



SIDMOUTH TOWN JUNIOR VIKINGS



SIDMOUTH TOWN A.F.C.

THE VIKINGS

PLAYING TIME, RECRUITMENT & SELECTION POLICY



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PLAY • DEVELOP • ENJOY • BELONG

A child-centred approach to grassroots football

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SIDMOUTH TOWN JUNIOR VIKINGS

PLAYING TIME, RECRUITMENT & SELECTION POLICY

Policy owner: Club Committee

Applies to: All Junior Vikings players, coaches, managers, volunteers and parents/carers

Effective from:

Review date:

Version: 1.0

1. PURPOSE

Sidmouth Town Junior Vikings is committed to providing every child with a safe, enjoyable, inclusive and positive football experience.

This policy establishes clear and fair principles for:

Player recruitment and registration.

Player selection for training and matches.

Playing time and substitutions.

Movement between teams or age groups where appropriate.

Development opportunities.

Communication with players and parents/carers.

Handling concerns or complaints about selection or playing time.

The Club recognises that children develop at different rates and that grassroots football should support participation, enjoyment, development and confidence.

The Club will therefore seek to ensure that decisions are made in the **best interests of the child and the team**, rather than being based solely on winning results.

2. OUR PRINCIPLES

Sidmouth Town Junior Vikings will operate according to the following principles:

2.1 Every child matters

Every registered player should feel valued, welcomed and part of the club.

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Players will not be excluded, disadvantaged or treated unfairly because of:

Gender or sex

Race, nationality or ethnic background

Religion or belief

Disability or additional needs

Sexual orientation

Socio-economic circumstances

Footballing ability

Previous football experience

Family circumstances

The Club is committed to an inclusive environment in which children can enjoy football and develop their skills.

2.2 Player welfare comes first

The welfare and wellbeing of children will always take priority over footballing results.

This is consistent with the FA's safeguarding framework, which places children's welfare at the centre of youth football.

2.3 Development before winning

Coaches are encouraged to develop players over the longer term rather than selecting teams solely to maximise the likelihood of winning an individual match.

Winning is welcomed, but it must never come at the expense of:

Player welfare.

Enjoyment.

Development.

Fair participation.

Respect.

Inclusion.

2.4 Transparent decision-making

Selection and playing-time decisions should be understandable, consistent and capable of being explained to players and parents/carers.



2.5 Age-appropriate approach

The Club recognises that the appropriate approach to playing time and selection may change as players get older and football becomes more competitive.

3. PLAYER RECRUITMENT

3.1 Open and welcoming recruitment

The Club will seek to make junior football accessible to children who wish to participate.

Recruitment will normally take place through:

Club enquiries.

Open training sessions.

Taster sessions.

Community engagement.

Word-of-mouth recommendations.

School/community links.

Club publicity and social media.

No child should be discouraged from expressing an interest in joining because they are perceived to be less talented.

3.2 Trial and assessment periods

Where teams are at capacity or where an assessment is necessary, the Club may use a trial or assessment period.

Any assessment should consider a range of factors, including:

Technical ability.

Understanding of the game.

Physical development appropriate to age.

Attitude and effort.

Teamwork.

Coachability.



Commitment and attendance.

Behaviour and respect.

Potential for development.

Coaches must recognise that children develop at different rates.

A child's current ability must not automatically be treated as an indication of their future potential.

3.3 No pay-to-play selection

Selection must not be influenced by a player's ability to pay additional fees, purchase equipment, attend privately arranged coaching, or participate in other paid football activities.

3.4 Existing players

Existing players should not automatically be displaced simply because a new player is perceived to be stronger.

Where squad numbers create difficulties, the coach and Club should consider appropriate alternatives, including:

Additional training opportunities.

Development squads.

Another suitable team within the Club.

Opportunities to play with an older or younger age group where appropriate.

Sharing playing opportunities where league rules permit.

4. TEAM AND MATCH SELECTION

4.1 Selection responsibility

The relevant coach/team manager is responsible for match selection, subject to Club policies and league/county FA rules.

Selection decisions should be discussed with the relevant age-group coordinator or Club committee where they involve:

Significant changes to squad structure.

Moving a player between teams.

Persistent concerns regarding participation.

Exceptional circumstances.



4.2 Selection criteria

When selecting a team, coaches may consider:

Player development.

Attendance and commitment.

Training effort and attitude.

Behaviour and respect.

Ability to perform the requirements of the particular match.

Positional requirements.

Player wellbeing.

Previous playing time.

Tactical considerations.

The need to provide appropriate development opportunities to the squad.

Selection must never be used as a punishment.

For example, a coach should not automatically exclude a child from a match because the child made a mistake, missed a training session because of circumstances outside their control, or disagreed respectfully with a coach.

5. PLAYING TIME POLICY

5.1 General commitment

The Club's objective is that **all available players receive meaningful opportunities to play**.

Playing time should be managed across a series of matches rather than judged solely on one fixture.

Coaches should keep an informal record of playing time to help identify significant imbalances.

