



**PLAY
SAFE**

BUILDING AN EVER-SAFER CULTURE

**THE FA SAFEGUARDING STRATEGY TO 2024
ANNUAL REVIEW & REPORT – YEAR 3**



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PROGRESS ON ALL FRONTS

The final annual review of our 2020-24 safeguarding strategy highlights the safeguarding work we have undertaken in the 2023/24 season.

Excellent progress has been made in the grassroots game with the County FAs, ESFA and ISFA demonstrating through the independent NSPCC assessments how safeguarding is embedded across all their activities. Most County FAs are also now being recognised for areas of their work which exceed the Standard.

In the grassroots open-age game, feedback on the new Player Welfare Course, which all Club Welfare Officers and team officials complete to affiliate, has been overwhelmingly positive reinforcing its value.

In the men's professional game, there have also been positive outcomes from the independent safeguarding audits of Premier League and EFL clubs. We welcome that these audits continue to cover club community organisations (CCOs), which come into contact with huge numbers of children and young people.

Beyond the audits, the leagues and clubs ensure safeguarding remains a constant priority via year-round support, education and training.

In the women's professional game and the level immediately below it (The FA Women's National League), clubs have also made progress against the licence and standard requirements.

In addition, safeguarding work in the steps immediately below the men's professional leagues – the National League System (NLS) Steps 1-4 – has also advanced over the past year. Representatives from every club have now been trained via a workshop specific to this level of the game. NLS clubs are also actioning the safeguarding requirements in the licensing agreement for 2024/25.

Away from the playing of the game, extensive safeguarding practices, policies and procedures are now in place across the two world-class venues we run – Wembley Stadium and St. George's Park, as well as other stadia staging England matches at every level.

Meanwhile, Play Safe, our national safeguarding campaign, scaled new heights last season. The Play Safe weekend in October 2023 saw a 3-million reach through social channels. Our aim now is to take the already brilliant game-wide collaboration to new heights in this year's Play Safe weekend (28th/29th September 2024).

Helping frame Play Safe each year is The FA Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group (FASSSAG). That's alongside Group members creating podcasts, films and presenting at external conferences in partnership with FIFA, Safe Sport International and National Policing.

With all the proactive work across the game, we expect the number of referrals and concerns to increase – and we view this as an important and positive indicator that shows confidence in our processes. Our thanks go to colleagues – from volunteers to professionals – across the game involved in the management of concerns and cases, who diligently apply learnings to strengthen our safeguarding practice.

We know safeguarding work is never done, and that progress must be continuous. Having signed off the new FA Safeguarding Strategy 2024-28, and an increase in permanent safeguarding staff, we will continue to focus on this priority area of work over the next four years.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Bullingham'.

Mark Bullingham
Chief Executive, The FA

OUR PURPOSE, APPROACH AND PRINCIPLES

Football's lead organisations in England are united by a threefold safeguarding purpose:

WE WILL:

1. Implement preventative safeguarding measures and create fun, safe football environments.
2. Make the reporting of concerns as easy as possible.
3. Ensure safeguarding, child and adult protection concerns are investigated swiftly and thoroughly in conjunction with statutory agencies – and with demonstrable outcomes.



MARK BULLINGHAM

Chief Executive,
The FA



RICHARD MASTERS

Chief Executive,
Premier League



TREVOR BIRCH

Chief Executive,
EFL



DAWN AIREY

Chair, FA Women's Super
League and FA Women's
Championship Board



MAHETA MOLANGO

Chief Executive,
PFA



RICHARD BEVAN

Chief Executive,
LMA



PROFESSIONAL GAME
MATCH OFFICIALS

DANIELLE EVERY

Chief Operating Officer,
PGMOL

- **Our approach:** The above chart reflects the collaborative safeguarding work that goes on every day across the football landscape. This work extends beyond the football bodies and for example, encompasses the group set up to ensure survivor voices are heard. It also means working closely with statutory bodies and organisations such as those listed in the second columns on [page 37](#). Crucially, collaboration also means ensuring the voice of the child is heard – this may sound obvious, but is often overlooked.

- **Our principles:** Our safeguarding work is based on the five principles on [page 13](#) of Building an Ever-Safer Culture, our main Safeguarding Strategy, which you'll find [here](#).

OUR FIVE FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIC GOALS

Our strategy has five focus areas, each with its own strategic goal:

FOCUS AREA	STRATEGIC GOAL
1. LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE	To provide strong leadership of safeguarding across the game and deliver effective governance frameworks.
2. STANDARDS	To clearly communicate the expected standards, regulations, and policies across the game and to support those in designated safeguarding roles to drive and monitor safeguarding practice and culture.
3. PREVENTION	To create ever-safer football environments through robust recruitment processes, driving safer working practice and culture, utilising insight and delivering clear messaging and inspirational campaigns.
4. EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT	To deliver accessible, impactful safeguarding education programmes, resources and information to help create ever-safer football environments for children and adults at risk.
5. PROTECTION	To make the reporting of concerns as easy as possible, continue to build strong partnerships with statutory agencies in managing abuse cases, provide guidance on managing low-level concerns and deliver robust case management by The FA.

From pages 8-35 inclusive, you'll read about the work we've undertaken in the last 12 months against each of the above focus areas.

YEAR 3 IN NUMBERS

1. LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

100%

FA Board and Senior Management Team received safeguarding updates.

100%

of County FA Board Directors up to date with safeguarding training.

53

INDIVIDUALS

individuals and family members accessed Sporting Chance support this season.

£56,075

awarded by FA Benevolent Fund this season to survivors of abuse in football.

31

individuals supported this season via Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) Survivor Support Advocate Service.

2. STANDARDS

100%

of County FAs, English and Independent Schools Football Associations (52) independently assessed and continued to demonstrate that they meet the Safeguarding 365 Standard.

100%

of Premier League clubs (20) independently assessed this season.

33%

of EFL clubs independently assessed this season, as part of a rolling programme through which all clubs have been assessed by Barnado's.

100%

of BWSL and BWC clubs have a Designated Safeguarding Officer or an FTE equivalent.

YEAR 3 IN NUMBERS

3. PREVENTION

98%

of 131,972 youth team officials in-date with safeguarding training. 2,090 showing as non-compliant (as at 27/5/24) are being monitored through to compliance or suspended by County FAs.

101,406

DBS Checks undertaken August 2023-July 2024.

100%

of 39 football, sport and concert events at Wembley risk assessed, with safeguarding plans and all DBS Checks in place.

87

England Teams camps, at St. George's Park or England fixtures 'on the road' were risk-assessed and had event safeguarding plans in place.

81%

of parents/carers of youth players feel positively towards Play Safe ([see page 22](#)).

52%

of parents/carers think grassroots football is safer, having seen the Play Safe campaign.

4. EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

178K

learners completed safeguarding courses

97.3%

of learners feel confident/very confident in their safeguarding skills and knowledge having completed The FA Safeguarding Children course.

24,110

completed Safeguarding Awareness for Parents/ Carers' course.

4.8/5

average post-course confidence rating by parents/carers.

5. PROTECTION

95%

referrals received by FA initially assessed in two working days.

182

concerns about child and adult safeguarding at 39 Wembley events resulted in 16 referrals to statutory agencies.

Reporting on focus area 1:

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

STRATEGIC GOAL:

To provide strong leadership of safeguarding standards across the game and deliver effective governance frameworks.

What we said we'd do

1. Continually improving the ways in which we measure the impact of the safeguarding measures that are implemented.
2. Continuing to deliver safeguarding training and continuous professional development (CPD) to The FA Board and the Boards of all County FAs and Affiliated Associations.
3. Continuing to engage with and support The FA Board Safeguarding Champion and enhance the support for the County FA Board Champions.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- Insight tracked the impact of public-facing campaigns, with Play Safe having reached 3m via social channels in 2023.
- Safeguarding 365 monitoring tracked 11 measures across the Standard in grassroots youth and adult open-age football. For each measure there is a definition, baseline, target, data source, reporting and escalation process – if needed.
- The FA commissioned independent assessments of the County FAs – delivered again by the NSPCC CPSU in 23/24.
- An independent QA process was implemented again, for the independent Safeguarding 365 assessments, conducted by NSPCC CPSU on behalf of The FA.
- Perception trackers include safeguarding questions in grassroots football and FA settings.
- The independent safeguarding audits of Premier League and EFL clubs, continue to cover club community organisations (CCOs) that come into contact with huge numbers of children and young people throughout the year.
- The FA Board Lead for Safety and Welfare attended the Sport England sponsored Senior Leaders workshop on “Embedding Safeguarding into Strategy”, alongside the Director of Football Development.
- 100% County FA and National Associations' Boards received safeguarding updates and maintained safeguarding CPD, and this was verified by the NSPCC CPSU as part of the Safeguarding 365 Standard independent assessments.
- The FA Board Lead for Safety and Welfare (Board Champion) regularly met the Head of Safeguarding and Head of Safeguarding Case Management to discuss progress against the strategy, key issues and Board reporting.
- The FA Board Lead for Safety and Welfare networked with Board leads from the Home Nations and Ireland.
- County FA Board Champions were provided with tailored input via the County FA Safeguarding Conference (Nov23).
- A Safeguarding Strategic Consultation Group was set up, with representation from 10 County FAs, and includes 3 Board Safeguarding Champions (BSCs). This Group has regularly contributed to key strategic thinking and projects, as well the 2024-28 strategy refresh. The BSCs have connected with peers from other County FAs to inform the support they would like to have in place for 24/25.

