OXFORD UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB

ACADEMY SAFEGUARDING & PLAYER SUPPORT OFFICER

JOB SPECIFICATION – 2026/27 SEASON

Position: Academy Safeguarding & Player Support Officer
Term: Full Time
Hours of Work: 40
Department: Safeguarding & Player Care (Academy)
Location: Oxford United Training Centre, Oxford, UK
Reports To: Jack Nield & George Christian

JOB OVERVIEW

The Academy Safeguarding & Player Support Officer will support safeguarding practice across the Academy, providing a visible, trusted and accessible safeguarding presence for players, parents and staff. Alongside this Academy-wide safeguarding remit, the postholder's primary Player Support responsibility will be for Boys Academy players in the U9-U14 age groups, ensuring that younger players and their families receive consistent, age-appropriate welfare, transition and pastoral support.

The postholder will combine Academy-wide safeguarding responsibilities with a focused U9-U14 Player Support remit. This includes responding to and recording concerns, proactive welfare work, player and parent/carer engagement, transition support, EDI education and effective collaboration with the Junior Academy multidisciplinary team. Working under the direction of the Head of Safeguarding, the postholder will help translate Club policy, EFL requirements, The FA framework and applicable PGAAC-assessed Youth Development Rules into consistent day-to-day practice.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- Act as an Academy Safeguarding Officer across all Academy age groups, while taking primary responsibility for the Player Support provision for Boys Academy U9-U14 players and their parents/carers.
- Maintain a regular physical presence at evening training sessions and home Sunday fixtures, providing timely advice, support, challenge and escalation where required.
- Ensure safeguarding and welfare concerns are recognised, responded to, recorded and referred promptly in accordance with Club procedures and the direction of the Head of Safeguarding.
- Promote meaningful player and parent voice, using feedback and emerging themes to strengthen the Junior Academy environment and player experience.

- Lead the effective implementation and review of the Junior Academy Player Transition Policy.

Safeguarding presence and case management

- Provide a visible and approachable safeguarding presence at evening Junior Academy training sessions and at home Sunday fixtures, with attendance arranged to meet the operational needs of the programme.

- Receive and respond appropriately to safeguarding disclosures, allegations, low-level concerns and welfare issues, following Club reporting and escalation procedures at all times.

- Ensure all safeguarding incidents and concerns are recorded accurately, factually, securely and without undue delay on Patronus Safeguarding, including actions taken, decisions, referrals and outcomes.

- Immediately escalate serious, complex or potentially criminal concerns to the Head of Safeguarding and support referrals to relevant statutory agencies or football authorities when directed.

- Maintain appropriate professional boundaries, confidentiality and information-sharing practice, ensuring information is shared on a need-to-know basis in line with Club policy and applicable data-protection requirements.

- Monitor open safeguarding and welfare actions allocated by the Head of Safeguarding and provide clear updates until they are appropriately concluded.

Player and parent support

- Provide Academy players and parents/carers with an accessible safeguarding contact, while taking primary responsibility for day-to-day player support, wellbeing and welfare provision for Boys Academy U9-U14 players, including proportionate support and signposting where appropriate.

- Build trusted relationships across the Academy while preserving professional boundaries, with particular emphasis on ensuring the voices and lived experiences of U9-U14 players inform player-support, safeguarding and welfare planning.

- Design, coordinate and evaluate U9-U14 player voice and parent/carer voice activity. Surveys, forums and feedback exercises must include appropriate EDI questions covering belonging, inclusion, accessibility, discriminatory behaviour, confidence in reporting and whether players and families feel respected and heard. Themes, risks and recommended improvements must be reported to the Head of Safeguarding and relevant Academy leaders.

- Identify recurring welfare themes and contribute to preventative education, awareness activity and targeted support for players and families.

Equality, diversity and inclusion responsibilities

- Act as an operational EDI champion within the Academy, embedding inclusive, child-centred practice into safeguarding, player support, inductions, transitions, player and parent voice, and day-to-day Academy activity.

- Plan, coordinate and, where appropriately trained, deliver an age-appropriate programme of EDI workshops for Academy players, parents/carers and staff. Ensure the programme is scheduled across the season, reaches part-time and casual staff, is accessible to participants, and is delivered in accordance with Club policy, applicable Youth Development Rules, PGAAC audit expectations and football-authority guidance.

- Evaluate the effectiveness of EDI workshops through attendance monitoring, player and parent/carer voice, staff feedback, learning checks and review of incident themes; implement or recommend improvements where gaps are identified.

- Ensure EDI learning is included within the U9-U14 player-support and personal-development programme, covering relevant protected characteristics, respectful behaviours, discrimination, inclusion, allyship, reporting routes and the consequences of discriminatory conduct.

- Work with the Head of Safeguarding, Academy Manager, Player Care, Human Resources and appropriate internal or external specialists to identify EDI training needs and secure suitably qualified workshop delivery.

- Maintain auditable evidence of EDI provision, including schedules, attendance, learning objectives, resources, participant feedback, impact review and actions arising, and promptly address gaps affecting part-time, casual or newly appointed staff.

- Promote and clearly communicate confidential routes for players, parents/carers and staff to report discrimination, bias or exclusion, ensuring concerns are recorded, escalated, responded to and monitored under Club safeguarding, complaints and disciplinary procedures.

- Use player voice, parent/carer voice, incident themes and available demographic information to identify barriers to inclusion and recommend proportionate improvements to the Academy environment, policies and programmes.

- Contribute evidence and updates for PGAAC, EFL, FA and internal assurance activity, and support completion of any EDI-related action plans within agreed timescales.

