NORTHWICH UNITED FC | SAFEGUARDING

Managing Lower-Level Concerns Policy

Season: 2026/2027

Northwich United FC is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children, young people and adults at risk who participate in, support or are otherwise involved in club activities. This policy sets out the club's formal approach to identifying, receiving, recording, reviewing and responding to lower-level concerns in a timely, proportionate and consistent manner.

Policy Overview

Policy Owner	Northwich United FC Committee / Club Welfare Officer
Applies To	Players, coaches, managers, volunteers, parents/carers, spectators, officials and anyone representing Northwich United FC
Core Principle	**Football for everyone. Always.**

1. Our Commitment

The club recognises that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that concerns about conduct, boundaries or professional standards should be addressed at the earliest appropriate opportunity. All individuals representing or associated with Northwich United FC are expected to maintain high standards of behaviour, act in accordance with club policies and relevant football safeguarding requirements, and report concerns without delay.

2. What is a Lower-Level Concern?

A lower-level concern is any concern, doubt or sense of unease, however small, about the behaviour of an adult or young person connected with the club. This may include conduct that appears inconsistent with the club's code of conduct, safeguarding expectations, safer working practice, equality standards or appropriate boundaries, even where the matter does not initially meet the threshold for referral to statutory agencies or football safeguarding authorities.

Lower-level concerns must not be dismissed because they appear minor. A single concern may indicate poor practice and a pattern of concerns may identify a safeguarding risk, breach of standards or need for guidance, support, training, monitoring or formal action.

3. Examples of Lower-Level Concerns

Area	Examples
Coaching & Behaviour	Shouting, dismissive language, inappropriate criticism, poor role-modelling or behaviour that falls below expected standards.
Communication & Boundaries	Overly personal communication, inappropriate contact outside expected club channels, or boundaries that cause concern.
Matchday, Parents & Online	Poor treatment of players, officials or opponents, intimidating behaviour, inappropriate comments, or online behaviour inconsistent with club standards.

4. Selection and Game Time

Team selection, squad rotation and playing time are ordinarily operational football matters and should normally be managed through the club's selection guidance, coaching communication and complaints process. Such matters may, however, become safeguarding or welfare concerns where the conduct involved includes

humiliation, bullying, discriminatory treatment, intimidation, inappropriate punishment, deliberate targeting, abuse of trust, or behaviour that may adversely affect a player's wellbeing.

5. Reporting a Concern

- Listen carefully, remain calm and take the concern seriously.
- Reassure the person raising the concern that they have done the right thing by speaking up, but do not promise confidentiality or a specific outcome.
- Record the facts as soon as possible, including what was seen, heard or reported, the date, time, location, people involved and any immediate actions taken.
- Report the concern promptly to the Club Welfare Officer, or to the Club Chair or another appropriate senior club officer where the concern relates to the Club Welfare Officer.

Individuals must not investigate concerns themselves, interview witnesses, confront the person the concern relates to, gather evidence independently or attempt to determine the outcome. Assessment and decision-making must be undertaken through the appropriate safeguarding, welfare, complaints or disciplinary pathway.

6. What Happens After a Concern Is Reported?

The Club Welfare Officer will review the information received, consider the context and any previous or connected concerns, and determine the most appropriate next steps. This may include offering advice or guidance, addressing poor practice informally, arranging training or support, monitoring conduct, referring the matter through the club's complaints or disciplinary procedures, or escalating the concern to Cheshire FA, The FA, Police, Children's Services or other statutory agencies where required.

The club will seek to ensure that all matters are handled fairly, objectively and proportionately, with regard to safeguarding responsibilities, confidentiality, information-sharing requirements and the welfare of any child, young person or adult at risk who may be affected.

7. Serious or Immediate Safeguarding Concerns

Where there is an immediate risk of harm, the safety and welfare of the person at risk must take priority. Contact emergency services on 999 where necessary and inform the Club Welfare Officer as soon as it is safe and appropriate to do so. If there is uncertainty about whether a matter reaches the safeguarding threshold, it must still be reported promptly so that the appropriate safeguarding person can assess it.

8. Confidentiality, Recording and Monitoring

Information relating to lower-level concerns must be handled sensitively, securely and on a need-to-know basis. Concerns must not be discussed in informal conversations, changing rooms, team messaging groups, parent/carer groups, social media or with individuals who do not have a safeguarding or governance role in the matter. Records must be factual, accurate, dated and retained in accordance with safeguarding requirements and applicable data protection responsibilities.

9. Positive Behaviour and Zero Tolerance

- Northwich United FC expects all members, volunteers, officials, players, parents/carers and spectators to uphold the club's values and the England Football Grassroots Code: Enjoy the Game, Give Respect, Be Inclusive, Work Together and Play Safe.
- The club requires respectful communication, appropriate boundaries, positive role-modelling, support for officials and opponents, and behaviour that contributes to a safe and inclusive football environment.
- The club will not tolerate racism, homophobia, sexism, bullying, harassment, discriminatory abuse, violence, threatening behaviour, sexual abuse or any other conduct that may constitute a serious safeguarding, welfare, equality or disciplinary concern.

10. Governance, Escalation and Review

The Club Welfare Officer is responsible for receiving and managing safeguarding concerns, maintaining appropriate records, identifying patterns or repeated concerns, and liaising with the Club Committee, Cheshire FA, The FA and statutory agencies where necessary. The Club Committee is responsible for ensuring this policy is approved, communicated, implemented and reviewed at least annually or sooner following any significant safeguarding, legal, regulatory or football governance change.

11. Quick Reference

LISTEN → REASSURE → RECORD → REPORT
Stay calm. Listen carefully. Reassure the person that they have done the right thing by speaking up. Record factual information clearly and promptly. Report the concern to the Club Welfare Officer or appropriate senior club officer. Do not investigate the matter yourself.
Doing nothing is not an option. A concern does not need to be proven before it is reported.

Appendix A – Lower-Level Concern Record Form

Use this form to record a concern as soon as possible. Record facts, not assumptions, and pass it to the Club Welfare Officer.

Date / Time of Concern:	_____
Location:	_____
Person Raising Concern:	_____
What Happened?	_____ _____
Immediate Action Taken:	_____
Reported To / Date & Time:	_____

Northwich United FC Safeguarding Contact

Club Welfare Officer	Michaela Thompson • 07702 797542
For safeguarding concerns, report promptly and do not investigate the matter yourself.	

Policy Approval and Review

Approved By	Northwich United FC Committee
Policy Owner	Club Welfare Officer
Effective Date	14.09.2026
Review Date	01.08.2027

Lower-Level Concern Record Form

Use this form to record a concern as soon as possible. Record facts, not assumptions, and pass it to the Club Welfare Officer.

Date / Time of Concern:	
Location:	
Person Raising Concern:	
What Happened?	
Immediate Action Taken:	
Reported To / Date & Time:	

Northwich United FC Safeguarding Contact

Club Welfare Officer	Michaela Thompson • 07702 797542 • welfare@northwichunited.org.uk
For safeguarding concerns, report promptly and do not investigate the matter yourself.	