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

(continued)

Specific activity based on Sheldon Report recommendations:

What we said we'd do

4. Continuing to partner with Sporting Chance to provide therapeutic support to survivors, support the work of The FA Benevolent Fund and the PFA in relation to the Survivor Support Advocate Service.

5. Support The FA Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group (FASSSAG) to input to football's work and exert their influence more widely in sport and society.

6. Regular safeguarding refresher training every three years for The FA Board and Senior Management Team.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- Sporting Chance delivered support to 53 survivors and family members, (including 18 who are new to the service), supporting 298 in total since 2017.
- The Benevolent Fund supported a further 13 applications, from a total of 163 applications, with £558,655 awarded since 2019.
- The PFA Survivor Advocate supported 31 individuals this season, with 126 supported in total since 2019. In addition, the PFA Survivor Advocate also supported adult PFA members who sought assistance as survivors of child sexual abuse in family or other non-football settings.

- The FA Survivor Group met six times during the season, inputting to The FA's thinking on:
 - Safeguarding Strategy 2024-28.
 - Workstreams with the NLS Steps 1-4.
 - Play Safe 24 campaign.
 - Mandatory Reporting.
 - Proposed approach to tackle bystanding.
- The Group also worked with the NWG¹ and the NPCC Hydrant Programme², contributing to workstreams being led by these organisations.
- Each season the Group goes on the road to hear about contextual safeguarding in football. In 23/24 they visited League 2's Salford City FC to hear about safeguarding work across the club, including their academy and on matchdays.
- Members of the Group, as well as Ian Ackley the PFA SSA, contributed their voices and lived experience via films, podcasts or speaking at events. See case study on [page 35](#).

- The FA Senior Management Team input included a deep dive in relation to the Safeguarding Strategy 2024-28, which also included meetings with individual Executive Directors.
- See objective 2 on [page 8](#) for training attended by The FA Board Lead for Safety and Welfare.

¹ NWG is the [National Working Group Network](#) who collaborate to inform, educate and prevent child sexual exploitation and abuse across the UK.

² [The Hydrant Programme](#) is part of the National Police Chief's Council Child Protection and Abuse Investigation Portfolio.

Reporting on focus area 1:

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

(continued)

Specific activity based on Sheldon Report recommendations:

What we said we'd do

7. Safeguarding training every three years, for the Boards of all men's and women's professional clubs, across the Premier League, EFL, Barclays Women's Super League (BWSL) and Barclays Women's Championship (BWC).

8. Enhance the advocacy for safeguarding at Board level, through the appointment of and engagement with additional Board Safeguarding Champions e.g., in the women's professional game.

9. Publish a safeguarding report at the end of each season, providing a position statement and progress updates on safeguarding across the game

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- All clubs must ensure Board members receive regular safeguarding training. This is subject to regular audit.
- The Premier League has developed bespoke safeguarding leadership, governance, and culture training to support clubs.
- All 72 EFL club Board members are required to complete the newly released, bespoke EFL Board of Directors' mandatory course within three months of appointment.
- All 24 BWSL & BWC club Board members are required to complete safeguarding training every two years.
- 91% of BWSL & BWC club Board Members had in date training delivered by either PL, EFL, FA or other training input. Given natural turnover, plans are underway to have the remaining BWSL & BWC club Board members trained during the first part of 24/25 season.

- 100% BWSL & BWC clubs have a named Board Champion in place.
- Named Board Champions sat on the BWSL & BWC and Women's Football Board's and contributed to the safeguarding inputs to these Boards.
- The Women's Football Board engaged in a session on the Women's and Girls' Football Strategy 2024-28, in which safeguarding is embedded.
- The Women's Football Board Lead for Safety and Welfare was engaged in a session on the Safeguarding Strategy 2024-28.

- The Safeguarding Strategy Year 3 Review you are reading is the report on the 2023/24 season.



Case study, looking at:

Young people's voices to the fore at Fulham

To ensure the opinions of young people help frame future programmes, Fulham FC Foundation's Youth Forum recently delivered a 'Contextual Safeguarding' workshop to the club's CEO and management board.

The workshop comprised a presentation on the challenges young people face as they navigate their daily lives. This was followed by a task called 'hotspot mapping', based on getting home after a match, only using public transport. Along their route, members of the management board were asked to mark the areas they felt were most unsafe and most safe, using coloured pens. This was to emulate a child's journey home after attending our sessions.

"Watching our young people deliver a safeguarding workshop to the CEO and management board was amazing," says Gemma Taylor, the club's Safeguarding Manager. "The 'hotspot map' task is extremely powerful and was able to put management board members in the young people's shoes and hopefully understand the challenges our participants face every day.

"I think sometimes we underestimate the power of hearing it directly from young people's mouths. Who better to tell their story than the young people themselves?"

Fulham's safeguarding team has used this approach with staff, Academy Players and Foundation participants, resulting in changes to programmes based on input from young people.

Fulham CEO Alistair Mackintosh echoes Gemma's thoughts: "Every year Board members are required by the Premier League to receive safeguarding training. This year's Foundation's Youth Forum workshop alerted us all to the issues young people face related to crime, drugs, pressure, criticism, social media and bullying. The 'hotspot mapping' exercise led to some really interesting conversations about what contributes to making someone feel safe, or unsafe. Overall, it was a great reminder about the importance of understanding how safeguarding fits within all our roles."



Members of Fulham FC Foundation's Youth Forum recently ran a safeguarding workshop for the club's CEO and management board. The pics alongside show some of the Forum's members and inset, a line-up with the club CEO and management board.





Case study, looking at:

Safeguarding commitment at every level

At EFL club Birmingham City, a commitment to safeguarding underpins the club's values. Championing that commitment is the club's Head of Safeguarding, Stephanie Rolfe.

"I believe knowledge is key," she says. "That's why my goal is to foster a learning culture that emphasises the importance of safeguarding, sharing knowledge and best practices across the organisation."

With this goal in mind, every month all staff receive Continuing Professional Development (CPD) materials on specific safeguarding topics. Safeguarding is also a regular feature in monthly newsletters sent to staff, players and parents/carers.

"The club abides by the motto 'Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility'," Stephanie continues. "This is embedded throughout our new policies, strategies and in our weekly One Day One Conversation (ODOC) meetings. This makes it easier for everyone to contribute to creating a safety net that prevents child abuse and neglect, ensuring all children feel safe, listened to and supported."

