



SECTION	Football and Safeguarding
POLICY	Youth Players Playing/Training Up
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1. Introduction

Safeguarding is at the centre of everything Club Doncaster represents. Club Doncaster recognised that as part of its elite sports teams, there will be times where Academy players will ‘play-up’ into the respective senior team.

This policy outlines the processes that are put in place to ensure that the individual(s) are well protected while playing and training with the senior team.

2. Parent/guardian dialogue

As part of the process of an U18 player being called up to the first-team professional squad, dialogue will be opened with the players parent(s)/guardian(s). As part of the dialogue, the following arrangements will be discussed:

- Congratulate them on their achievement(s) thus far. Highlight that being called up doesn’t mean they will be playing, or even involved in the matchday 18.
- Provide reassurances that you will be making sure the player is comfortable at all times and is emotionally supported in what could be a stressful and nervous period.
- If it’s an away fixture –explain that their child will be travelling with the team and they will be staying in a hotel. They will have their own room, unless there is more than one U18 travelling together.
- Explain the ‘buddy’ process, whereby a senior professional will be appointed as a person to support them and help them prepare throughout the experience.
- Explain the process we’re going through to help support.

3. Discussions with the player

It is the responsibility of the First-Team Manager or Lead Professional Development Phase Coach to inform the player they have been called up. The Head of Football Administration and Operations will notify the club's DSO (People and Culture Manager), who will have a conversation with the player in question, discussing, and not limited to, the following:

- a) Congratulate the player on being selected, and highlight the reality of the playing time and potential to not be in the matchday 18.
- b) Talk through emotions they might be feeling.
- c) Explain the process of identifying a 'buddy' for them.
- d) Explain that the player does not have to tolerate any forms of 'banter' or behaviour, and should set their own boundaries and know when a 'line' is crossed to inform the club DSO.
- e) If travelling away, explain there will be a lot of 'down time', so should take something to keep them occupied while in the hotel room, or travelling on the bus.
- f) Explain the process of having a hotel room to themselves, unless travelling with another U18 player.
- g) Outline the expected respect of a code of conduct and their personal responsibilities during the trip. This includes ensuring they drink no alcohol, no access to adult TV or adult materials, not to engage in gambling and social media should be used in a responsible manner.
- h) Remind the player of the process of who they can talk to or contact if they feel overwhelmed or has any other concerns while travelling away.

4. Talking to the buddy

The DSO has a responsibility to ensure they have appointed a 'buddy' from the senior first-team who will be travelling. This is a member of the first-team playing squad who the DSO trusts to be a first in-person port-of-call.

The 'buddy' should be a player who the U18 can feel comfortable to approach.

When the DSO speaks to the 'buddy', they should stress that they are not the players responsible carer, but there for emotional support if and when required.

5. Talking to members of staff with a DBS CRC Disclosure

Club Doncaster ensures that members of its first-team staff have an in date DBS/CRC. Ahead of a game, the DSO will touch base with members of the first-team staff who have this to ensure they are another emotional support mechanism for the young player, if they require. Similar to the 'buddy', they are not held responsible for any supervision or the care of the young player.

6. Communication with the first-team manager and head of football administration and operations

Once the DSO is made aware of the U18 player receiving a call-up to the first-team matchday, it is the DSO's responsibility to make sure the first-team management are aware of the procedures in place to protect the U18.

The key messages to deliver are:

- a) Players under the age of 18 are defined through law as children, and adults working with children need to protect those young players, but also demonstrate standards of behaviour which do not leave the adults open to allegations against themselves.
- b) Players U18 who are travelling to away games must have their own hotel room, unless sharing with another U18 player.
- c) Separate changing and shower facilities must be made available to the player.
- d) Staff and players must not encourage U18s to engage in any inappropriate activities such as gambling; the use of alcohol or other inappropriate illegal substances; or watching or engaging in inappropriate activities. The younger the player, the more vulnerable they will be.
- e) Staff should be aware that the player may be very vulnerable, and shouldn't act upon that to make them engage in inappropriate activities. The younger the player, the more vulnerable they will be.
- f) Provide positive role models from the squad who can demonstrate exemplary behaviour.

7. Paperwork

Club Doncaster's safeguarding and/or player care team will ensure:

- A consent form is signed by the parent/guardian, giving permission to participate in senior training or matches and they are aware of the physical and mental risks associated with that.
 - The form will cover who their safeguarding and welfare contacts are at Club Doncaster.
- The club's DSO will join the Head of Safety for their pre-match briefing with match officials, if the fixture is at home. The DSO will make the match officials aware that there is an underage player involved.
- The player will have their own changing rooms, shower and toilet, so they will not be mixing with any senior pros or staff.
- A member of the safeguarding team will be present in the tunnel to ensure procedures are adhered to. Members of staff based in the tunnel are reminded of their safeguarding responsibilities to ensure that access to the changing room is prohibited.
- Should the match be away from, it is the responsibility of the Head of Football Administration and Operations to warn the home team that there is a

possibility of an U18 player playing for us for that fixture. The responsibility is then on the home team to prepare appropriate arrangements for their involvement.

8. Summary

All staff that work with U18 players are in a position of trust. Club Doncaster must ensure that everything we do allows for the young players, their parent(s) and guardian(s) to have full faith in us to handle this kind of transition.

