



## Referee Workforce Safeguarding Guidance

### Observers / Coaches / Mentors for Communicating with Under 18 Referees

Young Referee's account for 25% of our registered referee's. As part of the Referee Workforce as an Observer, Coach or Mentor, the chances are, you will be in direct contact with a referee under the age of 18 at some point during a season. These roles create additional vulnerability if communication and interactions with adults are not carried out appropriately, both on and off the field, either through direct face-to-face communication, or digital communication, such as text messages/emails.

Throughout their time as a referee, whilst under the age of 18, they are likely to communicate frequently with observers/coaches/mentors, and The FA recognises that the use of social networking sites, forums and message boards may form an integral part of these communications and may be beneficial to their development within football. Making use of these mediums is a positive step as long as it is done appropriately.

It is vital that we remember that they are not "adults" and as such we have a responsibility to safeguard them as we do any young person in football. Following this guidance will put in place helpful safeguarding practices:

#### Referee Contact Details

Mobile phone and email contact details for referees under the age of 18 should not be displayed on websites, handbooks or any other public domain. These details must be held securely and only displayed within private areas for the purpose of the activities they are undertaking with the written permission of their parent/carer.

#### Cambridgeshire FA recommends the following as best practice in relation to communicating with 16-17 year olds who are operating as referees:

1. Signed parental/carer consent should be given prior to email, social networking and mobile phone communications. Ideally the adult(s) who will be communicating in this way should be named. The purpose for the communication should be made clear. Sam Anderson will ensure that consent is gained to contact all under 18 promotion candidate/CORE/Academy members, or other arrangements will be made for this purpose.
2. Both parties to only communicate for the purpose of the identified professional role(s)
3. Observers/Coaches/Mentors contact young referees prior to game should copy in another County FA official, parent or carer to their communications.
4. If any inappropriate communication or content is shared between an adult and an U18 this should be reported immediately to the Cambs FA County Designated Safeguarding Officer (Diane Bradshaw – 01223 209 021 – [diane.bradshaw@cambridgeshirefa.com](mailto:diane.bradshaw@cambridgeshirefa.com))

**Communication with any referee under the age of 16 must be done through the parent/care. The CFA want to make observers aware of this, despite the fact there will be no referees under the age of 16 on the promotion scheme.**



Best practice for observers, coaches & mentors when communicating with Under 18's.

- Members of the referee workforce should not put themselves in a vulnerable position by becoming friends with Under 18's on Social Media.
- Post-match debriefs must be conducted in an open environment, ideally on the side of the pitch. If this isn't possible, the clubhouse or another suitable venue where it will never be just you and the young referee one on one. Under no circumstances should observers/coaches/mentors be entering the changing room of any Under 18 if it means they will be alone with that young referee. There may be occasions where the referees parent/guardian might come in with you, which would be an acceptable way to conduct the de-brief.
- Communication should not be through text messages or similar medium under any circumstances. Email with the parent/guardian, or a CFA representative copied in is the Cambridgeshire FA's recommended method of communicating with Under 18 referees.

### Reporting a concern

Below we will outline what to do if you need to report a concern about behaviour towards a child.

If you are worried about a child, it is vital you report your concerns – no action is not an option.

There are four ways to report a concern.

1. To the Cambridgeshire FA Designated Safeguarding Officer:  
Diane Bradshaw – 01229 209 021 – [diane.bradshaw@cambridgeshirefa.com](mailto:diane.bradshaw@cambridgeshirefa.com)
2. By emailing The FA Safeguarding team at [safeguarding@TheFA.com](mailto:safeguarding@TheFA.com) or by calling and asking the team on 0800 169 1863
3. If urgent, and you cannot contact any of the above, you should call the NSPCC 24 hour helpline on 0808 800 5000.
4. If it is an emergency because a child or children are at immediate risk, then call the police (999) or the Cambridgeshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (Cambridgeshire MASH) on 0345 045 1362 (office hours) or 01733 234 724 (out of hours).

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_