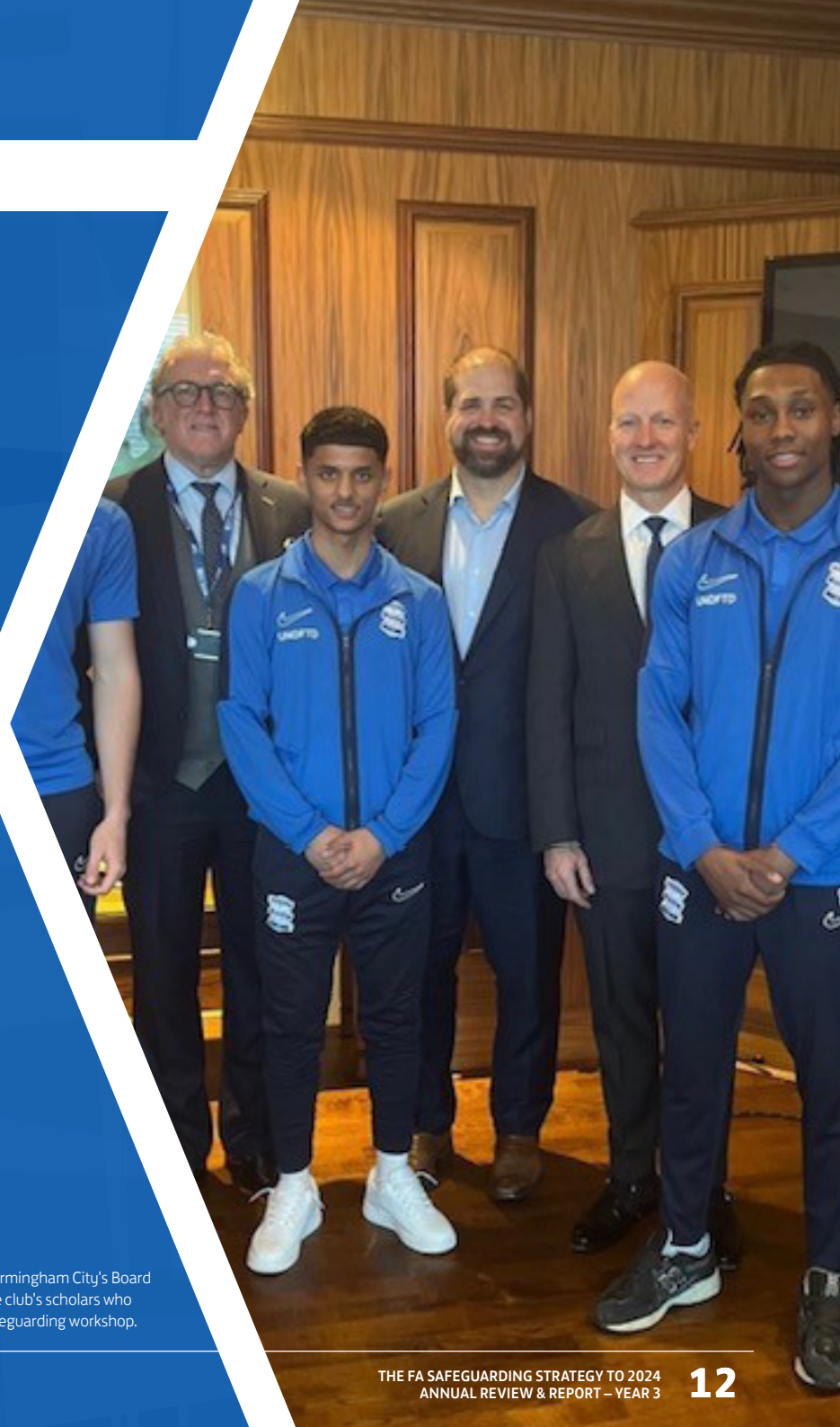
Recognising that each club faces unique challenges, Stephanie has aimed to highlight to the Board the real-life scenarios and issues our young players encounter. "I also believe it's crucial to involve our young players in the educational process, not only as beneficiaries but also as contributors to our safeguarding culture."

"To this end, the players and I delivered a safeguarding workshop to our new Board members using a storytelling approach. The workshop followed the journey of a young player from trials to debut, emphasising the importance of having the right people in the right positions and ensuring proper training and awareness among staff." A key message of this workshop was reinforcing the idea that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, which is essential for fostering a culture of collective responsibility for the wellbeing of all individuals within our Club. This approach helps create a safer and more supportive environment.

The Board's commitment to safeguarding has seen Stephanie's team expanded to include dedicated safeguarding leads across the Academy, Women's team and Foundation. This reinforces the collective commitment to safeguarding and ensures a robust, effective safeguarding framework.



Members of Birmingham City's Board with two of the club's scholars who delivered a safeguarding workshop.



STANDARDS

STRATEGIC GOAL:

To communicate clearly the expected standards, regulations and policies across the game and to support those in designated safeguarding roles to drive and monitor safeguarding practice and culture.

What we said we'd do

1. Continuing to demonstrate that The FA meets and evolves in line with the NSPCC CPSU Standards.
2. Collaborating with the Premier League and EFL as they ensure their independently assessed Standards are met across their club membership.
3. Ensuring all Barclays Women's Super League and Barclays Women's Championship clubs meet the required safeguarding standards as per their club licence.
4. Supporting the independent assessment of every County FA and Affiliated Association¹ against The FA's bespoke 'Safeguarding 365' Standard and ensuring all compliance requirements are met.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- The NSPCC CPSU confirmed that The FA has met the requirements of the Standards and evidenced that in many cases these have been exceeded.
- The Premier League and EFL require their clubs to demonstrate they meet their safeguarding standards.
- This season all 20 Premier League clubs and 26 (33%) EFL clubs have been independently assessed, as part of their rolling programme of assessments.
- These assessments have also been extended to the Club Community Organisations.
- Premier League audits have included a focus on club matchday safeguarding measures. See case study on [page 18](#).
- Where relevant, actions have been identified for clubs to implement continuous improvements.
- 100% of the 24 BWSL & BWC clubs appointed a Designated Safeguarding Officer or an FTE equivalent.
- Overall club compliance for the safeguarding requirements in the licence is 92% and actions have been taken to follow up the remaining compliance issues.
- Following the tragic death of a Championship player, the league offered support via Sporting Chance, which was taken up by a number of players. Avenues of support available to elite players who may be struggling with their wellbeing were also reiterated across the BWSL and BWC.
- Given the rapid growth of the women's game, this support has been provided, alongside the continual evolution of a framework of support for performance well-being, and a network of full-time designated safeguarding and welfare leads in the 24 clubs.
- 100% of the 50 County FAs, ISFA and ESFA were independently assessed and demonstrated that they continue to meet the Safeguarding 365 Standard.
- For the first time, all 52 organisations met the Standard at the first assessment, which is a positive indicator of safeguarding culture being further embedded.
- The assessors identified numerous areas of good practice and highlighted where individual associations had exceeded the Standard.

Reporting on focus area 2:

STANDARDS (continued)

What we said we'd do

5. Ensuring The FA meets and continues to evolve in line with the Ann Craft Trust Safeguarding Adults' Framework² to develop standards and promote best practice when working with adults in football.

6. Reviewing the safeguarding provision within men's clubs in the National League System (NLS) and women's clubs in The FA Women's National League (FA WNL) and supporting their development.

7. Regularly reviewing and updating our safeguarding regulations, policies and procedures.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- Collaboration with The Ann Craft Trust (ACT) continues to ensure practice and guidance are developing in alignment with the ACT safeguarding adult's standards framework.
- Safeguarding plan and risk assessment undertaken for The FA Disability Cup 24-25 June 2023, including the new experience area allowing attendees to try different formats of the game.
- PGMOL rolled out a programme of safeguarding training for its staff, with a focus on vulnerable adults.

- Designated FA safeguarding staff in place to drive safeguarding standards and support the case management for NLS Steps 1-4 clubs.
- The Vanarama National League appointed a DSO to support clubs in Steps 1-2 and shared learning with Steps 1-4 clubs.
- Following a consultation, a bespoke workshop was developed for NLS 1-4 Club Welfare Officers and delivered to every club in steps 1-4 via 31 virtual workshops.
- 68% clubs in Steps 1-2 have undertaken in person training related to FA case thresholds, management of concerns and referral processes.
- Safeguarding requirements have been introduced to the licencing requirements for NLS 1-4 clubs from 2024/25 season. See case study [page 19](#).
- Safeguarding requirements were embedded into The FA Women's National League Minimum Standards with monitoring of compliance through 2023/24.

- The Safeguarding Adults Policy was updated for 24/25.
- The England Women's Safeguarding Policy and Safer Working Practice Guidance were refined in collaboration with the Women's Technical Teams.
- A new Safeguarding Children Policy for the Barclays Womens Super League and Barclays Women's Championship was published.
- Event Safeguarding risk assessments, plans, alongside a safeguarding lead were embedded into the delivery of the 4 FA Womens National League final events in 2023/24.
- As per new licensing requirements for 2024/25, all NLS 1-4 clubs are required to submit a safeguarding risk assessment. The FA have provided an exemplar template, guidance, and training video to empower clubs to meet this requirement.
- We have also supported the Vanarama National League to review exemplar policies and procedures, including those related to trips, tours and travel, which have been disseminated to all step 1-4 clubs.

STANDARDS (continued)

What we said we'd do

8. Providing ongoing support and training for the network of designated safeguarding persons (Board Champions, organisation Senior Leads and Designated Officers) across the game.

9. Ensuring that those in regulated activity working with children's (under-18) and adult teams - including adult disability teams – who have not yet undertaken safeguarding training, do so.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- Training opportunities provided for those in designated safeguarding roles, i.e.:
 - County FAs: Safeguarding 365 conference; Managing Safeguarding in Your County; Safeguarding Adults; Thresholds for Referrals. In addition, County FAs accessed third-party training e.g., via local authorities.
 - Premier League clubs and Club Community Organisations: Board Safeguarding Leadership and Governance; Accredited Safeguarding Officer Learning and Development Programme; Embedding Children's Rights; Allegation Management; Safer Recruitment; Risks linked to Online Gaming; the Government's Prevent Duty; Safeguarding Adults at Risk. Also, facilitation of peer support and practice-sharing events.
 - The Premier League has delivered its accredited safeguarding officer learning and development programme to the fourth cohort of learners.
 - The Premier League in partnership with the NSPCC launched the Safety Goals empowerment programme which aims to help children and young people recognise abuse and to speak out and be heard.
 - The Premier League Charitable Fund's learning and workforce development offer for CCOs included sessions on: Safeguarding children and young people; safeguarding adults; safeguarding disabled children; contextual safeguarding; assessing and mitigating risk in the community environment, courses on domestic abuse; modern slavery and safeguarding supervision.
 - EFL in the Community's development offer to CCOs includes: Safer Recruitment; Supervision, Managing Allegations & Critical Incident Management. EFL in the Community also hosted bi-monthly DSO sessions

to network and share best practice.

