

Irish Football Association



# Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football Policy

1. Our Club/League/Organisation acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of every child and young person and is committed to providing a safe environment for all. A child is any person under the age of 18. We adopt the Irish FA Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football Policy and Procedures and will apply this across our club/league/organisation.

Our Club/League/Organisation endorses and adopts the following key safeguarding principles:

- the welfare of the child is paramount;
  - all children and young people have a right to be treated equally regardless of their age, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status or civil partnership, race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, ability or disability. There are no circumstances where abuse is acceptable.
  - ensuring that all allegations of abuse are responded to promptly, in a confidential manner and in line with statutory and Irish FA guidelines;
  - sharing information about concerns with safeguarding agencies that need to know and involving children and young people and their parents or guardians if appropriate.
2. Our Club/League/Organisation has a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people by protecting them from all forms of abuse, including bullying, and creating a safe playing environment. It is accepted that the Irish FA's Articles of Association in relation to Safeguarding Children and Young People apply to everyone in affiliated football whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, including coaches/managers, volunteers, match officials, medical staff or other club officials/representatives.
  3. We adopt the Irish FA's Safe Recruitment guidelines and, as a minimum, we will ensure:
    - We will meet with potential volunteer(s), ascertain their motivation for taking up their prospective role and interview people before appointing them;
    - Ask for and follow up with appropriate references before appointing someone;
    - We will communicate their full role and responsibilities within our club prior to them taking up a role;
    - All those in regulated activity (coaching, providing transport or medical/physiotherapy on behalf of the club, supervising overnight stays/residentials) complete an Enhanced Disclosure Check through AccessNI in accordance with Irish FA procedures prior to us offering them a role. This will be updated every three years;
    - All those acting on behalf of our club will attend Irish FA-approved safeguarding children and young people training relevant to their role. This will be refreshed every three years.

If there are concerns regarding the appropriateness of an individual who is already involved in affiliated youth football or who has approached us to become part of our football club, guidance will be sought from the Irish FA.

We accept that the Irish FA will consider the relevance and significance of the information obtained via AccessNI checks and that all suitability decisions will be made in accordance with legislation and in the best interests of children and young people.

We accept that the Irish FA aims to prevent people with a history of relevant and significant offending from having contact with children or young people and the opportunity to influence policies or practice with children or young people. This is to prevent direct sexual or physical harm to any person and to minimise the risk of 'grooming' within football.

4. Our Club/League/Organisation has appointed a Designated Child Safeguarding Officer (DCSO) in accordance with Irish FA Articles of Association.

The post holder will have completed Irish FA safeguarding training relevant to their role as well as a suitable AccessNI check. The DCSO is the first point of contact for all club members regarding concerns about the welfare of any child or young person.

The DCSO will play a proactive role in increasing awareness of respect, poor practice and abuse amongst club members and regularly communicate with the club management committee/ Board. The DCSO may liaise directly with the Irish FA Safeguarding Team for advice and guidance on potential safeguarding issues and inform them of any referrals to statutory services.

5. We acknowledge the Irish FA's identification of bullying as a form of abuse. Bullying of any kind is not acceptable at our club. If bullying does occur, all players and parents/carers should be able to access our anti-bullying policy and know that incidents will be dealt with appropriately. Incidents need to be reported to the DCSO. In cases of serious bullying we may seek advice from the Irish FA.
6. Codes of conduct for players, parents/spectators, officials and coaches have been implemented by our club. All those involved in our club have a responsibility to adhere to the positive behaviours outlined in the relevant code of conduct. Any behavioural issues will be addressed by our DCSO and sanctions may be imposed depending on the seriousness, intent, regularity and potential impact of behaviour in breach of the relevant code.
7. Blowing the whistle on practice or behaviour which compromises the safety and welfare of children and young people who participate in our club activities can be daunting. Volunteers who whistle-blow about concerning practice or behaviour at our club should be reassured that they will be believed and supported. Children and young people should be encouraged to disclose to a trusted adult, either internal or external to our club. Parents and guardians can voice their concerns, where appropriate, to the head coach/programme manager. You may contact the Irish FA on 028 9066 9458 should you wish to discuss any concerns.
8. The safety of the child will always be paramount. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and we know that inaction is not an option. If anyone is worried about a child, it is important that they report their concerns to the DCSO who may deal with reported concerns as follows:
  - i. Our DCSO will endeavour to address poor practice concerns with the support of our management structure. Where necessary we may seek advice from the Irish FA Safeguarding Team.
  - ii. Our DCSO may make referrals about more serious concerns to the Irish FA or, in an emergency, statutory services.
  - iii. We aim to meet the immediate needs of the child. If they require medical treatment, we may call an ambulance and tell them it is a child protection concern.
  - iv. Our DCSO will keep records of the actions taken and inform the Irish FA of any allegations of abuse or serious cases of poor practice.
  - v. If at any time our DCSO is not available, or the matter is clearly serious, all our members should be aware that they can:
    - Contact our club chairperson;
    - Contact the Irish FA's Safeguarding Team on 028 9066 9458;
    - Contact the Police on 101; and/or
    - Health and Social Care Trusts.

In Northern Ireland each health trust has a Gateway team to deal with initial reports of abuse and to provide contacts for ongoing professional liaison and advice on concerns.

Northern HSC Trust Tel 0300 1234 333 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

South Eastern HSC Trust Tel 0300 1000 300 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

Southern HSC Trust Tel 0800 7837 745 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

Belfast HSC Trust Tel 028 9050 7000 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

Western HSC Trust Tel 028 7131 4090 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

You can also call the NSPCC 24-hour Helpline for advice on 0808 800 5000 or text 88858 or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

Additional contacts are available on the Irish FA Safeguarding App at

<https://www.irishfa.com/irish-fa-foundation/grassroots-and-youth-football/safeguarding>

Members of \_\_\_\_\_ Committee understand procedures.

We commit to ensuring our members are aware of and have access to our policies.

Role	Name	Contact details
Chairperson		
Designated Child Safeguarding Officer (DCSO)		
Deputy DCSO		
Secretary		