



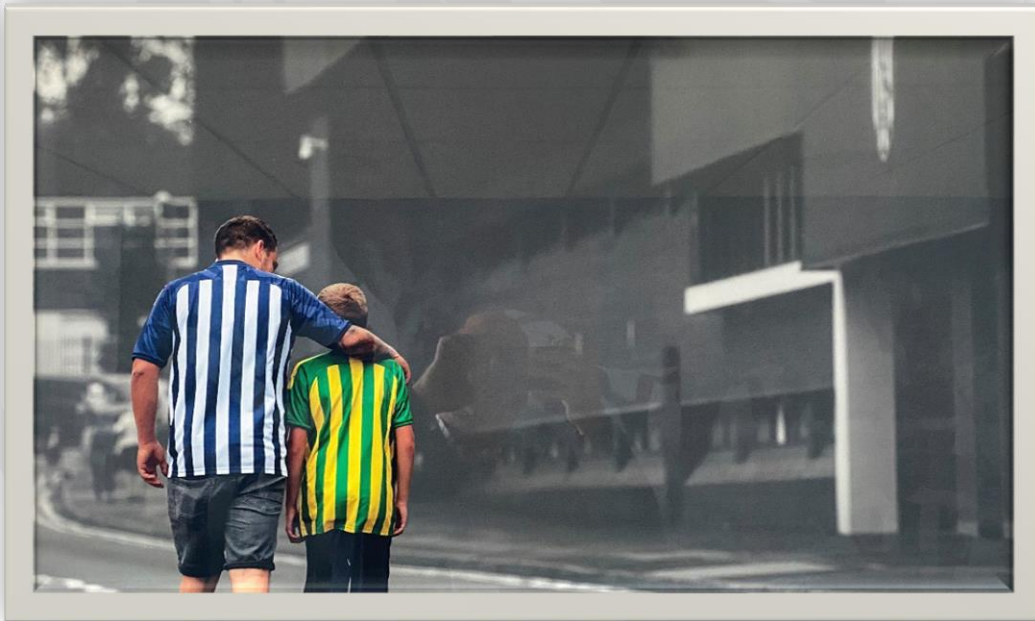
West Bromwich Albion FC

Safeguarding Annual Report 2021/22

Safeguarding Commitment

Everyone at our club is committed to the safety and wellbeing of everyone we engage with. Whether on match days, at our academy, or at The Albion Foundation we will seek to create safe environments where children and adults at risk are respected and listened to.

Through the implementation of our safeguarding strategy, we will seek to develop a culture amongst our staff and volunteers that places children and adults at risk, at the heart of what we do.



Summary

This report and associated documents, sets out the developments in safeguarding across the organisation and includes analysis of concerns raised throughout the season.

The report will set out

1. An overview of the Safeguarding Structure & Practices
2. How we Measure Safeguarding Risk
3. Reporting of Concerns and Data Arising
4. Match Days at The Hawthorns and other events
5. Academy Safeguarding
6. Mental Health and Wellbeing
7. Safeguarding Training and Development of Staff
8. The Albion Foundation (TAF)
9. Governance and Audits
10. Looking Ahead

1. An Overview of the Safeguarding Structure & Practices

The Safeguarding structure of the club is set out in our strategic action and implementation plan.

There are three groups which meet regularly. Each group's terms of reference and purpose are clearly set out.

The Senior Safeguarding Group (SSG)

Board representation which meets Quarterly.

The drivers of our vision and values and our safeguarding strategy.

The Safeguarding Operating Group (SOG)

Meet monthly.

They are department leads who carry out and create safeguarding actions

The Safeguarding Champions (SCG)

Meet monthly and are the safeguarding eyes and ears of the club who feed into the SOG and help promote Safeguarding throughout.