- Premier League Charitable Fund and EFL in the Community delivered a conference to more than 80 CCO designated safeguarding staff in June 2024 at Wolverhampton Wanderers' Molineux Stadium.
- EFL clubs rolling programme of: DSO Level 3 qualification; Adverse Childhood Experiences; Contextual Safeguarding; Child Sexual Exploitation; Introduction to Domestic Abuse; Recognising and Dealing with Bullying Issues; Mental Health First Aid (Youth and Adult); Safeguarding Investigations and Decision-Making; Online safety; Training for Senior Safeguarding Managers with NSPCC, Safer Recruitment, Harmful sexual behaviour and adultification and Matchday Safeguarding as added in 23/24.
- EFL in the Community: Level 3 DSO Qualification; Safer Recruitment; Safer Culture; Safeguarding Adults at Risk & Mixed Age Activities; Safeguarding Online Activities; Writing a Safeguarding Policy; Responding to Low-Level Concerns; Safeguarding Walking Football. EFL in the Community also hosted monthly DSO sessions to network and share best practice.
- BWSL and BWC clubs: Safeguarding forums for BWSL and BWC DSOs discuss emerging themes, share safer working practice and reflect on practice. Board training developed for and offered to BWSL and BWC Clubs. Programme scoped for new FTE DSOs operating across the BWSL and BWC Clubs.

- Registered under-18 teams must name coaches working with them.
- As of 27 May 2024 in grassroots youth football, 98% of 131,972 affiliated youth team officials are in date with their safeguarding course requirements. The 2,090 who are non-compliant are monitored through to compliance or suspended by County FAs.
- In the adult game a new Player Welfare Officer course was introduced and is mandatory for all adult open-age club welfare officers and team officials for the 2024/25 affiliation process. Compliance with this requirement is currently being monitored as part of the Safeguarding 365 Standard measures and will be reported on in 2025/26.

STANDARDS (continued)

Specific activity based on Sheldon Report recommendations:

What we said we'd do

10. Refreshing and publishing updates to the series of FA safeguarding guidance notes which can be found **here** on various topics, and proactively promoting them across the game.

11. Ensure that clubs proactively share their welfare/safeguarding officer's contact details, as well as their policy and procedures with their players and their parents/carers when players join and at the beginning of each new season.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

Updates to FA safeguarding guidance notes made in the last 12 months include those to:

- 1.3 The FA's Safeguarding Regulations.
- 1.7 Position of Trust and Appropriate Behaviour.
- 1.9 Safeguarding Risk Assessment template.
- 5.7 Acceptable Behaviours when working with Young People.

In addition, this new set of guidance notes was produced covering the vital area of:

- 5.11 Listening to Children.

- As part of the Club Affiliation process, there are tailored safeguarding declarations for every level of the game, which have been refreshed for 2024/25 season.
- This declaration must be signed for clubs to affiliate and re-emphasises the importance of safeguarding culture and practice.
- It requires clubs to sign up to eight commitments if they run youth football and five more if they run football activities for 4–5-year-olds. These commitments include:
 - adhering to The FA's Safeguarding Children (SC) Policy and Procedures and proactively sharing their Club SC Policy with all parents/carers, players, club, and team officials.
 - proactively sharing and promoting their Club Welfare Officer's details with all parents/carers, players, club, and team officials.
- As this is a requirement 100% of affiliated clubs sign up to this commitment.
- As part of the Safeguarding 365 Standard, County FAs undertake desktop reviews as well as in-person safeguarding visits to at least 13% of their clubs each season. This enables County FAs to review what club safeguarding information is or is not in the public domain and then to follow this up with the relevant clubs to agree any specific actions for the clubs.

Reporting on focus area 2:

STANDARDS (continued)

Specific activity based on Sheldon Report recommendations:

What we said we'd do

12. Incorporate into the Safeguarding 365 Standard a review of the clubs' safeguarding policies and practices, including overnight stays, away travel and trips, use of social media, and coaching in a digital environment and obtain the views of children and young people.

13. Ensure that the designated safeguarding persons in professional clubs regularly report to their club's Board on safeguarding matters. At every Premier League and English Football League (EFL) Championship club, there should be a dedicated, full-time, salaried post, with suitable qualifications and experience. In EFL Leagues 1 & 2, there should be, as a minimum, a part-time salaried post, with suitable qualifications and experience, and 50% of their time should be dedicated to safeguarding.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- As part of the Safeguarding 365 Standard, desktop reviews and safeguarding visits by County FA each season, conversations took place with club officials about overnight stays, away travel and trips, use of social media, and coaching in a digital environment.
- As part of the club visits, County FAs talked with children and young people, as well as any parents and coaches present, to obtain their views.
- The safeguarding declarations detailed in point 11, also refer to club practices in relation to youth football with them committing to:
 - maintaining accurate data on club and team officials on FA databases.
 - ensuring all team officials working directly with under-18s maintain an in-date accepted FA DBS check and have completed all required FA Safeguarding training.
 - referring safeguarding concerns in line with The FA's SC Policy and Procedures.
 - ensuring there are a minimum of two FA DBS-checked and safeguarding trained adults in place for all club-organised activities.
 - committing to creating a child-centred culture.
- In Focus Area 4, there is further information on how children and young people's views are obtained across the game.

- Safeguarding is a standing Board agenda item for the Premier League and EFL.
- The Premier League and EFL Safeguarding Standards require club boards to provide effective leadership and governance over safeguarding arrangements.
- The Premier League standards also state the minimum staffing requirements, ensuring clubs meet this recommendation.
- The EFL introduced minimum staffing requirements require EFL Club Chief Executives to complete a self-certification stating that they meet the staffing requirements. This is also checked as part of the independent audit process to ensure that all Clubs are compliant.



Case study, looking at:

Safeguarding on Liverpool matchdays

When it comes to safeguarding on matchdays, Liverpool FC's priority is to ensure everyone is safe and has the most enjoyable experience possible. That's whether matches are at Anfield or The Totally Wicked Stadium, where all Liverpool Women's home games will be played in the 2024/25 season.

Leading the team that focus on this priority is Lorna Duckworth, the club's Deputy Director of Safeguarding and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for stadia.

"A DSL is present at all men's and women's home matches, backed by a strong and well-respected matchday safeguarding team," says Lorna. "The goal is to ensure all the Premier League Safeguarding Standards related to matchdays are evidenced by very good practice."

Safeguarding is also a key component in pre-match planning, with direct access to the Matchday Control Team on matchdays themselves.

Supporting safeguarding on matchdays is a team of Safeguarding Response Stewards, plus a trained pool of safeguarding staff to cover all stadium areas.

"Safeguarding Response Stewards come from backgrounds of schools, police, children/adult services, medical, youth work etc.," says Lorna. "They are highly experienced in dealing with children and adults at risk and are identified by wearing a purple tabard."

The main role of these stadium-wide stewards is to prevent, identify and deal with any safeguarding matters. They are flexible and can move according to need across the stadium footprint. In addition, there are safeguarding-trained staff within hospitality areas, identified by a safeguarding pin badge.

Vitaly, there's also commitment from the top, as Barnardo's noted in its Premier League audit of Liverpool's safeguarding practices: "Senior leaders demonstrated a clear drive to ensure that safeguarding was on everybody's radar and was everybody's business at all times."



Premier
League



BARCLAYS
WOMEN'S
SUPER LEAGUE



Safeguarding personnel are an embedded part of Liverpool matchdays, across men's and women's games.



Case study, looking at:

Empowering ever-safer club cultures

Empowering those working with – and within – National League System¹ (NLS) clubs to create ever-safer cultures has been a central focus of The FA's safeguarding efforts in the past year.

Through listening to those working in clubs, leagues and County FAs a bespoke workshop has been created, addressing the safeguarding areas most relevant to this level of the game. For example, it covers the recruitment of volunteers, away travel, loan players and changing facilities.

Backed by Step 1-4 leagues, the workshop has been delivered by County FA staff, to representatives from every club in the country operating at this level of the game.

To support understanding of The FA referral thresholds, 68% of clubs in steps 1 and 2 have to date, also received in-person training.

Alongside this, a proposed set of required safeguarding standards has been established for clubs across steps 1-4. These standards align to those in the professional game, but have been reconfigured to ensure they are relevant, achievable and impactful given the wide variance in the type of clubs operating within these leagues. By ensuring the standards are backed by easy-to-follow guidance and resources, clubs are given the tools to meet expectations. A 32-club trial of the intended standards is currently ongoing.

