



# AN EVER-SAFER CULTURE

THE FA SAFEGUARDING STRATEGY  
2024-2028



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#### Acronyms:

The following acronyms (in alphabetical order) are used at points in our strategy:

ED&I = Equality, Diversity & Inclusion  
 EFL = English Football  
 EFLitC = English Football League in the Community  
 ESFA = English Schools' Football Association  
 ISFA = Independent Schools Football Association  
 LCA = League Coaches Association  
 LMA = League Managers Association  
 NLS = National League System (the six 'Steps' of senior men's football below EFL League 2. It stretches from the National League at Step 1 through to the various Leagues at Step 6).

PFA = Professional Footballers' Association  
 PGMOL = Professional Game Match Officials Limited  
 PL = Premier League  
 The FA = The Football Association  
 The FA WNL = The FA Women's National League  
 WPLL = Women's Professional Leagues Limited  
 WFP = Women's Football Pyramid (the women's leagues structure in England – when used in this document we are focusing on those leagues below the professional game).



## HELPING TO CREATE AN EVER-SAFER CULTURE IN FOOTBALL

Safeguarding remains a vital part of our game, and we want to ensure that all children and adults at risk are able to play football in a fun, safe, inclusive and welcoming environment for years to come.

We often see wider societal issues and challenges being reflected within a football environment. Our responsibility is to remain relentless in our efforts to mitigate, minimise and eliminate any safeguarding concerns that arise in football.

I'm incredibly proud of our work to ensure that we have industry-leading safeguarding measures in place, with stringent and robust processes that are reviewed by the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit. Since the publication of the Sheldon review in 2021, and our implementation of its key recommendations, we have helped to create a new future for safeguarding in English football that puts the support and protection of children and adults at risk at its heart.

Under our previous safeguarding strategy, we made great progress across all of our key strategic targets, and this is charted in our 2022, 2023 and 2024 safeguarding reviews, which can be found [here](#).

As we embark on the next four years of our strategy, we remain committed to continuously improving our levels of delivery, as well as tackling ongoing and new challenges. This means driving enhancements to safeguarding requirements and standards at all levels, including with our England teams and talent pathway activity. And we'll use technology to help safeguard in digital spaces, as well as harnessing technology to save time for those who carry out ID checks as part of the essential DBS vetting processes. Importantly, everyone in football has a role to play to help uphold our safeguarding standards and to ensure children and adults at risk are kept safe at all times.



**Mark Bullingham**  
Chief Executive Officer

Throughout this four-year strategy cycle, we will drive FLAG IT, an initiative to help everyone remain vigilant and to address and report any safeguarding concerns in an appropriate way with bespoke training, advice and signposting. Building awareness and trust in our reporting processes remains a key priority for us.

Safeguarding is a non-negotiable, and our new strategy relies on collaboration from across the game. Not only with the football bodies, including our network of 50 County FAs throughout England and our Leagues, but also with the Government and other organisations inside and outside the sports sector. Together, our goal is to make sure safeguarding is a core element of any activities for children, young people and adults at risk.

In all of our work, we have the invaluable backing of The FA Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group (FASSSAG), now in its sixth year, which includes members with lived experience of childhood sexual abuse in football. Their voice is at the heart of our plans, helping to guide our thinking and supporting our actions in this crucial area.

To the members of FASSSAG and all those in designated safeguarding roles in football, we send our heartfelt thanks and gratitude. We now head into the next four years with the unwavering aim of creating an ever-safer culture across our national game.

# OUR SIGNATORIES AND SUPPORTERS

Our strategy is endorsed by the football authorities

  MARK BULLINGHAM Chief Executive, The FA	  RICHARD MASTERS Chief Executive, Premier League	  TREVOR BIRCH Chief Executive, EFL	  NIKKI DOUCET Chief Executive, WPLL	  MAHETA MOLANGO Chief Executive, PFA	  RICHARD BEVAN Chief Executive, LMA	  DANIELLE EVERY Chief Operating Officer, PGMOL
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## ENDORSEMENT BY MEMBERS WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE ON THE FA SURVIVOR SUPPORT AND SAFEGUARDING ADVISORY GROUP:

Having a clear strategy and action plan is vital if everyone in football is to play their part in creating an ever-safer environment within our game.

