



# FOUNDATION SAFEGUARDING REPORT

**JULY 2024 - JUNE 2025**



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Board of Trustees at Cambridge United Foundation (CUF) would like to thank the staff for their care and due diligence when delivering the impactful programmes to the local community. Providing support to vulnerable members of the community will naturally lead to safeguarding concerns being brought to our attention, and we are committed to following up professionally and appropriately to every case we receive.

The Board would also like to thank the partners that have been so responsive in supporting our safeguarding practices, including delivery partners, training partners and referral support. Collaborating with trusted organisations strengthens our network of support to the community we serve, we look forward to developing our relationships further in the coming year.

Finally, thank you to our participants and supporters of CUF's work. Week in week out you challenge yourselves to better yourselves and build a fantastic community network. Your welfare is our priority, and we will continue to listen and respond as best we can to support your individual journeys and that of us all.

# FOREWORD

Thank you for your interest and time to take up and review this report that has been developed by participants, staff and trustees. This, to provide an indication of where CUF is now in the continued development of the organisation's safeguarding endeavour.

The ambition of this endeavour being to provide equal opportunities for all to take part and contribute towards the sessions and opportunities offered by CUF in a safe environment, where we all look after ourselves and each other with care and consideration.

This endeavour has realised a tremendous upsurge in activity over recent times; arising from the direction of the Charity Commission, and the leadership of the English Football League's (EFL) Club Community vision with the support initiated through the EFL and provided by Barnardo's during the autumn of last year.

Barnardo's recommended 23 areas for development and 18 of these have been implemented with a further 5 to be completed within the next 12 months.

Of particular interest are:

- Threshold levels to distinguish concerns needing to be reported onwards as poor practice or those considered abuse.
- Preventative actions through "Risk Assessment".
- Checks and balances through "Quality Assurance"
- Formation of a "Community Champions Group" to encourage participation in the improvement process, particularly from beneficiaries.

CUF are ensuring that the strategy and initiatives developed and implemented are consistent with those of Cambridge United FC (CUFC), this through a shared Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) and regular networking between both organisations. This is an imperative to assure the community of Cambridge and surrounding population that both organisations have a common ambition in terms of safeguarding and welfare.

So, if you, having considered the content of this report, have any thoughts or suggestions to support our journey to achieve our ambition then please do make contact with us, enabling us to consider further exploration with you.





# GOVERNANCE

Safeguarding has always been a significant area of consideration for CUF and been a priority agenda item at Trustee Board Meetings.

Even-so, having considered further the direction from the Charity Commission, the EFL governance recommendations through the Club Community vision and support from Barnardo's then the governance process has been strengthened to facilitate an enhanced level of prevention with additional checks and balances with the following structure now in place:

**1.** Bi-weekly meeting with Foundation Safeguarding Manager (FSM) and DSO.  
This to ensure appropriate progress of all active concerns.

Monthly meetings with FSM, DSO and Lead Safeguarding Trustee (LST).

This to ensure appropriate progress of relationship development/networking, policy and procedure development, action plan progress, training and an overview of reported concerns.

**2.**

**3.** Quarterly meetings with FSM, DSO, LST and second trustee  
This to provide a "Helicopter View" of the effectiveness of outcomes developed through the monthly meeting process.

Compliance subcommittee of trustee board members and the FSM.

This to consider the effectiveness of the management process, particularly the level of success and any areas of concern arising from steps 1,2 and 3 and the impact upon staffing levels and training with recommendations provided the full Board.

**4.**

**5.** Board oversight by the complete board of trustees and head of foundation considering recommendations from step 4.

In addition, views, opinions and ideas will emanate from the encouragement provided from the Community Champions Group with these being considered within all of the 5 steps in the management process.

# PARTNERS AND REFERRALS

**There are several external partners that we may make referrals to, depending on the nature and severity of the concern. These include:**

- The police, particularly in cases where a crime may have been committed or where there are immediate safety risks
- The FA, especially if the issues relate to safeguarding within sport, who will support in terms of threshold decisions as well as progressing concerns.
- Social Services where there are concerns about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult.
- Various charities and organisations that provide specialist support, advice or intervention.

