



## Oxford United Football Club

### Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk Policy

2025/26 Season

---

#### 1. Foreword and Endorsement

Oxford United Football Club is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of **children and adults at risk**. Everyone who engages with our Club – whether through football, education, community, or support roles – deserves to feel safe, respected, and heard.

This policy reflects our Club-wide safeguarding responsibilities and has been formally endorsed by the Senior Leadership Team and Board of Directors.

**Signed:**

*Chief Executive Officer*

*Date: July 2025*

---

#### 2. Policy Purpose

This policy sets out:

- Oxford United's commitment to safeguarding both children and adults at risk.
- The structures, responsibilities, and procedures in place to protect all participants.
- How safeguarding is embedded in the culture of our Club and aligned with national standards.
- Integration with EFL Safeguarding Standards and UK Government guidance.

---

#### 3. Who This Policy Applies To

This policy applies to:

- All Oxford United Staff Club-wide
- Volunteers, mentors, placement students, interns
- Host families and accommodation providers

Version 1.4

Edited by Jack Nield

Date: 14/08/2025

Review Date: June 2026 or after any significant breach of policy

- Contractors, business partners and third-party service providers
  - Parents, carers, participants, and visiting professionals
- 

#### 4. Safeguarding Terminology and Definitions

- **Child:** A person under 18 years of age
  - **Adult at Risk:** Someone aged 18+ who is vulnerable due to age, disability, illness, or life circumstance, and may be unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation
  - **Safeguarding:** Protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse or neglect
  - **Abuse:** A violation of a person's human and civil rights by another person or persons
  - **SSM (Senior Safeguarding Manager):** Senior staff member who will oversee the responsibilities of the DSL and ensure compliance with all standards and policies
  - **DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead):** A senior staff member with lead responsibility for safeguarding
  - **DSO & MSO (Designated Safeguarding Officer & Matchday Safeguarding Officer):** The DSO is the individual responsible for overseeing and managing safeguarding concerns within the organisation. MSO ensures the implementation of safeguarding procedures and the welfare of children and vulnerable adults specifically during matchday operations.
  - **Capacity:** Adults are presumed to have capacity unless proven otherwise under the **Mental Capacity Act 2005**
- 

#### 5. Oxford United Policies and Protocols

This overarching policy is supported by:

- Host & Accommodation Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- IT & Social Media Policy
- Code of Conduct (staff and players)
- Transport and Travel Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Risk Management Policy
- Prevent Policy
- EDI Policy
- Mental Health Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Procedure
- Safeguarding Strategy Plan

All safeguarding procedures flow from this core policy.

---

## 6. Safeguarding Legislation and Guidance

This policy complies with:

- **Children Act 1989 & 2004**
  - **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018, updated 2023)**
  - **Care Act 2014**
  - **Mental Capacity Act 2005**
  - **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2025)**
  - **Equality Act 2010**
  - **EFL & FA Safeguarding Frameworks**
- 

## 7. Policy Statement

Oxford United Football Club is committed to safeguarding the welfare of all children and adults at risk who participate in our activities or are otherwise connected to the Club. We will take every reasonable step to protect those in our care from all forms of abuse, harm, neglect, exploitation, or poor practice. This includes physical, emotional, sexual, and financial abuse, as well as neglect, discrimination, and institutional abuse.

- We will ensure that all safeguarding concerns are acted upon promptly, consistently, and in line with statutory guidance.
  - Oxford United is committed to developing and maintaining a safeguarding culture that prioritises the rights, dignity, and wellbeing of every individual.
  - We acknowledge that safeguarding is a shared responsibility and expect all staff, volunteers, and partners to uphold the standards outlined in this policy.
- 

## 8. Principles of Safeguarding Children and Adults at Risk

- **Welfare First:** The safety and wellbeing of the individual are always the paramount consideration.
- **Empowerment:** Individuals are supported and encouraged to be involved in decisions about their lives.
- **Protection:** We provide support and representation for those in greatest need.
- **Prevention:** We act before harm occurs by identifying and managing risk early.
- **Proportionality:** Our response to safeguarding concerns is appropriate and tailored to the situation.
- **Partnership:** We work collaboratively with statutory services and safeguarding partners.
- **Accountability:** Everyone at Oxford United understands their safeguarding responsibilities and is held accountable.

