

Guidance on dealing with a complaint

Poor Practise

League receives communication from a party concerning an alleged incident involving youth players

Acknowledge receipt of complaint and log incident following safeguarding and league procedures

Review concern – if applicable refer/redirect to the Club Welfare Officer who should investigate the complaint (please see notes below). If serious, refer matter to ECFA. Should this be the case, advise the party raising the complaint that it has been re-directed.

If appropriate for league to continue make contact with concerned parties – EG if it involves two teams, contact both clubs for their observations (you can liaise with both club secretary and CWO).

Upon receipt of observations review the details. Some content may be agreed and other information may be disputed. It will be difficult to form a clear picture (you probably were not at the game). Try to form an overview of what is more probable. Always approach in a child centred manner.

Again review, if required refer to Designated Safeguarding Officer at ECFA (Helen)

There will be options at this stage and as each case is different, refer to the list below to gauge which is the more suitable (this list is not exhaustive but provides some suggestions):-

- Advise club if action is required – eg re issue Code of Conduct and or warn individual of their actions. Always ask party to confirm that the intervention has taken place. Advise club they should consider full range of options eg advising parent they are not allowed to be present at training or matches for a period of time (the child should still be able to participate). Club can remove membership of party.
- Invite parties to a meeting
- Advise party/parties on best practice – refer them to The FA's to review best practice documents: <http://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding/policy-downloads>

Once you have reached a conclusion, contact the party and advise of the outcome. You do not need to share all the details. For example, you could advise that following receipt of the complaint, the league have investigated and offered best practice guidance.

You should also share the outcome at the league meeting (please be mindful and sharing U18 details – on occasions it will be necessary but in many cases would not be required).

Record and update your league's (your) safeguarding record (I use an excel spreadsheet). Make sure this is kept as safe as possible.

NOTES:-

- ❖ There have been a few cases referred to Essex County FA concerning family situations. For example mother and father have split up. They disagree over the football arrangements for their child. I advise clubs that this (on the majority of cases) must remain a matter between the mother and father. The CWO can assist and support if possible, but it is the parents' responsibility to try to agree. The only time the club need to become involved is if there is a safeguarding concern to the player or if the player is part of court proceedings (there may be a court injunction stating that mother/father cannot have contact or be within a certain distance of the child. If this is the case the club should ask to view this document – this should also be reported to County (Helen).
- ❖ Always advise clubs to publish their club ethos – EG is the ethos that all players will play during a game – is there a certain time all players will play for – will they play in all positions. If this is part of the ethos, this advises parties on how the club is run and also helps reduce complaints.
- ❖ Remind clubs that poor practise / safeguarding concerns must be referred to the Club Welfare Officer. The Coach should not look to address these matters in isolation.
- ❖ Safeguarding visits highlighted that many parents did not know who their CWO was – at every opportunity ask clubs to promote this.
- ❖ Clubs should always investigate matters in a transparent manner – i.e. the coach should not make final decisions on whether a player is to be removed from the team/club.
- ❖ If a parent is not happy about how a club or league has investigated a complaint, they can refer their complaint to ECFA. This is why it very important that an investigation has been handled in a transparent manner and recorded correctly.