As the 2024/25 unfolds, The FA is working with the leagues to enhance licensing requirements, ensuring the inclusion of safeguarding for the first time. This means that this season, as we move towards a wider roll-out of the NLS Safeguarding Standards, all clubs will be required to:

- Share key safeguarding information on their websites;
- Submit a comprehensive safeguarding risk assessment; and
- Appoint a Board Safeguarding Champion to help drive changes in club cultures.

Collaboration and partnership have been the foundation of this work. Working hand-in-hand with clubs, leagues and County FAs has ensured this important work remains front of mind at all times.

As Jack Pearce, Chair of the National League, says: “There is no question that the significant work to support clubs across steps 1-4 in the last 12 months has enhanced the awareness and practice of safeguarding within all clubs at this level.”

¹ The National League System covers the leagues at steps 1-4 of the men's football pyramid, i.e. immediately below the full-professional leagues (Premier League and EFL).

Marine FC's Welfare Officer Team – Judith Moizer and Richard Cross.



PREVENTION

STRATEGIC GOAL:

To create ever-safe football environments through robust recruitment process, driving safer working practice and culture, utilising insight and delivering clear messaging and inspirational campaigns.

What we said we'd do

1. Reviewing and updating The FA safer recruitment policy for all staff and consultants.
2. Processing 70-75k DBS Checks each season and risk-assessing and managing the checks that include content indicating criminal convictions, cautions or additional information that may be relevant to safeguarding children and or adults at risk. This directly links to Focus Area 5: Protection.
3. Continuing to embed safeguarding in all relevant FA strategies and participation programmes.
4. Ensuring safer working practice is maintained across all England teams, at Wembley events, at England 'on the road' events, and at UEFA Women's EURO 2022.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- Ongoing continuous improvement work including enhanced systems and data.
 - 101,406 DBS Checks undertaken August 2023 – July 2024.
 - The checks enabled The FA and professional clubs to risk assess and screen out anyone with a known history indicating they may pose a risk of harm to children or adults at risk.
- Multiple existing and new FA and partner initiatives and programmes are supported, with tailored safeguards each season. For example:
- The Events Platform is being replaced with 'Book Football', improving the user experience whilst retaining or enhancing the safeguards for current programmes (Wildcats, Squad, Just Play). Working collaboratively through the pilot phase has ensured the necessary nuances for new programmes such as Comets and Walking Football are easily included. Safeguarding requirements are prepopulated for customers/partners delivering multiple programmes.
 - Working in partnership with the Association of Colleges (AoC) bespoke protocols and proformas were developed to support their Safeguarding Risk Assessment process specifically for residential activities. Following implementation, a Quality Assurance visit informed a joint review to establish the effectiveness of the support, resources and AoC staffs' confidence and ability to implement safeguards effectively. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive. This process has been repeated to support internal colleagues seeking guidance for residential events.
 - Safeguarding is embedded in EFL commissioned activity and programmes.
- 39 football, sport and concert events were delivered at Wembley. 100% were risk-assessed and had event safeguarding plans in place.
 - Our Event Safeguarding Advisors (ESAs) were deployed to these events and as a result managed the 182 concerns that arose at these events, resulting in 16 referrals being made to statutory agencies. These referrals related to child or adult welfare concerns that came to light whilst they were at our venues.
 - 87 England Teams camps, at St George's Park or England fixtures 'on the road' were risk-assessed and had event safeguarding plans in place.
 - In addition, there were 270 football and wider sporting events at St George's Park, with three incidents arising that were managed effectively.

PREVENTION

(continued)

What we said we'd do

5. Piloting and then launching a safeguarding self-audit tool for grassroots clubs' committees to track their progress in
6. Promoting the UK Government's safeguarding guidance for out-of-school settings to parents/carers who may access football activity via unaffiliated private football providers.
7. Continuing to evolve The FA's Respect campaign messaging to influence behaviour on the sidelines of youth matches and abuse towards referees.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- This work will align to the next strategy cycle and The FA Grassroots Football Strategy.
- This guidance for parents / carers continues to be reflected in:
 - FA guidance notes 8.1 'Questions You Should Ask' for parents/carers.
 - The FA Play Safe campaign.
 - The Safeguarding Awareness course for parents/carers in football.
 - 67% of individuals who hold an FA coaching qualification do not currently operate within the affiliated game. This means that there are coaches who could use The FA badge to attain a coaching position, but they may not be up to date with a DBS check or safeguarding training. Feedback from a consultation led by County FAs with providers showed, that in many cases, schools and parents/carers do not ask any questions around safeguarding, as most assume that providers will have a qualification.
 - We have taken action in this regard to educate parents/carers by sharing 'Their Coach, Their Safety, Your Call' messaging as part of Play Safe 2023.
 - We have also been developing a framework to encourage external coaching providers to affiliate to County FAs, to enable some oversight monitoring.
- We ran a repeat of our Silent Support Weekend in the 2023/24 season which saw over 47,000 teams and 620,000 players signing up to take part, an increase of more than 14,000 teams and 200,000 players since the first weekend in the 2022/23 season. Although many games that were due to be played that weekend were postponed due to adverse weather conditions, feedback on social media amongst teams who did participate was extremely positive with only 5.4% commenting in a negative light.
- A summary of the results was that Silent Support weekends are a positive way to help create a positive environment for young players, spectators and coaches, promoting a better atmosphere at youth football matches and giving players more opportunity to speak up. In the 2024/25 season we will continue to run 'Silent Support weekends' as well as piloting 'Silent Support', and 'We only do positive' leagues where spectators are able to contribute, but only in a positive manner.
- We launched the 'Enough is Enough' campaign to raise awareness of discriminatory behaviour and the tough consequences perpetrators face. A hard-hitting video campaign launched on socials, support by CRM comms to all participants along with a new dedicated 'Reporting Discrimination' page on EnglandFootball.com, to encourage reporting.
- We also published an action plan to tackle serious misconduct in grassroots football in alignment with Kick It Out and their accompanying press release. This action plan was created in response to research conducted last season into the issue of discrimination, with strong collaboration across both organisations' Grassroots and Comms teams enabling a robust and ambitious plan to be developed.

PREVENTION (continued)

Specific activity based on Sheldon Report recommendations:

What we said we'd do

8. Launch an ongoing safeguarding awareness campaign, to signpost those involved in football, including parents and families, towards information on safeguarding and minimising risk.
9. Work with stakeholders across the game and devote one day of the year to a National Day of Safeguarding in Football every season.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

The Play Safe campaign 2023/24 had a reach 3m via social media.

- Monitoring shows that current parent/carers awareness of the campaign is 41%, with 52% of them feeling football is safer, having seen the campaign.
- 81% of parents/carers feel positively about the campaign – see case study on [pages 23-24](#).
- The campaign was further amplified via The FAs support for two national events:
 - Anti-Bullying Week - 13-17 November 2023
 - Safer Internet Day - 6 February 2024.
- All Play Safe activations included a call for parents to complete The FA's free [online parent/carer course](#).

- Whilst safeguarding is 365 days a year and 24/7 throughout football, the National Safeguarding Weekend is the main iteration of Play Safe campaign which was delivered 30 September – 1 October. (see case study on [pages 23-24](#)).
- As part of The FA's Play Safe campaign, the Premier League worked with the NSPCC to fund its Childline service as part of the charity's 'One Unforgettable Day' initiative.



Case study, looking at:

Play Safe 2023 breaks reach records

30th September/1st October 2023 witnessed the weekend when the whole of football in England joined forces for Play Safe – the FA-led campaign that creates awareness of the importance of safeguarding in football.

Endorsed by leading children's charity the NSPCC, Play Safe 2023 reached more than three million people nationally – the biggest reach in the three years of the campaign to date.

The campaign majored on the message 'Everyone. Everywhere. Every Time.' and highlighted the safeguarding role every football participant can play – particularly parents/carers.

Team captains from the Premier League to grassroots football wore Play Safe-branded armbands over the weekend, with coaches also sporting Play Safe pin badges. County FAs, leagues and club at every level were supplied with digital and print assets and encouraged to carry out activities which showcased their own safeguarding efforts, policies and procedures.

Alongside this, every league and club could make an online 'Play Safe Pledge' to share how they would bring the Play Safe weekend to life. The result was myriad creative ideas – all of which fuel initiatives planned for the Play Safe 2024 weekend on 28th/29th September this year.

Crucially, Play Safe has the wholehearted support of The FA's Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group (FASSSAG), who alongside other activities, helped encourage parents/carers to take The FA's free online safeguarding course [here](#).

As FA Head of Safeguarding Sue Ravenlaw says: "Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, but it's our responsibility as the game's governing body to translate that responsibility into everyday vigilance and actions. In truth Play Safe is a 365-day-a-year campaign, but the weekend gives us – and all other football stakeholders – the chance to shine a light on this vital work as we all strive to create an ever-safer culture around the game we all love."

