



## SAFEGUARDING & CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Version	Date	Summary
1.0	15 May 2026	Initial adoption of policy
2.0	15 May 2027	Review due 2027

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### 1. POLICY STATEMENT

The Bearcat Running Club (the “Club”) is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and positive environment for everyone who participates in our activities. We believe that all participants — whether adults, young people, or children — have the right to enjoy running free from harm, abuse, neglect and poor practice, and that safeguarding is a shared responsibility across every part of the Club.

The Club’s constitution (May 2024) sets out that while full membership is open to those aged 18 and over, young people aged 12 to 17 may participate in regular sessions under the direct supervision of a member, and children below the age of 12 may be welcomed at specially organised invite sessions with conditions set in advance. This policy reflects and expands upon those constitutional provisions and sets out how the Club will meet its duty of care to all participants.

This policy applies to safeguarding concerns involving both children (persons under 18) and adults at risk.



The Club adopts the following core commitments:

- The welfare of every participant is the Club's primary concern.
- All participants, regardless of age, gender, disability, ethnicity or background, have the right to be protected from harm.
- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility — not just that of designated individuals.
- Allegations and concerns will always be taken seriously, investigated promptly and handled with appropriate confidentiality.

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## 2. SCOPE AND APPLICATION

This policy applies to:

- All current and prospective members of Bearcat Running Club.
- All coaches, run leaders, walk leaders and volunteers.
- Members of the Committee.
- Parents and carers of young people participating in Club activities.
- Any person attending Club sessions, events, races or social activities.

### 2.1 Membership Age Provisions

In line with the Club constitution, the following provisions apply:

Age Group	Participation Terms
18 and over	Full membership available. Subject to standard Club rules and this policy.
12 to 17	May participate in regular Club sessions without charge, provided they remain under the direct supervision of a member who is either the child's parent/carer, or who has agreed with the child's parent/carer to take responsibility for the child in place of a parent (in loco parentis).
Under 12	May only attend specially organised invite sessions. Conditions (including applicable age ranges) will be communicated in advance of each such event.



For the purposes of this policy, “child” or “young person” means any person under the age of 18. “Adult at risk” means any person aged 18 or over who may need care and support and who may be at risk of abuse as a result of those needs.

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### 3. SAFEGUARDING PRINCIPLES

Bearcat Running Club grounds its approach to safeguarding in the following recognised principles:

Principle	What This Means in Practice
Welfare First	The wellbeing and safety of participants always takes priority over competitive, reputational or other considerations.
Prevention	The Club takes proactive steps to reduce risks through safe practice, clear expectations and appropriate training.
Proportionality	Responses to concerns are appropriate, measured and evidence informed.
Accountability	Every person connected with the Club understands their safeguarding responsibilities.
Inclusivity	Discrimination, bullying and harassment of any kind are not tolerated. Safeguarding applies equally to everyone.
Confidentiality	Information about safeguarding concerns is handled sensitively and shared only with those who need to know.

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#### **4. CLUB RESPONSIBILITIES**

Bearcat Running Club, acting through its committee, will:

- Promote a culture in which safeguarding is openly discussed, understood and valued.
- Ensure that all coaches and run leaders complete safeguarding training appropriate to their role, refreshed at least every three years.
- If volunteers are used to fulfil run leader roles, the co-ordinator of that session will ensure that no children are in the group led by that person.
- Apply safe recruitment practices for coaches and run leaders, including Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for roles involving regulated activity with children or adults at risk.
- Maintain clear written behaviour expectations for all those who engage with the Club.
- Handle personal and sensitive information in accordance with applicable data protection legislation.
- Review this policy annually, or earlier following a safeguarding incident, a change in legislation, or updated best-practice guidance.
- Make this policy available to all members, parents and carers on request and via the Club's usual communication channels.

#### **4.1 COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY MODEL**

The Club does not appoint a single designated Welfare Officer. Safeguarding is therefore a collective responsibility of the whole Committee and all those who lead Club activities. This model places an obligation on every Committee member and run leader to be familiar with this policy, to act on concerns promptly and to support a culture of openness where safeguarding matters can be raised without fear.