Version 1.4

Edited by Jack Nield

Date: 14/08/2025

Review Date: June 2026 or after any significant breach of policy

---

## 9. National and International Safeguarding Frameworks

Oxford United aligns with all relevant safeguarding frameworks to ensure our practice meets or exceeds regulatory expectations. This includes:

- **UK Home Office guidance:** Including Working Together to Safeguard Children, Care and Support Statutory Guidance (for adults), and Prevent Duty guidance.
- **EFL and FA safeguarding standards:** Annual reviews, audits, and mandatory reporting align us with the football industry's leading safeguarding practices.
- **Oxfordshire Safeguarding Boards:** We cooperate with both the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) and the Oxfordshire Safeguarding Adults Board (OSAB) for training, protocols, and strategy development.
- **International human rights and child protection frameworks:** Including the UNCRC and FIFA/UEFA safeguarding standards, supporting our safeguarding efforts in international player environments and tournaments.

---

## 10. Oxford United Safeguarding Frameworks

Our safeguarding framework ensures coordinated delivery and monitoring of safe practices across the Club:

- **Senior Safeguarding Manager (SSM):** holds overall accountability for safeguarding across the Club, providing strategic direction, supervising the DSL, and ensuring all safeguarding policies, procedures, and practices align with statutory requirements and EFL standards.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Provides strategic oversight and responds to all safeguarding concerns. Liaises with statutory services, ensures compliance, and provides ongoing advice.
- **Internal safeguarding reporting systems:** All concerns are logged via our digital reporting platform and tracked for resolution. This enables robust oversight, information sharing, and pattern recognition.
- **Annual safeguarding audits in line with EFL requirements:** These measure our effectiveness and identify areas for development, with action plans agreed and monitored by the Club's board and safeguarding group.

---

## 11. Roles and Responsibilities

Each role within Oxford United carries a safeguarding duty, tailored to the level of responsibility and access to children/adults at risk:

- **Senior Safeguarding Manager (SMM):** provides strategic leadership and oversight of all safeguarding activity across the Club, ensuring legal compliance, supporting the DSL, and acting as the primary link with external safeguarding bodies and the Board of Directors.

Version 1.4

Edited by Jack Nield

Date: 14/08/2025

Review Date: June 2026 or after any significant breach of policy

- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):** Oversees the safeguarding function, policy compliance, staff training, and multi-agency liaison. Provides strategic safeguarding leadership.
- **Designated Safeguarding Officer & Matchday Safeguarding Officer (DSO & MSO):** The DSO is responsible for leading on safeguarding practices across the organisation, including responding to concerns, ensuring staff training, and maintaining compliance with safeguarding policies. The MSO is responsible for safeguarding implementation on matchdays, including monitoring safe access, responding to incidents, and supporting vulnerable individuals on-site.
- **Board Safeguarding Lead:** Ensures safeguarding is prioritised at executive level and represented in decision-making.
- **All Staff/Volunteers:** Must complete training, follow policies, and immediately report any concern. Non-compliance may lead to disciplinary action.
- **Contractors and service providers:** Must comply with Oxford United safeguarding clauses and be subject to vetting and compliance checks. Failure to comply may result in contract termination.

## 12. Organisational Safeguarding Framework

Our safeguarding system is both preventative and responsive:

- **Policies and procedures embedded across departments:** Every staff member knows how safeguarding applies to their role, and safeguarding is part of all operational protocols.
- **Use of MyConcern or equivalent systems:** A secure platform for logging, managing, and analysing concerns. Ensures transparency, accountability, and joined-up responses.
- **Learning from incidents:** We review incidents to identify gaps, training needs, or systemic issues. Lessons learned are embedded into practice and training.
- **Strategic reviews:** Conducted monthly by the DSL and safeguarding group to monitor compliance, develop strategy, and respond to legislative changes.

## 13. Raising a Concern

Anyone connected to Oxford United—including children, adults at risk, staff, volunteers, families, and external stakeholders—can raise a safeguarding concern. We promote open communication and ensure a supportive and confidential environment for disclosures.

- All concerns must be taken seriously, regardless of the perceived severity.
- Concerns can be raised verbally, in writing, or via the MyConcern system.
- No individual will face repercussions for raising a concern in good faith.

## 14. Reporting

- Reports should be made immediately upon suspicion or disclosure.
- The DSL will ensure the concern is logged, assessed, and appropriately escalated.
- In emergencies where a child or adult is in immediate danger, the police or local authority should be contacted directly.

Version 1.4

Edited by Jack Nield

Date: 14/08/2025

Review Date: June 2026 or after any significant breach of policy

- Oxford United will follow up on all concerns, ensuring actions are proportionate and in line with safeguarding protocols.