Safeguarding Lead: Mark Miles

Head of Operational Safeguarding: Chris Elliott

Head of Strategic Safeguarding: Lisa Reynolds

TAF Head of Safeguarding - Paul Glover

TAF Designated Safeguarding Lead - Andrew Wheeler

Our Safeguarding Strategy and Implementation Plan

Our Safeguarding strategy sets out how we will achieve our goals and meet our vision and values.

Our Action and implementation plan sets out actions to achieve our targets, who will be responsible for them and when they should be completed by.

Our strategy and our action and implementation plan are attached and can be seen on the club safeguarding web page.



Senior Safeguarding Group

Ron Gourlay
CEO

Chris Elliott
Head of Safeguarding

Mark Miles
Board Safeguarding Lead

Barney Ellis
Legal Counsel

Richard Stevens
Academy

Rob Lake (TAF)



Safeguarding Operating Group

Mark Miles
Board Safeguarding Lead

Chris Elliott
Head of Operational
Safeguarding

Simon Crockett
Head of Player Care
Academy

Lisa Reynolds
Head of Strategic
Safeguarding

Paul Glover & Andy Wheeler
TAF

Sam Foxall
Head of HR

Cindy Joyce
(Mascots
Fan Liaison)

Chris Harris
(Match Day
Operations,
Health & Safety)

Nick Williams
Head of
education

Gurdial Singh
Adults at Risk

Kaleidoscope
Monica Shafag

The Stadium and Academy Safeguarding Champions

Lisa Jones
Sarah Southall
James Smith
Carol Cash
John McNally
Sam Taylor
Therese Howells
Pooja Patel
Laura Gabbidon
Charlotte Robinson
Lee Baker
Mick Halsall

2. How we Measure Safeguarding Risk

All pre planned events across the club are considered and assessed for risk to children and adults at risk.

- A Safeguarding risk register is maintained by the club and is constantly reviewed.
- Some notable areas where risk was highlighted throughout the season was obviously home 1st team fixtures but also our U23s at AFC Telford where, as an example our home game with Wolves attracted a gate of nearly 500. This risk was assessed, and measures and mitigation were put in place. These included segregation of fans and additional stewarding.
- This was also the case for the U23s PL2 Cup final which presented the usual match day challenges around children and young people. This included our ball retrievers on the night having to be removed before the end of the game and subsequent penalty shoot. This risk was assessed in advance and appeared on the risk register.
- Other areas of risk, whilst deemed low, was 'An Evening of Queen' Concert and the 'Play on the Pitch' events. Through liaison across all stakeholders any risks were identified, minimized or removed.

3. Reporting of Concerns and Data Arising

The club records safeguarding incidents and low-level concerns on the 'MyConcern' Single Central Record. From the system the club can accurately see emerging trends and patterns about incidents. Several entries relate to welfare concerns or contact with released players. All contact with released players is recorded and as such there are recording peaks in November and March when the releases take place.

All members of the Champions have access to concerns or about individuals who have either been reported about or by whom. These concerns range from racist incidents, match day ejections, bullying allegations or concerns from the academy regarding children and young people.

This season the academy 'rolled out' access to 'MyConcern' for all staff members. The usage has been gradual. This though in part reflects the low number of concerns from the academy. Across the whole of the organisation there are at present 46 different users.

Incidents have been raised on 'MyConcern' from catering, retail, and hospitality.

Match Day incidents are also recorded and from the data there has been an increase this season in the ejection, detention and management of concerns around young people. This is not only the case at our club but also at most EFL clubs. Of note is the management and care of a 14-year-old being inside the ground whilst affected by alcohol. He was cared for inside the ground and returned to an adult friend following contact with family members.

