



GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

7.2

INCLUDING AND SAFEGUARDING DEAF AND DISABLED CHILDREN/ YOUNG PEOPLE

FOR ALL



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INTRODUCTION

This guidance will help clubs safely involve Deaf and disabled children and young people. It is important to read this alongside the FA's other guidance notes in **Section 11 – The Complete Directory**.

The FA is committed to including and safeguarding all children and young people in football who want to play or volunteer. Every child and young person should have the opportunity to experience and enjoy football. This could be playing the mainstream game, or they may prefer pan-disability or an impairment specific setting. Young players may prefer sessional football, or across multiple formats, but the most important thing is that they have a choice. Comets is a recreational, pan disability football programme by England Football for disabled boys and girls aged 5-11. To Find out more about the different formats of disability football - [here](#) - or you can speak to your County FA who can signpost to more specialist provision.

LANGUAGE

In this guidance we refer to “Deaf and disabled children and young people.”* The FA refer to Deaf children and young people separately because we recognise that some Deaf people do not identify as disabled. People with neurodiversity, colour blindness or epilepsy may not identify as a disabled person.

Always avoid stereotypes and refer to language used by the young player themselves. Assumptions about disability can sometimes lead to children and young people prevented in expressing their views. Some prefer identity-first language e.g. Deaf young person, or Autistic young person, some may not identify as having an impairment at all, so it is always best to check the child or young person's choices. See the young player for who they are before their impairment and put their needs and wellbeing first.

WHAT IS DISABILITY?

Disabled people under the Equality Act 2010 have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities. Click [here](#) for more details on the Government's Equality Act 2010 information guides.

The UK is also a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNRC) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which emphasises that all children have the right to participate, be heard and be protected from discrimination. These principles sit alongside the Equality Act definition and reinforce the importance of removing barriers to inclusion.

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF A PLAYER IS A DISABLED CHILD OR YOUNG PERSON?

Children and young people may not receive a diagnosis by services until they are in their teens, or they may be undergoing assessments. Some people see a diagnosis as an unwanted ‘label,’ or they may not want others to know, or feel that they cannot talk about it. Parents and carers may be concerned about exclusion by their peers or the club if they share. It is important to be respectful of cultural attitudes to disability, and that the club has a clear policy on inclusion. Take a positive and welcoming approach to help parents, carers, children, and young people to be open to any support they need.

REGISTRATION – RIGHT FROM THE START

When the child or young person registers with the Club it is good practice to complete a registration form. Parents and carers should share enough relevant information with the club so that they can effectively include and safeguard the young player. Ask parents and carers to update you if things change. For example, if the child or young person is on new medication or they need a new plan to help them stay calm or communicate more effectively. It is a good idea to build in a review period when the club can chat to the parents or carers and child or young person to see how things are going and if necessary, make further adjustments to the plan. It is never too late to seek advice, or to review how best to support the young player.

Provide reassurance to the young player, parent, or carer that all personal information shared with the club will be managed in line with UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 and will only be shared with those who need to know to keep the child or young person safe and included.

* The FA are guided by the principles that people are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment – read more about the social model of disability [here](#) (Social model of disability | Disability charity Scope UK).

WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

This will depend on the player, the **Club Annual Membership, Information and Consent Form (Guidance Notes 8.2)** is a good starting point in getting to know the child or young person. Asking the young player and their parents or carers to complete **The FA's Player Passport** is a great way enhance the child or young person's experience by understanding who they are, what they like, don't like, and how to respond in certain situations. For example, sometimes children and young people find change difficult and away games may mean they need extra support.

Whenever appropriate ask the child or young person what support they would find helpful – involve them and their parents or carers in their plans and development whether as young players or volunteers. Depending on the child or young person's needs you may want to plan more frequent roll on or roll off substitutions, change of position, time out, extra recovery time between training drills or other adjustments that will help to create safe, fun, and inclusive environment.

COMMUNICATION

Clubs and coaches know that communication is key to the making of talented young players and teams. All children and young people can communicate preferences if asked in the right way. It is essential to create an environment where children and young people feel safe to share their experiences. Whether this is through spoken language, body language, facial expressions, Makaton, British Sign Language (BSL) or using visual communication aids. Find out what works best for the young player and **check out**

the **FA's range of impairment or health condition specific support cards and top tips [here](#)**.

Behaviour is a form of communication. There could be reasons why children and young people become unable to control their emotions and behaviour. There are techniques that can help to reduce stress and increase enjoyment. Depending on the child or young person, visual timetables, social stories, or other strategies may be useful. See the **FA's resources and training for coaches [here](#)**.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Not all Deaf and disabled children and young people will have extra health needs, but if they do, it will be helpful for the club welfare officer and the coach to talk to the parents or carers together and write an action plan. This might need to be followed if the child is unwell or simply to check what impact exercise has on the child or young person – for example do they need extra breaks, extra fluids, are there are certain activities they need to avoid or time limits to be applied? Do they have sensory needs?

