



DEPARTMENT	SAFEGUARDING
POLICY/PROCEDURE	HOST FAMILY POLICY
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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set out how Lincoln City Football Club (“the **Club**”) will effectively deliver our Host Family provision to ensure that the highest standards of care are afforded to our young players.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all Club employees (including those on temporary and fixed-term contracts), and members of host families.

The Club is committed to creating an inclusive and safe environment where everyone can thrive, and all feel welcome. We will do this by embedding a culture where every individual engaged with the Club is treated with respect and met with positivity and compassion. We are all responsible for upholding the Club’s values by ensuring others feel included and valued, championing equality, and challenging all forms of discrimination, increasing our knowledge to develop the confidence to do so.

We believe that together we are stronger; we celebrate diversity and will proactively work with our community to ensure everyone has a fair opportunity to participate. This way the Club will build a culture to be proud of.

3. INTRODUCTION

Our Academy system provides a great opportunity for our young players to achieve their dreams, however occasionally they will be required to live away from home.

We recognise that whilst living away from their families they can be vulnerable to a range of additional stressors and hazards. It is our responsibility to ensure that the care and accommodation provided to them safeguards and promotes their mental health and emotional well-being.

4. DEFINITIONS

Host Family (HF)

“Host Family” (HF) means distant relatives, unrelated, independent families, or individuals contracted or employed (paid or volunteer) by the Club for the purpose of accommodating and caring for young players who need to live away from home to undertake their training at the Club. This includes accommodating and caring for trialists, a young player’s family, and providing holiday cover for other host families.

5. HOST FAMILY GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The welfare of the child is the paramount concern.

The welfare of children is the paramount concern in our decisions relating to our young players. Sometimes it will be necessary to distinguish clearly between their welfare as a child and their interests as a player, however, the former will always be prioritised.

Children and young people’s right to meaningful involvement in decision-making.

We have effective policies and practices that ascertain children’s wishes and feelings and include them in decisions made about them.

Working in partnership with Parents and Guardians

Parents and guardians of our academy players retain the primary decision-making responsibility for deciding what is in their child’s interests. We will ensure that we communicate openly and work in partnership with parents and



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guardians to ensure that they have all the necessary information to make informed decisions.

Everyone must agree to care and accommodation decisions.

Each Academy Player provided with care and accommodation must have an Individual Player Care Plan. This Plan will be developed in collaboration with the Academy Player, parent/guardian, Host family, and Academy Staff. This Plan will set out the expectations of each stakeholder.

6. HOST CATEGORIES

Host Families

Host Family arrangements involve either distant relatives, unrelated, independent families, or individuals contracted or employed (paid or volunteer) by a Club for the purpose of accommodating and caring for young players who need to live away from home to undertake their training at the Club.

Temporary Substitute Accommodation

Temporary substitute accommodation means communal accommodation not linked to providing education, which is provided by the Club, solely for Academy Players registered to train/play football. This may include accommodating and caring for trialists, their families and holiday cover for other Host Families which is sometimes at local private hotel premises. Children will always be accompanied in these situations by parents, or another adult nominated by the parent or guardian in exceptional cases.

In these rare scenarios the person nominated by the parent or guardian should be another adult family member and written consent of the parent should be recorded. Club Representatives or Intermediaries should not accompany children in these circumstances.

Where cover is provided for holiday reasons this should be arranged as far in advance as possible. Safer Recruitment checks are required for anyone other than the parent or guardian in all circumstances. The Academy Player Care Manager or the Club Safeguarding Lead should be notified of any such proposed arrangements to facilitate this process.

7. HOST FAMILY RECRUITMENT

Advertising

Prospective Host Families are often introduced to the Club through current host families or other contacts within the Club. However, the Club may also recruit through Club media channels and/or local circulation campaigns.

Application

Within our application process, we will inform all prospective Host Families in writing of:

- the range and needs of the Academy Player(s) likely to require care and accommodation.
- the comprehensive nature of the assessments and checks required by the Club.
- the Academy to Host Families' home distance requirement.
- the competencies they need to demonstrate their suitability for registration as a Host Family for the Club through the Host Family Job Description and Person Specification.

