

Academy Player Mental Health & Wellbeing Policy



Last Reviewed 2025 by Tim Allison

Policy Overview

Our Academy Player Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy sets out our commitment to create a culture where mental health and wellbeing is recognised by all within our Academy. The subject is discussed, issues raised, and support provided.



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1. Overview

This document provides an overview of the Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy for players and staff at Sutton United FC Academy. It contains our aims, strategy, simple tips, referral process and contact details of suitable contacts (internal and external).

2. Definition

Mental Health is defined by the World Health Organisation as 'a state of (complete) physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity'. Mental health "influences how we think and feel about ourselves and others and how we interpret events. It affects our capacity to learn, to communicate and to form, sustain and end relationships. It also influences our ability to cope with change, transition, and life events: having a baby, moving house, experiencing bereavement" (Friedli, 2004).

Anna Freud website: Mental Health describes our emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing. It affects our thinking, moods, and behaviours. Everyone has mental health, and it is normal for mental health to change during times of stress. Positive mental health does not mean always being happy, but feeling empowered to talk about, cope with and overcome the things we might encounter in life. That way, we recover from our downturns and learn to take care of our minds in the same way we do our bodies.



3. Aims

SUFC Academy is committed to:

- Operating a psychologically informed environment that promotes an openness to mental health and well-being across its players and staff.
- Responding to any concerns surrounding mental health in its players or staff.
- Ensuring that sufficient staff are suitably trained to recognise and support with mental health concerns.
- Ensuring that all players and staff understand the process to follow if there is a concern about their own or someone else's mental health.
- Having a clear referral process with suitable external providers (e.g., clinical psychology) to ensure that is adhered to by staff across the Academy,
- Providing educational material to staff and parents of players about mental health and being a point of contact should they have a concern regarding their colleague or a child

4. Strategy – Educate, Support, Monitor

Educate Players

- Psychoeducational programme – As part of the psychological skills programme players are taught skills and strategies to help promote healthy thinking patterns (relevant to football and broader life).
- External organisations – As part of the Academy lifestyle and wellbeing programme external organisations and speakers are invited in to speak to the players.

Educate Staff

- Staff Training – Specific staff members are trained to a level that allows them to provide support.
- Self-care – All staff are trained in self-care strategies to maintain their own health and wellbeing.
- Signs & Symptoms – All staff are trained in spotting signs & symptoms of poor / good mental health.

Educate Parents

- Workshops – Parent's workshops delivered as part of the psychology education programme.
- PMA & Email Educational material is provided to parents via email and on the PMA.

Support Players

- Environment – The academy is committed to providing a psychologically safe environment promoting open discussions around mental health.
- Safeguarding department – Players have access to academy safeguarding officers.
- Player Care department – Players have access to academy player care officer
- External support – The academy has relationships with external organisations to provide specialist support if required.

Support Staff

- Safeguarding department – Safeguarding officers work across the club and are on hand to advise and support staff.
- Player Care department – Staff have access to academy player care officer.
- Human resources department – The club HR department are available to provide specialist support to staff.

Support Parents

- Safeguarding department – Parents have access to academy safeguarding officers.
- Player Care department – Parents have access to academy player care officer

Monitor Players

Mental health measures: Weekly check in's with U18's

Injury – Injured players complete well-being measures.

Additional – More frequent monitoring is put in place for players receiving additional support.

Monitor Staff

- Reviews – Annual formal reviews with supervisors.
- Meetings – Regular informal meetings with supervisors.
- Supervision – Safeguarding supervision for staff with specific safeguarding responsibility.
- Mental health measures Staff complete PHQ (patient health questionnaire) and an anxiety measure twice per season.

5. Simple Steps for Supporting an Individual

The following steps are outlined by Mental Health First Aid England (MHFA) and provide a simple framework for players, staff and parents who have a mental health concern:

- Self-Care.
- Listen to others and sign post them towards support / information.
- Speak to others and utilise support available.
- Be on the lookout for signs and symptoms.

6. Use the ALGEE Action Plan Approach:

A Approach; Assess for Crisis/Assist with Crisis.

L Listen and Communicate Non-Judgementally.

G Give Support and Information.

E Encourage Appropriate Professional Help.

E Encourage Other Supports.

7. Key Club Contacts

- Harry Dunne (Senior Safeguarding Manager) harry.dunne@suttonunited.net
- Tim Allison (Chief Operating Officer) Tim.allison@suttonunited.net
- Beverley Little (Academy Safeguarding Officer) Beverley.little@suttonunited.net
- Bobby Childs (Foundation Safeguarding Officer) bobby.childs@suttonunited.net

8. Player Registration Release Request

If you wish to apply for your son to be released from Sutton United FC on the grounds of a safeguarding / health and wellbeing reason, please contact the Academy Safeguarding Officer in the first instance.

You will be contacted by the Academy Safeguarding Officer in relation to all welfare aspects and the Club Secretary (Club Safeguarding Officer) in relation to the release request.