Referrals are made with the aim of ensuring appropriate action is taken and that individuals receive the support and protection they need.

We have also developed a network of partnerships with organisations such as the EFL, Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the County Council, Living Sport, EFL in the Community, Premier League Charitable Fund (PLCF) and the Charities Commission. We are grateful for their continued advice and expertise.



# SUMMARY OF CONCERNS

All safeguarding concerns that are raised are logged on our online platform, MyConcern. MyConcern is a secure and trusted safeguarding software that is used by sporting organisations, schools, and colleges in the UK and worldwide to record, report and manage the full range of safeguarding, pastoral, and wellbeing concerns. Suitable for all educational settings, the cloud-based system enables staff to record any safeguarding concern with ease and accuracy. It also equips the DSO to assess each concern, manage any ongoing action that needs to be taken and build a team around the individual.

Cambridge United FC utilise MyConcern and have done since 2019/2020 in order to better streamline our safeguarding processes and allowing our staff and participants to receive the immediate support they may require.

The table below shows the number of concerns raised and recorded in MyConcern in the last year:

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	NUMBER OF CONCERNS RAISED	YEAR	NUMBER OF CASES STILL OPEN
10,252	102	JUNE 2024 - JUNE 2025	3



# LEARNINGS/ TRENDS

This year, we have noticed an increase in concerns raised around mental health and low mood. As a way of addressing this, we have introduced the Bright Horizons Café, a drop-in session for members of the community, offering a welcoming space for anyone in need. The café offers a relaxed environment where individuals can talk openly, connect with others and access guidance from trained staff. It is designed to reduce stigma, promote wellbeing and ensure that no-one feels alone in facing mental health challenges.

There have also been several concerns raised regarding both physical and verbal aggression, with reports indicating instances where individuals have experienced or witnessed behaviour that is considered harmful or threatening. This has highlighted the need for careful attention and appropriate intervention to ensure a safe and respectful environment and has led to us reviewing our codes of conduct for staff, volunteers and beneficiaries.

From concerns raised over the last year, we have learned the importance of staff always being ready and prepared to listen to any concerns raised and to act on those concerns promptly. Ignoring them and not responding to them is not an option.

We also need to ensure that we empower coaches to be able to signpost participants to the correct support where necessary. It is our aim that over the coming year, we will utilise the mental health first aid trained staff that we have at the club to support coaches in making these decisions.

# QUALITY ASSURANCE

This year, we have developed a quality assurance document that will be used across all our sessions. This allows us to ensure consistency, safety and high standards across all activities. The document also allows us to systematically observe and assess key aspects of each session, including planning, delivery, safeguarding practices and the overall environment. By capturing this information, we can identify areas of strength as well as opportunities for improvement, provide constructive feedback to staff and support ongoing development.

The use of the form also ensures transparency and helps us maintain accountability in delivering high quality sessions.

The aim is that managers will each visit sessions over the course of the year to carry out a quality assurance assessment.



# STAFF TRAINING AND WELFARE

## Mental Health and Wellbeing

CUF values all members of staff and participants and seeks to provide a positive and satisfying working environment in which each member is treated with respect and with regard for their health, safety and well-being.

CUF is committed to fostering a culture of co-operation, trust and mutual respect allowing staff and participants to perform at their optimum level, thus creating a workplace environment that promotes the mental wellbeing of all.

CUF has made a concerted effort to raise mental health awareness across our organisation. This has included playing an active role in CUFC's Mental Health and Wellbeing Team from which has arisen Mental Health Advocates for each department across CUFC and CUF. Several staff have also undertaken Mental Health First Aid Training and therein have received the skills to be able to provide initial support to players, staff and participants and look to spot early signs of poor mental health.

Adopting a culture of being a mentally health organisation must be embedded and with training and positive action to prioritise our own mental health, we are our own advocates to looking after not only our physical health, but our mental health too.

Wellbeing needs for staff are bespoke to each individual, with opportunities to access the various support through regular catch ups with their line manager, informal conversations with the Football Club chaplain as well as access to online counselling support through our partnership with Mynerva.



