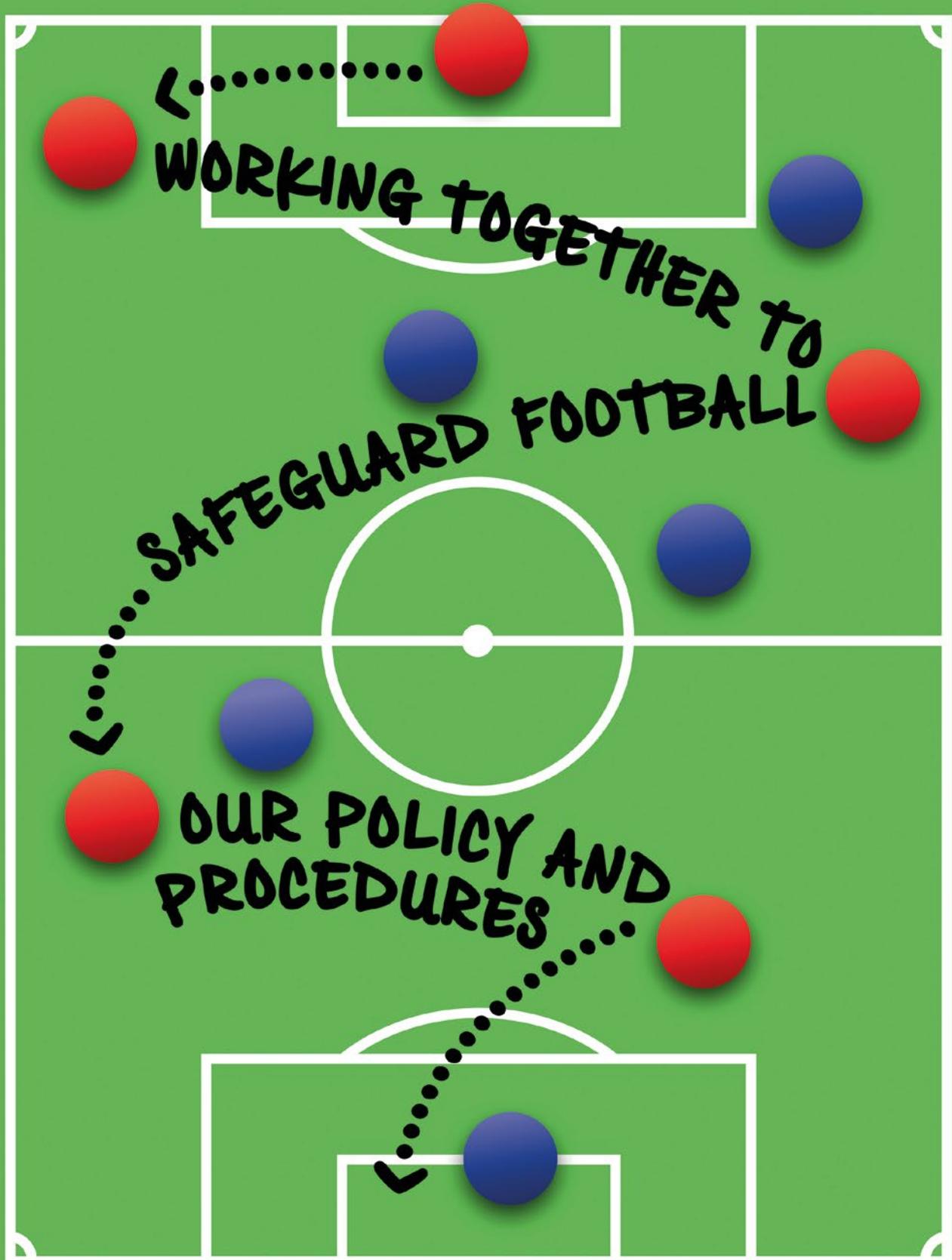


Grassroots Football Safeguarding Children





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Foreword



Grassroots football is the backbone of our game and key to our success as a football nation. Our extensive Youth Review has shown that talking to young people is key to understanding their needs and shaping the game for the future. The development of the game relies on football being a safe, positive and enjoyable experience for the millions of children and young people who regularly play, watch, coach, referee, pump up the balls and help to put up the nets.

The FA is totally committed to this goal. With so many young people involved in the game, it is our responsibility as the governing body to have a clear safeguarding children policy that is accessible to and adopted by grassroots football.