5.2 Younger age groups

For younger players, the emphasis should be strongly on:

Participation.

Enjoyment.

Ball contact.

Skill development.



Confidence.

Learning through playing.

Subject to competition rules and practical circumstances, coaches should aim to provide broadly balanced playing opportunities.

No child should routinely spend substantially more time on the substitute's bench than their teammates.

5.3 Older age groups

As players progress into older age groups and competitive football becomes more prominent, playing time may become more variable.

However, coaches should still seek to ensure that players receive meaningful opportunities to participate and develop.

Playing time may legitimately differ because of:

Attendance.

Fitness.

Player welfare.

Tactical requirements.

Positional requirements.

Development needs.

Competitive fixtures.

League or cup rules.

These factors must be applied reasonably and consistently.

5.4 Playing time is not guaranteed

The Club cannot guarantee identical playing time in every match.

However, a pattern of consistently excluding or substantially limiting an individual player should be avoided unless there is a clear, reasonable and documented footballing or welfare rationale.

5.5 Substitutions



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Coaches should plan substitutions where reasonably possible rather than relying solely on substitutions made in response to the match situation.

Where a player has had significantly less playing time than others over recent fixtures, the coach should consider this when planning substitutions.

5.6 Goalkeepers

Goalkeeper development should be considered fairly.

Where more than one player wishes to play goalkeeper, coaches should consider a rotation or development approach where practical, particularly in younger age groups.

Players should not be permanently assigned to goalkeeper solely because they are considered less capable in outfield positions.

6. ATTENDANCE AND COMMITMENT

Attendance can reasonably form part of selection decisions.

However, coaches should consider the reason for absence.

Examples of legitimate reasons may include:

Illness.

Injury.

School commitments.

Family circumstances.

Religious commitments.

Holidays.

Other significant personal circumstances.

A child should not be unfairly penalised for circumstances outside their control.

Where a player repeatedly fails to attend without communication, the coach may take this into account when selecting teams.

The emphasis should be on communication and support rather than punishment.

7. PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

The Club will encourage coaches to consider each player's individual development.



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Coaches should identify:

Strengths.

Areas for improvement.

Appropriate positions.

Development goals.

Confidence and wellbeing.

Opportunities to experience different positions.

Where appropriate, players may be given opportunities to:

Train with another squad.

Play in a different position.

Play with an older or younger age group.

Attend development sessions.

Take part in additional football activities.

Any movement between age groups or teams must be discussed appropriately with the relevant coaches and parents/carers and must comply with applicable FA and league rules.

8. PLAYING TIME RECORDS

Coaches are encouraged to maintain a simple record of:

Players selected.

Players attending.

Approximate playing time.

Goalkeeper rotation where relevant.

Significant reasons for unusually low playing time.

The purpose of recording playing time is **not to create unnecessary bureaucracy or guarantee mathematical equality**.

It is to help coaches identify persistent patterns and ensure that decisions are fair and defensible.

Records should be treated confidentially.



9. COMMUNICATION WITH PLAYERS

Coaches should explain expectations to players in an age-appropriate way.

Players should understand that:

Selection decisions are not a judgement of their value as a person.

Everyone makes mistakes.

Development takes time.

Effort and attitude are important.

They may not play every minute of every match.

They should respect teammates, opponents, coaches and officials.

Where a player is regularly receiving less playing time, the coach should, where appropriate, speak with the player/Parent privately and positively about areas for development.

10. COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS/CARERS

Parents/carers should be provided with clear information about the Club's approach to selection and playing time.

Parents/carers are encouraged to:

Support their child positively.

Avoid comparing children publicly.

Respect coaching decisions.

Raise concerns appropriately.

Avoid confronting coaches immediately before, during or immediately after matches.

Avoid discussing another child's selection or playing time.

The Club recognises that parents/carers may have genuine concerns and will provide an appropriate route for those concerns to be discussed.

11. PARENT/PLAYER CONCERNS

If a parent/carer has a concern regarding playing time or selection, the following process should normally be followed:

Stage 1 – Informal discussion

The parent/carer should contact the coach and request a suitable time to discuss the concern.



The discussion should focus on:

The child's development.

The selection process.

Playing opportunities.

Any relevant circumstances.

Stage 2 – Age-group/Club review

If the concern cannot be resolved with the coach, it may be referred to the relevant Age Group Coordinator or Club Committee.

Stage 3 – Formal complaint

If necessary, the matter may be dealt with under the Club's formal complaints procedure.

Please see contacts for relevant area

The FA confirms that issues such as player registration, team selection and playing time are generally **club operational matters rather than safeguarding concerns in themselves**, and should normally be addressed through the appropriate club, league or County FA procedures.

12. RECRUITMENT OF COACHES AND VOLUNTEERS

All coaches, managers and volunteers working with junior players must be recruited in accordance with the Club's safeguarding requirements and applicable FA regulations.

The Club will use safer recruitment practices, including where appropriate:

Clearly defining the role.

Obtaining an application.

