



FOUNDATION

**MENTAL WELLBEING
POLICY & PROCEDURES
2023-24**

Version Control

Document Title:	Mental Wellbeing Policy Season - 2023/2024
Document Owner:	Port Vale Football Club - Rich Talbot – Head of Safeguarding
Reference:	August 2023 (Revised Version)

Document Review

Last Reviewed	Position	Reason
08/2022	Tim Bailey (DSO)	Annual Review
14/03/2023	Rich Talbot (DSO)	New Wellbeing Action Plan
03/08/2023	Rich Talbot (Safeguarding Manager)	Annual Review
02/02/2024	Rich Talbot (Head of Safeguarding)	Update staff changes & structure

Version History

Version	Date Released	Originator	Authorised	Comments
1.0	03/2021	Natalie Simpson	Board	Mental Wellbeing Policy
1.1	04/2021	Jon Bloore	Board	Revised Version
1.2	08/2021	Tim Bailey	Board	Revised Version
1.3	08/2022	Tim Bailey	Board	Revised Version
1.4	14/03/2023	Rich Talbot	Board	Revised Version
1.5	03/08/2023	Rich Talbot	Board	Revised Version
1.6	02/02/2024	Rich Talbot	Board	Revised Version

1. Introduction

Statement

1.1 Port Vale Football Club (hereafter referred to as the Club) is committed to ensuring that when working with young people in an often competitive environment, it is important that staff and coaches are aware of stress which may occur through pressures which can be created by the ambitions of both players and their parents/guardians.

We are committed to ensuring the protection and promotion of the mental health and wellbeing of all our players, scholars, staff and volunteers.

We shall continuously strive to improve the mental health environment and culture of the Club by identifying, eliminating or minimising all harmful processes, procedures



and behaviours that may cause psychological harm or illness to its players and staff. Furthermore, we shall continuously strive, as far as is reasonably practicable, to promote mental health throughout the Club by establishing and maintaining processes that enhance mental health and wellbeing.

Carol Shanahan

Chair and Co-owner

Scope

1.2 This Policy is for use across the Club and is to be observed by all those working or volunteering and who may encounter a person suffering with mental health, this to ensure best practice in promoting the 'duty of care' shown towards an individual who may require support. Activities undertaken at the following locations and departments that are encapsulated under the remit of this policy including:

Port Vale Football Club and the Vale Park Stadium

Port Vale Foundation Trust

Port Vale First Team

Port Vale Academy and Youth Development

Port Vale Women

Port Vale Retail Store

Bescura LTD (Family Hub)

Any location visited by staff/volunteers in an official capacity.

This policy applies equally to all players, scholars, staff and volunteers at the Club.

2. Definitions

2.1 There are occasions when players are released from the Academy from the age of 9 years and upwards. This is more prevalent between the ages of 16 and 18 years. Worrying about possible release and learning to cope after release are two significant triggers for poor mental health. They can create feelings of stress and sometimes feelings of failure. It is vital that support is in place to address these challenging times and is embedded within the culture of the Club and in particular the Academy.

2.2 Every year, one in four of us will experience a mental health problem, but this is just what we are aware of. Many more people struggle without telling anyone or seeking support.

Mental Health



Mental health - Everyone has mental health, just as everyone has physical health. How we feel can vary from good mental wellbeing to difficult feelings and emotions through to severe mental health problems.

Mental wellbeing - Mental wellbeing is the ability to cope with the day-to-day stresses of life, work productively, interact positively with others and acknowledge your own potential.

If you have good mental wellbeing, you are able to:

- Feel relatively confident in yourself and have positive self-esteem.
- Feel and express a range of emotions.
- Build good relationships with others.
- Feel engaged with the world around you.
- Live and work productively.
- Cope with the stresses of daily life.
- Adapt and manage in times of change and uncertainty

Poor mental health - Poor mental health is a state of low mental wellbeing where a person is unable to realise their own potential, cope with the day-to-day pressures of life, work productively or contribute to a community.

Mental health problems – Everyone has times when they struggle with mental health, but when these difficult experiences or feelings go on for a long time and affect our ability to enjoy and live life in the way one would want to, this is a mental health problem. That person may receive a specific diagnosis from a doctor or just feel more generally that they are experiencing poor mental health.