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility and having Welfare Officers in all clubs and leagues with youth teams is crucial to The FA's simple three part approach to safeguarding, which includes:

- 'The Right People' – Seeking references and Criminal Record Checks.
- 'Raising Awareness' – Education and best practice.
- 'Dealing With Concerns' – Policy, procedures and referrals.

The cornerstones of The FA's commitment are our safeguarding children policy and procedures; a comprehensive safeguarding children education programme – which is mandatory for everyone taking FA qualifications; the Respect programme which addresses abusive sideline behaviour towards young players - including an online module for parents and carers; alongside best practice guidance to assist leagues and clubs.

Our network of approximately 10,000 volunteer Welfare Officers is key to ensuring everyone understands their responsibilities to safeguard children and young people and we acknowledge and applaud the work of this group of volunteers.

Our collective role is to create a fun and safe experience for children in football and where concerns come to light, whether they are about someone in football or in the child's wider life, then to report these concerns to the appropriate authorities.

'Let's make football safe – not sorry' sums up our commitment and intent and we are determined to fulfil and exceed in this most important of responsibilities.

Thank you for playing your part to make a difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kelly Simmons'.

Kelly Simmons

Director of the National Game
and Women's Football

Acknowledgements

The FA has drawn from work undertaken by the Amateur Swimming Association, All England Netball Association, The Rugby Football League, England and Wales Cricket Board, Child Protection in Sport Unit, Ann Craft Trust and Stonewall. We would like to thank these organisations for their support and kind permission to adapt some of their materials.

Glossary

- ACPO** Association of Chief Police Officers
- CDM** County Development Manager
- CFA** County Football Association
- CFA WO** County Football Association Welfare Officer
- CMT** Case Management Team
- CPSU** Child Protection in Sport Unit
- CPT** Child Protection Teams
- CRC** Criminal Record Checks
- CWO** Club Welfare Officer
- CYP** Children and Young People
- DfES** Department for Education and Science
- DBS** Disclosure and Barring Service
- FA OSS** Football Associations Online Safeguarding Service
- FDO** Football Development Manager
- FGM** Female Genital Mutilation
- FMU** Forced Marriage Unit
- HBV** Honour Based Violence
- LSCB** Local Safeguarding Children Boards
- NSPCC** National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
- PoFA** Protection of Freedoms Act
- The FA** The Football Association
- The FA CRB** The Football Association Criminal Records Body
- YLWO** Youth League Welfare Officer

Endorsement from the NSPCC, Child Protection in Sport Unit



On behalf of the NSPCC, Child Protection in Sport Unit I am delighted to recognise the great work being carried out across grassroots football and applaud your policies and procedures. It's well documented that by 'working together' safeguards are more effective in supporting and protecting children and young people. With an estimated 5 million children and young people involved in football is essential that there is a clear understanding of what is acceptable behaviour and how to report any concerns.

I'd like to thank all of the volunteers working hard to make football safe – not sorry.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Tiivas". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Anne Tiivas

Director, Child Protection in Sport Unit

Section 1

1.0 Introduction

The FA continues to be committed to ensuring all necessary steps are taken to protect from harm children and young people who participate in grassroots football. This document together with the safeguarding regulations, best practice guidelines and educational programme sets out The FA's position, role and responsibilities, and clarifies what is expected of County Associations; their affiliated clubs and leagues.

Everyone involved in football needs to understand the individual and collective responsibility they undertake when working with children and young people. It's clear that working together and giving young people a voice makes a difference when it comes to having effective safeguards in football.

It's essential that everyone is clear about how to report a concern about the welfare of a child or young person. In short this means following the guidelines set out in this policy. Further support and guidance can be obtained through your club or league Welfare Officer and County Association Welfare Officer. This essential network of Welfare Officers is further supported by The FA's Safeguarding team at Wembley.

Remember it's not your responsibility to decide if abuse is taking place, but it is your responsibility to report any concerns you may have.

1.1 The Association's Safeguarding Children Policy

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 abuse. This is the responsibility of every adult involved in football, thus every club is required to endorse and adhere to The Association's Safeguarding Children Policy.

The FA recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of children and young people who play or participate in football by protecting them from abuse and harm.

This means creating a safe and inclusive atmosphere where everyone at the club works together to tackle both bullying and discrimination, ensure safer recruitment, and tackle poor practice which leads to harm and reduces equal opportunities.

Best practice in Inclusion, Anti-bullying, Equality and the Respect agenda are all part of making safer cultures and prevention of harm and abuse.