Prospective Host Families will then make an informed decision whether they wish to proceed.

Initial Visit

Where prospective Host Families meet the application criteria, we will arrange an initial personal visit and explain



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the suitability assessment process. The purpose of this visit is to ensure the family can offer the right environment for our players and establish an early rapport with them.

During the initial visit, we will discuss:

- the induction, training, supervision, and review requirements of Host Families.
- Host Families' general duties, Club expectations, and Code of Conduct.
- Personal insurance commitment including the need to fully inform their 'home contents' insurer of the Host Family's circumstances.
- the status and implications for the Host Family as a contractor of services to the Club and fees.
- inform the applicants of the next stage and likely timescales.

The initial visit will be completed by the Academy Player Care manager and/or Club Safeguarding Lead. Where staff identify reasons not to progress the application, these should be recorded and discussed with the Head of Academy and Club Safeguarding Lead.

The Club will always inform the applicant in writing if the application will not be progressed.

Where sufficient strengths have been noted and no significant adverse factors are present, the application should proceed to the next Suitability Assessment stage.

Suitability Assessment Process

Suitability Assessments will be undertaken by Academy staff with appropriate knowledge and experience in assessing the suitability of individuals to provide care and accommodation. This member of staff will have completed Safeguarding and Safer Recruitment Training.

The assessment will follow the Club's format of Suitability Assessment to provide Care and Accommodation and will include:

- Care and Accommodation Provider Suitability Assessment Report
- Home Safety Checklist
- Care and Accommodation Provider Health Declaration
- Firearms Assessment
- Consent to References, social media, and Local Authority Checks

The suitability assessment will be presented to the Host Family Panel by way of a written report. The person completing the assessment will not be present to promote an objective approach. In each case, decision-making will be accountable and transparent. The applicant will then be informed of the Host Family Panel outcome in writing.

Outcomes will include:

- accept the recommendation.
- reject the recommendation.
- defer the decision.

Safer Recruitment Checks

Upon the decision to accept the recommendation for a Host Family as suitable to provide accommodation, the Club will complete safer recruitment checks. These checks will include:

- DBS checks for all people over the age of 18 years within the household
- Two references for each proposed Host Family member.



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Contract

Upon successful completion of the Suitability Assessment and Safer Recruitment checks, the Club will require applicants to sign a written agreement confirming the terms of their contract for services.

Upon receipt of the signed agreement from the Host Family, their details will then be entered into the Club's Register of Host Families.

8. PLANNING

Our Academy Players require care and accommodation placements that facilitate their aspirations, talent, and strengths as elite athletes. Similarly, there is a need to support their vulnerabilities as children. We recognise the challenges presented by living away from home at such an important period in their development. The quality of our care and accommodation planning plays a critical role in supporting the young person to fulfil his individual learning and performance.

We will work collaboratively with parents and guardians to play a key role in the care and accommodation planning process. To achieve this, we will ensure that they are provided with all necessary information to make informed decisions about the care and accommodation provided for their child by the Club.

We ensure our young players play an integral role in the care and accommodation planning process. We routinely seek their wishes and feelings and encourage and maintain their participation in relation to placement.

The Host Family will have completed a rigorous application process to determine their suitability for this role. We recognise the significant part they play in supporting both the Academy Player and Club to achieve their respective goals. We work in partnership with them in the care and accommodation planning process.

Although the Club plays a central role in the care and accommodation process, we do not acquire parental responsibility. As the party who decides whether to accept a child or young person into the Academy and who determines the suitability of the care and accommodation provider, we do recognise our responsibilities and duty of care to all involved.

The use of information technology assists us to utilise data collection to forecast demand and project individual placement suitability.

Our rigorous Care and Accommodation planning process:

- Ensures that all parties are treated in an open and transparent way.
- Provides clarity about the responsibilities of each party.
- Promotes accountability as to whether the Host Family can support the Academy Player and the Academy's goals.

