

Safeguarding Thresholds



What is Poor Practice?

These are low level concerns that on their own don't meet the threshold for a Safeguarding issue. The list below is not exhaustive, but gives an idea of the type of behaviour which constitutes poor practice for clubs to manage without the involvement of the County FA

- Allowing rough and dangerous play
- Bullying, the use of bad language or inappropriate behaviour by players;
- Putting performance over the wellbeing and safety of players;
- Having a win at all costs mentality and failing to be gracious in defeat;
- Lack of respect for other individuals, such as match officials, opposition coaches, players, managers and spectators and failing to accept a match official's decision
- Failure to provide effective supervision for coaching sessions which should be properly planned;
- Over training and exerting undue influence over players;
- Not holding required FA coaching qualifications for the role being carried out;
- Providing one to one coaching without any supervision or the presence of other adults;
- Inappropriate use of social media;
- Engaging in, or tolerating, offensive, insulting or abusive language or behaviour;
- Failure to challenge poor practice in others;
- First aid being administered without others being present other than in an emergency
- Failing to address the additional needs of disabled players or other vulnerable groups;
- Allowing confidential information to be shared inappropriately;
- Failure to respect and listen to the opinions of children and consider the rights and responsibilities of children;
- Failure to display and promote consistently high standards of behaviour and appearance;

Clubs should keep records of any poor practice reported, including what action was taken and what the outcome was as a result

When should you refer to the County FA?

With poor practice being dealt with effectively by clubs internal processes, the County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer must be notified of more serious concerns, defined as:

- Repeat offenders (where any poor practice has been identified on multiple occasions)
- Any matters where a child could be at risk of harm
- Any matters where there could be a breach of FA Disciplinary Regulations
- Any matters that you have tried to address but continue to happen in the club
- Any incidents that involve a statutory agency (e.g. Police, Social Services, LADO)

Dealing With Poor Practice

Poor practice or low level concerns are behaviours which fall below the standards required by a club and should be addressed accordingly. Whilst these behaviours may not be immediately dangerous or intentionally harmful, they do set a poor example and if they were allowed to continue might potentially lead to harm or put a child in danger.

To allow poor practice to continue unchallenged could result in an environment developing in which abuse may be able to take place. It normalises behaviour which is unacceptable and should not be condoned. It may also lead to other people having suspicions about an individual's motivations, even if there was no intention to harm.

Set the standard with clear Codes of Conduct

Club Codes of Conduct should reflect best practice by stating clearly the acceptable behaviours which the club wishes to promote. Specific Codes of Conduct should be written for coaches, match officials, parents, spectators, players and club members so everyone knows what is expected of them and what will happen if their behaviour falls below the required standard.

If it is decided that the matter is one of poor practice and is to be handled by the club, it will need to be referred to the club Disciplinary Committee and dealt with as quickly as possible. Depending on the club constitution, this could simply be the Chair, Secretary and Welfare Officer.

Supported by an agreed disciplinary process

To help ensure that any intervention is effective and accepted by all concerned, it is important to:

- Be fair and consistent – treating people in the same way regardless of their position in the club.
- Be proportionate to the offence
- Be progressively more serious for repeat offenders
- Follow a process which allows people to know when they have broken a Code of Conduct and provides them with an opportunity to explain their actions.
- Keep secure records of poor practice reports, investigations and outcomes
- Keep all communication professional

Clubs should be aware that under Data Protection regulations an individual has the right to request all records and communication that states their name or makes reference to them. It is important therefore in all communication to think that a person may request to see the information.

If you have questions about dealing with incidents of Poor Practice at your club, you can contact our Designated Safeguarding Officer for support and advice