The FA is committed to working to provide a safe environment for all children and young people to participate in the sport to the best of their abilities for as long as they choose to do so.

The FA recognises that the terms 'child or young person', 'abuse' and 'harm' are open to interpretation, so for the purposes of this policy, these are defined in Appendix 1.

The Association's Safeguarding Children Policy principles are that:

- The child's welfare is, and must always be, the paramount consideration
- All children and young people have a right to be protected from abuse regardless of their age, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status or civil partnership, racial origin, faith, ability or disability, pregnancy and maternity
- 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 and carers is essential

The FA is committed to working in partnership with the Police, Children's Social Care, Local Safeguarding Children's Boards (LSCB) and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in accordance with their procedures. This is essential to enable these organisations to carry out their statutory duties to investigate concerns and protect all children and young people.

The Association's Safeguarding Children Policy is in response to government legislation and guidance, developed to safeguard the welfare and development of children and young people.

Clubs and leagues with youth teams must appoint a Welfare Officer in line with FA affiliation requirements. All league and club Welfare Officers are expected to abide by the Code of Conduct for volunteer Welfare Officers.

The safeguarding children policy is further supported by The FA's Respect programme to address verbal abuse and bullying of youngsters by parents and coaches on the sidelines. More information can be found in Sections 3.1 and 3.2.



Section 2

2.0 Recruiting volunteers and staff

Grassroots football would not exist without the thousands of volunteers involved today. There are many different roles in football and ensuring we encourage individuals that are suitable is essential. Getting the right volunteers in place is key to a well organised and happy club that provides football in a safe and supportive environment.

Remember that a friendly, well run club is more likely to be successful in encouraging additional volunteers!

Whilst we understand that many clubs and leagues are in need of additional volunteers, all clubs and leagues with youth teams have a responsibility to ensure that appropriate recruitment checks have been carried out. Anyone may have the potential to abuse children and young people, therefore all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and young people.

Sound recruitment and selection procedures will help to screen out those who are not suitable to work in football. Please ensure your club/league follow the steps set out here.

2.1 Planning and advertising

- Draw up a role profile which highlights the key responsibilities of the role
- Decide upon the skills and experience the role will need; a person specification
- Be clear about what your club/leagues aims and philosophy are in your advert/information
- Reflect the club/leagues positive stance on safeguarding children and equal opportunities
- Use application forms to collect information on each applicant
- Ensure that more than one official looks at each application form
- Ask for original identification documents to confirm the identity of the applicant, e.g. passport or driving licence.

2.2 Interviewing

- Meet with all applicants prior to any recruitment decision
- Ensure more than one official is present.

The meeting or interview will enable the club/league to explore further the information provided in their application form. Prepare in advance the questions you want to ask; they should provide the applicant with the opportunity to share previous experiences and give examples of how they have or would handle situations.

It's important to obtain information regarding an applicant's technical capabilities and it's also necessary to explore their attitudes and commitment to child welfare. Here are examples that could be used to discover this information:

1. Tell us about any previous experience you have working with children or young people
2. Give a child related scenario and ask the applicant what they would do

e.g. 'It's a winter evening and the training sessions finished. A parent has not arrived to pick up their child – what would you do?' The applicant would be expected to say they would stay with the child and contact the parents to find out where they were.

2.3 References

Request at least two references from individuals who are not related to the applicant. One reference should be associated with the applicant's place of work and, if possible, one that demonstrates they have been involved in sport, particularly children's activities, previously, or other voluntary work. References should be followed up prior to any offer of appointment being made. If the references raise any concerns you are advised to contact your CFA Welfare Officer.

2.4 Criminal record checks

Criminal record checks are another tool in the recruitment process. A criminal record Check Disclosure certificate contains impartial and confidential criminal history information held by the Police and government departments which can be used by The FA to make safer recruitment decisions. It can indicate that a person is not suitable to work with children, for example if they have a history of sexual offending or offences against children. It may also tell The FA that further investigations are required, for example if the person has a history of drug dealing or racist offending.

