One page is enough.

##### **For adults**

- treat everyone with respect



- no shouting or humiliation
- appropriate language
- no private messaging children
- no lifts alone unless agreed
- avoid physical contact unless necessary/appropriate
- report concerns, don't ignore them

#### **For young people**

- be kind
- no bullying
- listen to coaches
- look after equipment
- tell someone if something feels wrong

Clear expectations create calm environments.

---

### **6. Safer Communication**

Most safeguarding issues now happen digitally, not physically.

#### **Keep it simple**

- group messages only
- copy parents in
- no private 1:1 chats with children
- no late-night messaging
- use WhatsApp groups or parent channels

If you wouldn't say it in front of a parent, don't send it.

Transparency = safety.

---

### **7. Recognising Concerns (trust your gut)**

You're not expected to diagnose anything.

Just notice and share.

#### **Things to look out for**



- sudden behaviour change
- withdrawal
- aggression
- unexplained injuries
- poor attendance
- inappropriate language or knowledge
- child confiding worries
- parents expressing stress

You don't need proof.

You only need a **reasonable concern**.

If it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't.

---

## 8. If Someone Shares Something With You

This is where people panic. Keep it simple.

### DO

- stay calm
- listen
- thank them
- reassure them they did the right thing
- write it down
- pass to safeguarding lead

### DON'T

- promise secrecy
- interrogate
- investigate
- ask leading questions
- try to solve it yourself

Your job is to **pass it on safely**, not fix it alone.

## **9. Recording Concerns (keep it factual)**

Short notes are enough.

### **Include**

- date/time
- what was seen or said
- exact words where possible
- who was present
- actions taken

Avoid opinions or guesses.

Store securely.

Good notes protect:

- the child
- you
- the club

---

## **10. Know Where to Go for Help**

You're not expected to handle serious issues alone.

Have local routes ready, such as:

- local authority safeguarding team
- school DSLs
- health or youth services
- national governing body support
- emergency services if urgent

When in doubt:

👉 share early, not late

Early help prevents crises.

---

## **11. Create a Welfare Culture (not just compliance)**

The safest clubs feel:



- welcoming
- predictable
- respectful
- inclusive

#### **Easy ways to build this**

- learn names
- celebrate effort
- notice quiet kids
- check in with parents
- hot drinks and chats
- youth leadership roles
- zero tolerance for bullying

Belonging reduces risk dramatically.

Children who feel connected speak up sooner.

---

## **12. Look After Volunteers Too**

Welfare isn't just for young people.

Adults burn out or struggle too.

#### **Support your team**

- share responsibility
- debrief after incidents
- offer breaks
- encourage time off
- check in informally

Tired adults make poor decisions.

Calm adults keep spaces safe.

---



### **13. Keep Paperwork Proportionate**

Avoid the trap of:

“more forms = safer”

Usually:

“more relationships = safer”

Have what you need.

Don't drown in admin.

If safeguarding becomes so heavy that volunteers quit, you've gone too far.

Balance matters.

---

### **Quick Safeguarding Checklist**

#### **Every session**

- ☐ register
- ☐ supervision
- ☐ first aid kit
- ☐ visible adults
- ☐ safe collection

#### **Ongoing**

- ☐ named lead
- ☐ DBS where required
- ☐ clear reporting route
- ☐ simple records
- ☐ open communication

If these are in place → you're covering the essentials.

---

### **One-line philosophy**

**Be visible.**

**Be approachable.**

**Notice small things.**

**Act early.**

**Protect people first, always.**