MENTAL HEALTH

- Spotting the signs
- Supporting
- Signposting

In partnership with

mind
for better mental health

And members of a referee-specific Mental Health Advisory Group

For Referees and those who support them

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Heads Up
The FA For All

These guidance notes form part of a wider campaign, called 'Heads Up'. The campaign harnesses the influence and popularity of football to help show the world we all have mental health and it's just as important as physical health. It also builds on decades of work to tackle the stigma and drive the conversation on mental health.

'Heads Up' is a partnership between The FA and Heads Together, which is a mental health initiative spearheaded by The Royal Foundation.

Heads Together combines a campaign to change the conversation on mental health with fundraising for a series of innovative mental health services.

'Heads Up' has four charity partners – Mind, CALM, Sporting Chance and Heads Together.

To read more about the 'Heads Up' campaign, **click here**.

Throughout this guidance we use the term 'mental health problems'. This is the most widely-used term – and preferred by people with lived experience.

> **"At every level, sport can be used to reduce stigma and encourage positive conversation about mental health. As the national sport, football is clearly a key driver."**
>
> **Paul Farmer**, Chief Executive, Mind

This is the second in a series of mental health guidance notes The FA is publishing. Each one is aimed at a different audience. The first in the series was aimed at coaches and managers in adult football clubs and can be downloaded **here**.

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HELPING YOURSELF AND OTHERS COPE WITH THE TOUGH TIMES

Rather like playing, being a referee promotes and helps physical health and fitness. But it can also contribute to mental well-being, despite the pressures that inevitably exists on occasions. While in the past the focus has been on fitness, it is now time to give greater attention to mental health which, like physical health, varies not only from person to person but also at different times.

There's no doubt refereeing can be stressful. But some of the reasons for stress – responsibility, pressurised decision-making, and conflict management – can, with the right support, provide opportunities to increase mental strength and self-confidence to cope with stressful situations in all aspects of life. While nerves are often helpful to get the adrenalin flowing to perform well, excess concern/stress can be destructive, physically and mentally.

Sometimes, the stress can be too much. So everyone involved in refereeing (and the wider football family) must be more alert to the signs of someone who is not coping. We should all be pro-active to give support and, where appropriate, encourage the person to seek professional help.

As a referee, assistant referee or a referee educator you are not only in an excellent position to focus on and improve your own mental health but also help your colleagues. Mental health improves when you have a support network and while many see refereeing as an isolated occupation (compared to being in a team) there is a wealth of people to assist you formally and informally. A simple chat with a colleague after a game or meeting as a group to train or review your last matches are valuable ways of dealing with the stress that is an inevitable part of refereeing.

The key is to recognise stress and develop strategies to cope with it. This includes managing it where you can, alongside being ready to seek support if you feel you need it, or when you are aware of a colleague who appears to need it.

Finally, there's one thing we want to make clear, which you'll see repeated several times in these guidance notes:

No-one expects referees – or anyone with a voluntary role in football – to become mental health experts. All we want, as the title page of this document suggests, is to help you **spot the signs, feel confident to support – and then signpost people to specialist help.**

David Elleray MBE

Chairman, The FA Referees' Committee

MENTAL HEALTH: WHAT ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

MENTAL HEALTH

Like physical health we all have mental health too. Just as our bodies can become unwell, so can our minds. As with our physical health, having a mental health problem can affect us all regardless of age, race, religion or income level. It is not the result of personal weakness or lack of character.

The World Health Organisation defines good mental health as a state of wellbeing (see below) in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.

MENTAL WELLBEING

Wellbeing describes the wider set of feelings and thoughts that influence our emotions and day-to-day behaviour. It is influenced by a broad set of factors such as the quality of and engagement with: relationships, housing, employment, finances, physical and mental health, etc.

Our mental wellbeing can change, from day-to-day, month-to-month or year-to-year. It can be characterised by times when you are or aren't feeling confident, engaged with the world, living and working productively – and are or aren't coping with the stresses of everyday life.

See 'Looking after yourself' on **pages 14/15** for five steps everyone can take towards positive mental wellbeing.

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

Mental health problems cover a range of conditions involving changes in emotion, thinking or behaviour (or a combination of these).

The experiences and symptoms of no two individuals are the same – we're all unique and so are the mental health problems we may encounter.

The most common mental health problems you are likely to encounter as a referee are anxiety and depression, or a mixture of the two. However, there's a wide range of conditions or problems which fall within the scope of mental health problems. If you want to know more, visit:
mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/mental-health-problems-introduction

Acceptable language: Related to the above definitions, see **page 23** for a list of what's acceptable and what's not in everyday language when talking about mental health.

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO TACKLE?

Using the reach of football to improve mental wellbeing can help tackle some of the statistics below. But it's not about statistics. It's about doing what we can to improve individual lives.

A collective effort across football can make a positive difference.

£105BN

THE ESTIMATED ANNUAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COST OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS[1]

MENTAL ILLNESS ACCOUNTS FOR

23%

OF ALL ILLNESS IN THE UK[1]

SUICIDE IS THE LEADING CAUSE OF DEATH OF MEN

15-49YRS[3]

50% OF ALL MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

ARE ESTABLISHED BY THE AGE OF **14**, RISING TO **75%** BY THE AGE OF **24**[1]

EVERY 2HRS

SOMEONE IN ENGLAND/WALES TOOK THEIR OWN LIFE IN 2017[3]

65.6MN

PRESCRIPTIONS FOR ANTIDEPRESSANTS WERE DISPENSED IN ENGLAND IN 2016/17. THIS IS A 6% INCREASE FROM 2015/16 AND A CONTINUATION OF A LONG-TERM UPWARD TREND WHICH HAS SEEN PRESCRIPTIONS MORE THAN DOUBLE OVER THE LAST DECADE[4]

DEPRESSION IS ONE OF THE LEADING CAUSES OF HEALTH PROBLEMS IN THE WORLD: EXPERIENCED GLOBALLY BY MORE THAN **300MN PEOPLE OF ALL AGES**. THIS IS AN INCREASE OF **10% OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS**[5]

WOMEN ARE UP TO THREE TIMES MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE A MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEM THAN MEN[2]

> "There are over 28,000 registered referees in this country. Each year, several thousand are recruited and trained but similar numbers also decide to quit officiating. There are a variety of reasons for this but we do know that some who decide to stop have a mental health problem which contributes to them feeling unable to commit to refereeing. The right support can help these referees through the tough times and back to refereeing. Even better, that support can help prevent referees quitting in the first place."

Richard Glynne-Jones, National Referee Manager, The FA

[1] From 'Coping Through Football' Evaluation Report (Sept 2018) | [2] Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey: Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing, England, 2014 www.content.digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB21748) | [3] Office for National Statistics (2018) Suicides in the UK: 2017 registrations www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/suicidesintheunitedkingdom/2017registrations | [4] NHS Business Services Authority (2018) Antidepressant Prescribing 2015/16 and 2016/17 www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/prescription-data/prescribing-data/antidepressant-prescribing | [5] The World Health Organization (2017) Depression fact sheet www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs369/en/

"Big changes in my life sent me on a downward spiral. Not knowing how to cope, I turned to try and take my own life. Football saved my life – a phone call from a club secretary confirming a game got me through the darkest hour of my life.