The type/level of criminal records check required in grassroots football will be determined by the role someone has, the frequency of that role being carried out and whether or not the role is supervised. Please use the guidance below to understand which roles in U18 football need to have a DBS Enhanced Criminal Record Check with Children's Barred List:

- Club Welfare Officers
- Coaches [this includes those who are referred to as Assistant Coach]
- Team Managers [including those referred to as Assistant Managers]
- Referees in U18 football, Referee Mentors, Referee Coaches and Referee Assessors
- First Aiders
- Physiotherapists and other Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC) registered roles
- Regular Club Drivers

Ordinarily, Club Chairmen, Treasurers and Secretaries do not require a check, if they are just or mainly administrative roles. However, if the people in these roles also help with coaching or at matches, then they will need a DBS Enhanced Criminal Record Check with Children's Barred List in their role as a coach, team assistant, etc.

Lots of roles do not need to have checks, for example: you do not need to have a check to watch your child play, if you occasionally run the line or if you drive your own child and his/her friends to games if this is a private and personal arrangement with other parents, or if your role is mainly administrative.

It is very important that people who do not need a check are not asked to complete one, as this is breaking the law and has serious consequences.

The FA will take into account the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act and only consider offences which are relevant to the care, supervision and training of children.

The FA is not allowed to tell the club about the actual offending and so applicants can be assured of confidentiality. The FA will however tell the club/league and County FA whether or not the person is considered suitable to work with children.

Anyone needing to complete an FA criminal records check can do so through their club/league Welfare Officer. There is an online application process available through FACRB. This service provides quicker, cheaper checks than the paper application and is simpler for clubs to administer.

We strongly recommend that applicants use The FA Online criminal records checks application system. For more about the online application system, e-mail FAchecks@TheFA.com

Your role in football	Action to take
Under 18s coach, manager, first aider or other club based eligible role	Speak to your Club Welfare Officer
Club Welfare Officer	Speak to your County FA Welfare Officer
Referee	Contact your County FA Referee Development Officer
Licensed Coach applicant	Ring 0845 210 8080 or e-mail FAchecks@TheFA.com for advice
Working in a private soccer school or unaffiliated football	You may not be able to get a FA Enhanced Criminal Record Check. Please speak to your line manager or contact 0845 210 8080 or e-mail FAchecks@TheFA.com for advice
Unsure what you should be doing	Ring 0845 210 8080 or e-mail FAchecks@TheFA.com for advice

For more information about who is eligible and how to apply for a check please visit our Frequently Asked Questions – www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/criminal-records-checks

If you have been asked to have a check and you don't think you need one, please ring The FA Criminal Record Body on 0845 210 8080 or e-mail FAChecks@TheFA.com for advice.

If you have been asked to check certain individuals and are not sure if they need a check, then please speak to your County FA Welfare Officer or e-mail FAChecks@TheFA.com for advice.

Club Welfare Officers can find out about The FA's Online Safeguarding Service; a tool developed specifically for Welfare Officers to monitor club membership and FA CRC compliance please refer to section 4.4 for more information.

2.5 Appointing volunteers and staff

Clubs and leagues should consider all the information they receive via the application form, confirmation of identity, the outcome of the take up of references and The FA criminal records check. This information should then be considered alongside the outcome of the meeting/ interview to make an informed decision as to whether or not to accept the applicant into their club.

2.6 Post appointment decisions

It is important that once a new volunteer has been recruited follow up action is taken and this should include:

- Any qualifications are substantiated e.g. request to see copies of their coaching certificate(s)
- New volunteers are made aware and sign up to the club's/league's safeguarding children policy and procedures, best practice guidelines and codes of conduct
- The roles and responsibilities of the new volunteer are signed up to
- Training needs are established and actioned
- A period of supervision/observation or mentoring is used to support the new volunteer; this is often referred to as an induction
- The FA's Safeguarding Children Workshop is completed or if it was taken over three years ago is renewed either Online or via a Workshop.

Section 3

3.0 Getting the essentials in place; the key safeguarding building blocks

Every football club and youth, mini soccer and girls' league must have a safeguarding children policy; this could be considered the cornerstone of your club or league. For your policy to be truly effective members need to understand what it actually means for them and that includes how it's integrated into daily football activities. A safeguarding children policy should be based on sound straight forward principles and the foundation of a well-run and effective club or league.

By signing up to The FA's safeguarding children policy and Procedures (see Appendix 2) and implementing key policies and procedures, best practice will soon become common practice. It's important to make sure that this information is shared with all new members and that your club/league has a process to check that this is happening.

The FAs current affiliation requirements for youth football mean every club and league with youth teams must have a Welfare Officer; they are key to ensuring everyone is aware of the safeguarding children policy and what this really means for the club/league.

