

GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

2.1

HOW TO REPORT SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

FOR ALL

PLAY SAFE

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The FA

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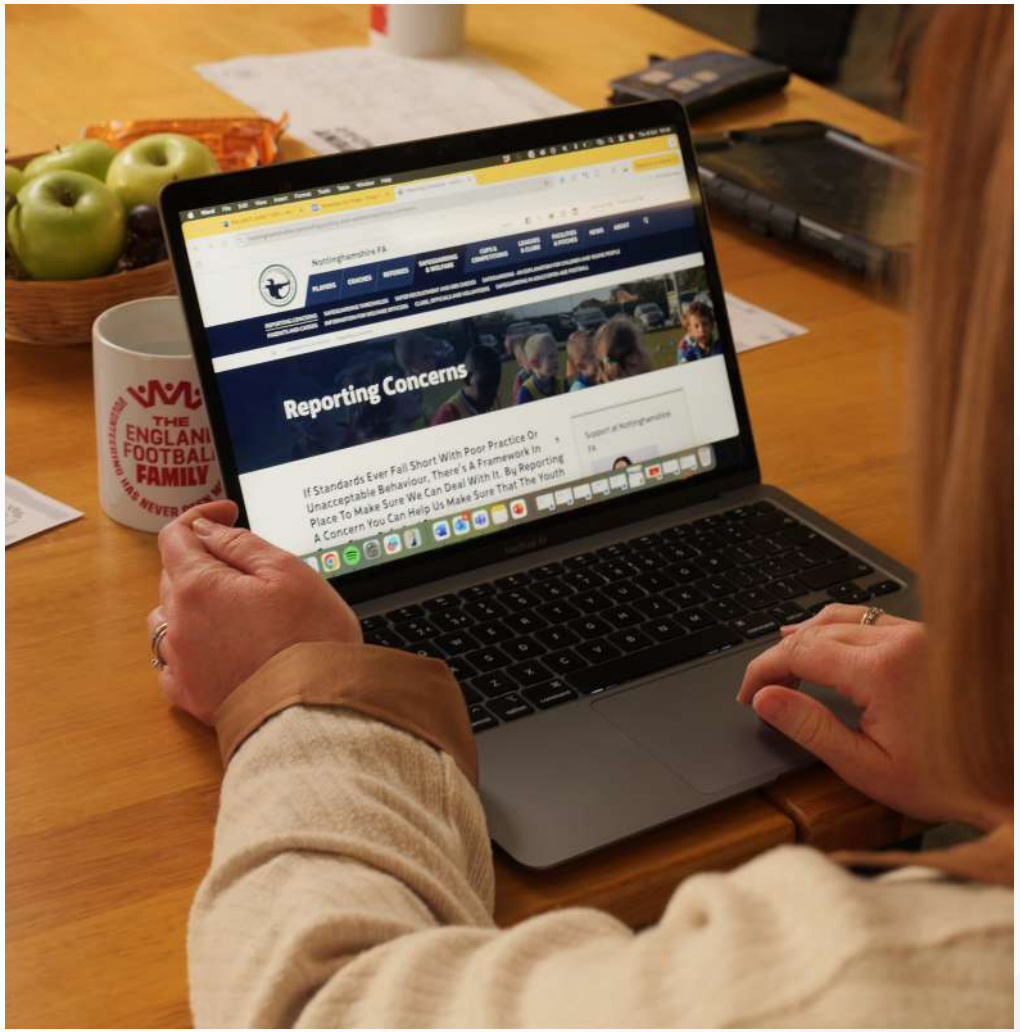
If you are worried about a child, it's vital you report your concerns. Doing nothing is not an option.

It's important you stay calm, and if any child is present, reassure them they are not to blame. But don't make promises of confidentiality or outcome.

Football's safeguarding network includes designated people in clubs, leagues, venues and County FAs, as well as The FA. Trained individuals across this network work together to manage concerns effectively. Safeguarding concerns vary in nature and risk. Depending on the type of concern you raise, it may be redirected to the most appropriate person to respond to it.