"That game gave me the sense of purpose I needed to carry on. Refereeing is the thing that allows me to escape my own thoughts. For those 90 minutes, I am so focused on delivering on the pitch that my own thoughts don't have the chance to spiral. My thoughts are solely on the game and the next decision I have to make.

"Getting the professional help I needed was key to my recovery. At times the side effects of medication can be difficult to manage, but the benefits outweigh the negatives. Counselling and talking was also a massive help to my recovery. Seek help, talk about how you feel and you will be amazed about how many others have felt the same."

Natasha Wilson,
Referee Development Officer, Leicestershire and Rutland FA

THE ROLE YOU CAN PLAY

Clearly, as in our everyday lives, we have a role to play in looking after and improving our own mental health.

Refereeing brings this into sharp focus, as you and your assistants are the 'third team' on the field – and sadly often at the receiving end of intense scrutiny and/or abuse. Both can understandably be unnerving. We give some tips on 'Spotting the signs' (**page 8**) and 'Looking after yourself' (**page 14**).

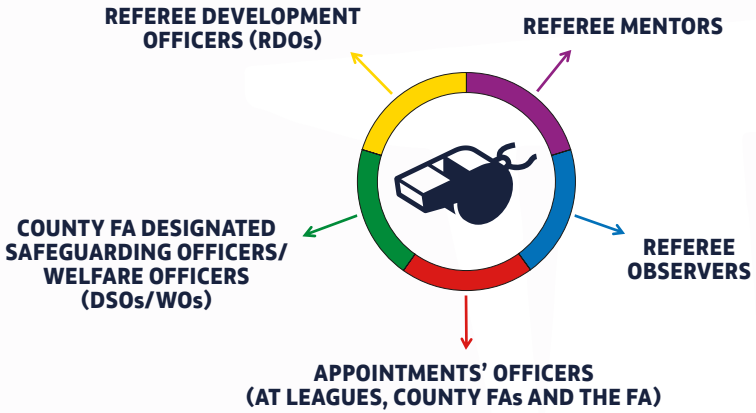
But one of the elements of your role in football is already a bedrock of mental health: physical health. We know that keeping fit and healthy has a direct effect on mental health, and refereeing is a great way of keeping active as well as staying in football long after your playing days are over.

Staying in football is in itself a benefit because of the friends you make and the camaraderie you build up.

However, several other categories of people play a support role in relation to referees. If they have a concern about a referee's mental health, this publication is also intended to help them:

- **Spot the signs;**
- **Support the referees you're concerned about;**
- **Signpost them to specialist help, if needed.**

These categories of people are shown below, but one thing we must emphasise: **we are not expecting anyone to be a mental health expert**. This publication is purely for guidance, so as many people as possible in football know what to do when a mental health issue arises.



"Refereeing is brilliant for my mental health. It keeps me active and the opportunities to spend time with other referees at training events, improving my knowledge and skills, are really valuable."

Anonymous referee

Spotting the signs

While there may be common signs/symptoms, the way people experience mental health problems can be very different.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS IN YOURSELF:

These could include:

- Reducing your availability and/or increased withdrawal from appointments;
- Reducing contact and/or communication in your refereeing and everyday life;
- Unusual disinterest in attending training events/meetings;
- Negative changes in your demeanour/personality/appearance;
- Noticeable drop in focus/concentration;
- Excessive pre-match anxiety;
- Deterioration in your physical health/fitness;
- Reduced interest in refereeing generally/desire to take a break;
- Frequent negative interactions/increased negativity;
- Unwillingness to interact with other officials pre-and post-match;
- Reduced interaction with other match officials at training events.

SPOTTING THE SIGNS IN REFEREES:

If you are one of the categories of people in football listed on **page 7**, many of the signs above may also be apparent to you.

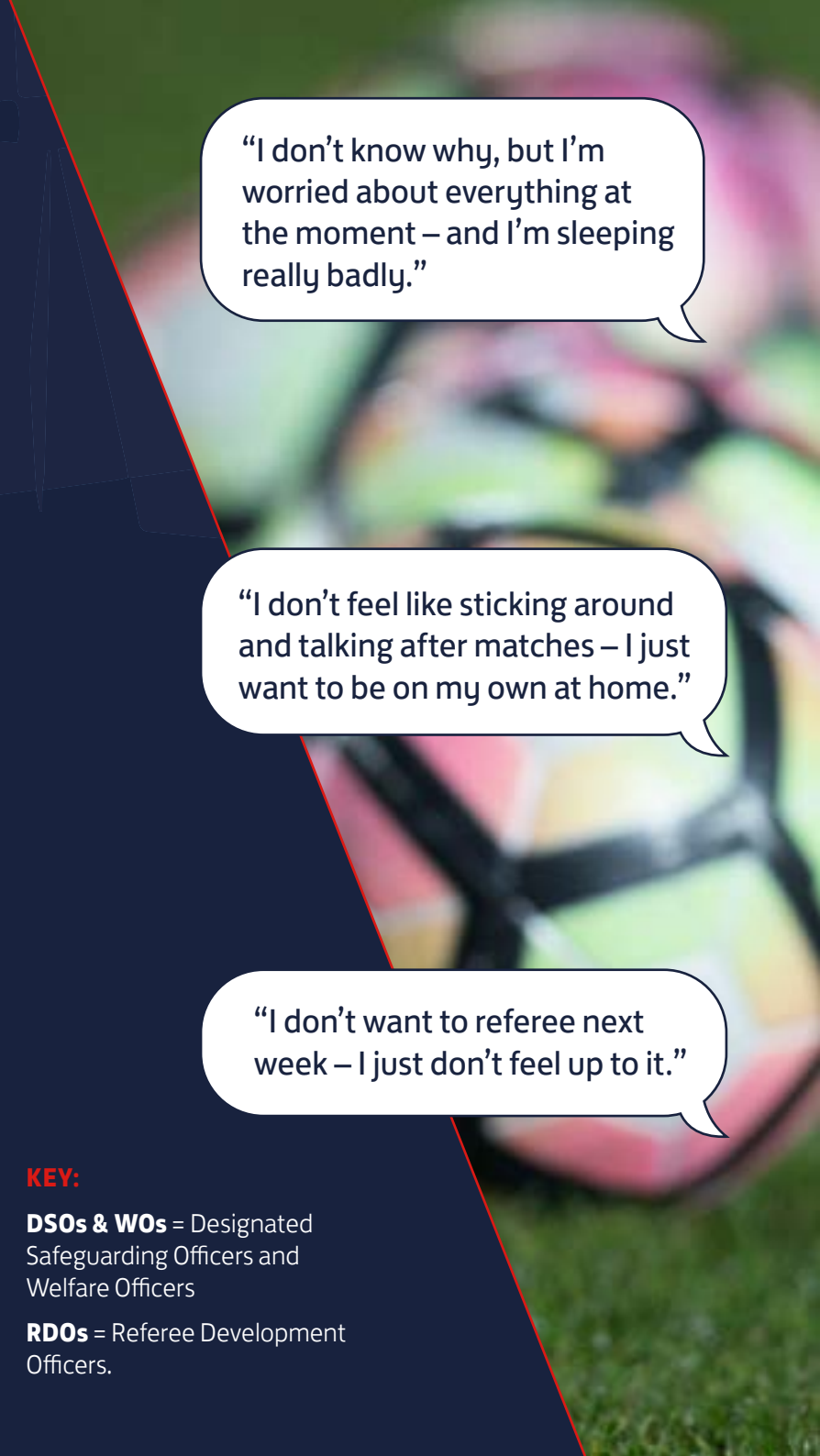
These categories and the signs each category may spot are charted opposite. We have also included a column on the signs referees may spot in fellow referees.