Checking relevant experience and qualifications.

Conducting an appropriate interview or informal meeting.

Obtaining references where required.

Completing relevant FA safeguarding requirements.

Completing an FA-accepted DBS check where eligible and required.

Ensuring appropriate training is completed.

The FA states that clubs should take reasonable steps to prevent unsuitable people from working with children and provides specific safer-recruitment guidance.



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Individuals undertaking eligible unsupervised roles working directly with under-18s must meet the applicable FA DBS requirements before undertaking such work unsupervised.

13. SELECTION OF COACHES AND VOLUNTEERS

When appointing coaches and volunteers, the Club will consider:

Safeguarding suitability.

Relevant qualifications.

Football knowledge.

Experience working with children.

Communication skills.

Commitment to inclusion.

Ability to create a positive environment.

Ability to work as part of a team.

Understanding of the Club's values.

References and relevant checks.

Football ability alone will never be sufficient reason to appoint an individual to a role involving children.

14. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Coaches and Club officials must declare any significant conflict of interest that could affect a selection or recruitment decision.

Examples may include:

Selecting their own child.

Selecting a close relative.

A personal disagreement with a player or parent.

Financial or personal interests.

Where a significant conflict exists, the Club may require another appropriate Club official to participate in or oversee the decision.

15. SAFEGUARDING



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Nothing in this policy overrides the Club's safeguarding responsibilities.

If a coach, volunteer, player or parent/carer has a safeguarding concern, it must be reported through the Club's safeguarding procedures and to the Club Welfare Officer where appropriate.

The FA's current safeguarding framework emphasises prevention, safer recruitment, accessible reporting and appropriate investigation of safeguarding concerns.

The Club will maintain an appropriately appointed Club Welfare Officer and ensure safeguarding requirements are followed.

16. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Sidmouth Town Junior Vikings is committed to providing football opportunities that are fair and inclusive.

Selection and playing time decisions must not discriminate unlawfully against players.

Reasonable adjustments should be considered for players with disabilities or additional needs.

Where a child requires additional support, the Club will work with the player and their parent/carer to identify reasonable ways of enabling participation.

17. BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINE

A player's behaviour may be considered when making selection decisions, particularly where behaviour affects:

Safety.

Other players.

Coaches.

Officials.

The ability of the team to function.

However, disciplinary matters should normally be managed under the Club's Behaviour/Code of Conduct and disciplinary procedures.

Playing time should not be arbitrarily removed as a punishment.

Any significant exclusion from football should have a clear reason, be proportionate and follow the appropriate Club procedure.

18. MATCH-DAY PRINCIPLES

On match days, coaches should:



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- Treat every player with respect.
- Avoid humiliating or publicly criticising players.
- Provide positive and constructive feedback.
- Give players appropriate opportunities to participate.
- Explain substitutions where practical.
- Avoid discussing selection disputes in front of children.
- Respect referees and opposition.
- Promote the Club's values.
- Put player welfare ahead of the result.

19. COACHING EXPECTATIONS

- All coaches are expected to:
- Plan for player development.
- Consider recent playing time when selecting substitutes.
- Avoid favouritism.
- Communicate clearly.
- Treat players consistently.
- Encourage effort rather than simply rewarding ability.
- Recognise different rates of development.
- Support less confident players.
- Give constructive feedback.
- Promote enjoyment.
- Follow all safeguarding requirements.
- Coaches are not expected to make identical decisions in every match. Football involves judgement and circumstances differ.
- However, decisions must be made **fairly, reasonably and consistently**.

20. EXCEPTIONS



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There may be circumstances where normal playing-time expectations cannot be achieved, including:

Serious injury.

Illness.

Player welfare concerns.

Disciplinary issues.

Exceptional match circumstances.

League/cup regulations.

Fixture cancellations.

Player availability.

Weather or facility issues.

Safeguarding concerns.

Other circumstances outside the Club's control.

Where an exception occurs, the coach should seek to restore balanced opportunities over subsequent matches where reasonably possible.

21. REVIEW AND MONITORING

The Club Committee will review this policy at least annually.

The review should consider:

Feedback from players.

Feedback from parents/carers.

Feedback from coaches.

Playing-time patterns.

Recruitment outcomes.

Equality and inclusion.

Safeguarding developments.

Changes to FA, County FA or league requirements.

The Club may amend the policy where necessary to ensure that it remains appropriate and compliant with current football regulations and guidance.



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22. CLUB COMMITMENT

Sidmouth Town Junior Vikings believes that grassroots football should provide children with the opportunity to:

PLAY – DEVELOP – ENJOY – BELONG

Our commitment is to create an environment where children are encouraged to develop their footballing ability while also developing confidence, teamwork, resilience, respect and friendships.

The Club will always seek to balance competitive football with the fundamental principle that **junior football is about children first**.

APPROVAL

Approved by: Sidmouth Town Junior Vikings Committee

Chairperson: _____

Club Secretary: _____

Club Welfare Officer: _____

Date approved: _____

Review date: _____

Version: 1.0