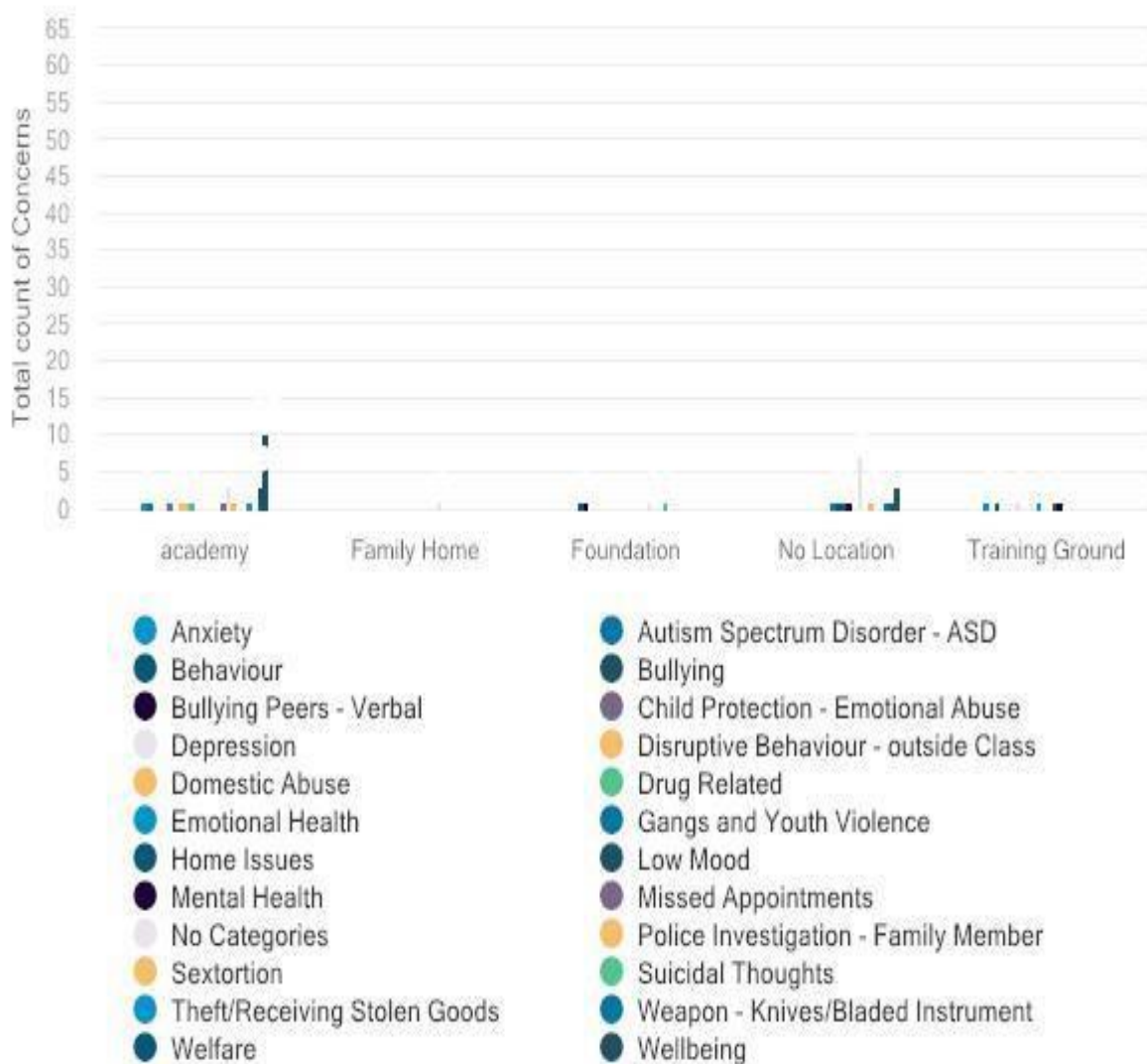
MyConcern Data

To ensure consistency and quality with the 'MyConcern' system a working group meets weekly to assess the entries, look for any lessons learned, and quality assure the content before filing.

To assist with this, matters are only filed following consultation with the other members of the working group; Simon Crockett, Andy Wheeler and Chris Elliott.

NB. The season-on-season figures are somewhat skewed due to behind closed-door games.

