



Listening to Players Strategy

Involving players in decision making, planning and hearing their voice is an important part of creating a safe culture in cricket.

The Oxfordshire Cricket Board (OCB) and the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) consider ‘Listening to Players’ as the foundation of a player centred approach. We want to ensure an environment where cricketers feel heard, supported, and able to express their concerns or ideas regarding their well-being, development, and safety.

The strategy aims to promote open communication, foster trust, and improve safeguarding practices within the OCB.

We want to create a culture of safe and open communication, in which our cricket community can approach us, and staff and coaches are trained to listen without prejudice, maintaining a non-judgmental stance to encourage honest communication. We are mindful of different cultural, gender, disabilities and personal backgrounds across OCB, and will ensure listening practices are inclusive and respectful of all players.

Our *Listening to Players* strategy is beneficial to all and builds upon OCB’s foundational values:

- Grow trust
- Connect as a team
- Make a positive impact
- Create belonging
- Be accountable

For players, our Listening to Players strategy:

- provides unique opportunities for young people to give views, ideas, feedback and raise their own issues, worries or concerns
- gives a chance to develop new skills, experience and confidence

- helps them to feel valued and listened to so they are more likely to feel comfortable to talk about concerns or worries with an adult within OCB
- helps them gain confidence by working within a group, becoming more connected with their peers and increasing their sense of belonging, team morale and loyalty

For OCB, our Listening to Players strategy:

- provides a space to hear concerns and ensure we are fulfilling our safeguarding responsibilities and provide the utmost duty of care
- promotes a child-focused approach, responsive to its core audience
- helps young people feel valued and listen to so they are more likely to report any concerns and stay in sport for longer
- ensures that plans, projects and materials are appropriate and relevant to young people, fulfilling our mission to
- can grow a valuable resource for consultation and involvement – in both the short and long term

OCB are committed to our *Listening to Players* strategy and will achieve this in the following ways:

1. Safeguarding culture and procedures:

Creating an environment in which the views of children, adults, and parents, guardians and carers are routinely sought and listened to fosters a culture in which individuals and those supporting them can say when something is worrying them. It is paramount that everyone in OCB should feel confident to raise a concern, no matter how small. Raising and dealing with concerns when they occur underpins our proactive safeguarding culture. We will do this by:

- 1) Every player on the Pathway, Bulls and Falcons and Boys Emerging Players Programme will have a luggage tag placed on their cricket bag which includes a QR code that enables them to report any concerns or share feedback throughout the year.
- 2) All clubs have a dedicated Safeguarding Officer and the reporting QR code is publicly advertised
- 3) Coaches regularly talk with players about wellbeing and remind them of the QR reporting mechanism, as well as part of programme inductions in session 1.
- 4) Safeguarding County Manager is visible and available to players to ensure their wellbeing
- 5) Reinforcing the importance of confidentiality when players share sensitive information, ensuring privacy while also adhering to safeguarding protocols.
- 6) Ensure players know the steps for sharing concerns and for escalating issues if they feel their concerns have not been addressed adequately.
- 7) Create an Open-Door Policy so players feel comfortable approaching coaches, support staff, or the safeguarding team to discuss issues, concerns, or suggestions.

2. Player feedback systems

We will endeavour to adapt our strategy based on continuous player input to ensure it remains responsive to the changing needs of the players. We will do this by:

- 1) **Surveys and Feedback Forms:** Conduct regular, anonymous surveys to gather player feedback on coaching, facilities, team dynamics, overall well-being and effectiveness of *Listening to Players* strategy
- 2) **Post-Match Debriefs:** Include open discussion time after matches or training sessions where players can voice thoughts on their performance, team support, or any concerns they may have.
- 3) **Well-Being Check ins :** Implement well-being checklists that players can fill out periodically to assess their mental and physical state.
- 4) **Safeguarding Players Bag Tags:** which provide mechanism to report concerns and feedback

3. Encouraging Peer Support and Listening

- 1) Team Captains as Mediators: Encourage team captains to act as liaisons between players and management, trained and supported by coaches to identify and relay team concerns.
- 2) Peer Support Networks: Promote peer-to-peer listening within the team by encouraging senior players to mentor younger members and act as informal confidants.

4. Training for coaches and staff

Representing the *Listening to Players* culture, support and training for staff is paramount. We will achieve this by providing training for coaches and staff on:

- 1) listening without prejudice, maintaining a non-judgmental stance to encourage honest communication.
- 1) active listening techniques, including how to recognize non-verbal cues and ask open-ended questions.
- 2) safeguarding issues, so they can recognise potential signs of distress or abuse in players and respond appropriately, including specialised Talent Pathway safeguarding training.
- 3) Mental Health First Aid skills to listen to and support players experiencing mental health challenges and utilise formally trained staff to support colleagues in this.

5. Youth Voice

Ensuring an authentic and proactive player representation across the organisation, we will:

- 1) Create a Youth Ambassador Forum for consultation purposes
- 2) Recruit a player representative on the board of the new charity
- 3) Involve players in recruitment of appropriate roles within the organisation

By implementing a structured *Listening to Players* strategy, cricket teams can enhance the safeguarding environment, ensuring players feel supported and empowered to voice concerns,

improving both their welfare and overall team dynamics. This approach will also contribute to creating a more resilient, cohesive, and motivated team.

OCB is committed to supporting clubs to promote the value and impact Listening to Players can have, including strategies such as:

- Participant feedback
- Publicising importance of sharing feedback and concerns to improve player experience
- Youth representative on club committees

6. Amendments to the Listening to Players Strategy

This strategy will be reviewed annually to ensure that it remains effective and in accordance with any external rule or direction from the ECB, and any relevant feedback from the OCB Pathway Manager, Selection Committees' and OCB Pathway Cricket Coaches, parents, guardians and carers of players. Any amendments to the '*Listening to Players Strategy*' will take effect the day in which they are communicated.

Any matters that are not covered within this "*Listening to Players Strategy*" shall be determined by the OCB at their sole discretion.