This list of signs isn't exhaustive and doesn't necessarily mean you have a mental health problem.

"A coach got really angry with me at a game last season. It shook me and I couldn't stop thinking about it for ages. I was glad when I eventually talked to my RDO. She was kind and understanding, supported me through the disciplinary process and I'm back loving my refereeing. I wish I'd spoken to her sooner."

Anonymous referee

	Signs that may be spotted by these groups of people:					
Signs	**Mentors**	**Observers**	**Officers**	**DSOs & WOs**	**RDOs**	**Refs on fellow refs**
Reduced availability and/or increased withdrawal from appointments	●		●		●	●
Reduced contact and/or communication	●		●		●	●
More misconduct taking place in matches	●			●	●	
Increased complaints about referee's performance and/or conduct	●				●	
Failure to attend training events/meetings					●	●
Changes in demeanour/personality	●		●			●
Changes in appearance	●		●			●
Lack of focus/concentration	●	●			●	●
Reduction in performance standards	●		●			
Appearing excessively anxious pre-match	●	●				●
Deterioration in physical health/fitness	●					●
Reduced interest in refereeing generally					●	●
Frequent negative interactions/increased negativity	●				●	●
Unwillingness to interact with other officials pre-and post-match	●	●				●
Poor timekeeping	●	●				
Appearing emotional/upset/aggressive during post-match debrief	●	●				
Unresponsive to correspondence/requests (poor administration)	●		●		●	
Reduced interaction with other match officials at training events					●	●
Indicating a desire to take a break from refereeing					●	●
Overly critical about their performance	●	●			●	



KEY:

DSOs & WOs = Designated Safeguarding Officers and Welfare Officers

RDOs = Referee Development Officers.

Supporting

If you're a referee, the first step in supporting yourself when you're concerned about your mental health is to talk to someone you can trust about what and how you're feeling. We cover this topic on **page 12** under SIGNPOSTING.

If you're someone who comes into contact with referees and you think they're experiencing a mental health problem, follow the **ALERT** acronym below to support them.

But be aware that many referees who may need support don't ask for it. Why? Because they're concerned their progress/appointments will be negatively impacted. So, if they do ask for support, the '**R**' in **ALERT** – for **Reassurance** – is particularly relevant.

ASK discreetly if the referee you're concerned about wants to talk about it. If they say yes, then it's about finding the right setting – somewhere private where the person feels comfortable and equal, e.g. a café or football club bar/function room when quiet.

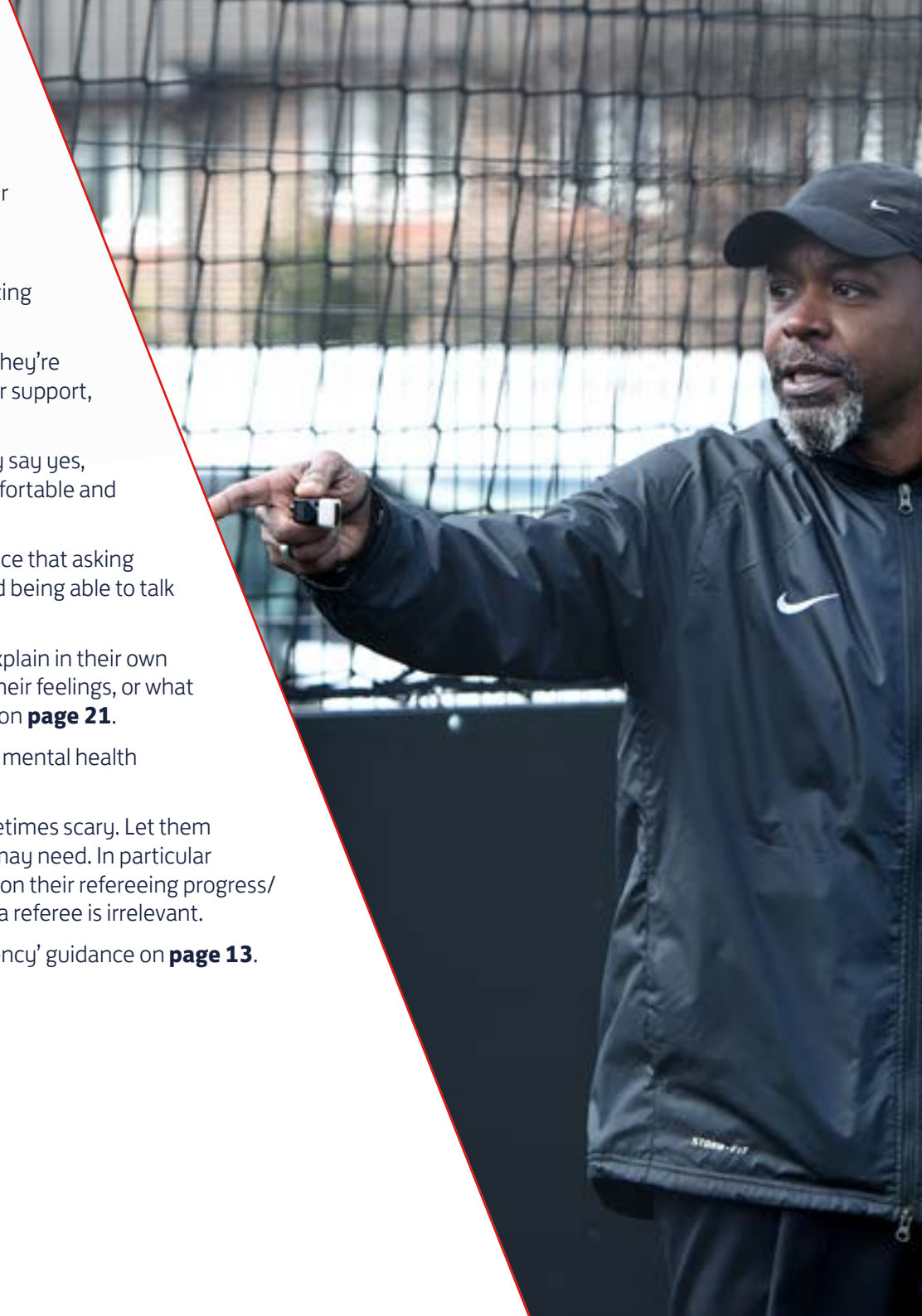
Don't worry about asking someone directly about how they're feeling. There is no evidence that asking sensitive questions makes the situation worse. Instead, the simple act of being asked and being able to talk about how you are feeling[1] is much more likely to be helpful.