Concerns Report



This chart shows the variety of matters recorded

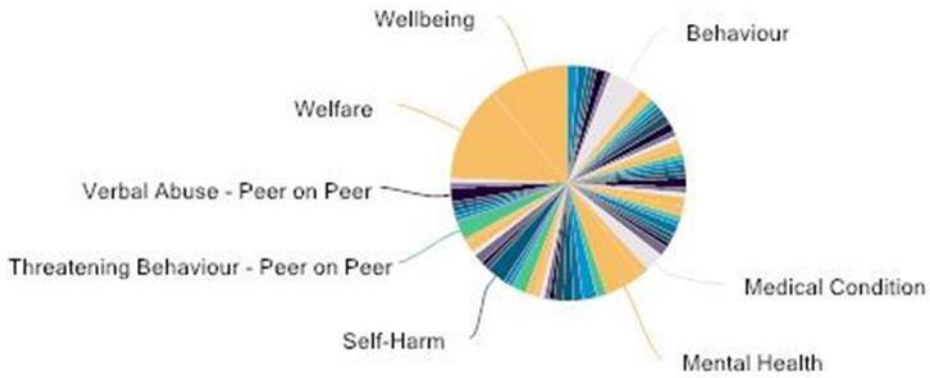


June 21 to June 2022 numbers of concerns per month.

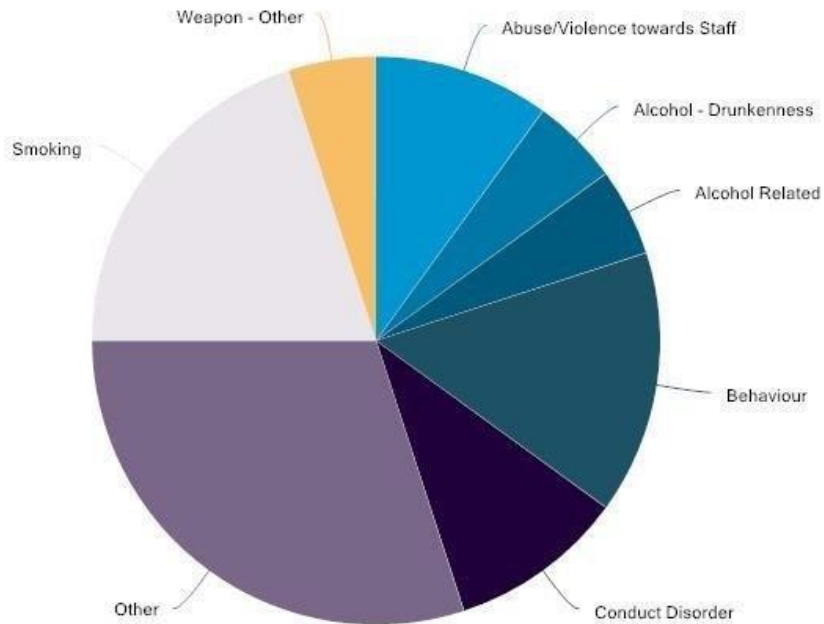
Rises in November and March can be attributed to the release of academy players.

Data impacted by Covid lockdowns.

Concerns linked to categories



2021/22 Season - Match Day Categories



4. Match Days at The Hawthorns and other events

Matchday at The Hawthorns for 1st team games has seen a rise of disorder by young people including drunkenness and possession of pyrotechnic devices.

Children aged 14 and 15 have been 'looked after' whilst being under the influence of drink. These children cannot be simply ejected and are therefore placed in an area of the ground where they can be safely looked after by stewards and CCTV. We have had incidents this year where the parents of child away fans have had to attend at Sandwell Hospital where their child had to be taken due to intoxication.

Match Day at the Hawthorns has included games of the U23s. The PL2 Cup final with Wolves attracted a crowd of nearly 7,000 of which a large number were young people.

The First women's game at the Hawthorns again attracted a large young crowd with a large young female percentage. The day passed without incident bar a 12-year-old pitch invader.

