



Child Protection Policy.

August 2024

(This statement of Best Practice follows and adopts the Football Association's Safeguarding Children Best Practice Guidelines)

1. Each member club of the League should acknowledge its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of every child and young person who has been entrusted to its care and be committed to working to provide a safe environment for all members. A child or young person is anyone under the age of 18 engaged in any club football activity.
2. Each member club should subscribe to the Football Association's Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures and endorse and adopt the policy statement contained in that document.
3. The key principles of the FA Safeguarding Children Policy are that:-
 - The child's welfare is, and must always be, the paramount consideration
 - All children and young people will have the right to be protected from abuse regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual orientation

- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- Working in partnership with other organisations, children and young people and their parents or carers is essential
- Each member club should acknowledge that every child or young person who plays or participates in football should be able to take part in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from poor practice and abuse
- Each member club should recognise that this is the responsibility of every adult involved in the club

4. Each member club has a role to play in the safeguarding of the welfare of all children and young people by protecting them from physical, sexual or emotional harm and from neglect or bullying. It should be noted and accepted that the Football Association's Safeguarding Children Regulation (see the FA Handbook) applies to everyone in football whether in a paid or voluntary capacity. This includes those who are volunteers, match officials, helpers on club tours, football coaches, club officials or medical staff.

5. Each member club should endorse and adopt the FA's Safeguarding Children Guidelines for recruiting volunteers and will:-

- Develop a role profile
- Request identification document
- As a minimum, meet and chat with the applicants and where possible conduct interviews before appointing
- Request and follow up with two references before appointing
- Require an FA CRB unit enhanced disclosure where appropriate in line with FA Guidelines

All current member clubs whose members have direct access to children and young people should be required to complete a CRB enhanced disclosure via the FA CRB unit. If there are concerns regarding the appropriateness of an individual who is already involved who has approached the club to become a member or involved in its activities, guidance will be sought from the Football Association. It should be noted and accepted that the FA will consider the relevance and significance of the information obtained via the FA CRB unit enhanced disclosure and that all decisions will be made in the best interests of children and young people.

It should be accepted that the FA aims to prevent people with a history of relevant and significant offending from having contact with children or young people and the opportunity to influence policies or practice with children or young people. This is to prevent direct sexual physical harm to children and to minimise the risk of "grooming" within football.

6. Each member club should support the FA's whistle blowing policy. Any adult or young person with concerns about a colleague should be encouraged to "whistle blow" by contacting the FA Child Protection Manager or by writing to the FA Case Manager at the Football Association, or

by going directly to the police, social services, or the NSPCC. Each member club should encourage everyone to know about these procedures and use them if necessary.

7. Each member club should appoint a Club Welfare Officer (CWO) in line with the FA's role profile and required completion of the safeguarding children workshop. The post-holder will be involved with designated persons with training provided by the FA. The CWO should be the first point of contact for all club members and parents or guardians regarding concerns for the welfare of any child or young person. They should liaise directly with the County Football Association Welfare Officer and be familiar with procedures for referring any concerns. They should also play a proactive role in increasing an awareness of poor practice and abuse amongst club members.

8. Each member club should acknowledge and endorse the FA's identification of bullying as a category of abuse. Bullying of any kind should not be acceptable at any club. If bullying does occur players, parents or guardians should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly.

Incidents should be reported to the Club Welfare Officer of each member club, a member of the committee of the club or, in cases of serious bullying, contact should be made with the Youth League Welfare Officer or the County FA Welfare Officer.

9. The code of conduct for players, parents or spectators, officials and coaches should have been implemented by each member club. In order to validate these codes of conduct the club should have clear sanctions to deal with any misconduct at club level and should acknowledge the possibility of potential sanctions which may be implemented by the League or by the relevant County Football Association in more serious circumstances. All prospective members should be informed of these codes