LISTEN attentively. Ask simple, open and non-judgmental questions. Let the person explain in their own words how they're feeling. Try not to assume you already know what may have caused their feelings, or what will help. Please also see 'Tips on having a conversation about someone's mental health' on **page 21**.

ENCOURAGE people to seek advice, where appropriate. You're not expected to be a mental health professional. See 'Signposting' on **page 12** for potential sources of support.

REASSURE the person that they're not alone. Seeking help can feel lonely, and sometimes scary. Let them know there is support out there – and that you can help signpost them to the help they may need. In particular reassure them that your conversation is confidential and will not have a negative impact on their refereeing progress/appointments. You're simply reaching out to a fellow human being. The fact that they're a referee is irrelevant.

TELL a specialist person if you think urgent action is needed. See the 'In an emergency' guidance on **page 13**.



[1] Dazzi et. Al. (2014): www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/24998511

SOMETIMES PEOPLE DON'T WANT HELP

If you feel a referee is struggling but can't or won't reach out for help, and won't accept any help you offer, it's understandable to feel frustrated, distressed or powerless. But it's important to accept that they are an individual, and there are always limits to what you can do.

As a guide, you can't:

- Force someone to talk to you;
- Force someone to get help:
- See a doctor for someone else.

"At its most challenging moments, refereeing can test even the most experienced individual's resilience, which makes the importance of conversation around mental health a worthy priority.

"It is important to note that all match officials are united by a common bond which forms one of the most tightly-knit communities in the game. Crucially this means help is never far away.

"The Referee Development Officer network can be the first port of call for someone to listen and help to provide support when it is needed, as we are most efficacious when helping others relish and enjoy their role in football."

Tom Elliott, Referee Development Officer, Manchester FA

Signposting

Whether you're a referee or someone who comes into contact with referees, there are four main signposts to follow. They are the same signposts for every member of the population:

Outside football:

- **Talk to a family member or friend, if appropriate**: Simply talking to someone trusted is often a huge help.
- **Visit to a GP**: GPs have general knowledge in the area of mental health and are also the gateway to specialist mental health services.
- **Access an Employee Assistance Programme**: If in employment and the employer has this type of support, such programmes are another route to specialist help.
- **Contact a specialist mental health organisation**: Such support can be either general or issue-specific. Please see 'Further information and specialist organisations' on **page 18**.

If you are approached by a referee for support, but for whatever reason do not feel able to help, you should refer them to your County FA Referee Development Officer (RDO) or The FA Referees' Department direct if the referee officiates at Step 4 or above.

You can find the contact details of Referee RDOs by looking at your County FA website. A list of these is available at: **TheFA.com/about-football-association/who-we-are/county-fas**

The above also ensures you also have support and are not left 'alone' with any concerns you have.

If the referee who's approached you is aged under 18, you should inform your County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO). Again, you can find the contact details of your DSO on your County FA's website.

In addition, the Referees' Association (RA) is also able to offer support to any of its members experiencing a mental health problem. A trained person will be on hand for an initial discussion and, if necessary, to signpost you to specialist help.

T: 02476 420 360

W: **www.the-ra.org**

E: **contact@the-ra.org**

If you are approached, it's important you maintain boundaries, so before you signpost anyone, you could say:

> "I'm sorry to hear you're having a tough time at the moment/feeling like this right now. As a .....insert your football role..... I'm not the best person, or qualified, to give you advice about this. But I can suggest other people/organisations who can help, if you like?"

This shows you understand and believe the referee who's approached you, but also explains the reason for the boundary.

> **"When I stopped refereeing because of injury, I was worried about how I could stay involved in the game and it got me down a bit. But becoming a mentor has been fantastic for me. I can now give something back to refereeing by helping young referees in the early stages of their careers and it helps keep me connected with my friends in refereeing."**
>
> **An anonymous referee mentor**

IN AN EMERGENCY:

In the unlikely event of you being faced with an emergency, here's some advice. An emergency could arise if you or a referee you support:

- Has harmed themselves and needs medical attention;
- Is having suicidal feelings, and feels they may act on them;
- Is putting themselves or someone else at immediate, serious risk of harm.

IN THE ABOVE CASES:

The text below is written if you are supporting a referee, but the advice equally applies to the referee his/herself.

- If they are not safe by themselves right now – as long as you feel able to do so, you should stay with them and help them call **999** for an ambulance, or help them get to A&E. They may appreciate it if you can wait with them until they can see a doctor.
- If they can keep themselves safe for a little while – you can get quick medical advice by calling NHS Direct on **111**, or you could help them make an emergency GP appointment to see a doctor.
- You can also encourage them to call the Samaritans on **116 123**.
- Alternatively, they can text '**HeadsUp**' to **85258** to connect with a trained crisis volunteer, who will chat to them by text message, sharing only what feels comfortable, and help them through the moment, working together on a plan for longer-term support. This service is available 24/7 and free to text from most mobile networks.
- Also see 'Further information and specialist organisations' on **page 18**.
- If you feel personally in danger right now, or that others are in immediate danger – you can dial **999** and ask for the Police to help. You might feel worried about getting someone in trouble, but it's important to put your own safety first. However, research shows that people with mental health problems are more likely to harm themselves than other people.
- An emergency might also arise if a young referee discloses that they are being harmed by someone else and that they feel that they are at risk. You can seek advice from your local County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer (see below) or in an emergency adult services or the Police. **Click here** for a list of all County FA websites, which will list key personnel, such as the County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer.

"Talking to someone and asking for help was the starting place in my own journey of recovery and today I look after my mental wellbeing like I look after my physical wellbeing. We should encourage people to talk about their mental health. This starts to normalise the whole topic – which can only be beneficial to individuals and wider society."

Tony Adams,
Founder of Sporting Chance

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Helping someone with a mental health problem can be very rewarding. But it can also be time-consuming and emotionally overwhelming.

Here are five evidence-based tips[1] to support your own wellbeing and the wellbeing of others.

No	Tip	Description	For example, for referees:
1	**CONNECT**	Feeling close to, and valued by, people is a fundamental human need and one that contributes to functioning well in the world. Social relationships are critical for promoting wellbeing and for acting as a buffer against mental ill health for people of all ages.	• Attend County FA training events; • Join the local Referees' Association (LRA); • Complete fitness training with other referees, rather than on your own; • If you're a referee, be proactive in contacting your coach or mentor; • Form networks with other match officials, particularly those at similar stages of development; • If you have access to HIVE, contribute and be active; • Connect away from refereeing, e.g. make sure you spend time with your family, walk the dog, socialise with friends etc.
2	**BE ACTIVE**	Regular physical activity is associated with lower rates of depression and anxiety across all age groups. Exercise is essential for slowing age-related cognitive decline and for promoting wellbeing.	• Complete fitness training regularly; • Officiate as much as you are able, ensuring balance with other commitments; • If feasible, continue to play (this will also help your refereeing); • Be active away from football, e.g. play other sports that absorb and relax you.
3	**TAKE NOTICE**	Reminding yourself to 'take notice' can strengthen and broaden awareness. Studies show that being aware of what is taking place in the present directly enhances your wellbeing and savouring 'the moment' can help to reaffirm your life priorities.	• Prepare properly for matches (e.g. ensure you have the necessary kit and equipment); • Set yourself realistic goals for each match and training session; • 'Do your homework' on the teams you will be refereeing (e.g. check out positions in table); • Treat every match as your most important of the season; • Provide leadership on match day to other match officials in your team (e.g. assistant referees); • Don't allow yourself to be distracted from the job in hand when training or on matchday; • Check in with how you're feeling. Focus on your breathing.

