



2024/25 Child Welfare Officer's Report

I am pleased to say that we've had no child welfare referrals during the season, which is great. Sadly, it feels like that's where the good news ends.

This season has seen exponential growth in the number of poor conduct reports. This has included both instances reported by our teams, but also reports made against our players, parents and coaches. Even more alarmingly, some of what has been reported has been extremely serious and we've also had reports from just about every age group. As adults, we should be setting an example to the children within the teams. Showing aggression, threats of violence and in some instances becoming violent is simply not ok or what we stand for as a club.

Worryingly there is also a tendency for issues to be referred to myself or the Management Committee relatively late on, often leaving us to find out about any issues from other teams or Clubs. This makes our lives all the more difficult in trying to manage them and, quite frankly, makes us look bad.

Just before Christmas the Management Committee wrote to every parent or guardian to remind them of the required and expected behaviours and how we must all play our part in making football an enjoyable and safe experience for all. Whether as a result of this or by coincidence, we had far fewer reports after Christmas which is good, but this must be maintained. As well as being completely unacceptable, dealing with poor conduct reports is disproportionately time consuming.

We have updated our complaints and disciplinary procedures to ensure we're better equipped to deal with any issues, but I'd like to avoid ever having to use it. Everyone should be mindful of the Club and FA's code of conduct and, if not confident on challenging this at the time, be clear that this should be reported at the earliest opportunity via one of the appropriate channels.

Lastly, we have had a small number of coaches be suspended in the year for either failing to send in their DBS certificate or renew their safeguarding children training when requested to do so by the FA. This is a pain to sort out, so please keep an eye out for any emails from the FA and any requests from them. We have to continue to run a tight ship with this as ultimately, the entire club can be impacted.

Many thanks,

Lucy Doherty
Child Welfare Officer