9. Key External Contacts

Mind Infoline: The Mind Infoline can help you to find out what services are available in your area. You can call them on 0300 123 3393 email info@mind.org.uk or text 86463. They are open 9am–6pm, Monday to Friday

Rethink Mental Illness: Founded 40 years ago through voluntary groups for people affected by mental illness, Rethink Mental Illness have over 100 groups in England. Call them on 0300 5000 927

Samaritans: Call free on 116 123

Childline: 0800 1111

10. Crisis Response

If there is immediate danger and/or potential imminent harm to an individual's safety please contact:

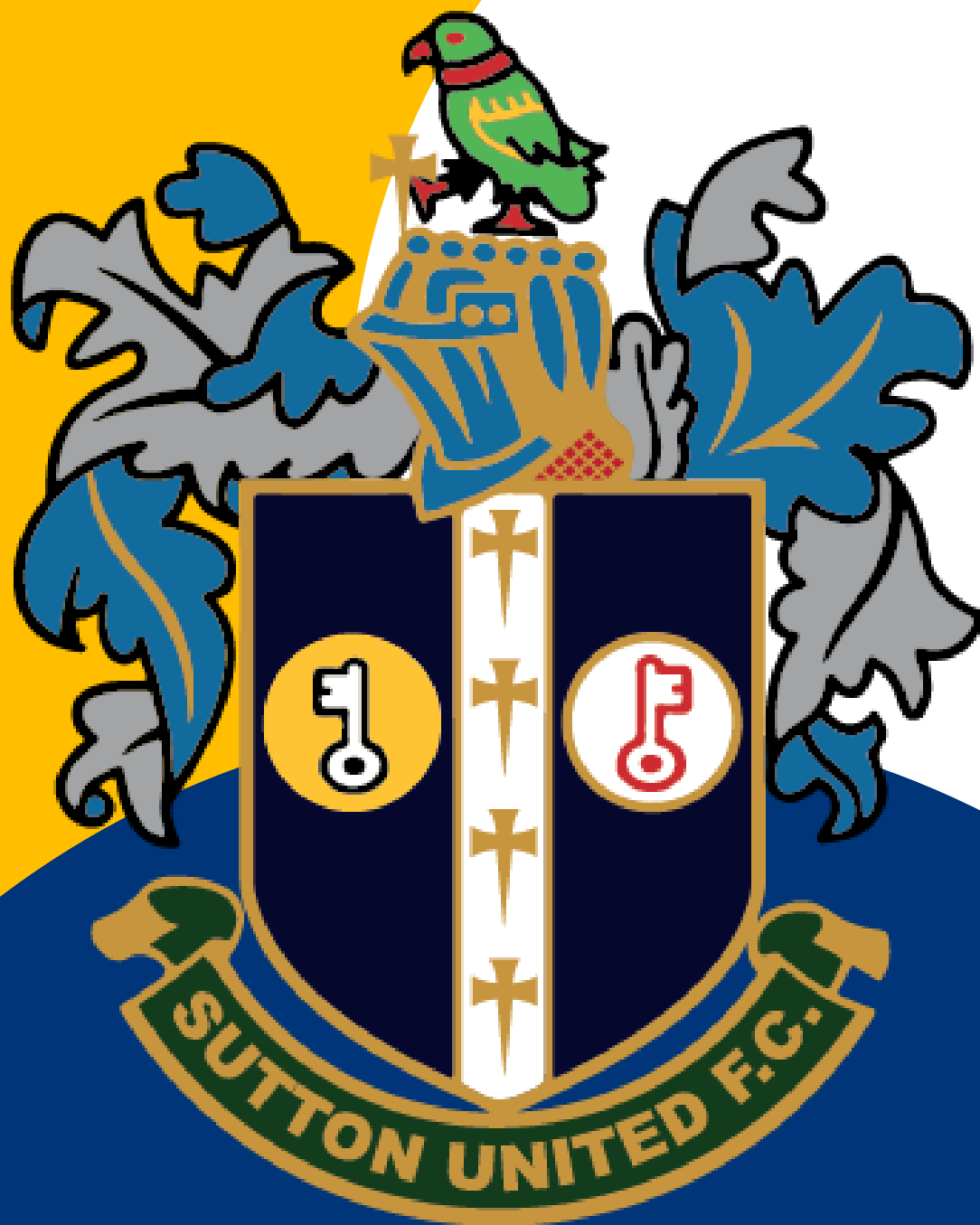
- NHS: 999 emergency or nearest A&E department.
- 111 for professional health advice 24/7.
- Samaritans: 116 123 (24/7 Freephone).
- When practicable to do so ensure you make your safeguarding officer aware of your action.

11. Referral Process

Where appropriate, the Academy will also refer players (and staff) to other external mental health practitioners. The following provides an overview of the process the Academy follows when situations emerge that require an external referral.

9. Potential Trigger for Action

- An individual player or staff member requests support on a mental health or wellbeing issue that falls outside expertise within Academy staff.
- Players' parent/s or guardian/s requests support for their child on a mental health or wellbeing issue that falls outside expertise within Academy staff.
- Staff member reports need for support of a player on a mental health or wellbeing issue that falls outside expertise within Academy staff.
- Medical identify a mental health or wellbeing issue with an individual that is beyond their scope of practice.
- Player or staff member requests external support on a mental health or wellbeing issue.
- Individual speaks with Psychologist and/or Head of Safeguarding (dependent on the specific issue being reported).
- Concern to be reported using "My Concern", the Clubs online Safeguarding reporting tool.
- For player - If further action is needed and the issue is outside scope of practice, then decision is made with support of the Club Doctor to refer for external support.
- For staff - If further action is needed then decision is made with support of the club doctor to refer to HR to arrange occupational health support. • Club Doctor, Head of Academy Medical, Head of Safeguarding and Academy Manager are made aware of this (for Academy players).
- Referral is made using the links the Academy has with University of Hertfordshire and the trained clinical psychologists that they can provide.
- If issue falls out of scope of these providers (or they are not available), or is specific in nature e.g., substance abuse, family counselling, financial management), then suitable provision is sought based on the following criteria: - Third party hold the required qualifications and is licensed under HCPC (or equivalent). - Third party has experience of working with young athletes.
- Even though referral has been made the Academy continues to support the player within the departments' relevant scope of practice and remain in contact with external provider to ensure progress is being monitored.



Contact us.

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