[1]From the New Economics Foundation 'Five Ways to Wellbeing': www.neweconomics.org/uploads/files/d80eba95560c09605d_uzm6b1n6a.pdf

No	Tip	Description	For example, for referees:
4	**KEEP LEARNING**	Continued learning through life enhances self-esteem and encourages social interaction and a more active life. The practice of setting goals, which is related to adult learning in particular, has been strongly associated with higher levels of wellbeing.	• Attend County FA, Referees' Association and (if applicable) FA training events; • Learn from others through HIVE (if applicable); • Continuously self-reflect on and analyse your own performances; • Be proactive in seeking advice from other match officials, including mentors and coaches; • Engage in post-match feedback sessions with observers, mentors and coaches; • Push and prepare yourself to attain the next level through the promotion system; • Take up a hobby or interest away from refereeing.
5	**GIVE**	Research shows that giving makes you happier. People with a greater interest in helping others are more likely to rate themselves as happy.	• Thank the other members of the match officials' team post-match; • If refereeing youth football, encourage the players during matches; • Give some time to help develop other match officials (e.g. through mentoring or tutoring).

Day-to-day, try to:

- Take a break when you need it to put football and refereeing into context. It's a game which should be fun and enjoyable;
- Talk to someone you trust if you're not feeling well;
- Set limits and be realistic about what you do;.

DEALING WITH PRESSURE/STRESS IN A REFEREEING CONTEXT

Certain amounts of pressure are good for referees. The right amount of pressure can help you perform which, in turn, can support your wellbeing. However, too much pressure could push you towards stress which might mean you become tired, irritated and experience heightened anxiety.

There may be times when you are refereeing that something happens that makes you feel stressed. For example, you might be verbally abused by a parent or you might have given an incorrect, match-affecting decision. Wanting to progress or having to maintain the required levels of fitness might also cause you to be stressed.

Outside refereeing, you might be feeling stressed as a result of day-to-day life (e.g. exams, relationships or work) or having to balance your refereeing with everything else you do.

Stress isn't a medical diagnosis but severe stress over a long period of time may lead to depression or anxiety. Therefore, recognising that you are stressed and acting early is important to your wellbeing.

HOW DO YOU MINIMISE POTENTIAL STRESS?

1. **Be organised:** e.g. plan your journey, leave on time, pack the right kit – don't leave anything until the last minute.
2. **Have a planned pre-match routine:** Visualise particular situations e.g. meeting the coaches pre-match, dealing with players wearing incorrect kit and even plan key timings before the game.
3. **Have a 'what if' plan to help deal with potential stressors** e.g. plan what you're going to say and do if you are verbally abused by a parent, or how you might deal with dissent from a coach.
4. **Look after yourself**: e.g. eat the right food, get enough sleep, exercise regularly, breathing exercises. There's lots of information about this on the Mind website **www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/**.
5. **Do something different**: Rather than focusing all your energies on refereeing, do something different and distracting, e.g. spend time with friends/family, engage in different activities.
6. **'Control the controllables'**: Accept that there are some things you can't change/influence and try not to worry about them e.g. a low mark from an Observer or a club.
7. **Postpone your worries**: Rather than thinking constantly about things that are worrying you, write them down (in a 'Worry Diary') and deal with them at one point only for a fixed time period (e.g. for 15 minutes each evening).
8. **Get support for your refereeing from your family** (and, if applicable, your employer): to reduce any worry about being away from them.
9. **Put things in perspective**: For most referees, it's a hobby. Also, don't be afraid to say 'no'. If you really feel like refereeing will make you feel worse, don't do it.
10. **'Self-talk'**: Have a set phrase or set of words to help you through potentially stressful situations in a match and to help you remain positive – could be something as simple as "come on Jimmy/Jane" or even counting to 10.
11. **Use association**: If you feel down or anxious pre-match, listen to some music that you associate with happiness to boost your mood.
12. **Turn off social media**: What are you really going to gain from knowing what clubs think post-match?

There's also lots more tips on managing stress on the Mind website: **www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/stress#.Xh8vl8j7SUk**

To take it one step further, there's also a template for a bespoke Wellness Action Plan you can download from the Mind website, to help keep your mental health on track: **www.mind.org.uk/workplace/mental-health-at-work/taking-care-of-your-staff/employer-resources/wellness-action-plan-download/**

"I had suffered from undiagnosed depression for many years and really struggled between college, uni and part-time jobs. I eventually got into teaching assistant work, and also started a refereeing course and loved it. But the depression didn't go away. I made some suicide attempts, and was hospitalised.

"With the right care, I started to recover and got back into refereeing. The FA really supported me and told me to take my time. I also had the support of my coach and Anthony Taylor, my FA regional core leader, kept in contact with me after visiting me in hospital.

"Getting support is so important, even if it's just a chat. Football is such a huge binding force in this country – let's all use it to create better mental health for everyone."

Lucy Briggs, Referee

FURTHER INFORMATION AND SPECIALIST ORGANISATIONS

WITHIN FOOTBALL:

- Contact your County FA to see if they are running any initiatives around mental health. **Click here** for a full list of County FA contact details.
- The Referees' Association (RA) is able to offer support and guidance: **www.the-ra.org**

GENERAL INFORMATION:

- **Mind InfoLine: 0300 123 3393**. The Mind Infoline can help find specialist services in your area.
- **Mind website**: **www.mind.org.uk**
- **Every Mind Matters**: visit **www.everymindmatters.co.uk** to get your free, online 'Mind Plan', designed to give you simple, personalised tips for a healthier mind.

HELPLINES AND LISTENING SERVICES:

- **Samaritans:** 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Call **116 123** (free from any phone).
- **SANEline: 0300 304 7000** (4.30pm–10.30pm every day).
- **HeadsUp**: For immediate support text HeadsUp to **85258** to chat by text to a trained and supervised volunteer. Free, confidential and available 24/7.
- **CALM** (Campaign Against Living Miserably): **0800 58 58 58** (5.00pm to midnight, 365 days a year).

For more options, visit the Helplines Partnership website for a directory of UK helplines: **www.helplines.org/helplines**

DIRECTORY OF ORGANISATIONS/SERVICES OFFERED:

Here is a selection of organisations which provide general or specific support for people with mental health problems. It is not an exhaustive list, but is included to provide some useful pointers.

Primarily for	Organisation	Website	Services offered
Anyone	Mind	www.mind.org.uk	• Information resources; • Online peer support community; • Info and legal lines; • Network of around 130 local Minds across England and Wales, delivering a range of community-based peer support, advocacy and support services.
	Mental Health Foundation	www.mentalhealth.org.uk/	• Conducts practice-informed research, disseminating resources and learning; • Champions mindfulness through BeMindful resource and directory.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

"We know that there are referees who have problems at home that can affect their mental health. It doesn't matter how these problems come about, we're here to listen and support. We know how great refereeing can be for people with mental health problems – it keeps them active, connected to other likeminded people and they're learning all the time."