Common mental health problems - These include depression, anxiety, phobias and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). These make up the majority of the problems that lead to one in four people experiencing a mental health problem in any given year. Symptoms can range from comparatively mild to very severe. Less common mental health problems like schizophrenia or bipolar disorder can have a big impact on the life of a person, it may be harder to find appropriate treatment and, as understanding tends to be lower, people may face more stigma. However, many people are able to live with and recover from these diagnoses and manage the impact on their life successfully.

Work-related stress - Work-related stress is defined by the Health and Safety Executive as the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them at work. Stress, including work-related stress, can be a significant cause of illness and is known to be linked with high levels of sickness absence, staff turnover and other issues such as increased capacity for error. Stress is not a medical diagnosis, but severe stress that continues for a long time may lead to a diagnosis of depression or anxiety, or

more severe mental health problems.

2.3 Our mental health influences our physical health, as well as our capability to lead a healthy lifestyle and to manage and recover from physical health conditions.

2.4 Mental health problems start early in life. Half of all mental health problems have been established by the age of 14 years, rising to 75% by age 24 years. This clearly evidences the need to embed a culture of care within the Club and in particular the Academy given the number of young people who attempt to seek a football career at Port Vale Football Club.

3. Aims

3.1 The aim of this policy is to:

- To create a workplace environment that promotes the mental wellbeing of all players, scholars, staff and volunteers.
- To promote high ethical standards throughout the Club.

4. Objectives

4.1 Develop management skills to promote mental wellbeing and management health issues effectively.

Key Actions

- Provide players, scholars, staff and volunteers information on, and increase their awareness of, mental wellbeing.
- Provide opportunities for players, scholars, staff and volunteers to look after their mental wellbeing, for example through physical activity, stress-buster activities and social events.
- Offer employees flexible working arrangements that promote their mental wellbeing.
- Give all staff and volunteers the opportunity to influence how they fulfil their role, scope for varying working conditions as far as possible, and opportunities to develop and fully utilise their skills.
- Set realistic targets for players, scholars, staff and volunteers that do not require them to work unreasonable hours.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers have clearly defined job descriptions, objectives and responsibilities and provide them with good management support, appropriate training and adequate resources to do their job.
- Manage conflict effectively and ensure the workplace is free from bullying and harassment, discrimination and racism.
- Establish good two-way communication to ensure player, scholar, staff and volunteer involvement, particularly during periods of organisational change.

4.2 Develop a Culture based upon Trust, Support and Mutual Respect

Key Actions

- Provide non-biased and proactive support to individual players, scholars, staff and volunteers who experience mental health problems.
- Show compassion to all players, scholars, staff and volunteers who are suffering from mental health problems due to circumstances outside the workplace, and who consequently find it difficult to fulfil their role properly.
- Give new players, scholars, staff and volunteers a comprehensive induction programme providing an understanding of the Club, the established policies and procedures, and the role they are expected to carry out.

4.3 To provide support for players, scholars, staff and volunteers experiencing mental health issues

Key Actions

- Ensure individuals suffering from mental health problems are treated fairly and consistently and are not made to feel guilty about their problems.
- Encourage staff to consult their own GP, or a counsellor of their choice.
- Investigate the contribution of working conditions and other organisational factors to mental ill health and remedy this where possible.
- In cases of long-term sickness absence, put in place, where possible, a structured and/or phased return to work.
- Make every effort to identify suitable alternative employment, in full discussion with the employee, where a return to the same role is not possible due to identified risks or other factors.
- Treat all matters relating to individual players, scholars, staff and volunteers and their mental health problems in the strictest confidence and share on a 'need to know' basis only with consent from the individual concerned.
- Ask individuals to complete the 'Wellbeing Action Plan' document. This can be used for identifying triggers and listing coping mechanisms ([See Appendix C](#)).
- Inform the Head of Safeguarding (hereafter referred to as the HoS), departmental Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO), or Line Manager who will record the matter onto the 'MyConcern' secure online system.
- The HoS will notify the Senior Safeguarding Manger (hereafter referred to as the SSM) as soon as is practicable after the initial report is made.

