



**St Bernard's Football Club
Child Safety Handbook
June 2025**



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1. Commitment to Safeguarding Children and Young People

The St Bernard's Football Club is committed to promoting and protecting the safety and wellbeing of the children and young people in our care who access activities, programs, services or facilities for which the St Bernard's Football Club is responsible.

The St Bernard's Football Club Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Code of Conduct seek to actively promote and protect the rights and wellbeing of all children in our care and prevent abuse from occurring by fostering a child safe culture.

In the event a concern or allegation is raised in relation to any form of child abuse that has occurred under the care of the St Bernard's Football Club, the club will ensure it is treated seriously, in a culturally sensitive manner and fully investigated in accordance with relevant legislation and the WFNL's Policy and Procedures.

The St Bernard's Football Club recognises the need for community football clubs to take direct responsibility for providing a safe physical and online environment for children and young people in their care.



2. Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

2.1. Purpose

This policy was written to demonstrate the strong commitment of the management, staff and relevant volunteers of the St Bernard's Football Club ("the Club" or "SBFC") to child safety and to provide an outline of the policies and practices the Club has developed to keep everyone safe from harm, including abuse.

2.2. Child Safety Mission Statement

The St Bernard's Football Club is committed to promoting and protecting the safety and well-being of children and young people in our care. We seek to promote and protect the rights of all children in out care and prevent abuse from occurring by fostering a child safe culture. The welfare of the children in our care will always be our first priority and the Club has no tolerance for child abuse. We present environments and experiences that always consider and put measures in place to ensure the safety of children.

2.3. Application of this Policy

This policy is an adapted version of the policy that was developed by the WFNL in collaboration with AFL Victoria.

This policy applies to all individuals involved in SBFC (paid and volunteer) including, but not limited to:

- Administrators
- Coaches
- Officials
- Participants
- Parents
- Spectators

All of the people to which this policy applies have a role and responsibility in relation to child protection. They must all:

- Understand the indicators and risks of child abuse;
- Appropriately act on any concerns raised by children; and
- Understand and follow all applicable laws in relation to the protection of children and reporting or management of child safety concerns

2.4. Child Abuse

Child abuse can take a broad range of forms including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or psychological abuse and neglect. People to whom this policy applies need to be aware that child abuse can occur whenever there is actual or potential harm to a child, and these are circumstances that the Club is committed to reducing the risk of occurrence.



2.5. Children's Rights to Safety and Participation

The Club encourages children to express their views about their safety. We listen to their suggestions, especially on matters that directly affect them. We actively encourage all children within our Club to 'have a say' about things that are important to them. We listen to and act on any concerns children or their parents raise with us.

2.6. Valuing Diversity

We value diversity and do not tolerate any discriminatory practices. To achieve this we:

- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of Aboriginal children and their families;
- Promote the cultural safety, participation and empowerment of children from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families;
- Welcome children with a disability and their families and act to promote their participation; and
- Seek appropriate staff from diverse cultural backgrounds

2.7. Recruiting staff and coaches

The Club takes the following steps to ensure best practice standards in the recruitment and screening of staff, coaches and relevant volunteers:

- Interview and conduct referee checks on all staff and coaches
- Require Working with Children Checks for staff, coaches and relevant volunteers
- Staff, coaches and relevant volunteers are required to declare their knowledge and understanding of the St Bernard's football club child safety policy and procedures and the code of conduct.

2.8. Supporting staff and volunteers

The Club seeks to attract and retain the best staff and volunteers. We provide support and supervision so people feel valued, respected and fairly treated. We have developed a Code of Conduct to provide guidance to our staff and relevant volunteers, who receive a copy of the code and are required to declare their knowledge and understanding of its contents. In doing so, they are encouraged to seek clarification from the committee if required, and to access online training courses promoted by the WFNL.

2.9. Reporting a child safety concern or complaint

The Club has appointed Shaun Lancashire as our Child Safety Officer (CSO) with the specific responsibility of responding to any complaints made by staff, volunteers, parents or children. He can be contacted by phone: 0439 807 379.



2.10. Risk Management

The Club recognises the importance of a risk management approach to proactively preventing child abuse, in addition to general occupational health and safety risks and activity planning. This is evident in our child safety policy, procedures and code of conduct.