That's why the document you're reading is so important. Fundamentally, it's in place to ensure everyone understands what's meant by safeguarding in football. It also defines specific actions so everyone's clear about their individual responsibilities.

The FA Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group (FASSSAG) was formed in 2018, comprising former players who suffered childhood sexual abuse in football, alongside independent professionals in safeguarding. FASSSAG has an important role in challenging and informing The FA's thinking in relation to all safeguarding matters and initiatives. You can read more about FASSSAG's role [here](#).

We're proud that our lived experience has helped to inform the strategy – and frame the safeguarding policies, procedures and best practice throughout football.

The challenge to make the game as safe as possible for everyone will never go away. But with a strategy that defines a collective purpose we are confident football's heading in the right direction.

## Everyday delivery everywhere

While central safeguarding strategy and policy-making is led by The FA, the 50-strong County FA network, the ESFA and ISFA, NLS (National League System) and WFP (Women's Football Pyramid) play critical roles in ensuring safeguarding is at the forefront of grassroots participation, schools' association football activity and NLS and WFP club football. This includes compliance with requirements and standards.













Collectively, all the above organisations, whose logos are shown alongside, are responsible for:

- Ensuring the safeguarding standards set out by The FA are met.
- Promoting The FA's safeguarding policies and procedures.
- Supporting the volunteer workforce in all their safeguarding work.
- Working with their members to ensure they are meeting their commitment to safeguard and protect children, young people and for County FAs, NLS and WFP adults at risk.
- Working with The FA's Safeguarding Case Management Team to manage concerns.

You can contact your County FA DSO [here](#), the ESFA [here](#) and the ISFA [here](#).

## ...and all supported by:

Effective collaboration with like-minded organisations is also pivotal to delivering our strategy. These organisations include, but are not limited to:

	FA National Youth Council		UEFA
	Premier League Charitable Fund		FIFA
	EFL in the Community		NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU)
	The League Coaches Association (LCA)		The Ann Craft Trust
	Association of Colleges Sport		Hydrant Programme
	British Universities and Colleges Sport		IICSA (Independent Inquiry Child Sexual Abuse) Changemakers



## SCOPE

Our 2024-28 strategy reflects football's extensive everyday work to safeguard children and adults at risk, alongside workstreams designed to continuously develop and improve our framework and approach.

The objectives and interventions outlined in this strategy will continue to drive the cultural change highlighted in Clive Sheldon KC's Review<sup>1</sup>.

The strategy seeks to build an ever-safer culture across:

- Affiliated football<sup>2</sup>.
- All the England teams, talent pathways and related activity.
- Our venues – Wembley Stadium and St. George's Park.
- FA programmes, events; and
- Activity with or via our official partners and stakeholders.

<sup>1</sup>Clive Sheldon KC was appointed by The FA to conduct the 'Independent Review into Child Sexual Abuse in Football: 1970-2005'. The Review was published in March 2021.

<sup>2</sup>Affiliated football is football played by clubs affiliated to The FA, their County FA, or other types of designated FAs (as defined by The FA), and approved to play in leagues and competitions sanctioned by The FA, their County FA or other type of FA, or otherwise organised under the auspices of The FA – and includes referees registered with The FA.

## CONTEXT AND OUR COMMITMENT

Football provides a hugely positive experience for the majority of 15.7m regular<sup>1</sup> players across England. The game promotes a healthy lifestyle, is fun and helps create lifelong friendships. It also teaches life skills such as teamwork, leadership and resilience.

Sadly however, this is not the experience of every child or adult at risk. From engaging with victims and survivors, we know the devastating impacts that abuse has.

Safeguarding is undertaken collectively to create ever-safer football environments, prevent abuse in all its forms and respond to concerns robustly.

It's the most important thing we do and it's everyone's responsibility.