## Training

Before any full-time, part-time or volunteer (including trustee) are formally recruited by CUF, two references are obtained, a self-declaration form is signed by the individual and our own DBS check is carried out through the Football Association (The FA). References and checks are important to ensure our commitment to safeguarding is upheld through our recruitment process. Where trustees are appointed, they have an additional check to ensure they are not disqualified from being a trustee.

CUF is dedicated to safeguarding the welfare of every child, young person, and adult at risk under our care, providing a safe environment for all. We recognise everyone's right to protection from harm and exploitation, giving equal priority to all regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation, nationality or socio-economic background. Our commitment includes ensuring our staff complete regular training to keep up-to-date with legislation, are confident in delivering a high service and are aware of local and national issues that our participants may be facing.

### Training Requirements on induction – All staff and volunteers

TRAINING	PROVIDER	METHOD
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN	THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION	E-LEARNING
SAFEGUARDING ADULTS	THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION	E-LEARNING
ACTION COUNTER TERRORISM	HIGHFIELD	E-LEARNING
PREVENT AWARENESS	HM GOVERNMENT	E-LEARNING
PLAYING FOR INCLUSION	ENGLISH FOOTBALL LEAGUE	E-LEARNING
FIRST AID IN FOOTBALL	THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION	E-LEARNING



## Training completed 2024-2025

TRAINING	RECIPIENT	PROVIDER	METHOD
SAFER RECRUITMENT	MANAGERS	ENGLISH FOOTBALL LEAGUE	E-LEARNING
SEXUAL HARASSMENT AWARENESS	ALL STAFF	BREATHEHR	E-LEARNING
SEXUAL HARASSMENT FOR MANAGERS	MANAGERS	BREATHEHR	E-LEARNING
SAFEGUARDING FOR ALL	TRUSTEES	THE FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION	E-LEARNING
MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS	ALL STAFF	ENGLISH FOOTBALL LEAGUE	LIVE - ONLINE
SAFE AND EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	ALL STAFF	ENGLISH FOOTBALL LEAGUE	IN-PERSON
EMERGENCY FIRST AID AT WORK	ALL STAFF	KAIZEN CONSULTING AND TRAINING	IN-PERSON

Other training attended by staff during 2024-2025 includes: Introduction to coaching football, Men's health, FGM, First response emergency care, HR, Making every contact count, Player welfare in football.

CUF hold annual appraisals for staff, these take place in person with their line manager. A great opportunity to reflect on the positive work and the learnings from the past year, as well as plan for the future. Training and development needs are discussed, with shared accountability for these plans to be implemented.