Placement

Placement decisions will involve consideration of all information gathered by Academy staff. Player profiles, suitability assessment, and the wishes and feelings of all stakeholders will be considered during this process.

The objective of the placement is to select the best available provider who can meet the individual needs of the player. The Club's aim is to develop a protracted and settled placement to promote the well-being and relationships of all stakeholders.

The Individual Player Care Plan

Every Academy Player within a Host Family setting will be subject to an Individual Player Care Plan (IPCP). Academy staff will have responsibility for compiling and reviewing this Plan.



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Wherever possible, the Club will complete the IPCP before the player moves into the accommodation. This will ensure that all parties understand what is expected, from whom and when, from the start of the placement.

In exceptional circumstances, it may not be possible to complete this before the player enters the programme. In these circumstances the Plan should be completed as soon as practicably possible.

The Planning Process

The planning process will include all interested parties:

- Academy Player.
- Parent or Guardian.
- Host Family.
- Academy – relevant Academy staff.

Communication with all parties will ensure that voices are heard, and requirements captured. This will subsequently inform the Individual Player Care Plan.

Maintenance and Review of Individual Player Care Plan

Responsibility for the update and review of the IPCP rests with Academy staff and stakeholders. The plan will be updated whenever a material change occurs, after which the amended version of the Care and Accommodation Plan will be circulated to all relevant people.

The IPCP will be made available for Multi-disciplinary Reviews held in respect of each Academy Player.

Each IPCP will be formally reviewed annually or in the event of a significant event such as:

- complaint made against the Host Family.
- change in Host Family’s circumstances.
- change in Academy Player’s circumstances that has a significant impact upon the care and accommodation needed such as injury.

9. INDUCTION & TRAINING

The Club will support all those involved in the Care and Accommodation process through an induction and training phase. The Induction will include processes that familiarises Host Families with the Club’s safeguarding policies and the skills required to provide accommodation. The training commitment is mandatory and any lack of engagement in this area will result in the contract being breached.

To ensure that children receive the highest care standards, the training programme will include both face-to-face and e-learning delivery. The induction should be completed within three months of the Host Family’s registration date.

HOST FAMILY MINIMUM TRAINING REQUIREMENTS	
Induction: Familiarisation with Host Family policies and procedures, Code of Conduct, Self-Declaration Form & undertake EFL Safeguarding course	Within one month of registration
EFL EDI online training course & online Prevent training course	Within three months of registration

This training will be delivered by a range of internal and external providers.



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10. SUPERVISION

Due to the important nature of this role, the Club will ensure that Host Families receive supportive supervision to help them to fulfil their role. The requirements for supervision visits to the home will differ according to the Development Phase of the Academy Player placed with the Host Family.

Supervision will be undertaken by a relevant person with a good understanding of the Academy, Academy Players, and Host Families. Occasional personal visits to Host Family homes will be made to ensure standards are maintained.

Supervision is defined broadly and includes face-to-face – individual and group, remote and digital communication e.g., email and telephone contact. Supervision will be recorded by the relevant member of Academy Staff undertaking the supervision. The Supervision Record will form part of the Review of Suitability to Provide Accommodation.

11. REVIEW

The Club will complete a review of the Host Family's continued suitability to provide accommodation on a frequent and periodic basis, normally every two months. This may be sooner if there has been a 'significant incident', i.e., an allegation made against a member of the Host Family household, the unplanned end of an Academy Player's stay with a Host Family, or any incident that might bring the Academy into disrepute.

The judgement as to what constitutes a 'significant incident' will be made by the Club Safeguarding Lead and/or Academy Player Care Manager in consultation with the Head of Academy.

The review process will include contributions from:

- The Academy Player
- Academy Staff
- Parent or Guardian
- Host Family members.

The review will be undertaken by safeguarding staff who will ensure it is transparent; rigorous; analytical and comes to an evidence-based recommendation.

Each decision will be accountable and transparent with outcomes communicated to the Host Family in writing.

