



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.