To reduce the risk of child abuse occurring, adults to whom this policy applies are required by our Code of Conduct to avoid direct, unsupervised contact with children. For example, this should be a consideration when:

- Using change room facilities;
- Using accommodation or overnight stays;
- Communicating via text, email, Facebook or any other form of electronic communication message.
- Travelling; or
- Physical contact when coaching or managing children, other than providing first aid.

2.11. Reviewing this policy

This policy will be reviewed every year and we undertake to seek views, comments and suggestions from the WFNL, as well as any children, parents, carers, staff and volunteers involved in the Club.

2.12. Associated documents

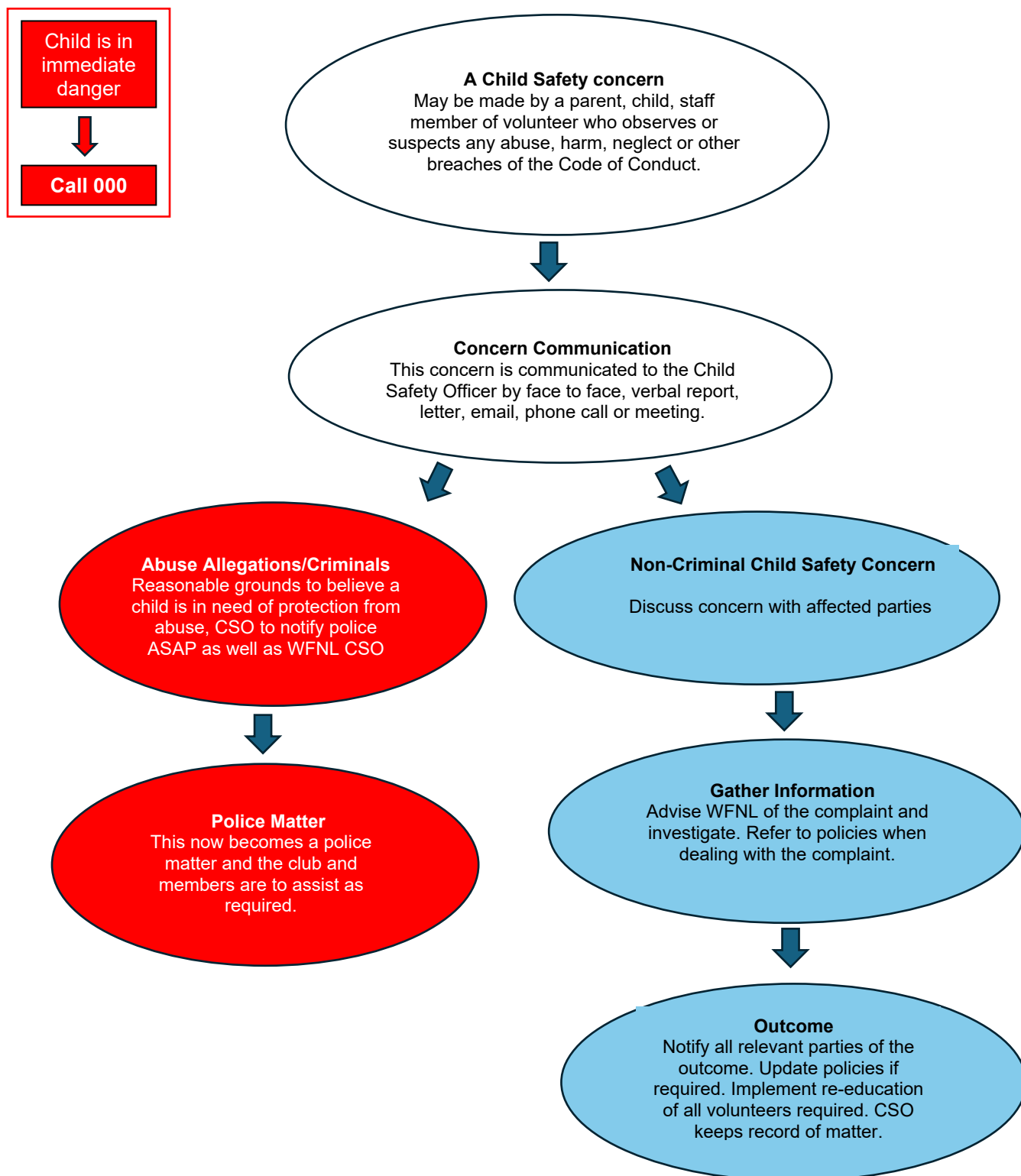
The following documents shall be used in conjunction with this policy:

