Onslow Junior Football Club
Safeguarding / Child Protection Policy

Constitution alignment: This policy is a bylaw/policy made under clause 14 of the OJFC Constitution. It is binding on Members. If there is any inconsistency, the Constitution and applicable Capital Football / New Zealand Football regulations and rules prevail.

Status: Current
Version: 1.1
Approved by: Executive Committee
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Policy owner: Executive Committee

1. Purpose

Onslow Junior Football Club (OJFC) is committed to providing a safe, positive and inclusive environment for all children and young people participating in club activities. This policy sets out how OJFC will prevent harm through safe practices and clear expectations, respond to concerns promptly and appropriately, and ensure concerns can be reported safely and handled fairly, confidentially, and consistently.

2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All players under 16 (First Kicks through Youth).
- All parents/caregivers.
- All coaches, assistant coaches, youth coaches, junior leaders, managers, volunteers, committee members, employees, contractors, programme providers and any other person acting for or on behalf of OJFC.
- All club environments and activities, including trainings, matches, tournaments, trips, changing facilities, communications, group chats, social media and other online interactions.

3. Definitions

- Child / young person: anyone under 18 years.

- Club representative: any coach, assistant coach, youth coach, junior leader, manager, referee, volunteer, committee member, employee, contractor, programme provider or other person acting for or on behalf of OJFC.
- Safeguarding: actions taken to prevent harm and respond to concerns about a child's wellbeing or safety.
- Concern: anything that suggests a child may be unsafe, at risk, or experiencing harm (inside or outside football).

4. Principles

OJFC will apply the following safeguarding principles:

- Child wellbeing comes first.
- Everyone has a role in safeguarding and must act on concerns.
- Do not investigate suspected abuse—report promptly through the correct channels.
- Confidentiality and need-to-know: information is shared only with those who need it to keep a child safe.
- Fair process: where club decisions are required, they will follow natural justice and impartial decision-making.

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is responsible for:

- Approving and overseeing safeguarding policy and implementation.
- Ensuring appropriate resourcing, training, and safe systems are in place.
- Appointing a Safeguarding Lead and ensuring role clarity.

5.2 Safeguarding Lead (and Deputy)

The Safeguarding Lead is the club's primary contact for safeguarding concerns and is responsible for:

- Receiving concerns and ensuring appropriate escalation.
- Maintaining secure records of concerns and actions.
- Coordinating with Capital Football safeguarding support when required.

Safeguarding Lead: OJFC Compliance Officer

Deputy: OJFC President

Club contact email: compliance@onslow.org.nz

5.3 Coaches, Managers and Other Club Representatives

All coaches, assistant coaches, youth coaches, junior leaders, managers, referees, volunteers, employees, contractors, programme providers and other persons undertaking child-facing duties for OJFC must:

- Follow safe practice expectations in Section 6.
- Report any concern immediately to the Safeguarding Lead.
- Keep records factual and confidential, and not discuss concerns widely.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries in person and through digital communications and online interactions.
- Use communication channels in accordance with section 6.5.
- Seek guidance from the Safeguarding Lead if uncertain about an appropriate communication arrangement.

5.4 Parents/Caregivers

Parents/caregivers are encouraged to:

- Raise welfare or safety concerns early.
- Support safe environments by following club codes and processes.

6. Preventing harm: safe practices

OJFC adopts safe practice expectations, including:

6.1 Appropriate behaviour with boundaries

- Use positive, age-appropriate language.
- Avoid inappropriate physical contact; any contact must be relevant and appropriate to the activity.
- Avoid being alone with a child (e.g., changing rooms, secluded areas); use “two-adult” practice where practicable.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries in all face-to-face and online interactions and comply with the digital communication requirements in section 6.5.

6.2 Supervision

- Ensure appropriate adult supervision (at least one adult over 18 years of age present) at trainings and games, especially for younger grades.
- Children should not be sent off alone or unsupervised (including leaving venues).

6.3 Transport and overnight stays

- Adults should not drive a child unaccompanied except where explicitly agreed by caregiver and where club processes permit.
- Overnight activities require clear supervision planning and safeguards.

6.4 Photography and video

- Filming/photography must be appropriate and aligned to consent expectations and club privacy settings.

6.5 Digital Communications and Online Interaction

The same safeguarding standards that apply during in-person OJFC activities apply to digital communications and online interactions.

This section applies to OJFC-related communications through email, text messages, team-management applications, messaging platforms, group chats, social media, online forums, video calls and other digital channels.

General expectations

Club representatives must:

- keep communications appropriate, respectful and relevant to football participation, administration, safety or player wellbeing;
- maintain appropriate boundaries with children and young people;
- use OJFC-approved or team-approved communication channels where practicable;
- use group communications rather than private one-to-one communications wherever practicable;
- communicate through, or include, a parent or caregiver for players and/or youth coaches;
- ensure significant communications can be retained and reviewed if a safeguarding concern arises; and
- report inappropriate communication or other online safeguarding concerns in accordance with section 8.

