



IN SAFE HANDS

OUR GAME PLAN FOR SAFEGUARDING
THIS SEASON AND BEYOND

SAFEGUARDING:
AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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As we look ahead to the upcoming season, we would like to share a snapshot of some of the key measures we're implementing to enhance our safeguarding arrangements and support throughout the Club. This represents a small segment of a much broader, long-term development plan that encompasses short, medium, and long-term priorities aimed at ensuring the safety and well-being of everyone involved in our football community.

Our comprehensive safeguarding strategy is extensive and subject to regular independent review, including by the Premier League and Barnardo's. While we cannot list every detail here, we believe it's essential to keep our players, families, and supporters informed and reassured. Below are some of the highlights we're proud to share with you.

You can learn more about safeguarding in football by visiting:

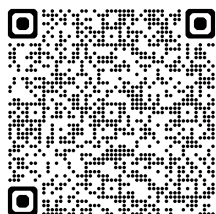
- The Premier League's Safeguarding site:

<https://www.premierleague.com/safeguarding>

- The FA's Safeguarding site:

<https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding>

Want to read our Safeguarding Policy? Just scan the QR code below.



1. LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE, AND CULTURE: ACCOUNTABILITY

To enhance our commitment to safeguarding, we are expanding our steering group to include Health & Safety, Club Compliance, and other key areas. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, not just that of one team. By collaborating, we can identify risks more quickly, make informed decisions, and integrate safeguarding into all club activities, from matchday operations and facility safety to staff conduct and fan experience. This approach aligns with national guidance and best practices, protecting children, at-risk adults, and our broader community while ensuring that our club remains a safe and welcoming space for all.

Matchdays bring their own distinct set of safeguarding challenges, including large crowds, varied age groups, noise, movement, and emotions, which can all trigger vulnerabilities or incidents. Whether it's a lost child, an adult fan experiencing a mental health crisis, an intoxicated parent responsible for a child, an unaccompanied under-16 fan, or a safeguarding disclosure, we're visibly committed to safeguarding and invest in dedicated matchday safeguarding teams to ensure clear lines of responsibility and reporting. West Ham United's investment in robust safeguarding resources sends a strong message: safety and well-being are not just priorities but necessities. We've found that this type of governance helps build trust with families, fans, players, and partners. It also encourages staff at every level to take ownership, stay vigilant, and act when concerns arise. Next season, we'll enhance our safeguarding visibility on matchdays through the deployment of trained staff, clear signage, accessible reporting mechanisms, and close collaboration with stewards and safety teams. This approach goes beyond being just a preventative measure; it reflects a forward-thinking, accountable culture that values people and safeguards the integrity of the game.

That's why it's crucial to make room for contextual governance and inclusive leadership within safeguarding strategies. Recognising intersectionality—how factors such as age, gender, background, disability, or lived experience intersect is vital to ensuring that safeguarding is truly effective and accountable in all its forms. Our vision is to be even more creative in finding more ways to engage our young supporters, Academy players, and community forums in planning actions, ensuring we remain proactive in addressing the real, nuanced challenges.



2. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Continuous improvement and the delivery of sustainable, positive outcomes are central to our safeguarding strategy and operations. Last season, we took a significant step forward by appointing additional safeguarding leads for the Women's Team and the West Ham United Foundation. These appointments have already assisted us in expanding our safeguarding approach, providing greater insight, a daily presence, and support in both elite performance environments and community settings. With these roles now established, we are well-positioned to build on that progress and further enhance our contextual safeguarding approach, ensuring the right support is in place at the appropriate locations and times.

The new season is set to begin with a fantastic start. The West Ham United Foundation has launched The Foundry, a state-of-the-art community hub that aims to make a significant impact across East London. As a space dedicated to wellbeing, development, and inclusion, The Foundry will help us deliver safeguarding-led programmes and directly address the needs of local communities. Our collaboration with the Safer Neighbourhood Board presents exciting new opportunities to identify shared priorities, reduce harm, and integrate safeguarding into broader efforts to ensure the safety of individuals. Safeguarding is an integral part of all programmes delivered across the Foundation, including its various initiatives and delivery models. Discover more about West Ham Foundation's new beginnings.