- Commitment to Safeguarding Children and Young People
- Child Safety Complaints Reporting and Handling procedures.
- Child Safety Code of Conduct



3. Child Safety Complaints Reporting & Handling Procedures

Any person at St Bernard's that observes actual or potential abuse, harm or neglect (emotional, physical, sexual), or suspects any such abuse, or any other breaches of the St Bernard's Football Club Child Safety policy or Code of Conduct should report this Child Safety Concern, which will be handled according to the following procedures.





4. Child Safety Code of Conduct

We want all children and young people at St Bernard's Football Club to feel safe, included, encouraged and supported – essentially, to enjoy themselves so that they keep participating. To make sure that we create this environment, this St Bernard's Football Club's **Child Safety Code of Conduct** requires all staff and volunteers to abide by certain behavioural standards when it comes to dealing with children and young people ("children"). All behaviour towards children should consider the specific needs and safety of:

- Indigenous children;
- Children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds; and
- Children with a disability.

4.1. Language and tone of voice

- a) Should provide clear direction, encourage and affirm children and boost their confidence.
- b) Should NOT be harmful – i.e., derogatory (e.g. "you're a loser"), threatening, frightening, profane, discriminatory, racist, sexual.

4.2. Adhering to professional role boundaries

- a) Act only within the confines of your duties/role (e.g., if you're a coach, just be a coach).
- b) Unless provided with express written consent from the Committee of St Bernard's Football Club do NOT:
 - i) Provide unauthorised transportation to children
 - ii) Engage in activities or seek contact with children outside of football.
 - iii) Involve yourself in any child's private and/or family matters, unless you reasonably believe or suspect that they are at risk of harm, in which case the matter must be reported to the Child Safety Officer.
 - iv) Provide support to children or their families that is unrelated to football.
 - v) Accept an invitation to attend any private social function at the request of children or their family/carer unless there was an existing social, personal or family relationship.

If any of the above occur or you are made aware of a child requiring assistance outside the confines of your role, contact their parent/guardian or seek advice from an appropriate Committee Member.

4.3. Sending electronic communications to children

Any form or electronic communication between staff or volunteers and a child (including emails, texts, snaps and other direct electronic messages) must:

- a) copy in a parent(s)/guardian(s).
- b) only be sent if it is regarding issues relevant to football.
- c) be polite/friendly and in no way abusive in nature.

Staff and Volunteers must NOT:

- d) communicate with children, request to be "friends" or "follow" children using Internet chat rooms, social networking sites, game sites, instant messaging or anything of a similar nature, particularly to encourage social contact of an unauthorised nature.
- e) request that children keep any form of communication a secret.



4.4. Supervision of children

When supervising children in football, staff and volunteers should:

- a) Avoid unsupervised situations with children wherever possible - always be in view of others.
- b) Engage positively within the normal activities which are recognised as part of our sport.
- c) Behave appropriately towards one another.
- d) Ensure that the environment is safe, protected from external threats.

4.5. Physical Contact with children

All physical contact with children must be appropriate to delivery of our sport (e.g. coaching or skill instructions), with the consent of the children and based on the needs of the children (i.e. to comfort if distressed). Unless for medical (first aid) purposes, contact must not:

- a) Involve touching genitals, breasts or buttocks.
- b) Appear to have a sexual connotation.
- c) Be intended to cause pain or distress.
- d) Be overly physical (e.g., wrestling, tickling, etc).
- e) Be unnecessary (e.g., assisting children with toileting when they don't need help).
- f) Be initiated against the wishes of children (unless to prevent injury, in which case physical restraint should be a last resort).
- g) Physical contact initiated by children towards an adult or another child that is sexual and/or inappropriate must be reported to the Child Safety Officer at St Bernard's Football Club as soon as possible.

4.6. Sexual Misconduct

No form of "sexual behaviour" is to occur between, with or in the presence of children at St Bernard's Football Club, even if the children are above the legal age of consent – 16 years. This includes contact and non-contact behaviour (e.g. flirting, sexual innuendo, electronic messaging or photography).