There were no notable prolonged incidents of lost children throughout season 21/22.

The sensory room was utilised on several occasions throughout the season by children with additional needs. No record is made of these occasions.

NB. It is recommended that going ahead we do so. This will give us a better understanding of who and why it is being used.

There were reported safeguarding matters arising out of corporate hospitality and catering where female staff were the subject of unwarranted attention by patrons. These were dealt with swiftly and appropriately at the time and subsequently recorded on 'My Concern'

Safeguarding stewards play a vital role on matchdays dealing with both children and vulnerable adults. New training for the safeguarding stewards and general stewards is set for July and August respectively.

EFL Match Day Safeguarding Audit Visit

On 11th December 2021 the EFL safeguarding representative carried out a match day safeguarding audit

The report stated. “The match felt like a safe environment with a good atmosphere. The HOS was a clear visible presence throughout the match. The briefing document was excellent. Sensory room provision was excellent - and inclusive. The match big screen gave reminders to the crowd about CTU issues, and the homophobic and racism hotlines were also displayed, and reporting encouraged. Provision for under 18 catering staff was excellent in that the HOS directly trains them and their safety-home is paramount in that they are provided with taxis to convey them home. There is regular training for stewards, which was evidenced by the HOS. Stewards when asked knew - what their role entailed and were aware of safeguarding considerations. Good briefings x 2 observed - the supervisory steward briefing was good and had a safeguarding input, as was the general steward briefing.

There are regular, dedicated disability liaison staff which provide a consistent and friendly face to customers.”

“A real positive experience.”

Author: Helen T Smith, EFL Safeguarding Advisor



5. Academy Safeguarding

The Academy continues to be the most active point of contact between the club, children and young people. With over 150 players from the U9s through to the U23s/PL2 team, there are many varied concerns and issues raised in the last 12 months, as outlined in the MyConcern data.

During the last 12 months, we have received two audit visits to assess the safeguarding and player care support for the academy. Whilst these reports were complimentary of several initiatives and systems we have, there were a number of suggestions for improvement. As an organisation who want to always be evolving and improving, the suggestions have been embraced, listened to and plans produced to achieve 'outstanding' ratings in future audits.

The employment of Simon Crockett (Head of Player Care) and Lisa Reynolds (initially as consultant on Host Families arrangements and formally as Head of Strategic Safeguarding) have had a real positive impact on the support and direction of welfare, wellbeing and safeguarding of players and staff in and around the academy.

Plans are now in place for the 2022/23 season with further training to be offered to staff, awareness sessions for players, parents and host families as well as the increase in the Safeguarding DSOs and Champions.

6. Mental Health and Wellbeing

The Mental health and Wellbeing strategy of the football club was launched in 2021.

It includes the provision of care for our staff, those we engage with and contains a separate section around the children and young people at our academy.

The strategy which was produced with the support of 'Kaleidoscope' Mental Health services in Sandwell was commented upon in a recent Barnardos audit as an excellent provision and document. A separate standalone document is in the process of preparation for the academy.

Whilst it is noted that the club 'Able futures' support is promoted for our staff there is less for those young people who we engage with.

Our academy children and young people are supported through the PFA for young players and scholars.

Signposted to sporting chance through the PL and EFL and through in house workshops delivered by our player care and psychology department.

Several members of staff have recently completed Mental Health First Aider training delivered by the EFL. Other staff at the stadium and academy have also completed the iHasco mental health awareness workshop.

Mental Health and wellbeing of staff and those young people who we engage with, remains a priority of the club.

7. Safeguarding Training and Development of Staff

Staff across the football club receive safeguarding awareness training upon induction at the club.

Staff are further made aware using on- line courses through iHasco and 'High Speed Training' from the EFL.

All academy coaches undertake a FA safeguarding course as part of their qualifications which is then supplemented by academy in house CPD.

Further advanced training is to be made available for the academy safeguarding champions and all of the dedicated safeguarding staff.