Where the Club decides that a Host Family is no longer suitable, the Club may need to inform the Local Authority of our decision and the reason for having come to that conclusion. It may also be necessary to notify other external authorities such as the DBS. This decision will be agreed by the Head of Academy, Club Safeguarding Lead, and Academy Player Care Manager.

12. DELEGATED AUTHORITY

A person with delegated authority (i.e. Host Family member) may only do what they are authorised to do - save for in an emergency. In such cases, they can (and should) do what is reasonable to keep the child safe. Delegation of authority does not relieve the parent or guardian of liability that may arise because of a failure to meet that parental responsibility.

Arrangements for delegating authority should be agreed with stakeholders and recorded in the IPCP. This arrangement is not legally binding, and the parent or guardian may remove the child from the care and accommodation setting and/or the authority they have delegated, at any time, unless a court says otherwise.

There could be a range of situations in which decisions need to be made where authority may be delegated to the



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Host Family. These will be considered on an individual basis i.e. administration of over-the-counter medication.

The Academy Player will be included in all discussions about delegated authority.

Where legislation allows, if over 16, or under 16 but mature, he can consent in his own right. For example, an Academy Player aged 16 (or under that age and is considered by medical staff to have sufficient understanding of the implications of treatment) can consent to their own medical treatment.

13. ALLEGATIONS AGAINST HOST FAMILIES

An allegation is a concern raised by any person that a Host Family member has:

- acted, or failed to act, in a way that has caused significant harm to a child or young person or adult at risk.
- committed a criminal offence; or
- otherwise behaved in a way that indicates that they may pose a risk of harm which impacts upon their suitability to safely provide care and accommodation.

An allegation must be investigated with the involvement of the Local Authority in whose area the Host Family resides, together with the English Football League (EFL) and/or Football Association (FA).

Our Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy will apply in such situations. This policy outlines the action to be undertaken where allegations are made.

The Designated Officer (formerly Local Authority Designated Officer, LADO) will coordinate and oversee the investigation of the allegation and refer, where necessary, to Children's Social Care and the Police.

When allegations are made, we will consider the following strands:

- The police investigation of a possible criminal offence.
- Enquiries and assessment by Children Services to determine whether the Academy Player is a child in need of protection or in need of services.
- Consideration by the Club whether any disciplinary action is required.
- Consideration of poor practice that triggers a response under the FA's Low-Level Concern thresholds.

Each strand influences each other but is distinct and subject to different thresholds for action. A police decision of insufficient evidence and No Further Action (NFA) does not lead, necessarily, to an NFA decision from Children Services or the Club.

Clubs will investigate fully any allegations made against Host Family members to determine whether any action should be taken.

There may be occasions where the outcome of the investigation of the allegation coordinated by the Club Safeguarding Lead is unsubstantiated, however, the allegation triggered concern regarding standards of care.

Each investigation of these concerns will be transparent, rigorous, and evidence-based, leading to a fair and proportionate decision.

Consideration will be given to placing the player at alternative accommodation whilst the allegation is investigated. Such Allegations will always be considered at the Host Family's Review of Suitability - irrespective of the outcome of the allegation.

14. COMPLAINTS FROM PLAYERS, PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

On occasions, the Club may receive complaints from players or parents/guardians about lower-level matters which do not constitute allegations. This could be for a variety of reasons such as food quality, cleanliness, noise, privacy



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etc. In such cases, Academy staff will seek to resolve any differences through negotiation/advice. Every effort will be made to reduce any need for alternative placement unless necessary.

15. COMPLAINTS FROM HOST FAMILIES

Any complaints received from Host Families will be handled by the Club Safeguarding Lead in the first instance. If it is not possible to find a suitable resolution, then this matter will be escalated to the Chief Executive Officer.

In the unusual event of the Club being unable to resolve the matter, the Host Family will be referred to the EFL for determination.

Responsibility and Key Contacts

<https://www.weareimps.com/club/safeguarding>

Associated Policies

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
Safer Recruitment Policy
Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Staff Policy