



Player Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy

Hartlepool United Football Club recognise the positive mental health and wellbeing are essential to the development of thriving and successful players. It is therefore vital to our aims as an organisation that we provide high quality mental health and wellbeing support.

This policy sets out our commitment to monitoring and improving the wellbeing of our players of all ages. It sets out some of the ways in which key members of staff take responsibility for the Club's approach to prompting positive mental health and wellbeing. It also describes our process for identifying and responding to mental ill health, and the support we make available to all players.

Aims

We aim to ensure that our Club:

- Reduces the stigma attached to mental health issues and promotes positive wellbeing in all players.
- Provides a secure environment that encourages openness and trust.
- Can respond effectively to concerns about a player's mental health.
- Embeds the skills players need to make good decisions about their own mental health and wellbeing.
- Offers comprehensive pastoral and medical support that is accessible to all players.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Club's designated lead for mental health and wellbeing is responsible for:

- Coordinating the Club's approach to promoting positive mental health and wellbeing.
- Providing all members of staff with the knowledge and skills they need to identify signs of mental ill health in players.
- Building strong working relationships with child and adolescent mental health services and other external partners.
- Reporting to the Board on the Club's wellbeing policy and programmes.
- Working with the senior management team (SMT), Board, Club staff, parents and players to create an environment where everyone feels safe, supported and motivated.

The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) is responsible for:

- Keeping detailed records of any significant mental health concerns.
- Liaising with external services where there are any significant mental health concerns.
- Acting as a source of support and expertise across the Club.

All members of Club staff are responsible for:

- Treating all players with empathy, respect and kindness.
- Encouraging players to disclose concerns or seek help when necessary.
- Reporting any wellbeing or mental health concerns to the Club's designated lead for mental health and wellbeing.

Examples of good practice may include:

- Organising whole club or age specific training and education sessions to discuss specific mental health and wellbeing issues.
- Arranging for external speakers to visit and discuss topical issues such as the use of social media or the impact of body image.
- Using key dates such as Mental Health Awareness Week and World Mental Health Day to raise the profile of mental health.
- Hosting designated health and wellbeing days.
- Dedicating time to celebrate players' academic and extracurricular achievements.
- Including player wellbeing in session observation criteria for coaching staff.
- Running yoga or mindfulness sessions to prepare players for a relaxed day.
- Using displays and bulletins to signpost players to sources of support.

Supporting individual players

All members of staff will work together to identify and monitor mental health concerns. Open communication between members of staff will help to create a 'first line' in supporting individual players and responding to disclosures. Staff will record information accurately and regularly in order to track concerns. This will complement the Club's pastoral tracking processes. In addition, safeguarding and player care staff will meet monthly to discuss any ongoing concerns and make suitable arrangements as required.

Staff will be encouraged to look out for:

- Erratic, unaccountable behaviour (e.g., leaving sessions suddenly)
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Disengagement from training
- Unexpected or disproportionate reactions to ordinary situations
- Aggressive or compulsive behaviour
- A drop in attendance
- Isolation from peers
- Dysfunctionality in family life
- Talking about self-harm or suicide
- Changes in appetite
- Changes in clothing
- Abusing alcohol or drugs

The Club will provide a list of all members of staff who are available to discuss mental health concerns confidentially. If a member of staff feels it is appropriate to pass on concerns, they will explain to the player who they are going to talk to and what they are going to tell them.

Providing a network of support

In addition to supporting individual players with mental health and wellbeing concerns, the Club will commit to making sure that all players can access a cohesive network of pastoral and medical services. These include:

- Our player care team
- The medical team or club doctor

The Head of Safeguarding will work to identify opportunities for staff training, so that all members of staff feel confident in supporting players. Examples of good practice include mental health first aid training.