## **15. Low-Level Concerns**

Low-level concerns are those that do not meet the threshold for referral but may indicate poor practice or the beginnings of concerning behaviour.

- All low-level concerns must be recorded and reviewed.
- Patterns of low-level behaviour may trigger further action or training.
- Staff are encouraged to report even minor concerns to maintain a culture of transparency and early intervention.

## **16. Confidentiality**

- Oxford United handles all safeguarding matters with discretion and respect for privacy.
- Information is shared strictly on a need-to-know basis.
- Staff must never promise confidentiality to a child or adult at risk if there is a safeguarding concern.

## **17. Consent**

- Where possible and appropriate, consent will be obtained from the individual involved before sharing safeguarding concerns.
- However, in situations where a person is at risk of significant harm, information may be shared without consent in line with statutory safeguarding guidance.

## **18. Partnerships**

- Oxford United works closely with statutory agencies, schools, care providers, and other football clubs to ensure joined-up safeguarding approaches.
- Our safeguarding expectations are embedded into all partnership agreements.

## **19. Support**

Oxford United is committed to providing appropriate and timely support to all individuals affected by safeguarding concerns, recognising the potential emotional, psychological, and professional impact.

- Individuals affected by abuse, exploitation, or safeguarding concerns will be offered access to in-house welfare support, such as the Safeguarding Team or Player Care/ Psychologist.
- When needed, individuals may be referred to specialist external services including counselling, therapy, child and adult mental health services (CAMHS/AMHS), and independent advocacy.
- Staff involved in safeguarding incidents, whether as reporters, witnesses, or subjects of concern, will be provided with debriefing and emotional support, in line with Oxford United's wellbeing and HR policies.

## **20. Good Practice**

Oxford United promotes a proactive safeguarding culture by embedding clear professional standards and codes of conduct that protect both participants and staff.

- Always maintain professional boundaries. Avoid any conduct that may be misinterpreted or compromise trust.
  - Engage in work with children and adults at risk in open, transparent environments—never work alone behind closed doors without others being informed or present.
  - Treat every individual with dignity, fairness, and respect, regardless of age, ability, background, or identity.
  - Foster a culture of open communication where concerns, questions, and feedback are encouraged and acted upon without fear of reprisal.
  - Avoid favouritism, inappropriate jokes, unnecessary physical contact, or interactions on personal social media channels.
- 

## **21. Safeguarding Staff**

Oxford United ensures that individuals with safeguarding responsibilities are adequately prepared, supported, and held accountable for their role.

- Those appointed to safeguarding roles must demonstrate up-to-date knowledge of current safeguarding legislation, guidance, and best practices.
  - Safeguarding responsibilities will be clearly outlined in role descriptions and employment contracts, ensuring expectations are understood and enforced.
  - Regular reflective supervision, access to updated training, and engagement in internal safeguarding meetings will be provided to ensure continuous professional development and support.
- 

## **22. Staff Training**

Training is a vital element of Oxford United's safeguarding framework, helping to ensure all personnel are equipped to recognise and respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns.

- All staff and volunteers, regardless of their level of contact with children or adults at risk, must complete safeguarding training that is relevant to their role.
  - Internal Continuous Professional Development (CPD) sessions will be held to keep safeguarding knowledge current and practical.
  - Staff who have frequent or direct contact with children and adults at risk (e.g. coaches, medical staff, support staff) will receive safeguarding training on a variety of topics.
-

## 23. What is Abuse

Oxford United recognises and responds to the full spectrum of abuse as outlined in statutory guidance:

- **Physical Abuse** – Non-accidental injuries or harm such as hitting, shaking, or poisoning.
  - **Emotional Abuse** – Persistent emotional maltreatment affecting development or self-worth.
  - **Sexual Abuse** – Forcing or enticing a person to take part in sexual activities, whether they are aware of what is happening.
  - **Neglect** – Persistent failure to meet a person's basic physical or emotional needs.
  - **Financial or Material**– Misuse or theft of money, possessions, or financial control.
  - **Discriminatory Abuse** – Abuse motivated by race, gender, disability, sexuality, or cultural background.
  - **Organisational Abuse** – Poor care practice within a group setting such as a club, residential care, or institution.
  - **Domestic Abuse** – Any form of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between intimate partners or family members.
  - **Online Abuse** – Harm facilitated via digital platforms, including grooming, sextortion, bullying, or exploitation.
- 

## 24. Additional Child Protection Considerations

Oxford United recognises that some children are particularly vulnerable to abuse or harm due to their personal or situational circumstances.