Having an information event such as a pre-season open evening for new players and their parents/carers would be an excellent way of introducing your club's officials including the Welfare Officer and sharing the philosophy and expectations of the club.

3.1 Policy and procedures check lists

Please make use of these checklists to ensure your club/league has the key 'building blocks' in place with which to build and develop successfully run clubs and leagues. Having these in place will guide your club/league members as to what they can expect from your club/league and what in turn you expect from them!

Policy	In place	In progress	Last Revised
Safeguarding children policy			
Selection and recruitment policy			
A whistle-blowing policy			
Health and safety policy			
Anti bullying policy			
Equality policy			
Codes of conduct for coaches, players, officials and parents/spectators			
A clear club philosophy that is shared at the start of the season.			

Procedures check list

Procedures	In place	In progress	Last Revised
A Club Welfare Officer appointed*			
Procedures for reporting concerns about the welfare of a child or young person			
Complaints and disciplinary procedures			
A system for gathering player and parental consent			
A system for gathering medical information about a child or young person			
A system for gathering information about a child or young person's specific needs			
An avenue for young people to express their views and have them heard			
Information for parents, carers and players			
A committee representative of the wider local community, one that is inclusive representing current members and potential members (e.g. representing age, gender, disability and ethnicity)			
Travel and overnight stay procedures			
The FA's Respect Programme			

*In line with The FA's affiliation policy refer to Section 4 for more information

For further guidance on developing a club or league 'Health and Safety Policy', 'Complaints and Disciplinary Policy' and having a 'Complaints Policy' see Appendix 3.

Welfare Officers will be given support on how to implement and develop the key 'safeguarding building blocks' when they attend The FA's Welfare Officer Workshop. Further information and support can be obtained via your CFA Welfare Officer. Download our recommended template policies and procedures for use in your club or league via – www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/raising-awareness---downloads-section

Safeguarding children policy template for clubs

Respect

Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures

Club Template

Using this Policy

Football Club Safeguarding Children Policy

TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding Let's make football safe - not sorry

Anti-bullying policy

Respect

Anti-Bullying Policy for Football Clubs

The Football Associations Recommended Guidelines

Rationale of this Policy

What is Bullying?

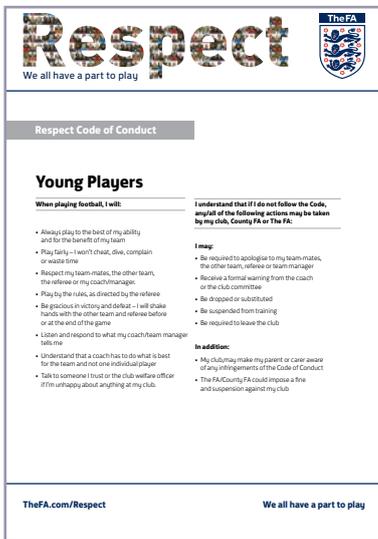
Signs and Indicators

TheFA.com/Footballsaf Let's make football safe - not sorry

Visit the following link to download the Respect codes of conduct for:

- Young players
- Spectators and parents/carers
- Coaches, team managers and club officials
- Match officials

www.TheFA.com/my-football/more/respect/respect-resources



Respect
We all have a part to play

Respect Code of Conduct

Young Players

When playing football, I will:

- Always play to the best of my ability and for the benefit of my team
- Play fairly – without cheating, diving, complaining or wasting time
- Respect my team-mates, the other team, the referee or my coach/manager
- Play by the rules, as directed by the referee
- Be gracious in victory and defeat – I will shake hands with the other team and referee before or at the end of the game
- Listen and respond to what my coach/team manager tells me
- Understand that a coach has to do what is best for the team and not for individual players
- Talk to someone I trust or the club welfare officer if I'm unhappy about anything at my club.

I understand that if I do not follow the Code, any/all of the following actions may be taken by my club, County FA or The FA:

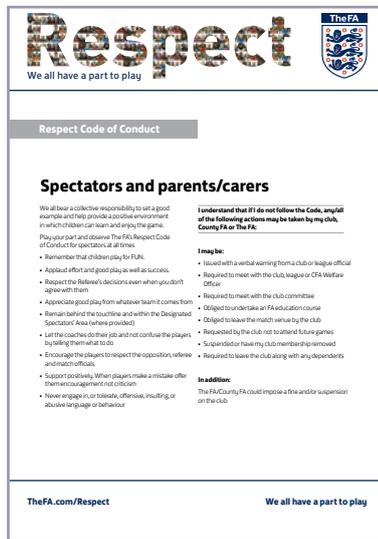
I may:

- Be required to apologise to my team-mates, the other team, referee or team manager
- Receive a formal warning from the coach or the club committee
- Be dropped or substituted
- Be suspended from training
- Be required to leave the club

In addition:

- My club may make my parent or carer aware of any infringements of the Code of Conduct
- The FA/County FA could impose a fine and suspension against my club.

