

Player Release Procedures

Policy and practice



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Release Policy

Date of Policy: February 2022 up dated Jan 2023 Feb 2024

This policy supersedes any other release policy.

Release Policy Statement

Bristol City Football Club, Bristol City Academy, Bristol City Women's Football Club, PGA-ETC, Bristol City Robins Foundation, Bristol Bears Rugby, Bristol Bears Women, Bristol Bears Academy, Bristol Bears Foundation, Bristol Flyers, Bristol Flyers Foundation, Bristol Sport Foundation, Ashton Gate and Bristol Sport are collectively referred to as "the Company".

"The Company" has both a moral and legal obligation to ensure a duty of care for both children and adults across its services. We are committed to ensuring that all children and adults are protected and kept safe from harm whilst engaged in any services organised and provided by "the Company". "The Company" is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflect statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice and local authority requirements.

This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and will be reviewed on a regular basis and can be amended at any time.

Principles

"The Company" acknowledge that the release of a player can have a significant impact on their mental health and wellbeing. It seeks to manage this process in the best way possible for both the player and "the Company" in line with Football League Development rules.

This policy will set out some key principles that should be taken into consideration when planning the release of a player.

For the purpose of the policy a released player is defined as a player who has either come to the end of their contract, who has a contract terminated or who leaves "the Company" to move to another Club.

Roles and responsibilities

It is the responsibility of "the Company" to both assess and agree the terms for any released player. It is the responsibility of any Manager tasked with releasing a player to follow the "Company" procedures as outlined below. The Safeguarding and Welfare team will take

responsibility for organising and delivering all relevant training in preparation for player release to both parents/carers and players. This will include mental health training (MHFA) for all Yr. 2 scholars.

Preparing to release a Player.

This section should be read in conjunction with the relevant phase description release procedures.

Whilst a difficult time for any player released it is also important to acknowledge that it is also not easy for the coach/manager. Support when releasing a player can be given by another coach or a member of Safeguarding /Welfare team. It is best practice to always have a second member of staff present. When releasing any player U18 an accompanying parent/carer MUST be present.

Prior to any formal decision ensure that:

- Departmental discussions have been carried out in a confidential manner.
- Multi-disciplinary meetings have been held.
- Regular reviews have been carried out that are both honest and realistic.

Planning for the release meeting:

- Ensure that you have read all the reports.
- Be accompanied by the lead coach where appropriate.
- Inform the Safeguarding/Welfare team to ensure support is available at the meeting.
- Pick a time that is convenient for the player.
- Book a space in advance for the meeting ensuring that it is private, and that the player does not have to exit in front of other staff or players.

At the meeting:

- Be sensitive to the feelings of player/parent or carer. This could be a very emotional time for them.
- Allow enough time for the meeting and do not rush off at the end.
- Respect the dignity of all parties.
- Use appropriate language and not terms such as “failed”.
- Use appropriate body language, words, eye contact; and always remain professional – no mobile phones.
- Have all the evidence ready so that you can refer to it where necessary
- Explain that this is only this Club’s view
- Outline alternative opportunities in both football careers and Education
- Where possible give positive examples of players who have been released and been successful in other clubs and/or careers
- Outline all exit opportunities provided by The Football League and LFE.
- Ensure that all relevant release paperwork is available and explained

After the meeting.

- Ensure that all appropriate administration tasks in line with League requirements are completed.

- A player profile which will include highlight clips will be produced for all U16-U21 players. This will be given to the player and if requested by the player sent to other Clubs.
- Pass any relevant information to Safeguarding/Welfare team for follow up support.

The Safeguarding /Welfare team will follow up on all released players within one week of the release date regardless of phase and will continue to monitor for a period of two years following their release.

All U18-U21 players released will continue to be monitored for 3 years following their release.

All U16 players will continue to be monitored for 2 years following their release.

Bristol City Football Club

Schoolboy Phases

Foundation Phase (U9-U11 age groups)

There are three release stages in this phase U9, U10 and U11.

Due to the ages of the players this can be a very sensitive time and will need to be handled tactfully.

An email will be sent to parents prior to release date to outline the process. The latest time would be start of May of that year.

Conversations should be held first with parents/carers who will decide, rather than the coach, how it would be the best way to tell the player.

Some parents/carers may prefer to tell the player themselves others may ask the coach to speak to them.

At this age it is recommended that, if possible, this should be conducted via zoom allowing the player to be in their home environment.

It is important that at this early-stage emphasis should be placed on the opportunities for players to return to the Club in a later phase.

Youth Development Phase (U12-U16 age groups)

There are three release stages in this phase U12, U14 and U16. The U12 have a year contract whilst U14/U16 a two-year contract.

Releasing a player at this stage can also affect their education and reputation within the school setting. The Safeguarding/Welfare team will contact the school once the player has been informed of their release.

An email will be sent to parents prior to release date to outline the process.

Best practice would be to speak with parents first and follow their advice as to next steps.

Professional Development Phase (U18-U23 age groups)

Scholarship (U16-18)

There are potentially different release times depending on individual contracts.

For the scholars (U18) they would be informed as early as possible. This will initially be in writing followed by a face-to-face interview with the Academy Manager and or Senior staff.

For U18 scholar this can be a very difficult time as they are still expected to complete the scholarship even though they have not been offered a contract. Players also have Education courses, that need to be completed.

Managing the time between decisions being made and leaving can be very challenging for staff and especially players. It is important to be sensitive to their emotional wellbeing

Support from relevant departments must be given in preparing clips to showcase their skills, attending exit trials, or finding an alternative club.

The Safeguarding/Welfare team will support in ensuring all departing players have a range of career pathways.

First Team Player

A released First team player will be supported by the Club to either move to another club or exit the profession with dignity and with welfare support as appropriate.

Bristol Bears Rugby

Junior Academy Player Pathway

The junior academy induction lays out a pathway for young players through to the end of Year 11. Players begin in the Aspire programme and then graduate, dependent on ability on to the Excel programme. Players within both programmes get regular feedback from the coaches in terms of progress. At the end of the programme some Excel players are recommended to join the Senior Academy pathway.

Players exited from the programme at this point are all encouraged to maintain playing through their clubs and schools. Due to late maturation some players may re-join the academy pathway at a later point.

Senior Academy Player Pathway

At the beginning of the programme & throughout senior academy journey all players are given information about the pathway. The parents & players get presentations from the professional development manager about options post KS5 in terms of work, apprenticeships, university & scholars' contracts.

Throughout the programme players have regular reviews and are given open and honest feedback on their progress and where they are on that pathway. On occasions a player maybe sent away with some areas to work on and then returned later in a revolving door scenario.

At the end of the U18 season each player must have a formal review meeting.

Written confirmation will follow all decisions.

Date reviewed	Position	Owner
February 2022	Executive Board	M. A. Martin
February 2023	Executive Board	
February 2024	Executive Board	