Wembley's giant external screen announced the weekend of Play Safe 2023.



Some clubs - such as Watford FC - had t-shirts made to promote Play Safe.



This is an example of one of the many digital assets provided to clubs throughout England at every level.

Case study, looking at:

Play Safe 2023 breaks reach records (continued)



As the two pictures above show, the grassroots game got right behind Play Safe, helping it reach 3 million people.



Captains of all the men's and women's professional clubs all wore Play Safe-branded armbands across the weekend.

Reporting on focus area 4:

EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

STRATEGIC GOAL:

To deliver accessible, impactful safeguarding education programmes, resources and information to help create ever-safe football environments for children and adults at risk.

What we said we'd do

- | | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| 1. Instilling a child/adult at risk-centred approach and embedding this via wider FA programmes, educational courses and general messaging. | 2. Delivering safeguarding refresher training for all FA staff and consultants. | 3. The Premier League continuing to deliver workforce learning and development opportunities, empowering children, young people and their parents/carers, and working with the NSPCC to enhance child-centred interventions. | 4. Providing safeguarding training for the designated safeguarding persons across the men's National League System and The FA Women's National League. |
|--|--|---|---|

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child/player-centred principles remain core to the way in which The FA shapes the thinking re: the future development of grassroots football.• Views of young people were sought and considered as part of the development of the new FA Grassroots Football and Safeguarding strategies (2024-28).• Work continued this season to embed adult at risk-centred practice at all levels. For example:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- On a case-by-case basis, supporting County FAs to build their confidence to work in collaboration with adults at risk.- Ensuring the player perspective has been considered and included in the design of the new Player Welfare resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement with individual Senior Management Team Directors regarding safeguarding in their directorates and strategy 2024-28 activations.• FA Safeguarding and Integrity teams delivered safeguarding and misconduct training to the Women's Professional Game Senior Leadership Team.• Briefings and refresher training delivered to targeted groups working with England Teams, St. George's Park Operations Team and Wembley Stadium events teams, including those working on St George's Park events, the UEFA Champions League Final and operating the Wembley Stadium Sensory Rooms.• 1:1 guidance was provided for Marketing and Commercial Partnerships Managers working with U18s or adults at risk in relation to media or social media activity.• Key FA Grassroots Programme leads regularly used the Safeguarding Risk Assessment Template tool as part of their planning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Premier League continues to deliver regular national training and awareness events, as well as training to clubs through individual support plans.• In 2023/24, these training and awareness events focused on contextual safeguarding, safer recruitment, adultification, adult safeguarding, keeping children safe online, match day safeguarding, concern, and allegation management.• Academy players continue to receive education on safeguarding-related issues and healthy relationships.• The League Managers Association (LMA), in conjunction with the Premier League delivered a session on 'healthy relationships' as a module, on the 2023/24 LMA Diploma in Football Management. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monthly meetings with Step 1-4 leagues and regular inputs to the Alliance Committee have ensured all remain well informed and up to date.• Representatives from every (100%) Step 1-4 clubs have taken part in a bespoke, three-hour, NLS Welfare Officer Workshops.• Representatives from each NLS 1-4 leagues took part in bespoke safeguarding workshops, with further training planned for 2024/25.• A forum was introduced for the FA WNL CWO network to support knowledge development, share best practice and raise emerging trends across the game. |
|---|--|--|--|

Reporting on focus area 4:

EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT (continued)

What we said we'd do

5. Reviewing, revising and re-launching the free 'Safeguarding for Committee Members' course run by England Football Learning, to ensure it also meets the needs of grassroots adult open-age clubs.
6. Continually evaluating, reviewing and improving critical courses to ensure they are high quality and provide appropriate support.
7. Evolving the e-learning Safeguarding Children course run by England Football Learning with contextualised webinar content and the opportunity for learners in different roles to interact with an expert tutor.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- Safeguarding for Committee Members Course is available for all committee members and is mandatory for the Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Welfare Officer of all affiliated Youth Football Clubs and was re-launched in October 2022.
- As previously reported, it has been and continues to be well received, the average course rating for 2023/24 was 4.7/5
- 8,624 learners completed the course during 2023/24.
- The total number completed for the 2021 – 2024 strategy is 28,629.
- Continually evaluating, reviewing and improving critical courses to ensure they are high quality and provide appropriate support. Accessibility reviews have introduced numerous changes to improve the learner experience aligned to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 2.1 AA.
- All Courses that underwent an update during the 2023/24 season went through an accessibility audit and this will continue in 2024/25.
- The FA Safeguarding Children eLearning Course was attended by 79,880 in 23/24.
- Since 2020/21, those in coaching and welfare roles have been required to re-certificate every two years. The previous requirement of recertification every 3 years had been in place since 2000/2001. This change was a response to evidence showing that retention periods were significantly lower 36+ months after course completion.
- Recertifying every two years should ensure that key information is retained.
- This shift to two-yearly recertification was also endorsed by the findings from FA commissioned research undertaken by Loughborough University.
- In 2023/24 we commissioned the NSPCC CPSU to undertake a review of contextualised webinar content delivered by County FAs.
- This showed that over the past two seasons, most of the County FAs were delivering between two virtual or in-person CPD sessions per season, with some offering monthly sessions.
- The delivery format was shaped via survey feedback and the virtual sessions and promotion of recordings of these sessions, increased reach as they were shared more widely via social channels.
- Topics included FA Campaigns – Play Safe, Respect, Silent Support Weekends etc; Safer recruitment, DBS, policy and practice; the role of the welfare officer; managing Low-Level Concerns etc.
- The report recommended ways in which The FA could support County FAs and enhance the CPD offer, which we will act on from 2024/25 onwards.

EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT (continued)

What we said we'd do

8. Continuing to embed safeguarding messages across all England Football Learning provision.

9. Continuing to align with the UK Government's plans and messaging to empower adults to identify risk and keep children safe as part of its Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) strategy.

10. Similarly, aligning FA messaging with the UK Government's compulsory relationships' education in primary schools and relationships and sex education in secondary schools.

11. Reviewing and enhancing the safeguarding adult's guidance published on The FA's website, promoting this information directly to adult players.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- We recorded a podcast on safeguarding, with two current coaches from The FA Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group. This was released as part of the Coachcast series aligned with Play Safe 2023. The median amount of time that people listened to the episode on Spotify in the first seven days was 27m 29s. The episode length was 28:13, so basically listened to the whole episode – which is great!
- We've continued to implement a range of marketing initiatives to promote all safeguarding-related courses and learning resources. This has included email campaigns targeted directly at the football workforce, clubs, parents and players, social media content and a new promotional film for our Safeguarding Children course.
- The creation of a new welfare section on England football learning with dedicated safeguarding section. **See point 11.**

- All England Football Learning safeguarding courses are designed to empower adults in this way.
- The Safeguarding Awareness for Parents/Carers course empowers parents/carers in football and includes content on the potential risk of sexual abuse, grooming, exploitation, and reporting.
- The League Managers Association (LMA) Institute of Leadership and High Performance hosted a safeguarding webinar with LCA Solicitor, Gillian Pickersgill, which helped professional practitioners working with young people and children in the game to understand their role and responsibilities, providing practical advice on what to do when concerns are raised.
- The PFA ran member-focused education on Wellbeing, Healthy Relationships and Consent, Brain Health and Youth Advisory services supported by specialised PFA members of staff.

- Following a trial, National roll-out of 'The Greater Game' began in April, messages within this programme are closely aligned with those within compulsory relationships' education. This includes a focus on positive interactions, thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.
- Child-friendly safeguarding polices, which are currently in creation, will support children to know how to report concerns and thus align with the 'Being Safe' objectives within the relationships' education requirements.

- The welfare section of the England Football Learning website, launched at start of the 2023/24 season, received 4,000 users and 18,900 views.
- The welfare section consists of a Welfare Directory – a guide to helpful organisations and a range of video and article content to support players, coaches, parents and others across the game.
- The review and refresh of the safeguarding adult's guidance published on The FA's website is ongoing into 2024/25.

Reporting on focus area 4:

EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT (continued)

Specific activity based on Sheldon Report recommendations:

What we said we'd do

12. Build and launch a tailored safeguarding e-learning course aimed at parents/carers, including content to help them to understand grooming and how to regularly check in with their child(ren).

