



GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

7.2

INCLUDING AND SAFEGUARDING DEAF AND DISABLED CHILDREN/ YOUNG PEOPLE

FOR ALL

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INTRODUCTION

The FA is committed to safely involving all children and young people in football who want to play or volunteer – this includes children who are deaf or who have a disability. These best practice guidance notes will help clubs safely involve children and young people who are deaf or have a disability but it's important these are read alongside the other Guidance notes in this section – or in **Section 11 – The Complete Directory**.

With a little extra preparation and understanding many deaf or disabled children and young people can be included in local training and games or when older as volunteers. Some young players may need 'impairment specific' forms of football from a young age. For example, children who are blind ([TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/equality/disability-football](https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/equality/disability-football)) or a Club that is able to provide 'pan disability' opportunities. For more information about pan disability football contact your local County FA. Some players will progress via disability pathways to elite level, some playing for England.

There is lots of help available to Clubs and Coaches such as The FA course 'Coaching Disabled Footballers' ([TheFA.com/learning/courses/coaching-disabled-footballers](https://www.thefa.com/learning/courses/coaching-disabled-footballers)) specific organisations will also offer advice and information and there is a resource list at the end of this guidance. But every child is different and the 'experts' are the child and their parents/carers. Sometimes there is a 'team around the child' of different workers and these people may also be able to help you include and safeguard a child with a disability.

WHAT IS DISABILITY?

A child has a disability under the Equality Act 2010 if they 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 detail and to access the Government's Equality Act 2010 information guides.

If you have a child with a disability at your club you may need to make 'reasonable adjustments' to help them play or volunteer. Contact your County FA for advice and support to understand what a 'reasonable adjustment' could be for your Club.

The County FA will want to support all young people to play and are able to signpost to more specialist provision where clubs are unable to make sufficient adjustments to include the child themselves

HOW WILL WE KNOW IF CHILD HAS A DISABILITY?

It's not always easy to know if a child has a disability, sometimes it can be 'invisible', for example Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), colour blindness and epilepsy although sometimes it is 'visible', such as Down's syndrome or reduced mobility. Sometimes a disability is not diagnosed until a child or young person is in their teens, sometimes parents/carers and children prefer that others don't know or feel they can't talk about it. Some parents/carers are afraid the child or young person may be excluded if they tell you and some parents/carers may not be aware of their child's disability or the child may still be undiagnosed or undergoing tests. So it's important that the Club has a clear policy on inclusion and a positive attitude as this will help parents/carers and children and young people be open about any support they need.

REGISTRATION – RIGHT FROM THE START

When the child or young person registers with the Club it is best practice to complete a registration form. Parents and carers should share enough relevant information with the Club to help you include and safeguard the child and should update the Club if things change. You can use parents' evening at the start of the season to remind parents/carers to update the Club about any changes and this is really important if the child or young person is, for example, on new medication or a new plan to help them stay calm or communicate more effectively. It's a good idea to build in a review period when the Club can chat to the parents and child/young person to see how things are going and if necessary make further adjustments to the plan for the child/young person.

It's never too late to ask for help or advice or a chat or to review how best to support the player.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

This will depend on the player but the **Club Annual Information and Consent Form (Guidance Notes 8.3)** will guide you through important things like communication, sensory needs such as vision and hearing, physical health and behaviour. It might be helpful to ask how the child/young person responds to noise, different places and different people. Sometimes children and young people find change difficult and away games may mean they need some extra support.

Whenever appropriate ask the child or young person what support they would find helpful – involve them as much as possible in their own plans and development whether as players or volunteers.

It's a really good idea to have a session plan so everyone knows how to support and coach the child (for example – what are signs that s/he may be feeling tired or unwell or not coping with the demands of the game) and what to do if this happens. You could call this your 'what if' plan! Depending on the child's needs you may want to plan more frequent roll on/roll off substitutions, change of position, time out, extra recovery time between training drills or other adjustments that helps bring out the very best in the child.

It will be the parents or carers or the child themselves who knows best know how the young player can be supported so it's really important to build a relationship with the family/ carers and ask for help and advice from them. It will also be important to reassure the player and their parent/carer that the information is kept safe and only shared with people who need to know.

COMMUNICATION

Clubs and coaches know that communication is a key to making good players and teams.

