



Match Day Ball Retriever Policy

NEWPORT COUNTY AFC

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Newport County AFC is committed to the safeguarding, wellbeing, and safety of all our players, staff, and spectators. Within our duty of care, this also applies to those within our Academy who volunteer as ball retrievers for our first team home fixtures.

As the young players are placed in the 'buffer zone' between spectators and players on match days, their safety is paramount, and so adherence to this policy is vital to ensure that they are well protected and enjoy their day.

Preparation For A Fixture

The relevant Academy Phase Lead will communicate via Team App, the Ball Retriever schedule for each relevant age group in advance and ask for parents to confirm their child's availability. By confirming their attendance, parents are:

- Giving their consent for their child to participate
- Agreeing that their contact details are up to date on Team App in case of an emergency
- Agreeing that the Academy are fully aware of any medical issues/additional needs and that their child will carry any necessary medication with them, on their person to the fixture. EG: epi-pen, inhaler.
- Agreeing that in the case of an emergency, that urgent medical attention can be provided by medical professionals, including the need for blood transfusion and anaesthetic.
- Agreeing that their children can be involved in match day photography and videography, as well as being aware that their child may be viewed on television and social media sites. These images can also be used for promotional opportunities at the Club.
- Agreeing to drop off and collect their child at the agreed times for the fixture
- Agreeing to report any absence no later than 2 hours prior to the fixture kick off via Team App
- Agreeing to provide their child with appropriate clothing to represent their Club e.g., Club tracksuit/training kit, along with necessary protective clothing for the weather EG. Coat, hat, gloves (where possible in Club colours), along with their own drink and ensure that sun cream is applied as necessary before the fixture.
- Agreeing that they have gone through Newport County AFC Ball Retriever Code of Conduct and Newport County AFC Ball Retriever Policy with their child on Team App – under important documents, and fully understand their role and responsibilities, along with expectations of their conduct.
- Agreeing that Newport County AFC will take no responsibility for valuables that children bring to the game with them. Children will not be permitted to have bags with them pitch side. Please let us know if your child will need to bring medication with them e.g., inhalers, insulin, or epi-pens.
- Agreeing that your child is fit and healthy to be able to participate and has no symptoms of Covid. We would recommend the following ratios of staff to children, as per the FAW 'Are You Onside?' guidelines: (https://www.faw.cymru/files/3414/6255/2619/Away_Trips_Information.pdf)

Pre – Academy (U7s/U8s) 1 adult to 6 children

Foundation Phase (U9–U12) 1 adult to 8 children

Youth Development Phase (U13-U16) 1 adult to 10 children

The supporting staff must have a DBS in place and have completed their FA Safeguarding certificate and EFL safeguarding training, along with being registered and active on My Concern.

If girls are asked to attend as participants, then one of the accompanying staff must be female.

Equality

Newport County AFC have partnered with the FAW Girls Development Centre, and we would also welcome them to participate within the Ball Person Retrieval Schedule. All players participating as Ball Retrievers will be treated equally and without prejudice. All teams could be offered a pre-season friendly, League 2 game, or other alternatives such as FA Cup or EFL Trophy. No preference will be given to either boys or girls.

Match Day Meet and Greet at Rodney Parade

On match days, all participants along with their parents/guardians and supporting staff will be expected to meet at least 1 hour prior to kick off, outside the Bisley Stand ticket office. The Academy ball retriever support staff will then take a head count of all players, and document their names on a register, which they will then sign.

The parents/guardians can then leave their children with the support staff, who will escort them into the stadium to the toilets, where all children will be encouraged to use the facilities within the Bisley family stand. The staff will not be able to enter the toilets with the children, however, will wait outside the toilets until all users have used the facilities and then escort them to a quiet space in the corner of the pitch underneath the Bisley suite to receive their safety briefing.

The Academy support staff will go through the Ball Retriever code of conduct with the children, along with the Ball Retriever roles and responsibilities, and match day risk assessment. The Academy support staff will also allocate hi-vis vests and wristbands which the ball retrievers must always wear.

The Academy support staff will need to sign a copy of each document to confirm that all children and staff have understood the briefing accordingly and return it to the match day DSO for the match day safeguarding file.

Warm Up and During the Fixture

Under no circumstances are Ball Retrievers to approach or distract players of either team when they are warming up or playing within the fixture unless it is to return a stray ball to them.

When the ball is in play, the operation of a ball retrieval system should be applied in a fair and consistent manner for both teams, and should be adhered to in all matches:

- The operation should remain standard throughout the game unless it is suspended by the referee. Ball retrievers cannot be unilaterally slowed down by the home club.
- Ball retrievers should throw the ball back to the player from the appropriate team treating both teams in the same way in terms of the speed and efficiency of the ball being returned. They should not roll, bounce, or kick a ball to a player, in case this could be misconstrued.
- To demonstrate a fair and consistent application, the same provisions should be applied in both halves of the field of play throughout the match.