- Children with disabilities may have additional care needs or communication barriers that increase their risk.
  - LGBTQ+ children may face rejection, discrimination, or identity-based bullying, requiring support.
  - Looked-after children or care leavers may have complex trauma histories and require enhanced safeguarding vigilance.
  - Staff must understand that abuse can occur in a range of environments—online, at school, within peer groups, or in public spaces—and not just within the home.
- 

## 25. Mental Health

Mental health is both a safeguarding and wellbeing priority. Oxford United is committed to creating a psychologically safe environment where mental health is recognised, supported, and monitored.

- Abuse and neglect can have long-term mental health implications, including depression, anxiety, self-harm, or post-traumatic stress.

Version 1.4

Edited by Jack Nield

Date: 14/08/2025

Review Date: June 2026 or after any significant breach of policy



- Likewise, children and adults with existing mental health difficulties may be more vulnerable to abuse, bullying, or exploitation.
  - Staff must remain alert to warning signs such as withdrawal, aggression, sleep disturbance, loss of interest, or changes in mood.
  - Oxford United will offer internal support options and referrals to external services, including counselling, youth mental health providers, or NHS services, where necessary.
- 

## 26. Further Vulnerabilities to Consider

Safeguarding approaches must be tailored to account for individuals facing specific additional vulnerabilities, including:

- **Children with Additional Needs** – including physical, cognitive, or developmental disabilities.
  - **Young Carers** – who may experience excessive responsibility, hidden harm, or social isolation.
  - **Refugees and Asylum Seekers** – often affected by trauma, displacement, language barriers, or uncertainty over their legal status.
  - **Children affected by Substance Misuse or Parental Mental Health** – living in potentially unsafe, chaotic, or neglectful environments.
  - **Adults with Cognitive Impairments or Dependency Needs** – at risk of coercion, exploitation, or financial abuse.
- 

## 27. Contextual Safeguarding

Oxford United applies a contextual safeguarding approach, acknowledging that the risk of harm often arises from social, environmental, or peer-based settings.

- Staff will assess and monitor the environments where children and adults at risk spend their time—including transport, social settings, host families, online platforms, and peer groups.
  - Safeguarding responses will consider the influence of context, and Oxford United will act to mitigate risks through proactive safety planning, supervision, and targeted education.
  - Engagement with parents, carers, and external agencies will be essential in developing whole system safeguarding responses.
- 

## 28. Standards of Behaviour

All Oxford United staff, volunteers, and representatives must act as positive role models and uphold the highest standards of conduct.

- Bullying, harassment, intimidation, and discriminatory language or behaviour will not be tolerated in any form.
- Inappropriate or abusive behaviour—whether in person, online, or via digital communications—will be treated as a safeguarding concern.

Version 1.4

Edited by Jack Nield

Date: 14/08/2025

Review Date: June 2026 or after any significant breach of policy

- Any breaches of behavioural expectations will be investigated and may lead to disciplinary action, dismissal, or referral to external authorities as appropriate.
- 

## **29. Safer Recruitment**

Oxford United maintains robust safer recruitment practices to ensure unsuitable individuals are not employed or allowed to volunteer.

- All roles involving regulated activity require enhanced DBS checks, including barred list checks where appropriate.
  - References will be checked thoroughly, and any employment gaps will be scrutinised.
  - Safeguarding will be addressed explicitly in job advertisements, role descriptions, interview questions, and induction training.
  - Conditional offers of employment will only be confirmed upon completion of all necessary safeguarding checks and clearances.
- 

