

Vital Information for every
Club Secretary working with,
or in, Youth Football



Let's make football safe - not sorry



Please take
a few minutes
to read this leaflet.

It could save you -
and football - hours
of heartache.

Let's make football safe - not sorry

This leaflet focuses on
The FA's policy when
working with children
and young people.

When it comes to working with children and young people in grassroots clubs with youth teams, The FA's three-part policy is straightforward:

Every club with youth teams should:

1. Appoint a Club Welfare Officer to lead on safeguarding children matters for the club.
2. Ensure that anyone working in a role with children, completes an FA Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check as part of responsible recruitment practice – and then be approved to work in football.
3. Ensure that anyone in coaching, refereeing, first-aid/physio and welfare roles, completes The FA's specialist 'Safeguarding Children' training programme, run by your County FA.

As the secretary of a club affiliated to your County FA, we urge you to identify everyone at your club you feel this affects. By using the online access method described in the letter that accompanies this leaflet, you can establish the status of their FA CRB check and whether they have completed the above training.

Here's how we'll support you

As you're no doubt aware, The FA has its own FA CRB Unit to process checks, but as the game's governing body in England, we are taking three other key steps to make football safe:

1. We will require every youth league and club with youth teams to appoint a Welfare Officer by the start of the 2008/09 season. The Welfare Officer will need to be FA CRB-checked and have

completed our training programme.

Advice on how to appoint a Welfare Officer is available by visiting:

www.TheFA.com/footballsafesite and clicking on the download under the title Designated Persons.

2. We are working with County FA's to appoint County Welfare Officers to provide increased levels of guidance and support to Youth League and Club Welfare Officers. This will include additional welfare officer training for all affiliated youth leagues and clubs with youth teams.
3. We are running an awareness campaign so everyone in football knows the importance of:

- The FA's 'Safeguarding Children' training programme – so everyone's aware of the type of behaviour which gives cause for concern and how to report it.
- FA CRB checks being carried out as part of a responsible recruitment process. That way anyone who is a known risk can be screened out.

This leaflet is an example of this campaign in action.

Backed-up by legislation

The three-point approach is underpinned by government legislation and guidance on best practice when working with children.

But exactly who is affected by FA policy in this area, what do you

need to do as a club secretary – and how do you get more information? These are all questions being asked right now.

This leaflet sets out the basic answers and seeks to reassure everyone involved in football that CRB checks and relevant training is to be welcomed, not feared.

By way of reassurance

Understandably, people at your club affected by FA policy could wonder why they are being asked to complete a Criminal Records Bureau check – we realise this is a sensitive area.

For example, as soon as you or your Welfare Officer informs someone they need to be CRB-checked, that person may be affronted by the implication that there may be something inappropriate or

Your questions answered

untoward in their behaviour. This is perfectly understandable. But if having CRB checks in place is one way to bar anyone from football who is intent on harming children, then we simply have to do it.

If there are people at your club who have never had a CRB check, please tell them not to worry. It's painless and totally confidential. In excess of 100,000 FA CRB checks have taken place so far.

It only takes a few minutes to complete a simple form so The FA's own CRB Unit can initiate a check to ensure there's been no criminal activity that might lead us to consider someone is a risk to children.

Needless to say, almost everyone is acceptable but identifying anyone who could pose a risk to children is

so important to children, parents – and all of us working in football. If any of your club members have any questions when completing the form, we're here to help and advise, so just e-mail us on footballsaf@TheFA.com or call us on our Freephone number: 0800 085 0506.

Who is affected by this FA policy?

Anyone – paid or unpaid – in clubs with youth teams - working in a specific role with children or young people; that's everyone aged 18 or under.

Examples of people who should have CRB checks in place and have completed the FA's training programme are:

- welfare officers
- coaches
- managers
- first-aiders
- referees

As previously mentioned, 100,000 people working in football have already completed the CRB process. If you haven't started, this leaflet outlines the steps your club or league should take to fully comply with FA policy.

Why is it so important?

Because football has a clear responsibility towards young people.

Sadly, there have been some tragic cases of inappropriate people working with children, both in wider society and within football. Having an Enhanced FA CRB check is one way to help to reduce the possibility of such cases happening in the future.

The intention is not to pry into people's private lives or create loads of paperwork – it's to ensure football is fun and safe.

That's something we all want. More importantly, it's what all children and young people deserve.

This FA policy has also been embedded in our guidance on responsible recruitment practices.

For more information on recruitment guidelines, go to www.TheFA.com/footballsafe

This will reassure parents and carers, that anyone who is a known risk will be screened out from working with children and young people.

What are its main demands?

Primarily, that a CRB check must have been carried out on anyone – paid or unpaid – working with children or young people in the roles outlined above. As a result of the check, The FA will then make a decision whether to accept a person in to football or not.

For more information on CRB checks and how The FA makes its decisions please visit www.TheFA.com/footballsafe/CRB and check out the FAQs.

The responsibility for getting a check falls on two parties – the individual themselves, and the organisation providing the opportunity for the person to work e.g. a youth football club or league.

Many clubs are already following this best practice and we're alerting all clubs with youth teams now, so that if you haven't already begun, then you can start the process by appointing a Welfare Officer.

Once Welfare Officers are checked and trained, part of their role will be to oversee the checking of other people in relevant roles.

It is currently best practice to renew these checks every three years. The FA's policy on requiring these renewals is on hold, pending further clarity about the implications of new legislation.

Where does it apply?

Geographically, throughout England.

It covers any football activity involving children and young people – whether in games, training or other club events. This covers mini-soccer (under 10s), junior football (under 16s) and youth football (under 18s), whether affiliated or unaffiliated.

The intention of this FA policy and government legislation is to help provide as safe a framework as possible around children and young people. It will also reassure parents and carers, that anyone who is a known risk will be screened out from working with the younger members of our society.

When should I take action?

Now!

Clearly it may take a little time to process CRB-checks for everyone who is eligible in your club, so our advice is to appoint a Welfare Officer to your club as soon as possible, and then ensure they get the relevant training from your County FA.

The Welfare Officer can then ensure all other relevant persons complete The FA CRB process. We will also give them online access so they can keep up to date with club members' progress with through the CRB-checking process and our specialist training.

How do I get more information?

We have set up three main ways for you to get more detailed information on your role and responsibilities in the area of child protection in football:

1. More FAQs are available on www.TheFA.com/footballsafe
2. E-mail: footballsafe@TheFA.com
3. Freephone: 0800 085 0506

Alternatively, please contact your County Football Association direct.

A full list of County FAs, with contact names and numbers, can be downloaded from www.TheFA.com/CountyContacts – or by calling The FA on: 0207 745 4545.

Open-age football

Please note we are currently clarifying with the Government our position regarding those working in roles with young people in the context of open age football. Further guidance will be issued to open age clubs, at this point we ask open age clubs and leagues to await this guidance.



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