Young disabled players may need extra help to understand what they need to do and the whole team may need tips on communicating with each other so they can play well. Sometimes the tips will be really simple – for example, if the child has an Autistic Spectrum Disorder such as Asperger's syndrome use clear and simple language, speak directly to the child and use their name to get attention before speaking. Try not to use 'negatives' such as 'don't pass the ball' as the child may only understand 'pass the ball'.

Where a child uses Makaton or British Sign Language you may need to involve a parent/carer or to seek help from a disability expert to learn how best to communicate.

If a child has ADHD they may need to be reminded of the task and have things repeated as they may be distracted by another sound or activity that's going on.

If a child has a visual or hearing impairment, or is deaf, explore with the young player and their parent/carers to find out how best to support them.

There is much more information available about specific disabilities. Ask your County FA Welfare Officer for help and advice.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

Not all children and young people who are deaf or have a disability 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?

Remember it will also be important to reassure the player and their parent/carer that the information is kept safe and only shared with people who need to know.

It's fine to ask the parents to stay at training or games until you feel confident about including the young player safely.

DOES A CLUB NEED EXTRA SAFEGUARDS?

Deaf and disabled children and young people are more vulnerable to poor practice and abuse.

It's sometimes hard for them to report, they can be isolated, are more likely to be bullied and sometimes their disability may be used to explain away injuries. The child may not recognise abuse, they may have been used to receiving personal care (such as being dressed or bathed) and not realise when touch is inappropriate or they may find people don't listen or believe them when they try to disclose. Some children struggle to understand 'social interactions' and may not realise that someone is behaving in a way that is not appropriate.

So it's important that Clubs follow all the safeguards elsewhere on [TheFA.com](https://www.thefa.com) such as safer recruitment, social media guidance and guidance to the safe use of changing rooms.

Below are some tips to help you:

- Be positive – aim high;
- Celebrate success;
- Ask the child or young person and/or parent/carers if you are not sure about something;
- Have plans for players with known health needs;
- Make sure you understand the child's communication needs;
- Use clear and plain language;
- If the child signs (British Sign Language) find out who can stay and help who also signs;
- Think broadly about young players and how you assist their development, for example a colour blind player may benefit from very simple from adjustments to the colours of the cones or bibs;
- Plan carefully for dressing and changing if the child needs extra help;
- Have enough helpers – you may need more than usual if the child needs extra support;
- Learn to recognise the signs that a player is becoming stressed or angry, have a 'what if' plan ready such as roll on and roll off substitution and time off the pitch to prevent disciplinary incidents;
- Think about how the player or young volunteer can be helped to know who to go to if they are worried or upset;

- If you have a clubhouse have positive images of children, young people and adults with disabilities – this helps build a welcoming place;
- Have a very clear anti-bullying policy and don't allow banter or teasing about disability or any other difference;
- Make sure all players sign the player code of conduct – you might need to take time explaining what this means, perhaps use pictures to help explain what's OK and not OK;
- Remind everybody about the touch guidelines – some children may be very affectionate or perhaps frightened of touch so it's very important to know the child and follow FA guidance. Make sure any touch is safe and appropriate;
- Follow The FA's social media guidance – some children with disabilities have less understanding of boundaries and relationships so it's very important to stick to the guidance;
- Report concerns immediately, don't wait – you are only expressing concerns and remember – it is your responsibility to report. It might be nothing – but you might also help make the player and other children safer.

GETTING HELP AND ADVICE

There are many sources of help and advice locally and nationally:

- A good start is your County FA who have a County Welfare Officer and Disability Officers;
- FA Education's, Coaching Disabled Footballers' Course will give you lots of ideas and support;
- The Ann Craft Trust provides help and advice on safeguarding children with disabilities www.anncrafttrust.org;
- MENCAP offers support and advice to children and adults with a learning disability and their families www.mencap.org.uk;
- Childline has help for children and young people who have a disability including message boards for children who are deaf and videos using sign language www.childline.org.uk;
- SIBS is a support site for the siblings of children with a disability www.sibs.org.uk;
- National Deaf Children Society www.ndcs.org.uk;
- National Autistic Society for more about Autism and Asperger's Syndrome www.nas.org.uk;

- Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Services www.addiss.co.uk;
- The Colour Blind Awareness organisation has been founded to raise awareness of colour blindness (colour vision deficiency) and aims to be the first point of reference in the UK for people seeking information on colour blindness www.colourblindawareness.org.

