



GUIDANCE NOTES NO:

2.1

HOW TO REPORT SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

FOR CLUB/LEAGUE

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FOR ALL

HOW TO REPORT SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

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

It's also 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.

There are five ways to report a concern:

- To your club or league Designated Safeguarding Officer – please find out from your club who these people are;
- To your County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer. Click [here](#) for a list of County FA contacts.
- By emailing The FA Safeguarding Team at safeguarding@TheFA.com or by calling and asking for the team on **0800 169 1863**;
- If urgent and you cannot contact your club, league or County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer, you should call the NSPCC 24 hour helpline on **0808 800 5000**;
- 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](#).

CASE-HANDLING:

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

If reported to a club, league or County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer, they will make an assessment based on their training.

The assessment will classify the case as:

- High and immediate-risk;
- Medium-risk;
- Lower-risk or poor practice.

If high and immediate-risk: the statutory authorities will be informed and within 24 hours a standard referral form outlining the case will be sent to The FA Safeguarding team.

If medium-risk: a referral form will be sent to The FA Safeguarding team within 24 hours and handled on a case-by-case basis. This means it may be referred to the statutory authorities or handled by The FA and relevant County FA in the case of grassroots football, or the DSO if the incident has occurred at a professional club.

If lower-risk or poor practice: it will be handled by the County FA in the case of grassroots football, or the club DSO if the incident occurs at a professional club.

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:

- **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:** Persistent or repeated hostile and intimidating behaviour towards a child or young person.



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.

WITHIN FOOTBALL POOR PRACTICE IS DEFINED AS:

- 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.

Please note – this list is not exhaustive.

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 calling **0800 169 1863** and asking for The FA's safeguarding team, or via email to: 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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