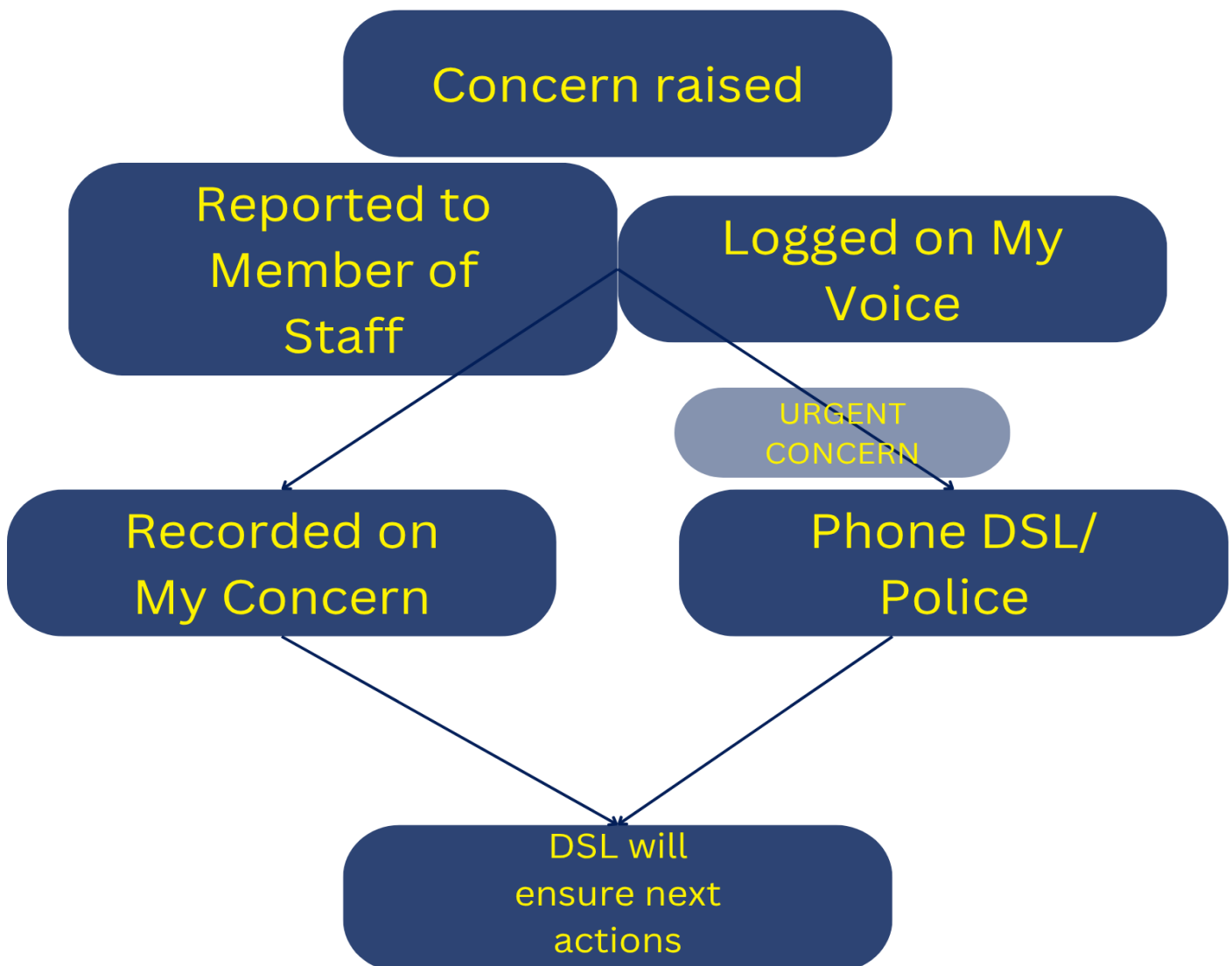
## **30. Photography and Image Capture**

To protect the privacy and safety of individuals, Oxford United enforces strict controls over photography and video usage.