TheFA.com/Respect We all have a part to play



Respect
We all have a part to play

Respect Code of Conduct

Spectators and parents/carers

We all bear a collective responsibility to set a good example and help provide a positive environment in which children can learn and enjoy the game. Players part and observe The FA's Respect Code of Conduct at all times.

I understand that if I do not follow the Code, any/all of the following actions may be taken by my club, County FA or The FA:

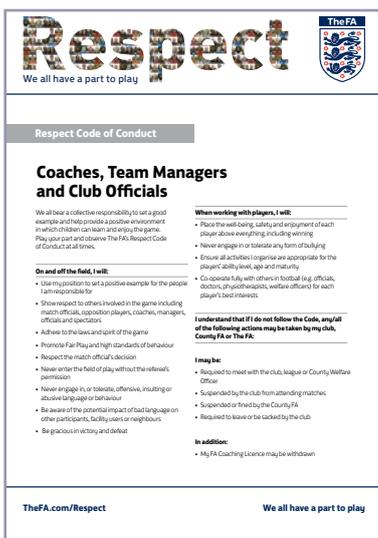
I may be:

- Issued with a verbal warning from a club or league official
- Required to meet with the club, league or CFA Welfare Officer
- Required to meet with the club committee
- Obligated to undertake an FA education course
- Obligated to leave the match venue by the club
- Required to pay the club to attend future games
- Suspended or have my club membership removed
- Required to leave the club along with my dependents

In addition:

- The FA/County FA could impose a fine and/or suspension on the club

TheFA.com/Respect We all have a part to play



Respect
We all have a part to play

Respect Code of Conduct

Coaches, Team Managers and Club Officials

We all bear a collective responsibility to set a good example and help provide a positive environment in which children can learn and enjoy the game. Players part and observe The FA's Respect Code of Conduct at all times.

On and off the field, I will:

- Use my position to set a positive example for the people I am responsible for
- Show respect to others involved in the game including match officials, opposition players, coaches, managers, officials and spectators
- Adhere to the laws and spirit of the game
- Promote Fair Play and high standards of behaviour
- Respect the match official's decision
- Never enter the field of play without the referee's permission
- Never engage in, or tolerate, offences, insulting or abusive language or behaviour
- Be aware of the potential impact of bad language on other participants, facility users or neighbours
- Be gracious in victory and defeat

When working with players, I will:

- Place the welfare, safety and enjoyment of each child above everything, including winning
- Never engage in or tolerate any form of bullying
- Ensure all activities I organise are appropriate for the player's ability, level, age and maturity
- Co-operate fully with others in football (e.g. officials, doctors, physiotherapists, welfare officers) for each player's best interests

I understand that if I do not follow the Code, any/all of the following actions may be taken by my club, County FA or The FA:

I may be:

- Required to meet with the club, league or County Welfare Officer
- Suspended by the club from attending matches
- Suspended or fined by the County FA
- Required to leave or be advised by the club

In addition:

- My FA Coaching Licence may be withdrawn

TheFA.com/Respect We all have a part to play



Respect
We all have a part to play

Respect Code of Conduct

Match Officials

We all have a responsibility to promote high standards of behaviour in the game. The behaviour of the match officials has an impact, directly and indirectly, on the conduct of everyone involved in the game – both on the pitch and on the sidelines. Players part and observe The FA's Respect Code of Conduct of match officials at all times.

I will:

- Be honest and completely impartial at all times
- Apply the laws of the Game and competition rules fairly and consistently
- Manage the game in a positive, calm and confident manner
- Deal with all instances of violence, aggression, unsporting behaviour, foul play and other misconduct
- Never tolerate offensive, insulting or abusive language or behaviour from players and team officials
- Support my match official colleagues at all times
- Set a positive personal example by promoting good behaviour and showing respect to everyone involved in the game

I understand that if I do not follow the Code, the following actions may be taken by my County FA or The FA:

I may be:

- Required to meet with The FA/County FA Refereeing Officer
- Required to meet with The FA/County FA Refereeing Committee

I may:

- Communicate with the players and encourage fair play
- Respond in a calm and confident manner using appropriate language for clarification by the team captains
- Prepare physically and mentally for every match
- Complete and submit accurate and concise reports within the time limit required for games in which I officiate.