13. Ensure the child's voice is considered and resources created for children themselves to empower them to contribute their views and to know they can speak up if they are worried about something. Partner with external experts and develop age-appropriate toolkits to support clubs and organisations. Regularly assessing the impact and acting on the feedback.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- The bespoke 30-minute Safeguarding Awareness for Parents/Carers course released in May 2022 covers this content, which is informed by parents/carers and The FA Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group (FASSSAG).
- To date there have been:
 - 35,521 enrolments
 - 24,110 completions, (68% conversion rate)
- Learners have said:
 - "Good concise course that can be taken in a short amount of time. Perfect for busy parents who want to know how to keep their children safe in football."
 - "Great learning and hard hitting – it has increased my sense of what to look out for with some good hints and tips."
 - "Great training course – will be recommending it to other parents / carers within the club."
- The course remains with an 4.8/5 average post-course confidence rating by parents/carers.
- Our collaboration with the University of Chichester, has resulted in the views of young people influencing newly-developed codes of conduct for Grassroots Football, while best practice case studies will be shared during the 2024/25 season.
- A new FA Guidance Note on Listening to Children has been produced and shared. This provides guidance around building effective listening cultures, along with practical suggestions for those working within clubs.
- Our County FAs have continued to play their role in enabling young people to contribute their views, this has included facilitating contributions to FA strategy conversations and development. Members of the FA National Youth Council also addressed our annual County FA Safeguarding conference.
- 73% of County FAs now have an active Youth Councils.
- We continue to collaborate with colleagues internally, as well as partners, including the Premier League and UNICEF to further opportunities to strategically embed the practice of listening to children across all areas of our organisation.

Reporting on focus area 4:

EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT (continued)

Specific activity based on Sheldon Report recommendations:

What we said we'd do

- 14. Create and disseminate safeguarding resources to raise awareness with adult players on how to recognise that another player may be struggling with something and may need help.
- 15. Mandatory safeguarding training for anyone working in regulated activity¹, who has not yet completed the training as part of an FA qualification.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- Player Welfare resources have been developed in consultation with County FAs and clubs.
- The Player Welfare in Open-Age Football eLearning supports open-age teams to recognise and respond to the key issues that impact player welfare and takes c45mins to complete.
- The web-based Welfare directory supports participants with information, guidance, and signposting. See [point 11](#).
- We are currently working with partners across the game to develop a multi-faceted, strategic initiative which will help to address this important area through the next FA strategic cycle, 2024-28.
- Please see the Standards' focus area, point 9, [page 15](#).

Above right is an example of one of the many FA safeguarding guidance notes, and on the right is the top of the landing page for the free FA Safeguarding Course for Parents/Carers.





Case study, looking at:

Embedding education to last a lifetime

The issue of adult behaviour around grassroots youth football has been a bone of contention for County FAs for a number of years.

Over a decade ago, Lancashire FA concluded that disciplinary measures alone were only a sticking plaster. Raising standards could happen by changing outdated attitudes and reducing ignorance. Following their ground-breaking Silent Weekend in 2014, the county decided an education session aimed at parents/carers and coaches was needed. From that process Lancashire FA developed its Adults In Junior Football workshop. 10 years later, the county has delivered over 300 free sessions, all held locally, to resounding acclaim.

Lancashire FA's Head of Safeguarding and Football Services, Neil Yates explains: "We have a number of clubs, including our largest, who now arrange sessions every year to cover the latest cohort of parents and coaches. The sessions are based on the theory that if we instil in them an understanding of the needs of children in football from the outset, it's likely they'll be positive role models throughout their children's football journey."

He adds: "We've never had a single attendee leave a session critical of the content or the key messages we deliver."

The session balances humour with hard-hitting stories that leave an indelible impression on those present. As Neil says: "Our clubs tell us this has been a critical element in improving touchline behaviour. This is borne out by reduced disciplinary charges being brought, but more importantly cultural change within clubs, with the rights and needs of children always paramount."

In 2023 one of the county's sessions was visited by former England goalkeeper David James who, having seen the impact told us: "Every club in the country needs to host this workshop."

One of the Lancashire FA's safeguarding training sessions for parents/carers and coaches in full flow.

This session was attended by former England goalkeeper David James, seen far left.



Case study, looking at:

Canaries' campaign to ensure #YouAreNotAlone

Norwich City's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy saw the launch last October of several initiatives to coincide with World Mental Health Day. These included a short awareness film, a Samaritans' shirt takeover and a social media initiative adopted by every EFL Championship club.

"The film was titled 'You Are Not Alone,'" explains Gary Dack, the Canaries' Head of Safeguarding. "It went on to be viewed almost 300 million times across 150 countries. It was also cited as the direct reason for over 7,500 individual inbound messages to the Samaritans. You can watch it [here](#)."

Produced in-house, the film was designed to dispel the myth that just because someone appears okay on the surface, the reality it may be very different. It purposefully featured two supporters who fall into the higher-risk age bracket most likely to die by suicide.

"Ahead of our closest matchday to World Mental Health Day, our shirt sponsors also generously gifted their logos to Samaritans," adds Gary. "This helped further raise awareness of the vital work the charity offers. The shirts were then auctioned, with profits donated to Samaritans."

The club also invited all EFL Championship clubs to take part in a matchday social media initiative, where a fictional lineup graphic showed the importance of checking in with loved ones. Every club took part, achieving a 3.3m reach and ensuring this important message was spread to supporters across the country.

Robin Sainty, Chair of the fan-led Canaries Trust said, "Mental Health support is a key part of our work. The #YouAreNot Alone campaign has truly resonated with football fans across the globe. We have been contacted by countless people to say that they have been empowered to generate check-in conversations with others about their wellbeing and mental health."

Driven by the Canaries' marketing team, #YouAreNot Alone won the 'Campaign of the Year' awards at the FEVO Sport Industry Awards in April.

As part of Norwich City's 'You Are Not Alone' campaign, all EFL Championship clubs produced social media assets featuring lineups of people with whom to check-in regarding mental health and wellbeing. A selection of these assets are shown alongside.



PROTECTION

STRATEGIC GOAL:

To make the reporting of concerns as easy as possible, continue to build strong partnerships with statutory agencies, provide guidance on managing low-level concerns and deliver robust case management by The FA.

What we said we'd do

1. Continuing to investigate all safeguarding-related allegations and concerns in line with internal policies and procedures.
2. Refreshing our policy around 'low-level' concerns, taking on board the learning from Clive Sheldon QC's Review as well as more recent publications to drive a safeguarding culture at all levels of the game. We will also continue to and learn from other sectors so we can assist clubs and organisations dealing with such concerns.

What's happened in the last 12 months?

- FA Board regularly apprised of statistics and analysis relating to caseloads.
- All County FAs and National Associations that have had Low-Level Concerns, have or are managing them with oversight of the NSPCC CPSU on behalf of The FA and where appropriate have escalated referrals to The FA.
- Some of our referrals, mirror Police reporting trends, and the progression of cases has been impacted by a continued delay in the court systems.
- 95% of referrals¹ to The FA had an initial assessment within two working days of receipt.
- All cases assessed by The FA that met the threshold for referral to statutory agencies were referred.
- Low-Level Concerns (LLCs) that do not meet the threshold for referral to The FA are managed by the County FAs and/or the clubs (with input from The FA as appropriate)
- County FAs and national School's Football Associations continued to log all LLCs on our PowerApps solution or another approved system.
- The NSPCC CPSU, as the current Safeguarding 365 Standard Assessors, are also commissioned to regularly review the uploaded LLCs.
- Significant work was carried out by The FA with County FA representation to configure a new case management system, which will be implemented for 2024/25. This will enhance the longer term efficiency and effectiveness of the management of LLCs and cases.



PROTECTION (continued)

What we said we'd do

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| <p>3. Continuing to deliver training on the types of concerns that must be referred to The FA, to all Designated Safeguarding Officers at County FAs/Affiliated Associations and men's and women's professional clubs (from the Premier League down to Step 4 and Tiers 1 & 2 of the women's pyramid).</p> | <p>4. Constantly improving awareness of the ways to report safeguarding concerns via all lead football organisations.</p> | <p>5. Utilising The FA's Quality Assurance Framework to provide insight and patterns of concerns about the referrals made into The FA and drive improvements in the way we manage concerns in football.</p> | <p>6. Continue to provide anonymised case data to Sport England-funded prevalence studies, to help gain a picture of the prevalence and type of concerns arising across sport.</p> |
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What's happened in the last 12 months?

