

Aquinas FC – Health and Safety Policy

Introduction

Aquinas Football Club is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for all players, coaches, volunteers, parents, and visitors. While the club does not have a designated home pitch, we are dedicated to ensuring that health and safety procedures are followed at all venues where training sessions, matches, or events take place.

This policy aligns with the Irish Football Association's (IFA) Health and Safety Guidelines and relevant Northern Ireland health and safety legislation, including the **Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978**.

Scope

This policy applies to all club activities, including:

- Training sessions
- Matches (home, away, or at rented venues)
- Tournaments and events
- Any club-related functions or gatherings

It covers all players, coaches, volunteers, parents, officials, and visitors associated with Aquinas Football Club.

Responsibilities

- **Club Committee:** The committee is responsible for ensuring the overall health and safety of all club members. This includes overseeing risk assessments, ensuring adherence to safety guidelines, and reviewing health and safety procedures.
- **Coaches and Volunteers:** Coaches and volunteers are responsible for the safety of players during training sessions, matches, and club events. They must ensure that all activities are conducted safely and report any hazards or incidents.
- **Parents/Guardians:** Parents are responsible for ensuring that their child arrives safely at training and match venues and must notify the club of any medical conditions that may affect the player's participation.
- **Players:** Players must follow instructions from coaches and staff, use equipment responsibly, and report any health or safety concerns immediately.

Venue Safety

Since Aquinas Football Club does not have a designated home pitch, we rely on external venues for training and matches. For each venue:

- **Risk Assessments:** The club will conduct a risk assessment before any activity, identifying potential hazards related to the playing surface, equipment, changing facilities, and other relevant factors.

- **Safety Inspections:** Coaches or designated volunteers will inspect pitches and facilities before each session or match to ensure they are safe for use. Any hazards identified must be addressed or reported immediately.
- **Venue Selection:** When choosing venues, the club will ensure that they meet safety standards, including proper maintenance of pitches, adequate lighting, secure equipment, and safe access routes for players and spectators.

First Aid and Emergency Procedures

- **First Aid:** A fully stocked first aid kit will be available at all training sessions and matches. Each team will have at least one designated first aider who has undergone appropriate training. The first aider will be responsible for providing basic medical care until professional assistance is available.
- **Emergency Contact Information:** Coaches will maintain up-to-date emergency contact details for all players and ensure that these are accessible during all activities.
- **Medical Conditions:** Parents and players are required to inform the club of any pre-existing medical conditions, allergies, or medications. Coaches will ensure that this information is recorded and that any necessary action plans are in place.
- **Emergency Procedures:** In case of a serious incident or injury:
 - Call emergency services immediately (999 or 112).
 - Ensure the injured individual is safe and attended to.
 - Evacuate the area if required.
 - Notify the venue's staff or officials if using a rented facility.

Child Safeguarding

Aquinas Football Club is committed to the safeguarding of all children and young people. All coaches and volunteers must:

- Adhere to the club's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, which follows the IFA's guidelines.
- Have completed appropriate safeguarding training.
- Ensure that no player under the age of 18 is left unattended at any club activity.
- Report any safeguarding concerns to the club's designated Safeguarding Officer.

Equipment Safety

- **Maintenance:** All football equipment, such as balls, goals, and nets, will be regularly checked and maintained to ensure they are in good condition and safe to use.
- **Setup and Storage:** Equipment must be set up correctly and securely for all training sessions and matches, and properly stored after use to prevent accidents or injuries.
- **Player Responsibility:** Players are responsible for using equipment as instructed and must report any damaged or unsafe equipment to their coach immediately.

Weather Conditions

Weather conditions can pose significant risks to player safety, especially in Northern Ireland where conditions can change rapidly. The club will:

- **Monitor Conditions:** Coaches will monitor weather conditions leading up to and during training sessions and matches. If conditions become unsafe (e.g., lightning, heavy rain, strong winds), the session or match will be paused or cancelled.

- **Extreme Heat/Cold:** In cases of extreme heat or cold, the club will provide guidance on appropriate hydration, clothing, and rest periods to minimize the risk of heatstroke, hypothermia, or other related conditions.

Transportation

- **Travel Safety:** When travelling to away games or external venues, parents are responsible for transporting their child safely to and from the venue. The club will not be liable for any incidents that occur during travel unless transport is provided by the club.
- **Carpooling:** If players are carpooling, the club recommends that the driver hold a valid driving license, insurance, and ensure that seat belts are worn by all passengers.

Fire Safety

- **Evacuation Procedures:** If an emergency such as a fire occurs, the coach or designated volunteer will lead an evacuation of the premises, following the venue's emergency procedures.
- **Emergency Exits:** All attendees must familiarize themselves with emergency exits at any venue used for training or matches.

Reporting Accidents and Incidents

In the event of an accident or incident:

- **Record the Incident:** Coaches or volunteers must document the details of the accident or injury, including how it occurred, the response taken, and any medical attention provided.
- **Notify the Club:** The club's Health and Safety Officer must be informed of any significant incidents, particularly those requiring medical attention or resulting in venue damage.
- **Follow-Up:** The club will review the incident and take appropriate action to prevent similar occurrences in the future. This may include updating risk assessments, providing additional training, or improving equipment or facilities.

COVID-19 and Infectious Diseases

In line with health guidelines from the IFA and local government, Aquinas Football Club will:

- **Follow Public Health Guidelines:** Comply with all government recommendations on COVID-19 or other infectious diseases, including social distancing, hygiene protocols, and reporting requirements.
- **Isolation Procedures:** Players, coaches, or volunteers displaying symptoms of COVID-19 or other infectious diseases must refrain from attending any club activities until cleared by a medical professional.
- **Communication:** The club will keep members informed of any changes to health and safety procedures related to pandemics or other health crises.

Monitoring and Review

This Health and Safety Policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier if required, in light of any changes to legislation, IFA guidelines, or significant incidents. The club is committed to continuous improvement in health and safety standards to ensure the well-being of all its members.

Designated Health and Safety Officer

[Name]

Contact Information: [Phone Number] | [Email]

By following this policy, Aquinas Football Club ensures the safety and well-being of everyone involved, regardless of where activities take place, while adhering to IFA and regional health and safety regulations.

This policy can be tailored further based on the specific venues Aquinas FC uses and any additional safety considerations particular to those locations.