TheFA.com/Respect We all have a part to play

The FA's equality policy

The FA is responsible for setting standards and values to apply throughout the game at every level. Football belongs to, and should be enjoyed by, anyone who wants to participate in it. The FA's commitment is to eliminate discrimination whether by reason of age, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status or civil partnership, racial origin, faith, ability or disability, pregnancy and maternity.

The FA is also committed to promoting equality by treating people fairly and with respect, by recognising that inequalities may exist, by taking steps to address them and by providing access and opportunities for all members of the community. It's essential that all youth clubs and leagues adhere to this policy and we would recommend you make use of The FA's template policy.



3.2 Footballs 'Respect' programme

We would encourage clubs and leagues to sign up to the Respect Programme; it's free to join and there are excellent resources available to support clubs and leagues to introduce Respect.

The Respect programme includes four practical steps to improve behaviour - on the pitch and on the sidelines - in and at matches throughout the country:

Step 1: Respect Codes of Conduct

Step 2: Designated Spectator Areas

Step 3: Captain taking responsibility

Step 4: Referee managing the game

Respect is simply the collective responsibility of everyone involved in football to create a fair, safe and enjoyable environment in which the game can take place.

Ensuring everyone understands what's on offer, what's expected and what's not tolerated at your club or league will help to ensure children and young people get to play their football in a fun and supportive environment.

Sign up and make use of the resources available including the following:

- Respect Codes of Conduct
- Online parents guide
- Respect guide for youth clubs
- Good practice guide for leagues
- Respect pitch side barriers
- Promotional films; these have had great reviews, they are short and to the point

To access more information on these resources and others either speak with your CFA Respect Officer, CFA Welfare Officer or visit – www.TheFA.com/Respect

3.3 Best practice guidance

We also have a wide range of safeguarding best practice guidance which aims to guide clubs and leagues on things such as how to go about 'appointing a Welfare Officer', ensuring safer recruitment of volunteers and organising trips away. For more information either ask your CFA Welfare Officer or visit – www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding to find out more about:

- Appointing a Club Welfare Officer
- Club Welfare Officer Roles and Responsibilities
- Appointing a Youth League Welfare Officer
- Youth League Welfare Officer Roles and Responsibilities
- Safer Recruitment
- Club Annual Membership and Consent Form
- Choosing a Club for Your Child
- Travel, Trips and Tournaments
- Safe Away Cards
- Changing Rooms and Showering Facilities
- Photography Guidelines
- Advice and Support; for individuals receiving a disclosure
- Advice and Support; for those against whom a complaint of poor practice or an allegation of abuse has been made
- Best Practice guidance on including and safeguarding Deaf and Disabled Children

Guidance on how to deal with a concern about a child's welfare, can be found via – www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/dealing-with-concerns

3.4 Social media

Facebook, Twitter, blogs, instant messaging and photo and video exchange sites are now common ways of communicating. All of these online tools provide a useful way for everyone in football to connect with children and young people. However the use of social networking sites also introduces a range of potential safeguarding risks to children and young people.

NSPCC

‘More than one in four children aged 11 to 16 with a social networking profile have experienced something upsetting on it the last year. The most reported issue was trolling*.Smaller numbers of children reported experiencing other things like racism, homophobia, being urged to hurt themselves or asked to respond to or send a sexual message.’

**Trolling was defined as any unkind, sarcastic or negative comment or rumours circulated online*

Source: ‘How Safe Are Our Children?’ NSPCC Report 2014

Registered charity Registered charity numbers 216401 and SC037717

So it’s important that you, your club/league and your members keep pace with how children and young people are being communicated with and follow the best practice guidance provided by The FA. The following information is available via – www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding

- Social networking, websites, mobile phone and email communications
- Running a website- Do’s and Don’ts
- Responsible use of social networking sites
- Communicating responsibly with young leaders, coaches and referees U18
- Using texts and emails with U18 – Dos and Don’ts
- ‘Trolling’ – advice for parents

For additional information and guidance on cyberbullying (including trolling) please refer to section 5.4.2

Additional care may be needed with some children with learning difficulties in terms of internet safety dependant on their understanding and development. This may be an area to consider in partnership with the child and their parent/carer.