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The threshold for making a referral to The FA SCMT is as follows:
An individual now or previously involved in football activity in any capacity has or is alleged to have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Been involved in the harm, abuse or exploitation of a child and/or AAR Committed a criminal offence against or related to a child and/or AAR Committed a sexual offence against anyone (adult or child) Behaved in a way that indicates they may pose a risk of harm to children and/or AAR; or Been subject to two previous low-level concerns and a further low-level concern has been raised. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the past three seasons, threshold training for Referrals' to The FA and statutory agencies has been delivered to representatives from the Premier League, Premier League Charitable Fund and Club Community and Organisations, EFL Championship and League One, EFL in the Community and Club Community Organisations, Barclays Women's Super League and Barclays Women's, Championship Clubs, National League System Steps 1 and 2. Threshold training is also delivered to all new County FA DSOs, Deputy DSOs, Senior Safeguarding Leads (SSLs) and Deputy SSLs every quarter. Emerging themes are being identified from referrals, to help shape ongoing training and CPD. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We continuously strive to increase awareness through everything we do. These messages are core to: All our safeguarding courses – which reached 178k earners in 2023/24. The Play Safe campaign - See pages 23-24. Increased liaison with statutory agencies with an updated version of The FA Statutory Agencies Guidance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All case work is subject to quality assurance within our dedicated FA Safeguarding Quality Assurance Framework. A Lessons model has been added to the existing Audit and Data Prevalence Models. This continues to support practice standards, internally and in relation to the quality of referrals received. The learning from the QA work is discussed during the season by the case management and preventative safeguarding teams, enabling the learning to help to shape relevant policy and procedures. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In collaboration with Sport England and the NSPCC CPSU, we continue to provide anonymised safeguarding case management data to assist with the overall understanding of abuse concerns in sport. |
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Case study, looking at:

Committed Changemakers making a positive difference

Co-ordinated by the NSPCC, IICSA¹ Changemakers are a group of like-minded organisations that have united to inspire a national mission to prevent child sexual abuse and provide much improved support to victims and survivors.

The FA has been a core member of the IICSA Changemakers since its creation in late 2022.

All IICSA Changemaker organisations contribute to the successful running of the group by investing their time, expertise, and access to networks. The FA has contributed significantly to the work of the IICSA Changemakers by providing evidence, case studies and access to the survivor community in football for the IICSA Changemakers to make thoughtful approaches to Government.

IICSA Changemakers work over three core areas² ensuring the voice of the survivor remains key as policies are designed and services developed.

IICSA Changemakers have responded to all calls for evidence and consultations, such as on mandatory reporting, the criminal compensation scheme and online harm regulations. They work to engage all Government departments as a response is formulated to ensure the findings of IICSA's statutory report³ are actioned.

As Clare Kelly, NSPCC's Associate Head of Policy and Head of Programmes for IICSA Changemakers, for the IICSA Changemakers, says: "The work of the IICSA Changemakers demonstrates our collective commitment to keep safeguarding central to all we do. We communicate this far and wide, so this commitment is visible to our users and helps to show to Government the level of support and resource needed to help deliver essential improvements."

Through the IICSA Changemaker survivor network The FA inputs into policy areas such as strengthening the Criminal Justice Bill, Victims and Prisoners Bill and responding to the next consultation on the Victims Code of Practice.

¹ Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.

² These are:

- i. The voice of the survivor: the voices and experiences of people who have experienced child sexual abuse, were central to shaping IICSA's work and findings, and remain key as we continue.
- ii. Policy: hosting policy discussions on core IICSA

recommendations and lobbying the government for better provision for children who have experienced sexual abuse. For example, the Victim's and Prisoner's Bill got IICSA's recommendation for a guarantee of specialist support for anyone who has experienced sexual abuse.

- iii. Practice: looking at our own practices and understandings as a group that we can offer to others.

³ Published in October 2022.





Case study, looking at:

Survivors continuing to deliver meaningful impact

The FA Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group (FASSSAG), set up in 2018, continues to add great value to the work of The FA and wider partners. Meeting six times a season, they regularly contribute to FA workstreams, strategic and operational thinking and actions.

Last September, at the invitation of Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, three FASSSAG members met with Peers from the House of Lords to dialogue about the need for Mandatory Reporting and why this is an essential part of the safeguarding toolkit. Their arguments were compelling and hopefully with a lasting impact.

During the Play Safe 2023 weekend, FASSSAG members were out and about in grassroots and professional football settings, helping endorse the campaign messaging.

Two members featured in a podcast for coaches, sharing practical every day safeguarding tips, while another, Jamie Cartwright, was filmed for the England Football Learning website, talking about the importance of safeguarding education.

In other work, Ellie Guedalla and Jamie Cartwright spoke at the Safe Sport International Conference in London and at the invitation of FIFA, Dion Raitt joined a panel in Zurich at their Safeguarding Summit, attended by safeguarding leads from worldwide national football associations.

In March, Gary Cliffe, Jamie Cartwright and Dion Raitt sat on a Panel at the National Policing Vulnerability and Exploitation Conference. Talking about the impact the panel had, Richard Fewkes, Director NPCC Hydrant Programme & the Child Sexual Exploitation Taskforce said: “The event was to consider critical issues in our approach to tackling vulnerability and exploitation. Speaking with colleagues, they all mention the panel discussion as a highlight. After hearing the powerful victim and survivor testimonies, they have a renewed purpose and determination in their role to further protect victims and survivors and bring those to justice, who seek to abuse and exploit them.”

Elsewhere, Ian Ackley, the PFA's Survivor Support Advocate, delivered input at Manchester City FC's safeguarding conference.

The main pic alongside is a still from the video FASSSAG member Jamie Cartwright filmed for the England Football Learning website, emphasising the importance of safeguarding education for parents. The inset pic shows another FASSSAG member, Gary Cliffe, at the Wolves v. Manchester City Premier League game last season, where he handed Play Safe-branded armbands to the two captains.



REPORTING CONCERNS

Anyone who has a safeguarding concern related to a child and/or adult at risk, including child-on-child abuse, or the behaviour of an adult towards an under-18-year-old, or an adult who may be at risk of harm in football, must refer it to The FA's safeguarding team.

Anyone who is concerned about misconduct between adults in grassroots football should report the concerns to their County FA and in men's and women's professional football should report their concern to The FA Integrity team via integrity@TheFA.com

The safeguarding and integrity teams are staffed by professionals who are experienced in dealing with these concerns.

It is important to state that anything urgent, where there may be an immediate risk of harm to a child, or an adult at risk, must be reported to the police, children or adult social care in your area.

Referring non-immediate risk of harm concerns can be done via a club, league or County FA/Affiliated Association – all have a Designated Safeguarding Person. Alternatively, The FA can be emailed directly at Safeguarding@TheFA.com

If clubs or the County FA DSO cannot be contacted, call the NSPCC Helpline for expert advice and support on 0808 800 5000 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

Concerns that someone may be behaving inappropriately or seeking to groom a child in an online environment should be reported to www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre. Reports made there will be directed to the team at the National Crime Agency. The relevant County FA should also be informed, or The FA at Safeguarding@TheFA.com

Victims of non-recent abuse in football should contact the NSPCC or The FA at Safeguarding@TheFA.com

If a child or young person or adult is in immediate danger, the advice is ALWAYS to call 999.

WHISTLE-BLOWING

Whistle-blowing in a safeguarding context means revealing and raising concerns over misconduct or malpractice within an organisation, or within an independent structure associated with it.

It can be used as an early-warning system or when it's recognised that appropriate actions have not been taken. This approach or policy is adopted in many different walks of life.

- Any adult or young person with concerns about a colleague's conduct towards a child or young person can also use whistle-blowing by emailing The FA's Safeguarding Team at: Safeguarding@TheFA.com

Alternatively, whistle-blowing concerns can be reported:

- Direct to the local Police or Children's Social Care services, or
- the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit at cpsu@nspcc.org.uk, or
- The NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or email: help@nspcc.org.uk



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about safeguarding measures in football – and in general – please contact the organisations below. All relevant phone numbers and email addresses can be found by visiting the specific organisation’s website.

  	www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding
COUNTY FOOTBALL ASSOCIATIONS	A list of all County FAs and contact details is available here . Click on the specific County FA website to obtain the email address of the County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).
	www.premierleague.com/safeguarding
	www.premierleague.com/plcf/safeguarding
	www.efl.com/governance/safeguarding
	www.eflinthecommunity.com/privacy-policy/
	www.thepfa.com <i>Note – services only available to PFA members</i>
	www.leaguemanagers.com <i>Note – services only available to LMA members</i>

To read about football’s overarching safeguarding framework and football bodies’ responsibilities and accountabilities, see pages 36 to 40 inclusive of Building an Ever-Safer Culture, The FA Safeguarding Strategy to 2024. You can find it [here](#).

 PROFESSIONAL GAME MATCH OFFICIALS	www.premierleague.com/referees <i>Note – services only available to PGMOL members</i>
 ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME	www.childline.org.uk
	www.nspcc.org.uk
 Child Protection in Sport Unit	https://thecpsu.org.uk/
 CEOP A National Crime Agency command	www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre

ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS

The PFA Survivor Support Advocate

Survivor Support Advocate offering support and signposting for victims of all forms of child abuse in grassroots and professional football.

E: SupportAdvocate@thepfa.com

The FA Benevolent Fund

Apart from its general remit, the Fund has provided financial assistance to survivors and is open to new applications. You can read more about the Fund and football’s other discretionary funding sources [here](#).

E: benevolentfund@TheFA.com





The Football Association
Wembley Stadium
London HA9 0WS
T: +44 (0)800 169 1863
F: +44 (0)800 169 1864
W: TheFA.com