ADJUSTMENTS AND SUPPORT

If you have a Deaf or disabled child or young person at your club, you may need to make reasonable adjustments to support them to play or volunteer. Contact your County FA for advice and support to understand what a reasonable adjustment could be for your club. Every child is different, and the experts are the young player and their parents or carers. Children, young people, parents and carers

should be involved in discussions and implementation of reasonable adjustments. The FA recognise that reasonable adjustments may be different for each club depending on the size of the club. Consider what is practical for your club, and what resources you have available. It is fine to ask the parents to stay at training or games until you feel confident about including the young player safely. Sometimes there is a 'team around the child' consisting of different professionals. They may be able to help you include and safeguard a Deaf or disabled child or young person.

Help is available for clubs to provide more opportunities. **See the FA's [Disability Toolkit for Clubs](#) – a guide to support clubs to start or grow disability provision. Access The FA's Free [Disability Training for Clubs](#) to learn how to engage Deaf and disabled children and young people at your club. The FA's [Introduction to Coaching Disabled Footballers](#) offers a free online course to support coaches with adapting delivery to include disabled footballers.**

DOES A CLUB NEED EXTRA SAFEGUARDS?

Deaf and disabled children require the same safeguards as any other child. It is important to be aware that there is greater vulnerability to abuse, neglect or poor practice because of negative attitudes and unequal access to resources. Deaf and disabled children and young people may face additional communication barriers when it comes to sharing worries and concerns. Adults can misinterpret indicators of abuse for signs of a child or young person's impairment or long-term health condition, for example, injuries

or bruising assumed caused by equipment or reduced mobility. Some Deaf and disabled children and young people have not had education appropriate to their needs on relationships and keeping themselves safe. As a result, they may not know how to recognise abuse or know who to tell. Putting the child first can help prompt important questions such as what is the child or young person's experiences and views? What is a typical day like for them? Are there signs of abuse? Use accessible communication methods and build in listening opportunities so all young players can raise concerns or feedback safely.

Consider all factors that might impact their safety and wellbeing. Understanding the young players lived experience and risks they may face will help to create a safe environment. Depending on the needs of the young player, you may benefit from more adults to child ratios – see the **FA's [guidance on 5.5 Ratios of Adults To Children](#)**.

Powerchair football has a unique nature where all ages, disabilities and genders play together. Mixed-age play requires risk assessed activities and considerations given to developmental stages and abilities.

It is important that clubs follow all the safeguarding guidance elsewhere on **TheFA.com** such as how to report safeguarding concerns, safer recruitment, social media guidance and guidance on the safe use of changing rooms.

If you are worried about a Deaf or disabled child or young person, the reporting process remains the same as it would for any child. There are five ways you can report;

- To your club or league Welfare Officer.
- To your County FA Designated

Safeguarding Officer. Click [here \(County FAs | The Football Association\)](#) for a list of County FA contacts.

- By emailing the The FA's Case Management Team at Safeguarding@TheFA.com.
- If you cannot contact your club or league welfare officer or County FA designated safeguarding officer, you should call the NSPCC helpline on 0808 800 5000 – Available between 10am – 4pm Monday to Friday.
- If it is an emergency because a child(ren) or young person(s) is at immediate risk, then call the Police or Children's Social Care in your area.

TOP TIPS

- Be positive – aim high;
- Celebrate success;
- Ask the young player, parents, or carers if you are not sure;
- Have plans for young players with known health needs;
- Make sure you understand the child's communication needs;
- Ensure the young player knows who they can speak to if they are worried or upset;
- Think broadly about how you can assist the young player's development and whether you need to consider making reasonable adjustments;
- Plan carefully for dressing and changing if the young player needs extra help;

- Have enough helpers – you may need more than usual if the child needs extra support;
- Use the FA's Young player Passport to help recognise signs that they may benefit from time off the pitch.

GETTING HELP AND ADVICE

- Use Find Football (<https://www.thefabrochure.com/disability-toolkit-for-clubs/>) to look for provision in your area, whether that is sessional, mainstream, pan-disability or impairment specific.
- You could speak to your County FA who have a Designated Safeguarding Officer and Disability Officer.
- Use the England Football Learning resources (<https://www.englandfootball.com/play/Disability-Football>) to give ideas, support and training.
- Use The FA's Disability Toolkit (<https://www.thefabrochure.com/disability-toolkit-for-clubs/>) – for practical guidance for clubs to be more inclusive.
- Childline has help for Deaf and disabled children that includes accessible guidance, their helpline is available on **0800 1111**. www.childline.org.uk.
- NSPCC has a helpline if you have concerns about a child(ren) or young person(s) on 0808 800 5000 – Available Monday to Friday.
- Activity Alliance (<https://www.activityalliance.org.uk/>) offer advice

and training resources to help embed inclusive practice.

