

Child Welfare

By Samantha Shilton

In this day and age it is always nice to know that people looking after your children take the job seriously, and none more so than Upper Hopton C.C.

With a county welfare officer on their staff in the form of Jack Charlton, the club has no choice but to keep their child protection policies up to date and enforced where necessary. "With Jack at the club we obviously have to keep ahead of the game and up to standard" says Ian Heaton, child welfare officer at the club.

And ahead of the game is exactly where the club is at. In the clubhouse can be found a rather robust collection of the different policies relating to child protection, should anybody wish to brush up on their knowledge.

"Safeguarding our children could not be more important, and we've got a comprehensive list of everything you need," says Heaton, 42. "We've got bullying policies; reporting policies; safeguarding welfare policies – it's all on the board there".

The club has never had a major incident relating to child protection according to Heaton, which could be testimony to the outstanding work that Heaton and other members of the club have done.

"Being child welfare officer isn't exactly an active role because everything is in place now. We haven't had any incidents, so most of my job is to do with risk assessments; health and safety; making sure the kids are properly supervised at practices and at matches; making sure they have got appropriate travel arrangements, that sort of thing".

But if no incidents have ever occurred, you might wonder if the club is well equipped to deal with them? "It's a friendly club and I'm quite confident that if anybody did have a query or an issue that they would bring it up there and then. That way, it doesn't get the chance to escalate into anything more serious and it can be dealt with accordingly".

The club seems to prefer taking preventative measures, as every junior member is required to fill out a registration form which has the different policies attached to it. By doing this, Heaton is ensuring that every junior, and the junior's parents, know exactly what to do if a situation presented itself.

"It's about raising awareness" explains Heaton. "Not just for members but for the coaching staff and the captains, who all have to have a criminal background check. Everybody in a position of authority is vetted to give piece of mind to parents".

Heaton adds that all coaching staff and captains are also prepped on the different child protection policies, so that every base is covered. "If you have a junior playing in the adult squad, there's things that they need to watch out for. For instance, the junior can't be getting changed at the same time as the adults and there's obviously no mobile phones allowed in the changing rooms".