The football bodies share an ongoing commitment to make our national sport as safe, enjoyable and inclusive as possible for everyone. To do so, we continue to work collaboratively in line with legislation, Government guidance and industry best practice to:

- Implement preventative safeguarding measures, supported by regulations and/or rules, policies, procedures, standards, safer recruitment checks, guidance and training.
- Make the reporting of concerns as easy as possible.
- Ensure safeguarding and child protection concerns are investigated swiftly and effectively in conjunction with statutory agencies – and with demonstrable outcomes, such as education, mentoring, supervision and or suspension.
- Review and continuously develop our practice.

Day-to-day safeguarding takes place throughout the football landscape in England, with The FA's team of safeguarding professionals working alongside colleagues within The FA, across the football bodies and the game. Collectively, we strive for effective safeguarding culture and practice, which demands our constant vigilance.

The FA, Premier League, English Football League and Women's Professional Leagues Limited have processes in place to check and challenge compliance against the safeguarding requirements and standards. This includes commissioning independent audits and assessments of County FAs and clubs respectively.

In the grassroots game, compliance is monitored continuously, and County FAs undertake safeguarding visits to a percentage of their clubs each season to observe safeguarding practice and culture, talk with players, coaches and parents and check and challenge compliance with requirements.

<sup>1</sup>15.7m players, consists of 5.1m children and 10.6m adults.



# THE SAFEGUARDING STRATEGY UNDERPINS THE FA GROUP AND OTHER STRATEGIES

Safeguarding underpins all The FA's main strategy's 'Game-Changers' and 'Drivers'. These are shown alongside.

At a deeper level, safeguarding is part of The FA's core role to create a safe and inclusive environment throughout football in England.

Each 'Game-Changer' and 'Driver' is guided by specific strategies and plans across The FA.

In turn, safeguarding underpins or is aligned to all these specific strategies, as well as other FA internal workstreams.

Most of the strategies shown below are public-facing and can be downloaded from [TheFA.com](https://www.thefa.com).

## GAME-CHANGERS

 <p><b>WIN TOURNAMENTS</b></p>	 <p><b>A GAME FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION</b></p>	 <p><b>EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN &amp; GIRLS</b></p>	 <p><b>TRANSFORM THE PITCH LANDSCAPE</b></p>
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## DRIVERS