4.7. Positive Guidance and Discipline

We want to create a positive environment for everyone at St Bernard's Football Club, understanding that children need to understand the acceptable limits of their behaviour, whilst ensuring that:

- a) Children are given clear direction.
- b) children are given an opportunity to redirect their misbehaviour in a positive way.
- c) Behaviour management strategies are fair, respectful and appropriate to children's developmental stage and involve the parents.
- d) No physical punishment, cruel/degrading/humiliating, etc treatment is used.
- e) Under no circumstances is physical punishment to be used, nor any other treatment that could be considered as degrading, cruel, frightening, humiliating or discriminatory.



4.8. Giving gifts to children

The giving of gifts to children must always be authorized by parents/guardians, other than prizes or awards that are given in relation to performance, in the presence of other team members, parents and / or staff and volunteers.

4.9. Photographs/video footage of children

- a) Photographs or video footage of children involved at St Bernard's Football Club must only be taken and/or distributed inside or outside the Club if:
 - i. prior approval has been granted by their parent(s)/guardian(s);
 - ii. the context of the photo/footage is directly related to football;
 - iii. children are appropriately dressed and posed;
 - iv. the image/footage is taken in presence of others involved in the Club;
 - v. the distribution of the image/footage is relevant and appropriate (i.e. Club social media, promotional activity, WFNL)
- b) No phones, cameras or other recording devices are to be used for recording of images in changerooms while children are changing before and after games.

4.10. Overnight Stays and Sleeping Arrangements for children

Overnight stays are to only occur with the prior written authorisation of parents/guardians and the Child Safe Officer of St Bernard's Football Club (or their nominated representative).

Overnight stays are only to be approved if they are part of a publicly communicated and approved St Bernard's Football Club program which includes attendance of nominated St Bernard's Football Club personnel as part of the program.

4.11. Change Room arrangements

People involved at St Bernard's Football Club must:

- a) Supervise children in change rooms whilst balancing their right for privacy.
- b) Avoid one-to-one unsupervised situations with children in a change room area (other than with their own child), whilst ensuring adequate supervision to keep children safe (e.g., standing outside the entrance to the change room).
- c) Not dress/undress in the change room whilst children are present, unless they are playing in a Senior Team and there are other members of the team present.
- d) Ensure that participants use the change room of their affirmed gender.



4.12. Use, possession or supply of alcohol or drugs

- a) All persons involved at St Bernard's Football Club who are delivering a program or on overnight stays/camps involving children must not use possess or be under the influence of illegal or illicit drugs or be incapacitated by alcohol or any other legal drug.
- b) Legal (i.e., prescription) drugs are permitted to be used provided that it does not interfere with the person's ability to provide an appropriate level of care to children at St Bernard's Football Club.
- c) No persons involved at St Bernard's Football Club shall supply illegal or legal drugs (including alcohol and tobacco) to children.

4.13. Transporting children

- a) The transportation of children (other than your child or any other child with whom there is an existing social, personal or family relationship, or an arrangement with the parents to provide travel) for the purpose of the delivery of football may occur without club approval.
- b) Where there is no existing relationship or arrangement with the parent/guardian, approval must be collected from the parent/guardian.
- c) If it is not possible to get a parent/guardian's approval in advance, the parent/guardian or volunteer providing the travel must send an approval text message to the CSO or another member of the Committee prior to the travel.

4.14. Pick up and collection of children

The Club will:

- a) Ensure that children and their parents/guardians know the times/locations of training/matches and that they arrive before the scheduled times so that children aren't unattended.
- b) Maintain a register of parent/guardian emergency contact details.
- c) Ensure Coaches are aware of pick-up details for children and that all relevant approvals are given.

All Coaches, or another Person that they have nominated, will:

- d) Make efforts to contact any parent/ guardian that is late to collect their child, noting that it is not their responsibility to drive children home.
- e) Always ask the second last child and their parent/guardian to wait, until the final child is collected.
- f) Not leave the training session or match until all children have been collected unless arrangements have been made with the knowledge of the parent/guardian that another adult will supervise them in the presence of others until they are picked up.
- g) Notify the Child Safety Officer at the club where there is a parent/guardian who is repeatedly late to collect their children.