4.4 Identifying and Reducing Workplace Stressors

Key Actions

- Identify all workplace stressors and conduct risk assessments to eliminate stress or control the risks from stress. Utilise the 'Wellbeing Action Plan' document.

- Provide training in good management practices, including those related to health and safety and stress management.
- Provide confidential counselling for staff affected by stress caused by either work or external factors.
- Provide adequate resources to enable managers to implement the agreed Mental Wellbeing Policy procedures of the Club.

Responsibilities

Heads of Departments have a responsibility to:

- Monitor the workplace, identify hazards and risks and take steps to eliminate or reduce these as far as is reasonably practicable.
- Ensure good communication between management and staff, particularly where there are organisational and procedural changes.
- Assist and support players, scholars, staff and volunteers who are known to have mental health problems or are experiencing stress outside work, e.g., due to bereavement.
- Ensure players, scholars, staff and volunteers are provided with the resources and training required to fulfil their role.
- Monitor workloads to ensure that people are not overloaded.
- Monitor working hours and overtime to ensure that staff are not over working.
- Monitor holidays to ensure that staff are taking their full entitlement.
- Ensure staff are provided with meaningful developmental opportunities.
- In addition, senior management will ensure that staff performing a management or supervisory function have sufficient competence to discharge that function in a manner consistent with the maintenance of mental health in the workplace.
- The HoS will record and monitor all completed 'Wellbeing Action Plan' documents upon the 'MyConcern' secure online system for all players, scholars, staff and volunteers.
- Provide advice and support to managers, players, scholars, staff and volunteers in relation to this policy.

People Manager (Human Resources) has a responsibility to:

- Monitor and report on levels of sickness absence which relate to mental health problems including stress-related illness, this in conjunction with department heads.
- Record and monitor all completed 'Wellbeing Action Plan' documents upon the 'Breathe' secure online system for substantive members of staff.
- Provide advice and support to managers, players, scholars, staff and volunteers in relation to this policy.

Head of Development and Education has a responsibility to:

- Organise training and awareness courses on workplace mental wellbeing in conjunction with suitable experts.

Players, scholars, staff and volunteers have a responsibility to:

- Raise issues of concern and seek help from their line manager, People Manager or HoS.
- Accept opportunities for counselling and support when recommended.

5. Getting Support for Players & Scholars

5.1 All players, irrespective of age or team are encouraged to speak with their Coaches where they feel able and comfortable to do so. This can be an ad-hoc conversation at the request of the player or a conversation taking place during a scheduled review.

5.2 The Professional Football Association (PFA) offers clubs the ability to access the 'PFA Safety Net' online platform and this is utilised at the Club. It is tailored by age to ensure the appropriate level of information is reaching players at Foundation, Youth and Professional Development stages. This resource is also available to parents, guardians, carers and Academy support staff so that they can all support the individual with:

- Understanding their responsibilities on and off the pitch.
- Recognising behavioural addiction.
- Advice on panic attack, anxiety and depression.
- Information on gambling and substance abuse.
- How to manage insomnia or feeling homesick.
- How to deal with bullying and grief.

5.3 Scholars within the Academy also have access to the 'Aim-For' online platform, that allows each individual the opportunity to develop a growth mindset with a focus on performance improvement, wellbeing, and self-management for mental healthcare for all performers.

5.4 Players and scholars within the Academy, along with their parents/carers also have the opportunity to discuss any concerns with the Player Care Lead, the Academy Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO's) and the HoS who are able to offer guidance and support without prejudice ([See Appendix A](#)).

6. Getting Support for Staff & Volunteers

6.1 Talking about mental health does not have to be hard and you do not need to be an expert. Simply asking someone how they are feeling can really make a difference. Staff are encouraged, where they feel comfortable doing so, to speak first with their line manager about any matter that is causing them concern.



6.2 The Club now have a number of trained Mental Health First Aiders (see below) who are able and willing to support individuals who are struggling with their mental health. With the consent of the individual, they can be referred to other agencies for support.

6.3 This policy contains a copy of the 'Wellbeing Action Plan' which may be able to assist and/or identify individuals when in need of support. Questions upon the document can be treated as a self-assessment guide or can be completed when talking to others. This document is treated as 'Confidential' once completed by the individual ([See Appendix C](#)).