- SCOPE (<https://www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/sport-exercise-disabled-children-young-people>) provide advice and guidance on sport and exercise for Deaf and disabled children and young people.
- Mencap (<https://www.mencap.org.uk/learning-disability-explained>) provide advice and guidance about learning disabilities and associated conditions.
- National Deaf Children Society (www.ndcs.org.uk) provide advice and guidance via a helpline, online events and training and learning for children and young people who are Deaf (and families).

- National Autistic Society (<https://www.autism.org.uk/>) provide advice and guidance for autistic people or people on the autistic spectrum.
- The ADHD Foundation <https://www.adhdfoundation.org.uk/> provide advocacy, support and training for young people or their parents or carers on neurodiversity.
- Colour Blindness Awareness (<https://www.colourblindawareness.org/>) provide advice and guidance around colour blindness.

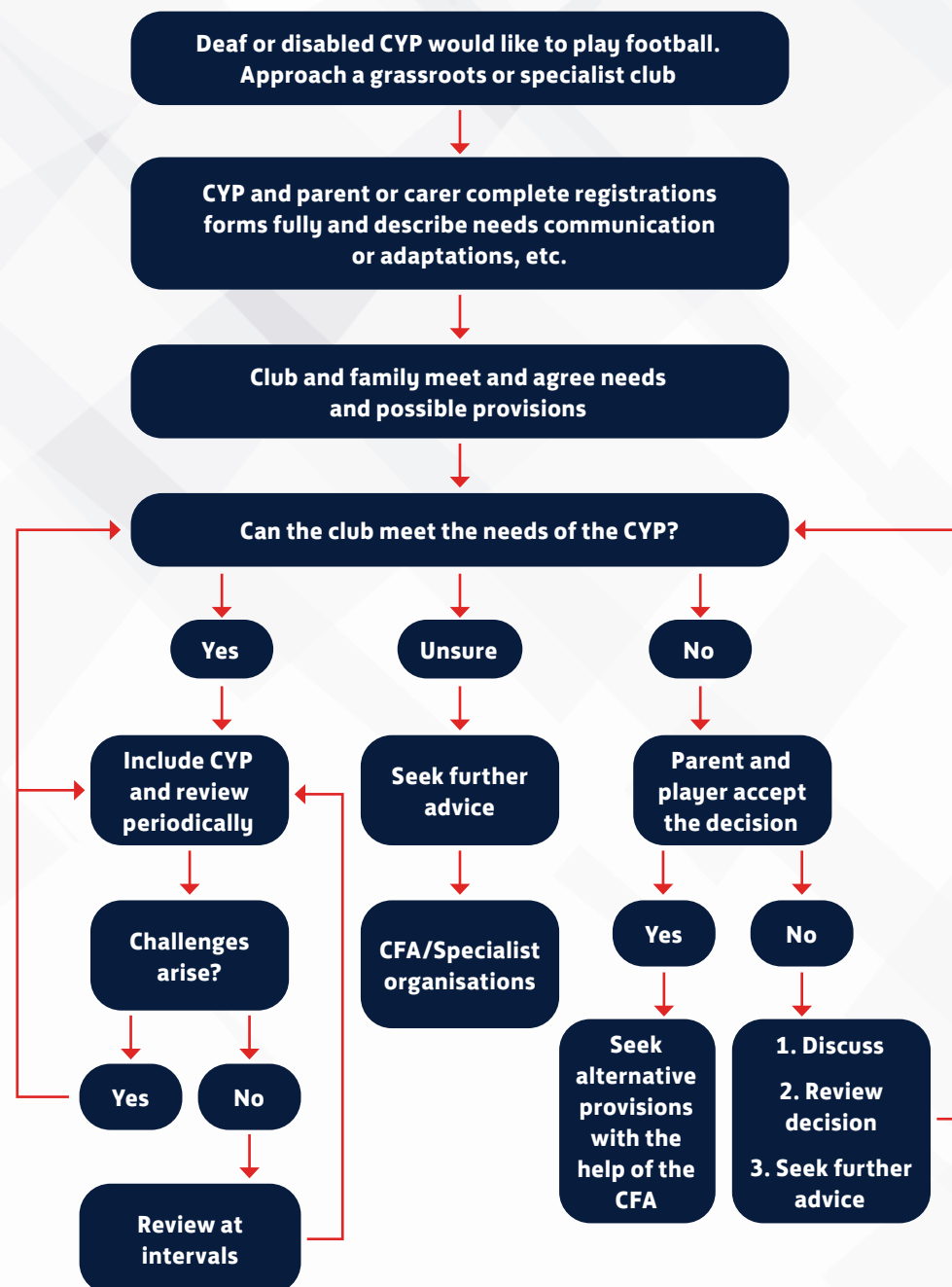


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The flowchart on this page is a process for including deaf and disabled children in a way that encourages the club to make reasonable adjustments in an informed way.

CYP = Children or Young Person

CFA = County FA





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