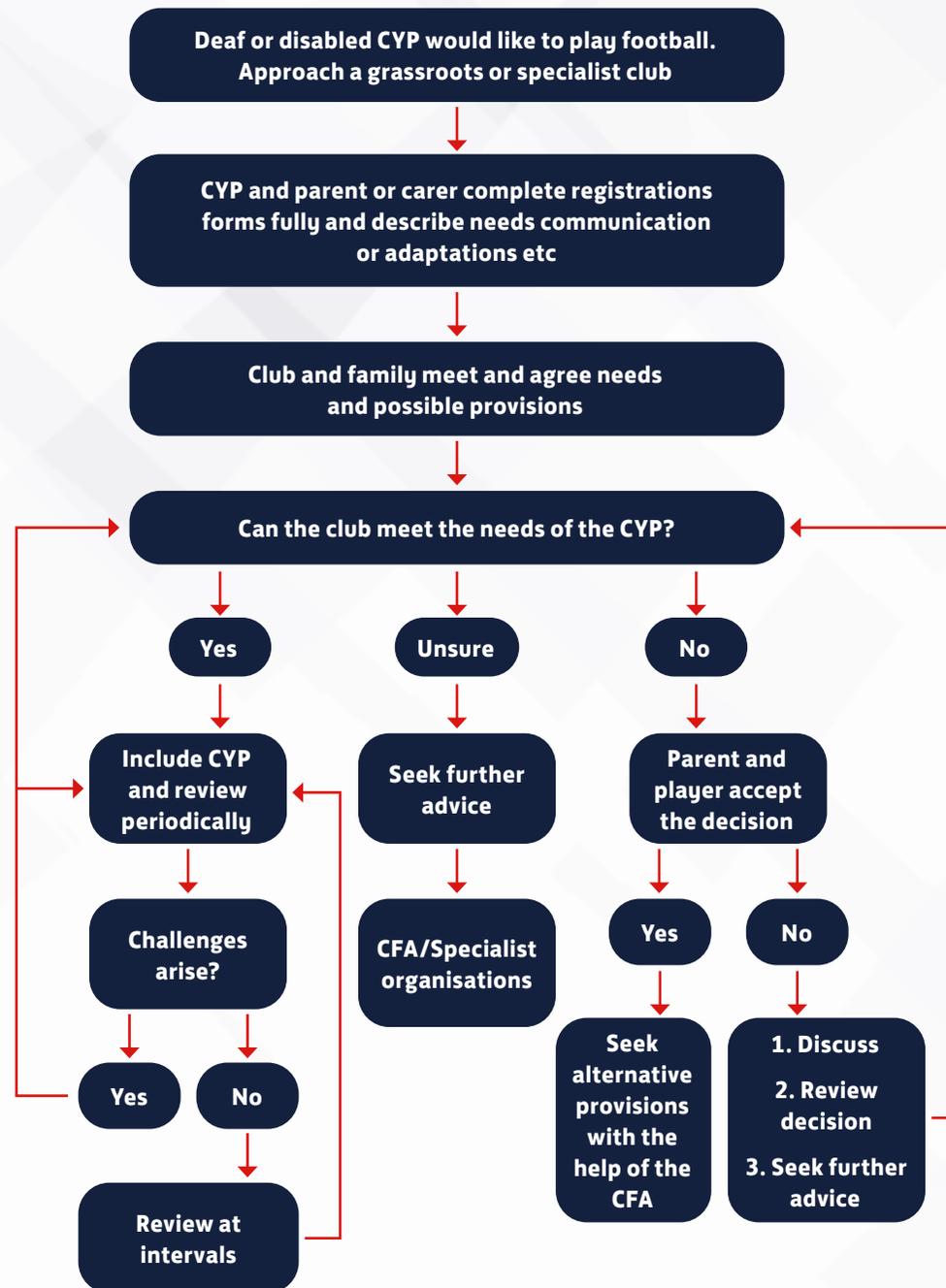


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The flowchart on this page is a process for including deaf and disabled children in a way that encourages the club to make reasonable adjustments in an informed way.

CYP = Children or Young Person

CFA = County FA





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