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## 5. RECOGNISING ABUSE AND HARM

Anyone connected with the Club may, during Club activities, become aware of signs of abuse or harm. The following categories are recognised:

Type	Examples of Indicators
Physical Abuse	Unexplained injuries, bruising or marks; flinching at physical contact; reluctance to change clothing; signs of physical pain during normal activity.
Emotional Abuse	Low self-esteem, extreme anxiety, withdrawal, sudden behavioural changes, excessive seeking of approval, fear of making mistakes.
Sexual Abuse	Inappropriate sexual knowledge or language for age, withdrawal, self-harm, reluctance around specific adults.
Neglect	Poor hygiene or appearance, hunger, fatigue, attendance at sessions without appropriate clothing or equipment.
Bullying / Harassment	Targeted negative behaviour — physical, verbal or online — that is repeated and intended to cause harm or distress.

This list is not exhaustive. Any behaviour or situation that raises concern about the welfare of a child or adult at risk should be reported in accordance with Section 6 of this policy. Club members are not expected to investigate or diagnose; they are expected to report.

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## 6. REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

Under the Club's collective responsibility model, any member, volunteer, coach or run leader who has a concern about the safety or wellbeing of a child or adult at risk must act without delay.



## 6.1 Reporting Procedure

1. Do not delay, dismiss or investigate the concern yourself. Safeguarding concerns must be reported promptly.
2. Raise the concern with any member of the Club Committee as soon as possible, verbally and then in writing.
3. If a member of the Club Committee is not immediately available and the concern is urgent, involves immediate risk of harm, or relates to potential abuse, contact the relevant authorities directly (see Section 6.2).
4. Do not discuss the concern with the individual alleged to have caused harm, or with anyone other than the Committee member or where relevant, the external authorities to which the report was directed.
5. Make a written note of what you have seen, heard or been told as soon as possible, using the individual's own words where relevant. Record facts, not opinions.

## 6.2 External Contacts

In cases of urgent concern or potential abuse, the Committee Member receiving the report must contact relevant external authorities as follows:

Contact	When to Use
Police — 999 (emergency)	Immediate risk of harm to a child or adult.
Police — 101 (non-emergency)	Non-urgent police concerns or disclosures relating to criminal conduct.
Richmond/Twickenham Children's Services	Concerns about the welfare or safety of a child under 18.
Richmond/Twickenham Adult Safeguarding	Concerns about an adult at risk of harm or abuse.
NSPCC Helpline — 0808 800 5000	Advice on child safeguarding concerns (24 hours).



### **6.3 Committee Response**

Upon receipt of a concern, the relevant Committee member(s) will:

1. Acknowledge receipt of the concern in writing to the person who raised it.
2. Make a written record of all details, including date, time, names, and the nature of the concern.
3. Seek advice from local safeguarding professionals or statutory agencies if uncertain how to proceed.
4. Take or facilitate appropriate action, which may include referral to statutory services.
5. Keep all records secure and confidential. Records will be retained as required by applicable guidance.

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## **7. CODES OF CONDUCT**

All those associated with Bearcat Running Club are expected to conduct themselves in a way that promotes safety, dignity and respect for all. The Club will maintain written codes of conduct for the groups set out below. These codes will be made available to all relevant individuals and form part of Club membership and volunteering agreements.

### **7.1 All Members**

- Treat all participants with dignity, fairness and respect at all times.
- Maintain appropriate personal boundaries with all other participants, particularly children and young people.
- Avoid behaviour that could be harmful, abusive, discriminatory or perceived as such.
- Prioritise safety during all Club sessions and activities.
- Support a positive, inclusive club culture free from bullying and harassment.
- Report concerns immediately rather than assuming someone else will act.



## **7.2 Coaches and Run Leaders**

- Never be alone with a child or young person in a private or enclosed setting.
- Communicate with young people's parents or carers through appropriate channels, not directly via personal messaging platforms.
- Ensure any physical contact during coaching is appropriate, necessary, and delivered in an open environment.
- Complete and keep up to date all required safeguarding training.
- Set a positive example of behaviour, language and sportsmanship at all times.

## **7.3 Parents and Carers of Young Participants**

- Maintain direct and continuous supervision of young people they have brought to a Club session for the full duration of that session, as required by the Club's constitution.
- Provide the Club in advance with any relevant medical, health or safeguarding information relating to the young person.
- Behave in a respectful and positive manner towards all members, leaders and officials.
- Raise any concerns about the welfare of their child promptly with the Committee.