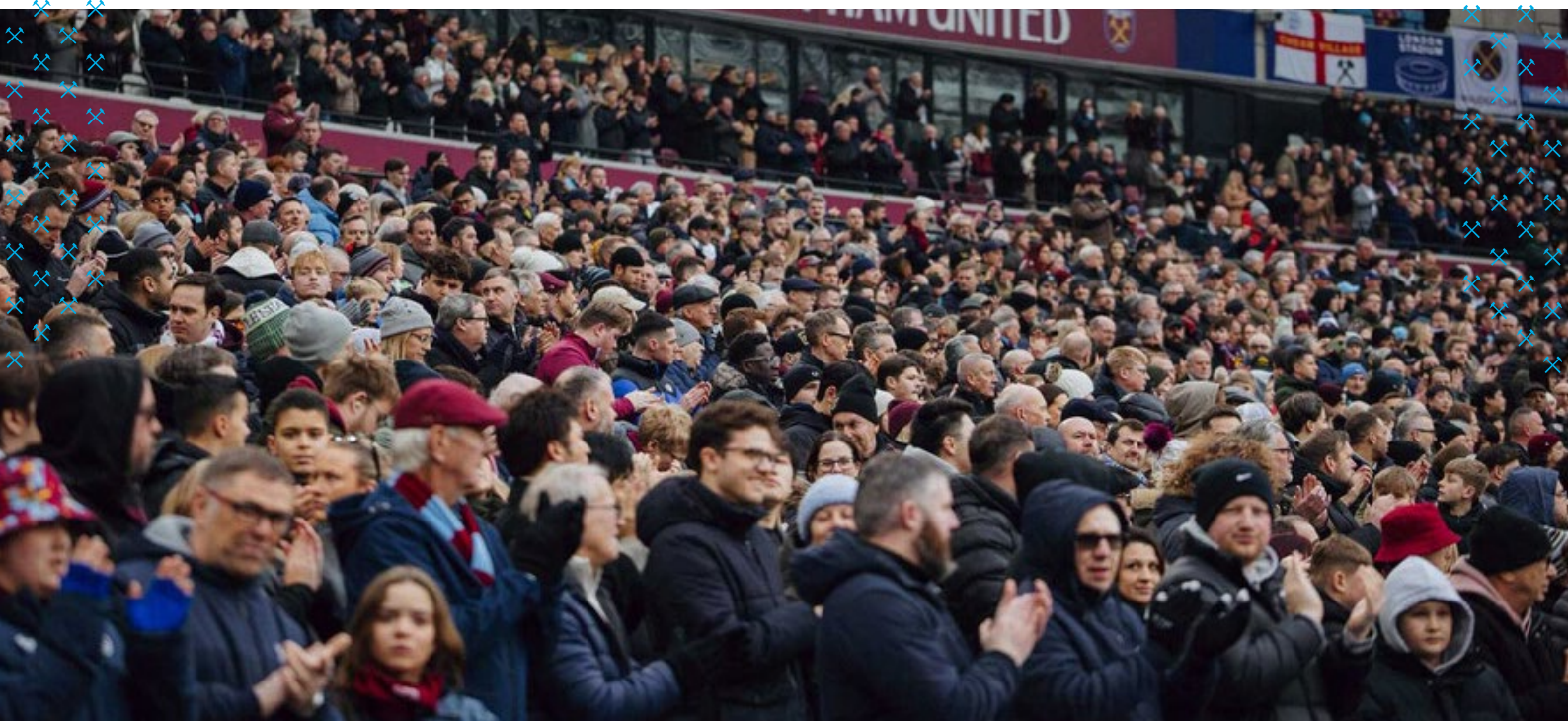
<https://www.whufc.com/news/foundry-new-hub-new-beginnings>



3. PREVENTION FROM HARM

As part of our ongoing commitment to safeguarding, we're enhancing our safer recruitment strategy for the next season by incorporating social media screening into our recruitment processes. In today's digital age, safeguarding means understanding the full picture of those we trust to work with children, young people, and vulnerable adults. While traditional recruitment methods, such as interviews, references, and DBS checks, remain crucial, they may not always uncover views or behaviours that could pose a risk. By reviewing social media platforms fairly and responsibly, we can gain valuable insights into a candidate's values, judgment, and alignment with our club's standards.

Strong safeguarding oversight is vital in supporting children with care experience and care leavers, who are disproportionately at risk of exploitation, exclusion, and inequality. To mark World Book Day 2025 (6th March), West Ham United and Fatima Whitbread MBE donated a book to every primary school in the London Borough of Newham, aiming to raise awareness of children with care experience. This season, we continue our focus on improving our structured mentoring programmes and wraparound support and protection for care-experienced young people, with a strong emphasis on emotional wellbeing, education, employability, and independent living skills. Our trusted adults, trained in trauma-informed practice, will deliver this support.



4. EDUCATION AND EMPOWERING

As part of the Premier League's ongoing requirements and last season's successes, we will bolster our healthy relationship education as a fundamental aspect of our safeguarding strategy in football and the wider community.

