

The Football Association Safeguarding Children Best Practice Guidelines



Appointing a Youth League Welfare Officer (YLWO)

TheFA.com/FootballSafe

The FA is currently encouraging youth football clubs to appoint a Club Welfare Officer (CWO) to help the club to be more proactive in dealing with poor practice issues. In addition, having an appropriate CWO will ensure that if there is a child abuse concern someone knows what to do.

The FA's vision, of having a local network of CWO's throughout as many youth clubs as possible, can be positively supported by youth leagues. Every County Football Association has a Child Protection Officer (CFA CPO), they are the official point of contact for any safeguarding children concerns locally. CWO's are required to pass on any child abuse concerns to the CFA CPO. For more information about The FA referral process please see Section 5 of The FA Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures (www.FootballSafe@TheFA.com)

The appointment of YLWO's will encourage the sharing and development of best practice across the grassroots game. As such, The FA sees youth leagues as key to helping to ensure the safeguarding of young people in football. The FA recognises that there are many proactive leagues that are already doing a great deal to address inappropriate sideline behaviour and to get clubs to play their part in being more aware of safeguarding children concerns. The appointment of the YLWO aims to give this stance a higher profile and consistency across grassroots football.

Please note: It is essential that the YLWO is perceived as being approachable, having a child centred approach and the ability to maintain this perspective when carrying out their role.

Where to start

- Discuss the idea of having a YLWO on your committee and the benefits that this can bring e.g. to promote the league's code(s) of conduct and review compliance during the season, to promote availability of basic safeguarding children awareness training for clubs, to encourage the completion of CRB checks via The FA CRB Unit, and encourage referees to share any concerns/issues they may have with clubs affiliated to the league
- Establish if this needs to be addressed by your league's constitution; could you co-opt someone onto the committee to speed up the appointment and then make it a permanent role?
- Make it known amongst all affiliated clubs - in particular if clubs already have an appointed CWO - that you are seeking to appoint a YLWO as an additional member of your committee and invite applications
- Provide all clubs with the relevant information about this role. This is detailed here on the following page and is also available on www.FootballSafe@TheFA.com.
- Establish whether anyone involved with your league or an affiliated club has any professional safeguarding children expertise. You may have a committee member or club member who is or was a police officer, teacher or social worker that might be willing to take on the role
- Ensure you have a fair and open recruitment process in line with your league's constitution

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Ideally

- Get all youth league committee members to understand the need and benefits of appointing a YLWO and get their support for the idea
- Involve the clubs and youth league committee members in suggesting possible candidates with the potential to take on this role
- Obtain support and make it clear to everyone that the YLWO will have the support and backing of the youth league committee
- Establish the YLWO post on the youth league committee as a permanent position
- Adopt the YLWO role as recommended by The FA as detailed below:
 - To know who the CFA CPO is and how to contact them
 - To refer any club safeguarding children or poor practice concerns to the CFA CPO
 - To seek advice from the FA/NSPCC Helpline if the CFA CPO is unavailable or in circumstances of child protection urgency
 - To seek advice from local Social Services or the Police in an emergency, if CFA CPO is not contactable
 - To encourage the club to discuss and implement The FA's Safeguarding Children Policy (www.FootballSafe@TheFA.com)
 - To encourage the club to utilise The FA's Safeguarding Children Guidelines on recruiting volunteers and always requesting and following up references
 - To encourage the club to discuss and implement The FA's Safeguarding Children Guidelines on the use of images and organising travel, trips and tournaments
 - To advocate that the CRB Enhanced Disclosure to

be used as part of the club's safeguarding initiatives and encourage the club to make use of The FA's CRB Unit

- To support the club in identifying those who require a CRB Enhanced Disclosure
- To promote, support and encourage the benefits of the Safeguarding Children Education and Awareness Programme

What next

- Before appointing your YLWO, ensure that you have considered their appropriateness for this role by checking their application against The FA's Safeguarding Children Fit and Proper Person Checklist, below
- Follow the appointment of volunteers guidance as provided by www.FootballSafe@TheFA.com when appointing the YLWO

Safeguarding Children Fit and Proper Person Checklist

Essential

- Willing and able to provide relevant references
- Willingness to update skills and knowledge
- Previous experience of working with children
- Knowledge of, and positive attitudes to, equal opportunities
- Commitment to treat all children as individuals and with equal concern
- Physical health – appropriate to carry out tasks
- Mental stability, integrity and flexibility
- Completion of The FA CRB Enhanced Disclosure Process and acceptance by The FA of the outcome. Some people with a history of offending can still be considered for this role. The FA CRB Unit or

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Safeguarding Children website can advise on whether the current methods for checking this process have been satisfactorily completed

- Attendance at an FA Safeguarding Children Workshop
- Understanding and appreciation of the need for confidentiality when dealing with issues
- Reasonable level of administration experience and understanding of how to deal with confidential documentation
- Attendance at an FA Welfare Officer Workshop
- Commitment to attend in-service training facilitated by The FA or the local CFA

Desirable

- Knowledge of safeguarding children issues*
- Knowledge of safeguarding children legislation (as appropriate)*
- Relevant football knowledge/understanding*

*If an interested individual does not currently have knowledge of safeguarding children issues and or child protection legislation this can be addressed initially by The FA's Safeguarding Children Workshop. These workshops are normally taken at a local level organised by your County Football Association contact details can be found on www.TheFA.com/Grassroots

NB: If any person is considered not to be a 'fit' person to work with children, his/her application should be refused.