- If towels are provided to dry the ball, both sides must receive the same consideration. To clarify, the guidance does not specify which Club should provide towels, therefore either the Home or Away Club are permitted to do this, however, where they are provided, they should be available for the use of both teams. Please note that under no circumstances (and particularly during a pandemic) should players be using items obtained from the crowd for the purpose of drying the ball.
- Wherever possible, Ball Retrievers should be placed behind perimeter boards or in gaps and never be placed in front of away supporters.
- All Ball Retrievers should remain seated throughout the fixture, until a ball goes out of play near them; then they should go and retrieve it. The ball should be thrown (not rolled, kicked, or bounced) back to the player who is calling for it. The ball retriever should then sit back down.
- If the ball goes into the crowd, the ball retriever should stand facing the crowd with open arms, waiting for the return of the ball.
- On occasions, players may swear at a Ball Retrieval person in the heat of the moment. This is usually followed up with an apology. If any Ball Retriever feels unduly upset or intimidated by such language from players or spectators, then they need to report it immediately to a steward or Academy support staff and be removed to a place of safety where they can be supervised by a member of staff.
- Academy Support Staff should be placed in diagonal corners of the ground which are deemed to be most boisterous, to support the children who could be intimidated by the behaviour and chanting of fans. This will enable Academy Support staff to act swiftly to support our young players with the support of Rodney Parade stewards.
- Under no circumstances during the game are mobile phones to be used to take calls, take photos or to access social media. This is only permitted in the instance of an emergency.
- Upon hearing the half time whistle, all Academy support staff, and Ball Retrievers should retreat to a meeting space underneath the Bisley Suite, between the Bisley stand North Terrace. The Academy support staff will then take all children to the toilet in the family end of the Bisley stand and encourage them to have a drink. Again, staff will not enter the toilet with them, however, will wait outside and escort the children back to their positions on the pitch ready for the second half to commence.
- In the event of any bad weather, Academy support staff will be responsible for moving any vulnerable children to a more sheltered area of the stadium. If the weather is hot, then the Academy support staff should rotate the children for the second half to ensure that they get a break from sitting in the sun for too long.
- In the event of an emergency, or should the stadium need to be evacuated whilst the children are pitch side, Club safety announcements/instructions must be adhered to. Academy support staff are to guide the children from the pitch to the nearest exit, as advised by Rodney Parade stewards. Once you have reached a place of safety as advised by the stadium safety stewards, you must then communicate a safe and appropriate alternative place of collection of children with your colleague and parents via Team App. At your earliest convenience, please contact your Academy Manager and Safeguarding Officer for further guidance and support.

The usual meeting spot at Rodney Parade following evacuation is on the 'cabbage patch' which is in front of the family marquee.

Final Whistle

Upon the final whistle, all Ball retrievers are to retreat immediately to a pitch side meeting point underneath the Bisley Suite with their stools where they will be collected along with their hi-vis by the Academy support staff. They will then be led out to the ticket office, where parents/guardians should be waiting to collect their child. A de-registration will take place and it is the Academy support staff's responsibility, to ensure that each child is handed over to the correct parent/guardian.

If a parent/carer has not arrived to collect their child, the Academy support staff member should have a list of emergency contact telephone numbers for parents, so that they are able to contact them. Two members of staff should wait with the child in a well-lit area for their parents to collect them, under CCTV cameras where possible. At no point should the child be invited back into a building or into a vehicle to wait for their parents.

If a girl is waiting to be collected, then one of the staff members should also be female.

In the event of non-collection of children, Academy support staff should follow the guidance as detailed in Newport County AFC's Late Collection of Children Policy. Should they be unsure as to what to do in the instance, they should contact the Academy Manager or Head of Safeguarding for further advice and guidance. Under no circumstances must a child be taken home by a member of staff.

Covid

Please note that if a child is displaying symptoms of Covid, they should not participate and should isolate and request a PCR test. Any person over the age of 11 may be asked to wear a mask in certain areas of the stadium. Please ensure that you are carrying one with you in case needed. If a child or member of staff is exempt, they must be displaying an exemption lanyard. Please use the hand sanitiser where available.

Members of Academy staff will need to follow the stadium guidelines with reference to Covid guidelines and government advice.

This policy also works in conjunction with other Newport County AFC policies, including:

- Late Collection of Children Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Managing Allegations Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Health and Safety Statement And in relation to the following legislation:
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Childrens Act 1989
 - Childrens Act 2004
 - Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018
 - KCSIE 2021

- Health and Safety Act 1974
- Data Protection Act 2018

Useful Contacts

Gareth Evans – Club Secretary

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Luke Hussey – Academy Manager

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