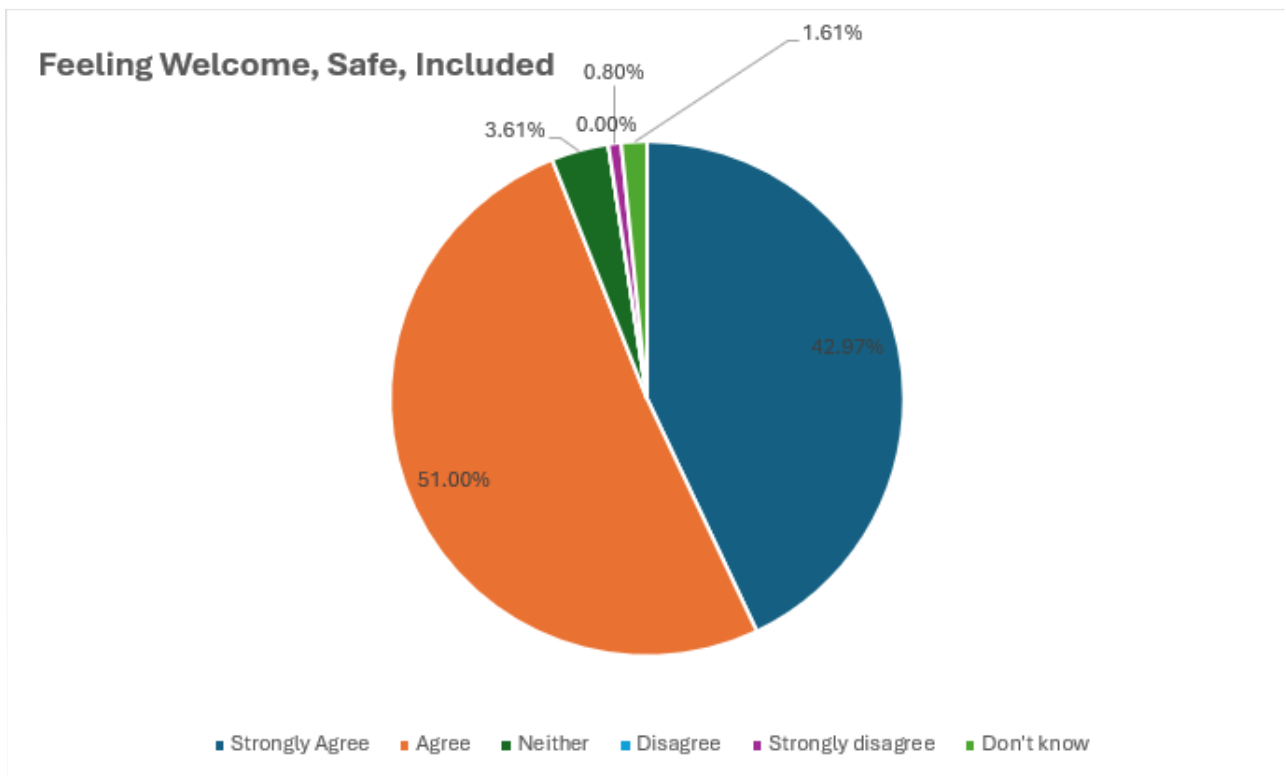
# WHAT OUR STAFF AND PARTICIPANTS SAY

With our strategy target being to double our impact in the coming three years, it is vital that our current and potential new participants are involved in shaping the foundations offer.

In October 2024, CUF held its first in-person consultation session since COVID. This workshop included reviewing programmes, finance, key partners and safeguarding practices.

Feedback from participants suggested those that are familiar with the sessions are more confident in reporting concerns, therefore a development to our welcome pack offer to new participants was to have safeguarding more prominent.

Our 2024-25 impact report findings tell us that 94% of CUF participants feel welcome, safe and included in our programmes.



Following informal conversations and small programme group meetings, we have decided to launch a 'Champions Group'. This would be made up of participants from across the programmes, giving us a regular platform for feedback on key topics, including safeguarding.

Cambridge United Football Club's annual wellbeing survey is carried out in June each year. This is an anonymous questionnaire that gains useful insights for the wellbeing group to review how to better support its staff and volunteers.

The findings reported by the Foundation staff were overwhelmingly positive, with all staff reporting agree or strongly agree to:

- Being proud to be a member of staff
- The Club and Foundation supports employees with maintaining positive mental health & wellbeing
- Have knowledge of where to get additional support if needed for their mental health & wellbeing.
- Feel supported by their line manager with their mental health and wellbeing.

Feedback from one member of staff read "I feel lucky to work for a wider organisation where wellbeing is given such a high and genuine priority. There is an excellent caring environment for every member of the team and hopefully others feel as supported as I do in coming to work every day".





# CONCLUSION

The staff with safeguarding responsibilities at CUF are dedicated to the wellbeing of children and young people and adults at risk and are dedicated to supporting the wider staff, volunteers and community when it comes to keeping themselves, and each other safe. The team have worked hard to identify areas of strength and are motivated to improve our development areas to ensure we meet the increasing complexity and demand of the presented needs.

As mentioned, safeguarding governance arrangements have progressed significantly, and the emphasis has been to ensure that CUF's statutory responsibilities are met, and measures are in place to provide a more robust and regular assurances.

## **Priorities for 2025-2026**

The following areas are set as priorities for 2025-2026 and will form the basis of our safeguarding action plan:

- **Fully embed new governance process**
- **Explore further training opportunities focusing on domestic abuse and county lines**
- **Develop our referral pathways, strengthening our newly formed relationships**
- **Develop our 'participant voice' when it comes to safeguarding and our practices.**

We are committed to the priorities for the coming year, along with the ongoing commitment to taking care of our staff, volunteers and participants alike. We pride ourselves as being a proactive, collaborative and listening organisation, and welcome current and new partners support as we continue through our safeguarding practices.



# FOUNDATION

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