3.5 Managing risk

We naturally assess the potential for risks when planning activities. However, to ensure the welfare of children and young people within our care it is important to always ask the following basic questions:

- What is the activity?
- What are the ages or levels of development of the children involved?
- Where is the activity going to take place?
- Are there any additional needs within the group? How do they affect the child's ability and needs in terms of safeguarding
- Are there mixed groupings?
- What experience and qualifications do the organisers have?
- Are staffing or volunteer levels appropriate to the needs of the group?
- Do you have someone with the appropriate level of first aid training for the needs of the group?

It's important to also consider your familiarity with the venue and the level of responsibility you have for the activity e.g. at your home ground (which may or may not have access to telephone, toilet and changing facilities, first aid provision, secure perimeters) or an unknown ground that your club has to travel to. Local sports centres or community playing fields will have guidelines on use and types of facilities, which you may or may not have access to. Also be mindful of social activities at a non football venue, which may or may not be known to you.

The principles for assessing potential risks remain the same whatever the activity, therefore you need to consider these and decide what ratio of adults to children or young people you consider to be appropriate to ensure their safety.

Adult/participant ratios must be based on the age and understanding of the children and young people involved, the degree of risk the activity involves, and whether there are additional needs. The lower the age of the participants, the higher the ratio of staff should be. If the activity is mixed gender, male and female staff should ideally be available.

Whatever the age of the children and young people and type of activity, a minimum of two adults should always be present. This ensures at least basic cover in the event of an incident.

As rule of thumb teams should generally have a minimum of 1 adult to 16 children and young people. Where the children are aged 8 or younger you will require more staff and remember a minimum of two adults should always be present. If the children and young people have additional needs e.g. learning needs or a disability the ratio should be higher than 1:16 to ensure you can meet the specific needs of any given group.

You may have club volunteers including FA Level 1 Coaches who are not yet 18. They cannot be considered an adult legally; therefore this affects the ratio of adults to children and young people. However, you can ask parents to come along in such circumstances. It is also important to consider the experience of the adults involved. Clearly it is best practice to have FA Licenced Coaches.

3.6 Charter standard programme

The FA Charter Standard programme is an accreditation, which recognises and rewards high quality levels of provision in grassroots clubs and leagues. The accreditation is awarded to clubs and leagues that are well run, sustainable and which place safeguarding, quality coaching and safety as being paramount.

There are three levels of FA Charter Standard Awards for clubs to recognise the different standards.

'FA Charter Standard Club (youth and adult)' – entry level

'FA Charter Standard Development Club'

'FA Charter Standard Community Club' – the most advanced level.

Each advanced level requires additional criteria to be met. Any club can apply for FA Charter Standard status, even a one team club. The criteria are challenging, but attainable for every club. Once awarded, FA Charter Standard clubs and leagues are given an annual health check to ensure the standards of provision are maintained. Signing up to The FA Charter Standard programme can help with the direction of your club, ensuring minimum standards are in place, setting a clear philosophy and ensuring consistency year on year as well as offering opportunities for growth and development.

Criteria for achieving the entry level award include having a trained Welfare Officer, Criminal Record Checks for all volunteers involved with youth teams with a valid FA Safeguarding certificate, FA Emergency Aid-trained volunteers linked to each team, Respect programme signup, a minimum Level 1 coach for each youth team, appropriate club administration in place and an volunteer FA Charter Standard Co-ordinator.

The benefits for an FA Charter Standard club include free Nike footballs, a free kit for clubs with a youth team as part of the McDonalds FA Charter Standard Kit Scheme, access to the McDonald's FA Charter Standard Kit store for a 20% discount on all Nike kit and equipment, free access for coaches to sign up to The FA Licensed Coaches club, access to a free FA legal helpline, access to a free Charity and CASC helpline, tickets upon application for England youth and women's internationals, local in-service FA coaching events, free access to Club Matters business and administration workshops and support with funding applications.

The 'hidden' benefits are key to most clubs working towards the accreditation. By achieving The FA Charter Standard accreditation, you are demonstrating to all members, parents, sponsors and the public, that you are a well-organised, safe club offering opportunities for all.

The club accreditation lasts for one season and will be renewed each year as part of the Annual Health Check process. Accreditation awards can be withdrawn if a club has a poor disciplinary record, fails to attend in-service FA Charter Standard events or is unable to continue to meet the criteria. For more information visit – www.TheFA.com/charterstandard