An anonymous Referee Development Officer

Primarily for	Organisation	Website	Services offered
Anyone	**Rethink Mental Illness**	www.rethink.org/	• Network of 140 peer support groups; • Over 200 plus services, including supported housing, 1-2-1 help for carers, to group activities for people leaving hospital.
	Time to Change	www.time-to-change.org.uk/	• Social movement to change attitudes and behaviour towards people with mental health problems to improve. Works in schools, workplaces and the community.
	Sane	www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/about_sane/	• Helpline and Textcare; • Online Support Forum.
	NHS England	www.england.nhs.uk/mental-health/	• See website for range of services.
	NHS (IAPT) Improving Access to Psychological Therapies	www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Psychological%20therapies%20(IAPT)/LocationSearch/10008	• See website for range of services.
LGBT+	**Switchboard**	www.switchboard.lgbt/	• Helpline: 0300 330 0630 (10am–10pm every day); • Messaging and email service.
Men	**CALM**	www.thecalmzone.net/help/get-help/	• Helpline and Webchat are open every day, 5pm-midnight, for anyone who needs support.
	Movember	uk.movember.com/	• See website for range of services/projects, all aimed at combatting premature death in men from suicide, prostate and testicular cancer.
Under-25s	**The Mix**	www.themix.org.uk/	• 1-2-1 chat and messenger services; • Discussion boards; • Information.
Veterans	**Combat Stress**	www.combatstress.org.uk/	• Specialist treatment programmes; • Peer-to-peer support groups; • Helpline.
Condition-specific	**Anxiety UK**	www.anxietyuk.org.uk/	• Self-help groups; • Support to access therapy.
	Bipolar UK	www.bipolaruk.org/	• Online peer support groups; • Regional support groups.
	Beat	www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk/	• Online peer support groups; • Regional support groups.
	Gamcare (gambling problems)	www.gamcare.org.uk/	• Helpline: 0808 8020 133, 8am to midnight, seven days a week. • Live chatroom etc. (see website).

For substance-misuse issues:

- Contact a relevant support organisation (click here for a list of organisations to which Mind signposts);
- Use the NHS search to find local drug treatment services;
- See a GP.

"Opening up about my mental health was the best thing I did; it started my recovery from being at rock bottom.

"My mental health is just as important as my physical health and I now take part in the necessary therapies to keep mental health on track, just like I do with my physical health by going to the gym.

"Refereeing has been vital for me. When I was at my lowest it gave me a focus, being amongst fellow colleagues also helps lift me and running around a pitch for 90 minutes gives me the ultimate buzz.

"The level of support I have received from the FA and in particular Chris Kay has been first class and I will be forever grateful for this."

Gareth Myers, Level 3 Referee

TIPS ON HAVING A CONVERSATION ABOUT SOMEONE'S MENTAL HEALTH

If you are supporting a referee, here are some general tips on the above subject:

IF YOU ARE CONCERNED ABOUT A REFEREE'S MENTAL HEALTH AND WANT TO TALK TO THEM ABOUT IT BUT ARE UNSURE WHAT TO SAY YOU COULD TRY:

- Asking them to have a chat over a cup of tea about how they are doing;
- Talking to them about how the activity of refereeing can positively affect their wellbeing.

OTHER IDEAS TO GET THE CONVERSATION STARTED INCLUDE:

- Finding out what the referee does to unwind on a tough day;
- Thank the referee for something they've done for you or the team/club;
- Simply saying how you're feeling today and something that's made you smile.

When the conversation starts, actively listen to the referee by giving them your undivided attention. Try to leave any questions or comments you may have until they have finished so you don't interrupt them.

Once they know they are being given the space and time to talk, they are more likely to open up.

If a referee approaches you wanting to talk, it may not be possible for you to give them the time they need there and then. You should show them you recognise that they have taken a positive step by speaking to you, explain why you cannot talk now and arrange a better time to have the conversation.

If a referee is in urgent need of help you should always signpost them to support (see **page 12**). Reflect back actual words they have used, as this can encourage them to open up more.

DURING THE CONVERSATION:

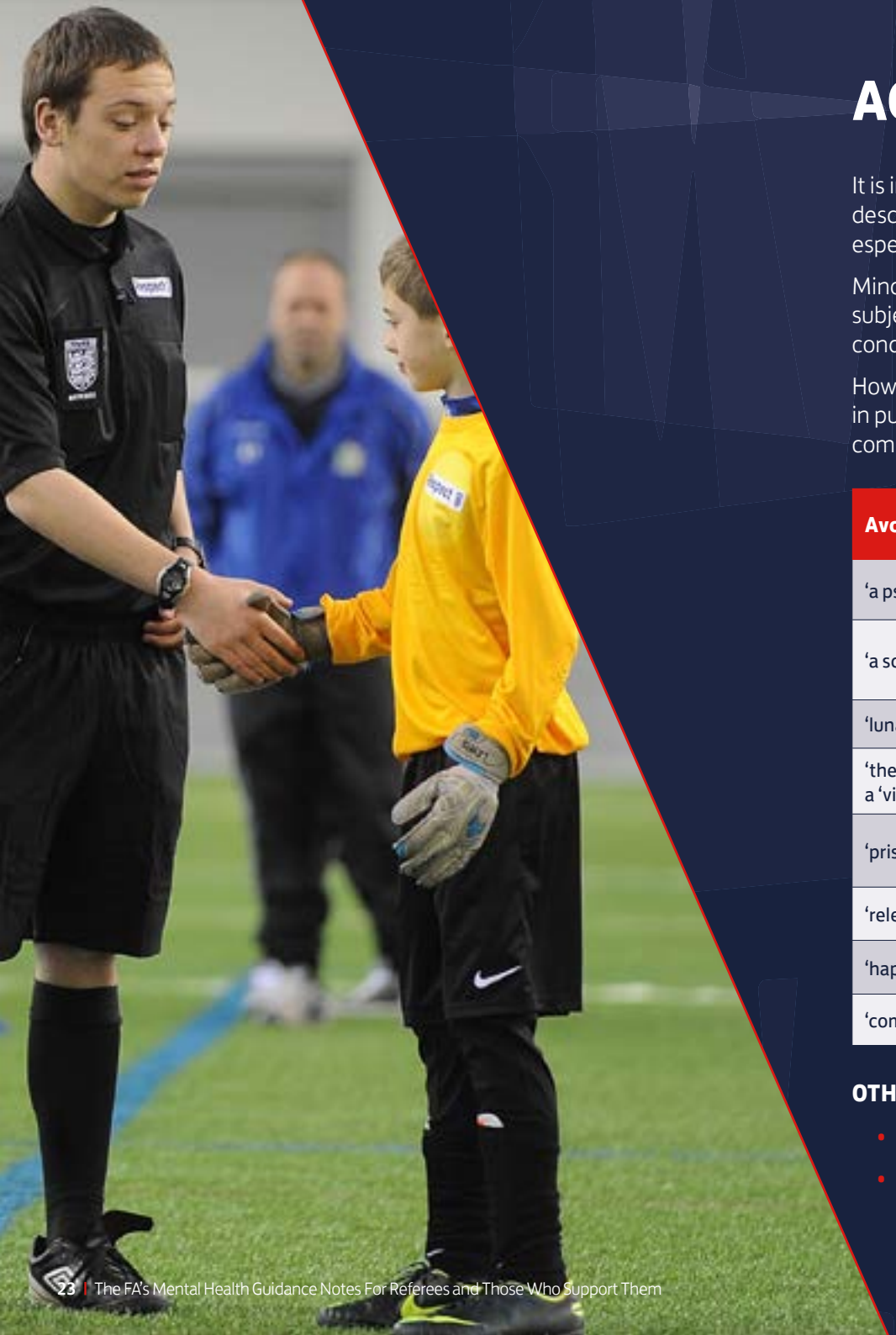
- Use empathic statements such as: "I appreciate this must be difficult for you...";
- Avoid clichés. Comments like "Pull yourself together" or "You're just having a bad day" are not helpful;
- Remind them that mental health problems are more common than people think and can affect anyone at any time;
- Avoid asking too many questions, especially questions that only require a 'yes' or 'no' answer, or that begin with the word 'why.' Ask open questions to invite a more detailed response, for example:
  - Tell me, how are you feeling?
  - How do you look after yourself?
  - What support do you have in place?
- Reassure them that it is positive they want to talk about their experience, what's happening with them, or that they are looking for support (if this is the case);
- The important thing is to listen, rather than give advice; the individual needs to be able to act for themselves. Signpost the individual to sources of support, rather than telling them what you think is best.