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## **8. SAFE RUNNING ENVIRONMENT**

The Club will take all reasonable steps to ensure that Club sessions, events and activities are conducted safely. In accordance with the Club's Health and Safety Policy and Risk Assessment documentation this includes:



## **8.1 Session Planning and Risk Assessment**

- All regular Club sessions and organised events will be risk-assessed before they take place.
- Routes will be planned to be appropriate for the ability level and age profile of the group.
- Session leaders will confirm participant numbers and, where relevant, emergency contact information before each session.
- Where young people or children are participating, adequate adult supervision ratios will be maintained and confirmed in advance.

## **8.2 Emergency Procedures**

- Session leaders will carry a mobile phone and first aid provision appropriate to the activity.
- Emergency action plans will be communicated to leaders and volunteers ahead of events involving young people or large groups.
- In the event of an incident involving injury, a record will be made as soon as practicable, in accordance with procedures set out in the Health and Safety Policy.

## **8.3 Invite Sessions for Children Under 12**

Where the Club organises special invite sessions for children under the age of 12 (as permitted under Section 3 of the Club constitution), the following additional requirements apply:

- Advance written notification to all participants confirming the age range, supervision arrangements and any conditions applicable to the session.
  - Written parental or carer consent obtained prior to participation.
  - At least two DBS-checked adults present for the duration of the session.
  - A designated Committee member responsible for overseeing the safeguarding arrangements for that event.
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## **9. PHOTOGRAPHY, IMAGES AND SOCIAL MEDIA**

### **9.1 Consent**

- Consent will be sought from participants before taking or sharing photographs or video images. For young people under 18, consent must be obtained from a parent or carer.
- Consent may be withdrawn at any time. The Club will remove or cease to use images upon request.

### **9.2 Use of Images**

- Images of young people will not include personal identifiers such as full names, addresses or school names.
- Images will never be used in a way that could place a participant at risk or cause embarrassment.
- Club images will only be published via official Club channels (website, sanctioned social media accounts).

### **9.3 Member Responsibilities Online**

- Members must not post personal information about other members, or images of other participants, without their prior consent.
  - Online behaviour in Club-related groups and channels must reflect the Club's codes of conduct.
  - Any member who becomes aware of inappropriate content relating to the Club or its members should report this to the Committee immediately.
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## **10. TRAINING AND VETTING**

### **10.1 Safeguarding Training**

All coaches, run leaders, walk leaders and Committee members with responsibility for organising or overseeing sessions involving young people or adults at risk will complete recognised safeguarding training. Training will be refreshed at minimum every three years, and records of completion will be held by the Club Secretary.

### **10.2 DBS Checks**

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks will be carried out for all roles that involve regulated activity with children or adults at risk. This includes, but may not be limited to, coaches, run leaders and Committee members who have a supervisory role at sessions where young people participate.

DBS check records will be managed confidentially by the Club Secretary or designated Committee member. Checks will be renewed at intervals required by best practice or earlier if circumstances change. The DBS check will be undertaken as part of the relevant person's award or renewal of LIRF or CIRF.

### **10.3 Induction**

New coaches, run leaders and, where appropriate volunteers, will receive an induction that includes:

- An overview of this Safeguarding Policy and their responsibilities under it.
  - The reporting procedures set out in Section 6.
  - The Club's codes of conduct and behaviour expectations.
  - The Club's photography and social media guidelines.
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## **11. BREACHES OF THIS POLICY**

Any breach of this Safeguarding Policy will be treated seriously. Depending on the nature and severity of the breach, the Club may:

- Issue an informal or formal warning under the Club's Grievance and Disciplinary Policy.
- Suspend the individual pending a disciplinary hearing (as authorised by the Committee under the Club constitution).
- Terminate Club membership.
- Refer the matter to the police or relevant statutory authorities.

Disciplinary procedures will be conducted in accordance with the Club's Grievance and Disciplinary Policy (maintained separately by the Committee and available from the Club Secretary). The right to appeal is preserved in all cases as provided in that policy.

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## **12. POLICY REVIEW**

This policy will be reviewed by the Committee at least annually. An earlier review will be triggered by any of the following:

- A change in relevant legislation or statutory guidance.
- Updated recognised best practice in safeguarding.
- A safeguarding incident or near-miss involving the Club.
- A significant change to the Club's activities, membership profile, or constitution.

Approved revisions will be documented in the version control table on the title page. The current version of this policy will be made available to all members.

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## ADOPTION AND SIGN-OFF

This policy was adopted by the Committee of The Bearcat Running Club.

Role	Name	Signature / Date
Chair	Susan Hare	
Secretary	Andrew Kew	
Membership Secretary	John Reece	
Treasurer	Alun Thomas	