Governance, standards and safer recruitment

- Work in accordance with Club safeguarding policies and procedures, EFL safeguarding rules and standards, The FA safeguarding framework, relevant legislation and statutory guidance.

- Attend all required safeguarding meetings with the Head of Safeguarding, prepare accurate updates and complete agreed actions within required timescales.

- Support the Head of Safeguarding to maintain safeguarding records and assurance documentation, including the Single Central Record (SCR), training records, eligibility checks and audit evidence.

- Support safer recruitment processes for roles involving children, including role-risk assessment, application and interview safeguards, references, identity and right-to-work checks, qualification verification, appropriate DBS and barred-list checks where legally eligible, induction and ongoing suitability monitoring.

- Identify gaps or non-compliance promptly and escalate them to the Head of Safeguarding, supporting remedial action and continuous improvement.

Academy integration and player transition

- Actively participate in all relevant Junior Academy multidisciplinary team (MDT), operational and planning meetings, contributing safeguarding and player-welfare insight to decisions.

- Lead the delivery, communication, monitoring and review of the Junior Academy Player Transition Policy, ensuring additional support is considered for players joining, moving within or leaving the Academy.

- Work collaboratively with coaching, medical, education, psychology, performance and operations colleagues while maintaining appropriate safeguarding independence and challenge.

- Contribute to risk assessments, tours, travel, events, trialist arrangements and other Academy activities where safeguarding input is required.

Training, administration and continuous improvement

- Complete safeguarding, safer recruitment, equality, data protection and role-specific continuing professional development (CPD), maintaining an up-to-date learning record.

- Support the Head of Safeguarding with administrative tasks, audits, policy reviews, meeting records, action trackers and reporting as required.

- Deliver or support age-appropriate safeguarding and welfare briefings for players, parents and Junior Academy staff.

- Remain alert to developments in safeguarding practice and professional football, sharing relevant learning and supporting improvements across the Junior Academy.

CANDIDATE PROFILE

We are looking for an approachable, professional and child-centred individual with a strong commitment to safeguarding, player welfare and EDI. The successful candidate will support safeguarding across the Academy while primarily leading player support for U9-U14 players, building positive relationships with players and families and ensuring young people have a meaningful voice in their Academy experience.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

This role involves regular work with children and is subject to the Club's safer recruitment process. Appointment will be conditional upon satisfactory completion of all checks that are lawful, relevant and proportionate to the role, which are expected to include:

- Assessment against the role of safeguarding responsibilities through shortlisting and a values- and safeguarding-focused interview.
- Proof of identity, right to work in the United Kingdom and verification of relevant qualifications or professional registrations.
- Satisfactory professional references, including the most recent relevant employer, where appropriate.
- An Enhanced DBS check with the relevant barred-list check where the duties meet the legal eligibility criteria, together with any additional football-authority vetting required for the post.
- Consideration of overseas criminal-record information where the successful candidate has lived or worked abroad and checks are appropriate and available.
- Satisfactory completion of safeguarding induction, the Club code of conduct, role-specific training and any probationary review requirements.
- An ongoing duty to disclose matters that may affect suitability to work with children, in accordance with Club policy and the law.

QUALIFICATIONS/SKILL REQUIREMENTS

- Essential: professional experience in safeguarding, child protection, youth welfare, education, social care, policing, health, sport or a comparable child-facing environment.
- Essential: experience of responding to concerns involving children and of producing clear, accurate and confidential records.
- Essential: confidence working directly with children aged 9-14 and communicating sensitively with parents and carers.
- Essential: ability and willingness to work regular evenings and Sundays in line with the Junior Academy programme.
- Essential: ability to attend the stated work locations and respond flexibly to Academy operational requirements.
- Essential: commitment to child-centred practice, professional boundaries, equality, diversity and inclusion.

- Essential: demonstrable commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and the confidence to facilitate, coordinate or quality-assure EDI learning for children, parents/carers and staff.
- Desirable: experience of planning EDI workshops, monitoring participation and impact, and maintaining evidence for regulatory, audit or quality-assurance purposes.
- Desirable: experience within professional football, an Academy, an elite sports environment or another regulated youth setting.
- Desirable: experience of supporting player transitions, participation or feedback programmes, or multidisciplinary case discussions.
- Sound knowledge of child protection, contextual safeguarding, online safety, peer-on-peer harm, exploitation, abuse of trust, information sharing and the additional vulnerabilities that may affect young athletes.
- Working knowledge of The FA safeguarding framework and EFL safeguarding standards, with the ability to apply requirements proportionately in an Academy environment.
- Working knowledge of the Equality Act 2010, protected characteristics, inclusive practice and football-specific expectations relating to discrimination, harassment, victimisation and reporting.
- Ability to translate EDI requirements into appropriate age workshops, practical guidance, auditable records and measurable improvements across the Academy.
- Understanding of safer recruitment principles, DBS eligibility, barred-list considerations and the purpose and maintenance of a Single Central Record.
- Ability to listen carefully, ask appropriate non-leading questions, remain calm and take prompt action when concerns arise.
- Excellent written communication and case-recording skills, with strong attention to accuracy, chronology, neutrality and confidentiality.
- Strong interpersonal skills and professional confidence to advise, challenge and escalate concerns constructively.
- Ability to organise competing priorities, maintain secure records, meet deadlines and follow actions through to completion.
- Competence using Microsoft 365 and secure electronic safeguarding or case-management systems.
- Relevant safeguarding qualification or evidence of equivalent learning. The FA Safeguarding Children Course, safer recruitment training and appropriate first-aid training are desirable or must be completed within a timeframe set by the Club.

HOW TO APPLY & DEADLINE

Please send CV & Cover letter to Hlaughton@oufc.co.uk by Friday 20th November.


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