CLOSING THE CONVERSATION:

- Sometimes conversations will come to a natural end. However, if this does not happen, give the referee a gentle indication that the conversation needs to come to an end. You could say something like: "It's been good to talk, we've covered a lot and we will have to wrap up soon because I have to start...."
- Summarise your conversation and anything you have both agreed to do. For example: "You have told me that you are going to speak to your GP about how you are feeling."
- Ask practical questions such as "Is there going to be someone there when you get home?" or "Is there a friend you can go and see?"
- Remember offering a 'listening ear' and showing your acceptance, warmth and regard will go a long way to help someone. It may not be possible to get a clear idea of the next steps the referee will take as a result of talking to you. Ending the conversation by inviting them to take some time to reflect on what has been discussed and to consider what they may want to do going forward could be the best way to bring the conversation to a close, especially if you feel there is nothing more you can say at that time.
- Naturally, then keep an eye on the referee and ask them how they're doing next time you see them.

"Through our Coping Through Football and the recent Evaluation Report, we have learned how football can be a force for good in transforming and in some cases actually saving lives. Used in the right way, it can help those with mental health problems to get their lives back on track by improving physical health, restoring confidence and self-esteem and reinvigorating social skills. For many, it has been a magic pill that has reconnected them with a pre-illness identity and set them on the road to recovery."

Alex Welsh, Chief Executive, London Playing Fields Foundation



ACCEPTABLE LANGUAGE

It is important that your language is as inclusive as possible. People have different ways of describing their own mental health and it is important that, where possible, you follow their lead, especially when communicating one to one.

Mind advises using the phrase 'mental health problems' when talking generally about the subject, although some people and organisations prefer to use the terms 'mental health conditions' or 'mental illness'.

However, certain language can cause offence and may be inaccurate when used in news stories, in publications, posters and fliers, documents or in everyday discussions. Here are the most common, as well as some alternative suggestions.

Avoid using:	Instead try:
'a psycho' or 'a schizo'	'a person who has experienced psychosis' or 'a person who has schizophrenia'
'a schizophrenic' or 'a depressive'	someone who 'has a diagnosis of' is 'currently experiencing' or is being treated for 'schizophrenia or depression'
'lunatic', 'nutter', 'unhinged', 'maniac', 'mad'	'a person with a mental health problem'
'the mentally ill', 'a person suffering from' 'a sufferer' a 'victim' or 'the afflicted'	'mental health patients' or 'people with mental health problems'
'prisoners' or 'inmates' (in a psychiatric hospital)	'patients', 'service users' or 'clients'
'released' (from a hospital)	'discharged'
'happy pills'	'antidepressants', 'medication' or 'prescription drugs'
'committed suicide'	'took their own life' or 'completed suicide'.

OTHER COMMON MISTAKES:

- 'Schizophrenic' or 'bipolar' should not be used to mean 'two minds' or a 'split personality';
- Somebody who is angry is not 'psychotic'.

"At a cultural and societal level, we know the beautiful game has an important role to play in the way we deal with issues including mental health and suicide. Being there for your mates when things get tough, whether you're playing or supporting, winning or losing, creates strong bonds that can genuinely save lives. Football can connect people and be a vehicle for conversations and support across the game."

Simon Gunning, CEO of the Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

FREQUENTLY-ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Q: I've heard the term 'mental health crisis'. What does it mean?

A: A mental health crisis is when an individual feels their mental health is at breaking point. For example, they might be experiencing:

- Suicidal feelings or self-harming behaviour;
- Extreme anxiety or panic attacks;
- Psychotic episodes (such as delusions, hallucinations, paranoia or hearing voices);
- Other behaviour that feels out of control, and is likely to endanger themselves or others.

Q: I, or someone I know, have experienced mental health problems and have found certain treatments helpful. Should I recommend such treatments to someone else?

A: No. It is not your role to recommend specific treatments as you are not clinically trained (unless you are a mental health professional) and it is outside the boundaries of your role as a coach/manager. It is okay to talk about your personal experiences and how you manage your mental health – that's to be encouraged. If you have found a particular treatment was helpful for you then it's fine to talk about it as it could be useful to the other person – but don't specifically recommend it.

That's because what worked for you may not necessarily be helpful or appropriate for somebody else. It is important to gently encourage people to get advice from their doctor.

Q: Are there any circumstances when it's permissible to break confidentiality?

A: You should consider breaking confidentiality (telling someone outside of your club or group), if the person is:

- **In immediate danger:** if a person has clearly told you that they plan to take their life within the next 24 hours, or has already taken action which puts their life in danger, but does not want to seek support themselves and does not give their consent for you to seek such support – call **999**.
- **Physically present at a training event or meeting**: You should act to get them support. This may involve contacting a mental health professional, or if they are an 'adult at risk' , their emergency contact. You should already have an emergency contact in place for any adults at risk.
- **Planning to take action which will put others at risk**: For example, stepping in front of a train, as this constitutes a risk of harm to others and you should call **999**.

- **In your view, at risk of abuse or neglect**: If you think the person talking to you is at risk of abuse or neglect you should explain that you need to seek advice. You can call your local County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer or, in an emergency, adult services or the Police.
- **Under 18**: If you think a child (under-18) is at risk of abuse or neglect you must report this either to your Club Welfare Officer, to your County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer or you can ring the NSPCC helpline for advice: **0808 800 5000**.

Q: I'm a mentor. What if one of my referees rings me randomly and says "I'm depressed"?