There are five ways to report a concern:

1. To your club or league Welfare Officer – please find out from your club who these people are;
2. To your County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer. Click **here** for a list of County FA contacts.
3. By emailing The FA's Safeguarding Case Management Team (The FA SCMT) at **Safeguarding@ TheFA.com**;
4. If you cannot contact your club, 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;
5. **Note:** If it is an emergency because a child or children are at immediate risk, then call the Police or Children's Social Care in your area.



WHISTLE-BLOWING

For ways to whistle-blow on malpractice see page 4.

MANAGING CONCERNS:

After I've reported a concern, then what happens?

If reported to a club or league Welfare Officer, they will liaise with the County FA DSO who will review the concerns and decide whether they can be managed by the County FA and/or Club or whether the concerns meet the threshold for a referral to The FA Safeguarding Case Management Team (The FA SCMT). The FA SCMT will undertake an initial assessment on all concerns referred to them to determine whether further investigation is required. Any further investigation will be managed by The FA SCMT in conjunction with the CFA DSO and statutory agencies.

Thereafter, just as in a legal case, there are various risk management actions which can be taken by The FA to safeguard children. These include education, mentoring, supervision and, where appropriate, suspensions.

See **Guidance Notes 2.2: Safeguarding Referral Form – Affiliated Football**

WHAT IS ABUSE?

Concerns identified as child abuse will fall within the following five categories (Please refer to **1.1 Footballs Safeguarding Children Policy** for further detail on categories of abuse):

- **Physical Abuse:** A child is physically hurt or injured by an adult, or an adult gives alcohol or drugs to a child or young person;
- **Neglect:** A child's basic physical needs are consistently not met or they are regularly left alone or unsupervised;
- **Sexual Abuse:** An adult or peer uses a child or young person to meet their own sexual needs;
- **Emotional Abuse:** Persistent criticism, denigrating or putting unrealistic expectations on a child or young person;
- **Bullying or Cyberbullying:** Persistent or repeated hostile and intimidating behaviour towards a child or young person.

MANDATORY REPORTING

The Crime and Policing Act, introduced on 30 April 2026, requires people in key roles working with children and young people in England, including in sport, to report sexual abuse.

A report must be made if someone:

- is told about child sexual abuse by a child or an adult involved;
- witnesses child sexual abuse;
- sees or hears it in images, video or audio.

It is also a criminal offence to prevent someone from reporting child sexual abuse.

While the government prepares detailed guidance on how the reporting duty will work, we are updating our policies, procedures, guidance and training to include it and will communicate widely to support understanding across the game.

WHAT IS HAZING?

Hazing is any action or situation, with or without the consent of the participants, which recklessly, intentionally, or unintentionally endangers the mental, physical, or emotional wellbeing of a child or young person. Hazing is not tolerated in affiliated football.

WHAT IS A LOWER LEVEL CONCERN/ POOR PRACTICE?:

- When insufficient care is taken to avoid injuries (e.g. by excessive training or inappropriate training for the age, maturity, experience and ability of players);
- Allowing abusive or concerning practices to go unreported (e.g. a coach who ridicules and criticizes players who make a mistake during a match);
- Allowing hazing practices to go unreported;
- Placing children or young people in potentially compromising and uncomfortable situations with adults (e.g. inappropriate use by a coach of social media with a young player(s);
- Ignoring health and safety guidelines (e.g. allowing young players to set up goal posts unsupervised by adults);
- Failing to adhere to the club's codes of practice (e.g. openly verbally abusing the referee);
- Giving continued and unnecessary preferential treatment to individuals.

Incidents of poor practice occur when the needs of children and young people are not afforded the necessary priority, so their welfare is compromised.



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: **Safeguarding@TheFA.com**.

Alternatively, concerns can be reported:

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



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