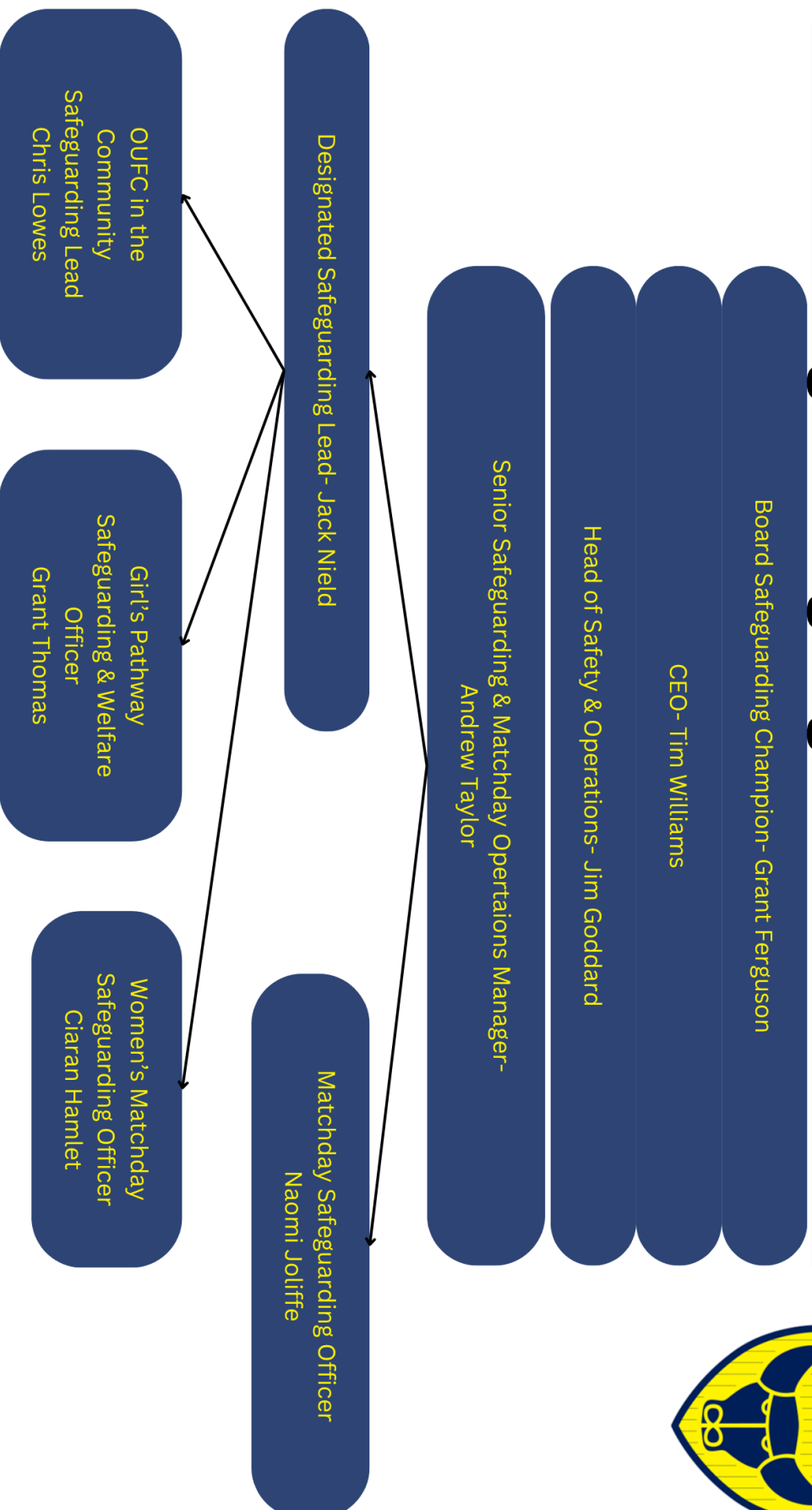
- Written consent from parents/carers or the adult at risk is required prior to capturing or sharing any images.
- Images must be stored securely and used only for authorised purposes (e.g., Club promotion, match reports, internal use).
- No personal mobile devices may be used to take or store images of children or adults at risk without prior authorisation from the Safeguarding Team.
- Oxford United reserves the right to remove or prohibit image use where safeguarding concerns arise.



# Mental, Emotional Wellbeing & Safeguarding Referral Process



# OUFC- Safeguarding Organisational Chart



Name	Email/ Website	Phone
Safeguarding	<a href="mailto:safeguarding@oufc.co.uk">safeguarding@oufc.co.uk</a>	07521 416723
Andrew Taylor- SSM	<a href="mailto:ataylor@oufc.co.uk">ataylor@oufc.co.uk</a>	07521 416723
Jack Nield- DSL	<a href="mailto:Jnield@oufc.co.uk">Jnield@oufc.co.uk</a>	07521 416723
EFL	<a href="mailto:Safeguarding@efl.com">Safeguarding@efl.com</a>	01772 325940
FA- Oxfordshire	<a href="mailto:safeguarding@oxfordshirefa.com">safeguarding@oxfordshirefa.com</a>	01295 407553
Police	<a href="#">Contact us   Thames Valley Police</a>	999/ 101 (non-emergency)
LADO	<a href="mailto:lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk">lado.safeguardingchildren@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a>	01865 810603
Childline	<a href="#">Login   Childline</a>	0800 1111
OSAB	<a href="mailto:SafeguardingAdults@Oxfordshire.gov.uk">SafeguardingAdults@Oxfordshire.gov.uk</a>	01865 328232
MASH	<a href="mailto:mash-children@oxfordshire.gov.uk">mash-children@oxfordshire.gov.uk</a>	0345 050 7666/ 0800 833 408 (emergency duty team)

## Appendix C - Contact Information