



SAFEGUARDING

LET'S MAKE FOOTBALL SAFE, NOT SORRY

The FA guide to reporting concerns about child welfare

Safeguarding children and young people is everyone's responsibility. Clearly within football, The FA, as the game's governing body in England, has a responsibility to put in place the best possible framework to ensure children* have fun and enjoy the game safely. However, it's also a difficult and sometimes complex area that can affect the lives of everyone involved. This brief guide addresses the most frequently-asked questions about The FA's important role in safeguarding.

What is The FA's strategy for keeping children safe

We have a three-part safeguarding strategy, built on a network of paid and voluntary personnel across youth football. These personnel are known as 'Designated Safeguarding Officers' (DSOs). The three parts of the strategy focus on:

1. **Getting the right people involved** – seeking references and doing Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks on those working in eligible roles with children.
2. **Creating a safe environment** – providing education and best practice advice and guidance and promoting codes of conduct.
3. **Promoting clear systems to deal with any concerns** – outlining policy, regulations, reporting and case handling procedures.
4. Our systems to deal with any concerns are supported by:
5. **People:** Trained personnel within clubs, leagues and County FAs, supported by The FA's professional Safeguarding team.
6. **Reporting:** Clearly defined ways to report concerns: **click here** for the referral process.
7. **Case-handling:** An established process for handling individual cases, supported by risk management procedures, where necessary.

People: who are these trained personnel?

These are the Designated Safeguarding Officers (DSO) referred to above. It is **mandatory** for every affiliated grassroots club and league with youth teams to have a DSO who has completed:

- An FA Criminal Records Check (CRC) and
- The FA's highly-regarded Safeguarding Children and Welfare Officer training courses

All these grassroots clubs and leagues must also have a defined Safeguarding Children policy and procedures. A standard template for this can be viewed at:

[TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/raising-awareness---downloads-section](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/raising-awareness---downloads-section)

There is also a DSO in every County FA, every professional club, all affiliated development centres, centres of excellence and academies.

Clubs, leagues and County FAs all receive guidance from The FA on recruiting the right people for these roles.

Once in place, all these personnel are trained in the legal framework for safeguarding and child protection.

They are also trained to deal with initial concerns and how to report them to The FA and statutory agencies, such as the Police or local Children's Social Care Teams.



* For reasons of space and not to become repetitive, the word 'children' in this document should always be taken to mean 'children and young people under the age of 18'.



Reporting: if I have a concern, how do I report it?

Firstly, if you are worried about a child, it is vital you report your concerns – no action is not an option. There are five ways to report a concern:

1. To your club or league Designated Safeguarding Officer – please find out from your club who these people are.
2. To your County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer. A list of all County FA contact details is available at [TheFA.com/my-football/more-county-fa](https://www.thefa.com/my-football/more-county-fa)
3. By emailing The FA Safeguarding Team at safeguarding@TheFA.com or by calling and asking for the team on 0800 169 1863.
4. If urgent and you cannot contact your club, league or County Safeguarding Officer, you should call the NSPCC 24 hour helpline on 0808 800 5000.
5. If it is an emergency because a child or children are at immediate risk, then call the Police or Children's Social Care in your area.

Case-handling: after I've reported a concern, then what happens?

It will then move into the third part of The FA's Safeguarding strategy: case-handling.

If reported to a club, league or County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer, they will make an assessment based on their training.

The assessment will classify the case as:

- High and immediate-risk
- Medium-risk
- Lower-risk or poor practice

If high and immediate-risk – the statutory authorities will be informed and within 24 hours a standard referral form outlining the case will be sent to The FA Safeguarding team.

If medium-risk – a referral form will be sent to The FA Safeguarding team within 24 hours and handled on a case-by-case basis. This means it may be referred to the statutory authorities or handled by The FA and relevant County FA in the case of grassroots football, or the DSO if the incident has occurred at a professional club.

If lower-risk – sometimes this is poor practice, then it will be handled by the County FA in the case of grassroots football or the club DSO if the incident occurs at a professional club.

Thereafter, just as in a legal case, there are various risk management actions which can be taken by The FA to safeguard children. These include education, mentoring, supervision and, where appropriate, suspensions.

This is a brief guide to Safeguarding and may not have answered all your questions. More detailed information on the following topics can be accessed at the web addresses shown:

Safeguarding area of TheFA.com

[TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding)

Become a Welfare Officer

[TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/thinking-of-becoming-a-welfare-officer](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/thinking-of-becoming-a-welfare-officer)

Best Practice Downloads

[TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/raising-awareness---downloads-section](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/raising-awareness---downloads-section)

Criminal Record Checks

[TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/criminal-records-checks](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/criminal-records-checks)

Information for Under 18's

[TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/be-on-the-ball](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/be-on-the-ball)

Online Safeguarding Service

[TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/online-safeguarding-service](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/online-safeguarding-service)

Recruiting the Right People

[TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/the-right-people---recruitment-crc](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/the-right-people---recruitment-crc)

Reporting Concerns

[TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/dealing-with-concerns](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/dealing-with-concerns)

Talk Pants - NSPCC advice for children

[TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/pants---the-nspcc-underwear-rule](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/pants---the-nspcc-underwear-rule)





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