6.4 A list of external support available is found at [Appendix B](#) below.

Mental Health First Aiders

Ritchie Bates (Head of Commercial)

Jon Bloore (Deputy Safety Officer)

Jess Frost (Club Secretary)

Matthew Meredith (Academy Head of Education)

Michelle Fallows (People Manager)

Gemma Finney (PVFC Foundation - Wellbeing Manager)

Kay Speedman (Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Lead)

Ben Sproston (Head of Growth Learning & Development)

Rich Talbot (Head of Safeguarding)

Will Turner (PVFC Foundation - Head of Community)

Megan Walters (Academy Player Care Lead)

Ben Wood (Media & Marketing Officer)



[Appendix A – Internal Contact Details](#)

List of Internal Contacts

Senior Safeguarding Manager (SSM)

Matt Hancock (Chief Executive Officer)

(E): matt.hancock@port-vale.co.uk (M): 07841 669182

Head of Safeguarding & Lead Disclosure Officer

Rich Talbot

(E): rich.talbot@port-vale.co.uk (M): 07703 753688

Port Vale Academy Designated Safeguarding Officers

Daniel Lloyd (Head of Coaching – U14 – U18)

(E) daniel.lloyd@port-vale.co.uk / (T): 01782 655830

Megan Walters (Player Care Lead)

(E): megan.walters@port-vale.co.uk / (M): 07802 796664

Port Vale Foundation Designated Safeguarding Officer

Will Turner (Head of Community)

(E): will.turner@port-vale.co.uk / (M): 07921 071848

Disability Access Officer (DAO)

Luke Cassidy

(E): DAO@port-vale.co.uk (M): 07722 925759



[APPENDIX B – External Contacts & Resources Details](#)

List of External Contacts and Resources

The Professional Footballers Association (PFA)

(T): 0207 329 9966

Aim-For (Academy Scholars)

(T): 0800 689 0721

Hub for Hope

Mobile Telephone App (IOS & Android) – Links to numerous support services.

Mind (Mental Health Support)

(T): 0300 123 3393 / (W): www.mind.org.uk

The Samaritans

(T): 116 123 / (W): www.samaritans.org.uk

Shout 85258

Free, confidential, 24/7 text-messaging support service.

The Mix

UK-based charity that provides free, confidential support for young people under 25. Young people can get support from the trained team (T): 0808 808 4994

Men Unite

Signposting to numerous mental health and wellbeing service providers.

(W): www.menunite.org.uk

National Domestic Abuse Helpline

(T): 0808 2000247

Stonewall (LGBTQ+ Support Network)

(W): www.stonewall.org.uk

Papyrus Suicide Prevention (Hopeline247 - 24 Hours – 7 days a week)

(T): 0800 068 4141 / (Text): 07860 039967 / (E): pat@papyrus-uk.org



[APPENDIX C – Wellbeing Action Plan Document \(Copy\)](#)

WELLBEING ACTION PLAN (Confidential once completed)

To be used by players, scholars, staff and volunteers to help develop an awareness of working styles, stress triggers and responses.

Name of Person	
Role in Club	
Date	

1. What helps you stay mentally healthy at work?

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2. What can the Club do to pro-actively support you to stay mentally healthy?

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3. Are there currently any situations that trigger poor mental health for you?

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4. How do these situations impact on your performance/work?

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5. Are there any warning signs that you show that we might recognise?

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6. How could the Club minimise the triggers or help you manage the impact?

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7. If we notice early warning signs – what would you like us to do?

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8. What steps can you take if you start to experience poor mental health?

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9. Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?

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Person Completing /Role	
Signed	
Date	

Reported to People Manager (HR)	YES / NO
Signed	
Date	



Reported to Head of Safeguarding	YES / NO
Signed	
Date	

Forwarded to SSM	YES / NO
Signed	
Date	



Authority from Port Vale Board and Acceptance of Policy

Board Member:	Claire Halket
Signature:	Claire Halket
Date:	02/02/2024 (Review)

CEO/Senior Safeguarding Manager:	Matt Hancock
Signature:	Matt Hancock
Date:	02/02/2024 (Review)

This policy will be reviewed by the Head of Safeguarding regularly and annually or following learning outcomes as a result of a significant incident or when legislation or statutory guidance changes are implemented.