Club representatives must not:

- use digital communications to develop an inappropriate personal or social relationship with a player;
- send or share offensive, abusive, discriminatory, intimidating, sexualised or otherwise inappropriate content;
- contact a player for purposes unrelated to their OJFC role;
- request unnecessary personal information from a player;
- encourage a player to conceal communications from a parent, caregiver, coach, manager or the Club; or
- use disappearing-message functionality for OJFC-related communications with children or young people.

One-to-one communications

Private one-to-one communication between a club representative and a child or young person should be avoided wherever reasonably practicable.

Where direct communication is reasonably necessary:

- it must have a legitimate football, administrative, safety or wellbeing purpose;
- a parent, caregiver, manager or another appropriate club representative should be included where practicable;
- the content and timing must be appropriate;
- the communication must be limited to the matter requiring attention; and
- the communication should occur through a channel that allows an appropriate record to be retained.

A child or young person who initiates a private communication should not be ignored if the message concerns their safety or wellbeing. The recipient should respond only as necessary to support the child, preserve the communication and notify the Safeguarding Lead promptly.

Group chats

Where children or young people participate in an OJFC-related group chat:

- the group must have a clear football, team administration or player-welfare purpose;
- at least two appropriate club representatives should have administrator access where practicable;
- parents or caregivers should be included or given appropriate visibility, particularly for younger teams;
- participants must be informed of the expected standards of behaviour;
- personal information should not be shared unnecessarily; and
- inappropriate content or behaviour must be addressed and reported promptly.

Social media

Club representatives must maintain appropriate boundaries with current junior players on social media.

They must not:

- use personal social media contact to develop an inappropriate personal relationship with a player;
- privately message a player except in accordance with this section;
- tag or identify a child in a manner inconsistent with the Club's photography, media-consent or privacy requirements; or
- publish OJFC-related content that compromises the privacy, dignity, safety or wellbeing of a child or young person.

Youth coaches and junior leaders

Youth coaches and junior leaders must follow the same behavioural and digital communication expectations as other club representatives.

Because a youth coach or junior leader may also be under 18:

- OJFC should identify an adult supervising coach, manager or programme lead for the activity;
- the supervising adult should have appropriate visibility of communications between the youth coach or junior leader and younger players;
- communications should use group or club-approved channels wherever practicable; and
- safeguarding concerns involving a youth coach or junior leader must be handled in a way that recognises that they may also require support and protection as a child or young person.

7. Safer recruitment and safety checking (including police vetting)

OJFC will apply a safer recruitment and screening approach for child-facing roles. Where roles involve regular or overnight contact with children, OJFC will implement appropriate safety checking and police vetting consistent with NZ Football guidance and processes.

Minimum measures include:

- Role clarity and suitability assessment for coach/manager/regular volunteer roles.
- Identity verification and appropriate vetting/safety checking for relevant roles.
- Restricting individuals from child-facing duties until checks are completed where required.

8. Responding to concerns (what to do)

8.1 If a child is in immediate danger

Call 111 immediately.

8.2 If you have a concern (but not immediate danger)

- Recognise: take the concern seriously.
- Record: write down what you saw/heard (facts only), including date/time.
- Report: contact the OJFC Safeguarding Lead promptly.
- Please do not investigate yourself.

This process applies equally to concerns arising from messages, group chats, social media, photographs, videos, online meetings or any other digital interaction. Relevant communications should be preserved where safe and practicable and provided to the Safeguarding Lead. They should not be circulated more widely.

8.3 External escalation (where appropriate)

OJFC will escalate concerns to Capital Football safeguarding support and/or relevant statutory agencies (e.g., Police/Oranga Tamariki) as appropriate. OJFC will share only the information necessary to protect a child's safety and wellbeing.

9. Relationship to complaints and discipline

Safeguarding takes priority. If a concern involves potential abuse, harm, grooming, serious bullying, unsafe supervision, inappropriate private communications or a serious breach of online boundaries:

- Do not run an informal complaints process first.
- Preserve relevant information where safe and practicable.
- Escalate immediately via Safeguarding.

Where issues do not involve child safety risk, use the Complaints and/or Discipline processes as appropriate.

10. Confidentiality, privacy and records

- Safeguarding information is handled on a strict need-to-know basis.
- The Safeguarding Lead will maintain secure records of concerns, actions taken, and escalation decisions.
- Records will be retained and disposed of in line with the Club's Privacy Policy.

11. Support for children and families

OJFC will aim to provide respectful communication with caregivers (unless doing so increases risk), signposting to external support services where needed, and support to volunteers involved in managing a concern.

12. Non-compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may lead to removal from duties involving children, disciplinary action under club policies, and/or referral to Capital Football / New Zealand Football or other authorities where required.

Depending on the nature of the concern, interim measures may include removing a person from an online group, restricting direct communication with players, suspending access to OJFC communication channels or temporarily removing the person from child-facing duties while the concern is considered.

13. Review

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, or earlier if club operations or external guidance changes.