Whether it's Patrick Hutchinson addressing the First Team about the importance of allyship and resilience or employing creative equine facilitation sessions to assist Academy and First Team players in recognising their internal warning signs for making healthy decisions that ensure their safety, we have observed over the past few seasons the positive impact of helping individuals understand what healthy relationships look and feel like. We recognise that access to education, which nurtures safer and more inclusive environments both on and off the pitch, enhances overall well-being.

This season, we are building on that foundation. Our aim is to expand access to tailored training for young players, coaches, managers, and customer-facing staff, ensuring that everyone in our club understands their role in promoting safe, respectful interactions. This is particularly vital for younger participants, who need the tools and confidence to identify unhealthy behaviours and seek help when necessary. For those in positions of trust, continued professional development in this area reinforces safeguarding standards and strengthens the positive culture we wish to see at every level of the game. As a club deeply rooted in our community, we are looking to extend this work further by using our platform to raise awareness and support healthy relationship education in schools, local programmes, and fan spaces.



5. PROTECTION

Safeguarding extends beyond children and young people to include adults at risk, and we are committed to their safety, dignity, and well-being in all our efforts. Last season, we hosted a planning day with all Heads of Safeguarding to enhance adult safeguarding throughout our work. This aligns with broader initiatives in football, led by Sally-Ann Bolton and supported by Safeguarding Adults Boards (SABs), to prioritise adult safeguarding.

We recognise that adult safeguarding involves not just reacting to concerns but fostering an environment where adults feel respected, safe, and supported. We aim to build upon partnerships with adult social care, mental health services, and community organisations to identify early signs of harm, such as financial abuse, coercion, or neglect. These collaborations enable timely responses and coordinate support for those at risk.

Last season, we piloted MyConcern alongside CPOMS to improve the recording and management of safeguarding concerns across the club and Foundation. Both systems utilise secure methods to track issues, enabling us to identify support needs and prevent harm. We conduct quarterly safeguarding reviews and provide reports to our Board and Trustees for accountability. Our next step involves deepening our understanding by incorporating staff experience. This season, we will include feedback from staff, players, and users in our safeguarding report, offering insight into day-to-day experiences. By merging data with lived experience, we will continually make ongoing improvements in responding to our responsibilities and collaborating with others to protect children and adults from harm.



6. WORKING TOGETHER: PARTNERSHIP

Our approach to safeguarding goes beyond just preventing harm. It's about understanding and responding to individual needs, especially in high-pressure environments where noise and fast-paced activity can be challenging. We've provided neurodiversity training throughout the club and Foundation to help staff create a calm, respectful, and flexible space. For several seasons, we've also offered annual refresher training to our customer-facing staff at the start of each season.

Last season, we took our neurodivergence training programme on the road, delivering it to the First Team, management, and staff before the PFA's report in March. This report revealed that 60% of professional footballers identifying as neurodivergent hadn't disclosed their traits to their team or club. The training had a real impact, with players and coaches staying behind to share their insights, experiences, and questions about assessments and signposting. Going forward, we aim to improve our signposting to the services and support that neurodivergent individuals need. We'll use our understanding of the vulnerabilities they may face to review, refine, and plan our community programmes.

Safeguarding is a fundamental aspect of our strategy and development plans, and it remains a priority on the agenda. Our Heads of Safeguarding are accountable for effective arrangements within the Club and Foundation, as well as for shaping broader strategic initiatives in the community. With facilities such as our social kitchen, enterprise zone, outdoor gym, and modern safe spaces serving over 50,000 people annually, safeguarding is crucial for promoting safety, connection, and wellbeing. We are also actively updating our long-term strategy against Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).



7. LISTENING CULTURE & PROPORTIONALITY

Successfully piloted by the Academy last season, the rollout of MyVoice, as part of the MyConcern safeguarding system, marks a significant step forward in making it easier, safer, and more accessible for young people to report a safeguarding concern. Barnardos in its audit of the Men's Academy noted; MyVoice strengthens our commitment to early intervention and prevention. It also helps build a culture where young people know they will be listened to, taken seriously, and supported. Giving young people the confidence to report concerns is a vital part of keeping them safe. (Barnardos Audit of Safeguarding Arrangements Season 24/25)

Following the successful piloting and an increase in player reporting, MyConcern and MyVoice will be adopted by the Senior Team and the West Ham Foundation as the preferred tool for self-reporting and gathering participant feedback. By increasing the number of pathways to reporting and making the process clear and user-friendly, we strengthen our commitment to early intervention and prevention.

Our duty of care is a moral and legal obligation to protect individuals from harm. Our responses to safeguarding concerns must be both appropriate and respectful. By organising welfare-themed workshops for Academy parents and caregivers, we can share our role and decision-making processes with them. With the Foundation's new hub, we can now invite the parents and caregivers of our young participants to get involved.