A: If they are starting off in such an upfront way, and being very open and honest, this might suggest that they are happy to have an open conversation so you could respond by asking if they are comfortable with telling you a little more.

You don't need to be an expert on mental health to offer support. In this instance your response may depend on how well you know the person, but whatever the relationship you have with the person they are reaching out to you for your support. Try and follow the tips in these guidance notes. The main response should be to make the time and space to have a conversation about how they are feeling and signpost to appropriate support.

Q: I'm being treated for depression and sometimes feel a bit low. Should I carry on refereeing?

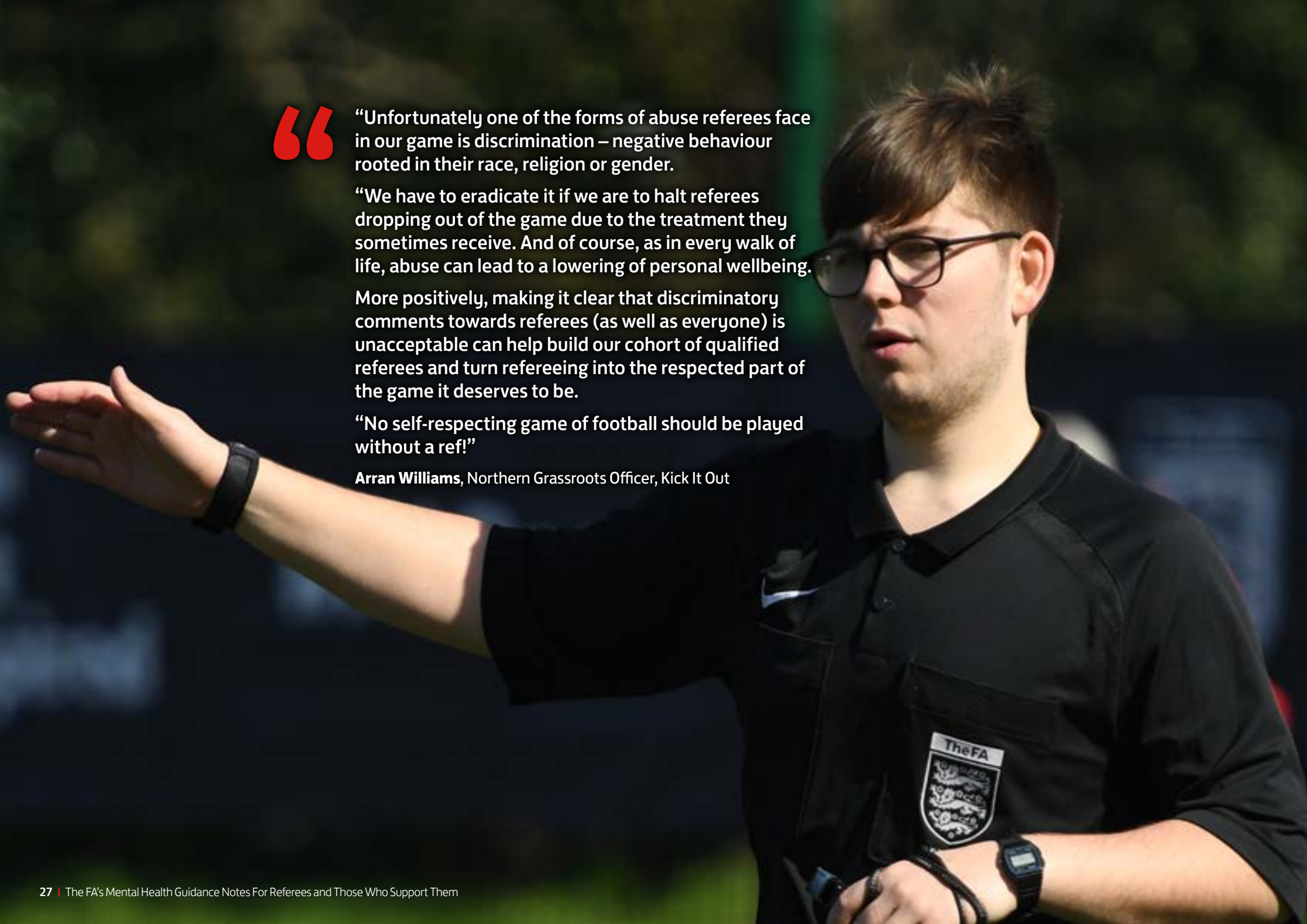
A: Yes, absolutely, if you feel ok to do so. We know that being active can help reduce the effects of depression, so carry on!

Q: I'm refereeing really well at the moment and am in line for a promotion. But I have a mental health problem and am not able to focus fully on refereeing. What should I do?

A: In the same way that you should not referee unless you are physically fit, you should also consider not refereeing unless you are mentally fit. Your performances could suffer, your observation and club marks may drop and you'll end up not getting promoted anyway. Instead, tell someone you trust how you are feeling, let your Appointments Officer know and take some time away from refereeing.

Q: I'm suffering from a mental health problem and not really feeling up to refereeing at the moment. What should I do?

A: You should tell someone you trust and also make sure that your Appointments Officer knows you'd like to have some time off from refereeing and the reasons why. Your Appointments Officer should allow you the time you need to improve your mental health.



"Unfortunately one of the forms of abuse referees face in our game is discrimination – negative behaviour rooted in their race, religion or gender.

"We have to eradicate it if we are to halt referees dropping out of the game due to the treatment they sometimes receive. And of course, as in every walk of life, abuse can lead to a lowering of personal wellbeing.

More positively, making it clear that discriminatory comments towards referees (as well as everyone) is unacceptable can help build our cohort of qualified referees and turn refereeing into the respected part of the game it deserves to be.

"No self-respecting game of football should be played without a ref!"

Arran Williams, Northern Grassroots Officer, Kick It Out

Participants and FA Tutor at a bespoke referees' training course run by the Lancashire FA at a faith-based school.

THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

There are several pieces of legislation related to mental health, which also cover the rights of those with mental health problems.

To read about the legal framework around mental health, visit:
www.mind.org.uk/information-support/legal-rights

> **"There is an overwhelming mountain of research to show that the best way to protect against mental health problems is to draw on active friendship groups. As a team sport, football produces such groups in abundance, so getting people talking and listening can help ensure we don't 'over-medicalise' emotions that are often normal reactions to life events."**
>
> **Professor Sir Simon Wessely,**
> President of the Royal Society of Medicine

STEERING GROUP FOR THESE GUIDANCE NOTES

The FA is grateful to the following for their help in shaping these guidance notes:

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Arran Williams, Northern Grassroots Officer, Kick It Out

Natasha Wilson, Referee Development Officer, Leicestershire and Rutland FA

"Referees play a key role in football, and unfortunately the pressure can be overwhelming at times. When it comes to dealing with this pressure, officials should be able to have a proactive support mechanism able to care for those who feel the strain of match day stress.

"From personal experience, officiating can be a release from personal stresses away from football – a place to clear my head.

"So where do we turn when even football presses us too much? We have to come together as a community to support our match officials at their time of need and regardless of what role we play in football, mental health should bring everybody in our game together – as one."

Mike Desborough, Referee Development Officer, Bedfordshire FA

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