

Taunton Youth Football Club Community Trust

Nurturing sporting intelligence: better than last week, but not as good as next week

Separated Parents Policy

Introduction

Research and experience have shown that separated parents can work well together, however, sometimes parents become estranged and find they are unable to communicate and work effectively together in support of their children's interests.

Purpose

At Taunton Youth Football Club we aim to maintain contact with both parents in the best interests of their child/children. The purpose of this policy is to clarify to all parties what is expected from separated parents and what can be expected from the Club.

We recognise that while the parents of some players may be separated, divorced or estranged, they are still entitled to information regarding their child/children and this entitlement cannot be restricted without a specific court order. In particular, the Club does not have the power to act on the request of one parent to restrict another.

Aims

We will remain neutral in difficult family circumstances and will not police one parent for another. All children's welfare and well-being is central to all we do and if we have any such concerns about a child we will involve all adults with parental responsibility.

Who has 'Parental Responsibility? (The Children Act 1989)

- All mothers automatically have parental responsibility;
- If the parents of a child were married/in a civil partnership at the time of birth, both parents automatically have parental responsibility;
- For children born after 1 December 2003 to unmarried parents, where the father's name is on the birth certificate, both the mother and father would usually have automatic parental responsibility
- In all other cases, parents seeking parental responsibility rights can acquire them through various legal means. (For further guidance see www.gov.uk/parental-rights-responsibilities)

Having parental responsibility means assuming all the rights, duties, powers, responsibilities and authority that a parent of a child has by law. People other than a child's natural parents can acquire parental responsibility through:

- being granted a Residence Order;
- being appointed a Guardian;
- being named in an Emergency Protection Order (although parental responsibility in such a case is limited to taking reasonable steps to safeguard or promote the child's welfare); or
- Adopting a child.

Responsibilities of the parents

- The information provided to the Club when the child first registers, including names of parents and emergency contact details will be presumed to be correct.
- Similarly, the information provided on the address(es) where the child resides will be presumed to be correct unless a court order proving otherwise is provided to the Club.
- It is the responsibility of the parents to inform the Club when there is a change in family circumstances. We expect parents to update the Club whenever emergency contact details change for one or both parents and/or there is a new arrangement for collecting children at the end of the training/matches.
- We understand that issues around family breakdown and separation can be fraught. However, we expect parents to be courteous and respectful at all times in their dealings with the Club.

Parents will be encouraged to resolve any issues around estrangement, contact and access to information without involving the Club directly.

The Club's responsibilities

- We will treat all adults with parental responsibility for a child equally, unless a court order limits an individual's exercise of parental responsibility.
- Everyone who has parental responsibility has a right to receive information about the child. This is the case whether they live with the child or not.
- There is no requirement for the Club to inform one parent about communications with the other parent.
- We recognise the sensitivity of some situations. Club staff and coaches will be informed on a 'need to know' basis so that suitable support can be offered.

In any event whereby the parents being estranged is appearing to impact upon the health, wellbeing and safety of a child the matter will be referred to the Club's Welfare Officer(s) for advice.

Contact Arrangements

- Where there are issues over access to children, any adult with parental responsibility for the child should contact the Club immediately to discuss these
- Court orders preventing an individual's access to a child or detailing contact arrangements which could involve the Club should be provided to the Club's Welfare Officer(s) as soon as they are issued. These will be shared with all relevant coaching staff.
- Where there is a court restraining order in place, we will put measures in place to ensure the child is not released to a named individual
- Where a separated parent has parental responsibility but is not the parent with whom the child usually resides and there is no court order in place, the Club is required to allow the child home with him or her; however, the Coach is able to use discretion (in the case of an unexpected or unusual request) and would look to seek clarification from the resident parent before allowing the child to leave

Access to Information

To ensure we are fair to all parents we communicate in the following ways:

- Notices and letters are sent via email. These emails are sent to all with parental responsibility whose contact details we hold.
- Information about the Club (e.g. our Welcome Pack and Club policies) are available on the Club's website.

- Notices about training and match events are issued via Teamer. Confirmation of attendance is accepted from either parent with parent responsibility and only one parent needs to give consent.
- We expect that parents will liaise and communicate directly with each other in matters such as the transport of children to away matches and enrichment activities, such as Club social events.
- In the event of an accident or emergency, we will phone the parent with whom the child mainly resides (or the priority phone number held on our system; or the parent with whom the child is residing on that day if we hold that information) although of course, depending on the severity of need and other constraints on staff time, we would try and contact both parents.

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