



The COUNTY FA SAFEGUARDING OPERATING STANDARD 2018/19

Instead of a face-to-face Safeguarding Operating Standard briefing this year, The FA has agreed we can write to you with an update on the Standard for season 2018/19, highlighting some key areas.

Thank you for signing and returning the Safeguarding Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct referenced the introduction of Adults at Risk and how this applies to the Conduct. A briefing note and guidance on Adults at Risk is available upon request.

We would ask you to:

- Read this letter;
- Review the Adults at Risk briefing note;
- Review the guidance note on Adults at Risk and Codes of Conduct;
- Retain a copy of the Code of Conduct for your records;
- Keep the Adults at Risk documents for future reference.

We'd like to start by thanking you for continuing to support football through all you do. We trust it is proving to be a safe and enjoyable season for any under-18s football with which you are currently involved.

We're delighted that The FA Chairman Greg Clarke provided a message for everyone connected to football within the County FAs to open the new Standard. As he says in his message:

*"Safeguarding is **everyone's** responsibility. All the organisations running football – and everyone working or volunteering in football – must play their part. The shared and unequivocal goal must be to ensure the game is safe and enjoyable for all.*

"Clearly, County FAs (CFAs) play a pivotal role in achieving this goal. In the 2017/18 season, football organisations affiliated 19,230 clubs, including 64,605 youth teams – a huge national community.

"Collectively, the task is to ensure safeguarding measures and processes are in place throughout this community – in every league and club to protect every individual – particularly young player and Adults at Risk.

"You have our unstinting support in this vital work."

Greg goes on to say how important consistency is and how the Safeguarding Operating Standard sets out a framework for the consistent delivery of safeguarding cross grassroots football.

The Chairman of the National Game Board, Mervyn Leggett, also wrote in the introduction to this year's Standard. He thanks everyone for their hard work and acknowledged the progress being made – especially in the team approach County FAs are taking. Mervyn concluded by saying how we'll continually strive to enhance our safeguarding practice.

Developments in the Standard

This year's Standard builds on that of 2017/18. This season there are six constituent parts of the 2018/19 Standard, including no.3, 'Listening to the Voice of and Supporting Under-18s'.

It makes it clear that we must recognise that under-18s in open age football are still children in the eyes of the law. Specifically the Standard says that under-18s in youth and open-age CFA-led events and activities should *"know who to and how to report any concerns about their well-being."*

The importance of listening to children and young people and them knowing how to report concerns is critical. These lessons have been learned from survivors, whether from recent or non-recent abuse.

For the first time, the Standard also describes some requirements around 'Safeguarding Adults at Risk in open-age disability football'. The FA will send us further information on this subject, including a toolkit for clubs with a disability team, and access to a free online course. If you are attached to a club/league with an open-age disability team, we will be in touch directly with your Secretary once this toolkit has gone live.

As mentioned previously, we have supplied a copy of a briefing note about Adults at Risk, which we urge you to read.

Having signed this season's Code of Conduct you'll notice it makes reference to Adults at Risk. If you have any questions about this, not answered by the briefing note or Guidance note, please contact Rachael Gallop – Designated Safeguarding Officer on 0116 284 5936 or email Safeguarding@leicestershirefa.com

Some safeguarding reminders

We'd also like to take this opportunity to remind you of a few safeguarding basics before you sign the Code of Conduct:

DBS Checks:

If you are working or volunteering with under-18s, your DBS Checks needs to be up to date. Please contact us if you're not sure whether or not you need one. If you are based in a club or league, we know you will support our message that everyone who works with children must keep their DBS in-date. Whilst this is part of safer recruitment, it is important it is done consistently. The FA is currently working with advisors to look at when DBS Checks may be required in adult disability football

Relationships of Trust:

Everyone who works/volunteers with children and young people (i.e. anyone under the age of 18) is responsible and accountable for the way they behave towards them. Every child has a right to be treated with respect and dignity.

- It is expected that all adult-child relationships maintain clear boundaries at all times, are supportive, positive and aimed at improving the young person's skills, development and progress. The adult-child relationships should all focus on the respective activity/event.
- No intimate or sexual relationship should take place while the member of staff or volunteer is in a relationship -of-trust relationship with an under-18 player.
- In addition, inappropriate, intimate or sexual relationships between an adult and a young player aged 16 and 17 may be unlawful, irrespective of gender and sexual orientation.
- Where a relationship of trust exists, it does not make any difference whether or not the relationship is consensual. The imbalance of power makes it an abuse of that relationship of trust.

Recommendations:

- Maintain a relationship with all participants that is appropriate to your role and reflects positively on our County FA.
- As someone in a position of authority, you should not seek or engage in sexual activity or sexual communications via social media with 16- or 17-year-olds for whom you are responsible.
- If you think a young person's behaviour indicates they are seeking to develop or engage in an inappropriate relationship with you, immediately bring this to the attention of our County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).
- Report any concerns to the County FA DSO. Make a written record of your concerns and relevant details.

Reporting:

Any safeguarding concerns must be reported immediately to our County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer. This is a regulatory requirement. It can often be hard to decide if something is poor practice or abuse, so please report *any* concerns to the relevant Club/League Welfare Officer or our County FA DSO. It is not your duty to decide if something is poor practice or abuse. But it is your responsibility to report.

Our DSO is Rachael Gallop and she can be contacted on:

T: 0116 284 5936

E: Safeguarding@leicestershirefa.com

Confidentiality and data: If you receive private information about a child or Adult at Risk you must keep it safe. That does not mean keeping secrets if there is, or maybe, a risk. Again, pass any concerns to our County FA DSO.

Whistle-blowing: If you suspect or believe a safeguarding concern has not been properly addressed you can whistle-blow by emailing safeguarding@TheFA.com

Finally, as FA Chairman Greg Clarke has said: *"Safeguarding is an ever-present priority for football. It will always require our collective and constant vigilance and professionalism."*

I know we have your support in this work, but if you have any questions, please contact me on 0116 284 5930 or Kelly.Ellis@LeicestershireFA.com

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kelly".

Kelly Ellis
Chief Executive Officer