Independent supervision has recently been arranged for the head of safeguarding and it is hoped that this will be made available to the Head of Player care and Head of strategic safeguarding.

The academy scholars receive safeguarding training as part of their scholarship syllabus which contains modules around on-line safety, media training. This has been delivered throughout the season.

Further age-appropriate training for the younger academy children and their parents is scheduled for summer 2022.

8. The Albion Foundation (TAF)

In March 2021, the Foundation received their annual Audit Report and undertook to implement the advice and requirements outlined in the report.

The main recommendation was to appoint a full-time Designated Safeguarding Lead, Andy Wheeler who was recruited in June 2021 with a background in sport safeguarding, coaching and development. This experience and knowledge have helped the role embed, engage and enthuse safeguarding within the staff across the Foundation. Having a full-time DSL has also meant the Foundation can produce, deliver and review a Safeguarding Strategy and Delivery Plan.

Across the last 12 months, the Foundation and the club Safeguarding Teams have worked closely to ensure a joined-up approach to safeguarding across the organisations. This has included shared intelligence on cases and case management, support in document production and attendance on each other's working groups. Due to the shared agreement with MyConcern portal, individuals from both organisations Safeguarding Teams sit on the 'MyConcern Working Group' to monitor the usage, set up and reporting from the system.

The Head of Safeguarding (HoS) for the club sits on the Foundation's DBS Content Panel and Safeguarding Strategic Group. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for the Foundation sits on the clubs Safeguarding Operational Group and Safeguarding Champions group. The DSL has supported the HoS on some match days across the season and been on hand if the HoS was unavailable.

Andy Wheeler

Designated Safeguarding Lead

The Albion Foundation

9. Governance and Audits

The Academy has been subject to a Barnardos audit on behalf of the EFL, together with an audit by the Professional Game Academy Audit Company (PGAAC). At the time of writing, we are awaiting the final report.

Where recommendations have been made by either auditors, they have been subject to attention or already addressed. An action plan to achieve these recommendations has been produced. These are in line with our safeguarding strategy and implementation plan.

The club Safeguarding children Policy (shortened) and the Adults at Risk Policy have recently been submitted to the local authority and feedback from them is awaited.






The full Club Safeguarding Policy and Procedure document has been reviewed this year and will be subject to further review and change for the coming season. It is hoped to produce a pocket-sized simple booklet for staff and young people who we engage with.

Feedback from those we engage or work with is sought throughout the season. Extremely positive feedback has been received from parents of match day mascot not only about their experience but also how they felt safe and that their children were being well cared for.

Another example of feedback is from the surveying of under 18 catering staff regarding safeguarding in the workplace. Many felt that the club were mindful of their wellbeing and that they knew who to report to if they had an issue. A consistent comment throughout the feedback was the desire to have separate changing facilities for male and female staff on match days.

NB. Feedback from the Safeguarding Operating Group and the Champions are planned for the upcoming season. This is to ensure here is clarity around their role and purpose

10. Looking Ahead

-  Since the summer of 2021 there has been a concerted effort to progress the cause of safeguarding throughout the club.
-  Branded safeguarding documents have been produced and the safeguarding page of the club web site has become more accessible and user friendly.
-  Liaison with other agencies such as the local authority. CTU and 'Prevent' have continued. Prevent carried out the launch of the 'Safer Six project' at a recent matchday. This promoted the safety of the 6 towns of Sandwell and included matchday programme and on- screen promotion. It is anticipated that this will again be the case in 22/23 season.
-  It is noted that with the growth of the women's game and increased funding from the FA that the uptake in participants and supporters will grow. With this comes an added increase of risk to young people. Consideration from the club/TAF should be given to bespoke stand-alone safeguarding responsibility.
-  The recent pitch invasions which have been subject to EFL, and PL discussions should be seen as an ongoing potential risk to children and adults at risk. Careful thought and planning shall be required going forward to ensure our stewarding and management of young pitch encroachers is proportionate and appropriate.

