

The Football Association Safeguarding Children Best Practice Guidelines



Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers Working with Children and Young People

[TheFA.com/FootballSafe](https://www.thefa.com/FootballSafe)

These Safeguarding Children Best Practice Guidelines have been developed to provide clubs and leagues with advice and guidance on the recruitment and selection of volunteers working with children and young people.

Any change to these guidelines will be notified via TheFA.com and in any relevant publications. Please remember that the safety of children and young people should be paramount in all your activities and this document has been designed to help you with this.

The FA is committed to providing a safe environment for children/young people under the age of 18. By adopting the points outlined in these guidelines, you will be putting in place the best possible practice to protect children and young people whenever a volunteer is sought to work with them.



Introduction

The intentions of most people in football involving children and young people are good. However, The FA recognises its responsibilities to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people participating in football by providing a safe and enjoyable environment. Sound recruitment and selection procedures will help to screen out those who are not suitable.

When clubs or leagues recruit new members, all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and young people. In addition, a club's or league's volunteer selection processes must be consistent and fair at all times. This guidance outlines methods that club or league officials can use to assist with their recruitment choices.

While these guidelines have special emphasis on recruiting volunteers to work with children and young people, they could easily be applied to recruitment of all volunteers, as well as paid staff.

Planning

The first stage of any recruitment process involves planning. Club or league officials would draw up a role profile, which highlights the main areas of an identified voluntary role. They should also decide upon the skills and experience that an individual would need to fulfil the requirements of the role and draw up a person specification.

A club or league's recruitment process must be developed in such a way that every applicant is treated in a fair and consistent manner.

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Advertising

In order to attract new volunteers, it may be necessary to advertise outside the club itself, for example - on a sport hall notice board, a local school, shop, community hall or newspaper.

The advertisement should reflect the club or league's Safeguarding Children Policy and it should contain the skills and experience required and the duties to be undertaken. However, it should not discriminate in terms of age, race, gender or disability.

Application Form

Clubs and leagues should use application forms to collect information on each applicant. The Volunteer Application Form can be adapted for a club's or league's use. Each applicant's information is then collected in a consistent way.

At least two officials should work together to consider all the application forms to ensure that they are scrutinised fairly and equitably. It is very important that clubs or leagues also ask for identification documents to confirm the identity of the applicant – for example: a passport or driving license displaying a photograph.

Meeting/Interview

It is highly recommended that club or league officials meet with all applicants prior to any recruitment decisions being made. More than one official should be present. The meeting/interview will enable the club or league to explore further the information provided in the application form. The questions to be

asked should be prepared in advance and should provide the applicant with the opportunity to recount previous experiences and give examples of how they have or would handle situations.

Whilst it is important to elicit information regarding an applicant's technical capabilities, it is also necessary to explore his or her attitudes and commitment to child welfare. Listed below are examples of questions that could be used to discover this information:

- 'Tell us about any previous experience you have working with children or young people'.
- Give a child-related scenario and ask the applicants what they would do. For example: 'It is a winter evening and the training session has finished. A parent has not arrived to pick up their child – what would you do?' The applicant would be expected to say that they would stay with the child and contact the parents to find out where they were.
- 'Is there anything we should know that could affect your suitability to work with children or young people?'
- You should also ask applicants to bring along certificates or other proof of any qualifications to the meeting or interview – for example, a coaching certificate or proof of attendance at any safeguarding children courses.

References

At least two references should be requested from individuals who are not related to the applicant. The Volunteer Reference Form can be adapted for the club's or league's use. One reference should be associated with the applicant's place of work and, if

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possible, one that demonstrates that the individual has been involved in sport, particularly children's football, previously. References should be followed up prior to any offer of appointment being made. If the references raise any concerns, you are advised to contact The FA Child Protection Department for advice and guidance.

Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) Disclosures

CRB checks are another tool in the recruitment procedure.

A CRB Enhanced Disclosure tells The FA about a person's recorded offences. It can indicate that a person is not a suitable person to work with children – for example: if they have a history of sexual offending. 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.

Volunteers and others in football should be assured that 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 or County FA about the actual offending, so applicants can be assured of confidentiality. The FA will, however, tell the club and County FA whether or not the person is considered suitable to work with children.

Applications for CRB checks should be dealt with by the club's Designated Person for Child Protection. If

an applicant claims to have an FA CRB Unit Enhanced Disclosure, the club should seek advice from The FA CRB Unit or the Safeguarding Children website on how to proceed.

Further information can be found at www.FootballSafe@TheFA.com

Recruitment Decisions

Clubs 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 CRB Unit Enhanced Disclosure. 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 the club.

Post Recruitment

It is important that once a new volunteer has been recruited, follow-up action is taken – for example:

- Ensuring that new volunteers are made aware of and sign up to the club's Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures, Best Practice Guidelines and any Codes of Conduct
- Ensuring that any training needs are established and actioned
- Ensuring a statement of roles and responsibilities is prepared and making sure that this is agreed by the new volunteer
- Initially, a period of supervision/observation or mentoring could be introduced to support the new volunteer.

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Summary

Safeguarding Children is about putting in place the best possible practices and procedures. This will protect not only the child but also you, the adult, in football. If you have any comments on this guideline, or require any further support or guidance relating to children and young people, please contact The FA Equality and Child Protection Department.

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The FA Equality and Child Protection Department

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Telephone: 0800 085 0506
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Access The FA website, the Home of English Football, for the latest safeguarding children information.

Your County Football Association Child Protection Officer

See The FA website for contact details for County FAs

The FA/NSPCC Helpline

Telephone 0800 800 5000

This is a 24-hour, free and confidential telephone Helpline that provides counselling, information and advice to anyone concerned about a child at risk of ill treatment or abuse.

Asian Helpline: 0800 096 7719

Welsh Helpline: 0800 100 2524

Deaf Users Text phone: 0800 0056 0566

www.nspcc.org.uk

Safeguarding Children in Sport Unit (CPSU)

NSPCC National Training Centre

3 Gilmour Close

Beaumont Leys

Leicester LE4 1EZ

Telephone: 0116 234 7278/7280

www.thecpsu.org.uk

The CPSU co-ordinates and supports Safeguarding Children across a range of sports organisations. Further advice and guidance for sports organisations can be found on their website or in 'Sportscheck – a Step-by-Step Guide for Sports Organisations to Protect Children' (2002).