	<b>THRIVING COMMUNITY CLUBS</b>
	<b>WORLD-CLASS FA CUPS</b>
	<b>PARTICIPANT-LED</b>
	<b>PROGRESSIVE GOVERNANCE</b>



WOMEN AND GIRLS



GRASSROOTS



DISABILITY/PARA



THE FA WNL



REFEREEING



ENGLAND FOOTBALL LEARNING



ED&I

# OUR SAFEGUARDING STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

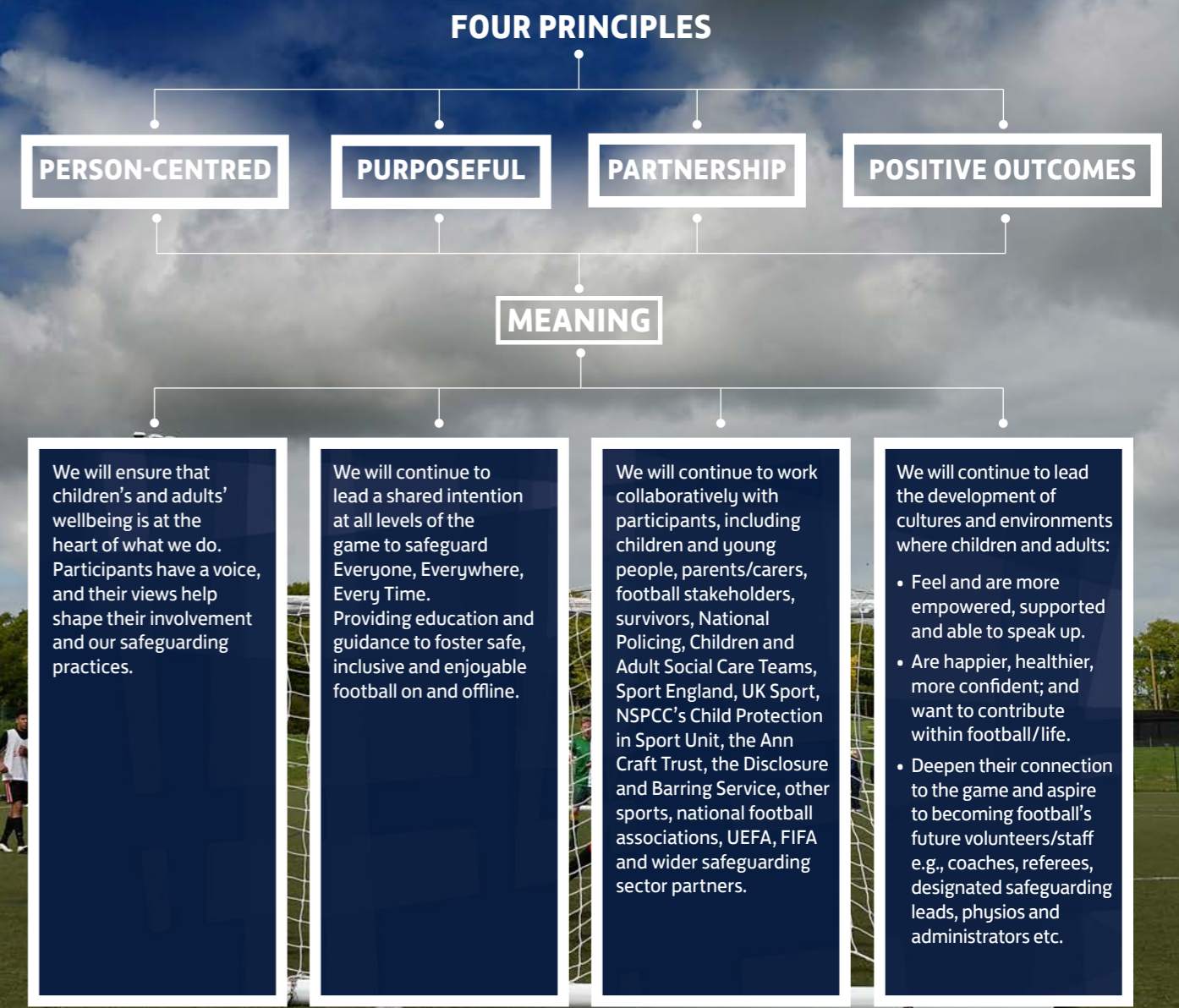
Consultation has helped us evolve our strategy framework, with children and adults at risk remaining firmly at its centre.



Underpinned by legislation, principles and guidance



# PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING OUR WORK



We will ensure that children's and adults' wellbeing is at the heart of what we do. Participants have a voice, and their views help shape their involvement and our safeguarding practices.

We will continue to lead a shared intention at all levels of the game to safeguard Everyone, Everywhere, Every Time. Providing education and guidance to foster safe, inclusive and enjoyable football on and offline.

We will continue to work collaboratively with participants, including children and young people, parents/carers, football stakeholders, survivors, National Policing, Children and Adult Social Care Teams, Sport England, UK Sport, NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit, the Ann Craft Trust, the Disclosure and Barring Service, other sports, national football associations, UEFA, FIFA and wider safeguarding sector partners.

We will continue to lead the development of cultures and environments where children and adults:

- Feel and are more empowered, supported and able to speak up.
- Are happier, healthier, more confident; and want to contribute within football/life.
- Deepen their connection to the game and aspire to becoming football's future volunteers/staff e.g., coaches, referees, designated safeguarding leads, physios and administrators etc.

These principles align with the rights outlined in the Articles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), 1989, and the Care Act, 2014.



# OUR THREE PRIORITIES



Priority 1:  
**GOVERNANCE  
AND STANDARDS**



Priority 2:  
**EDUCATION  
AND EMPOWERMENT**



Priority 3:  
**MANAGING  
CONCERNS**





Priority 1:

# GOVERNANCE AND STANDARDS

Ensuring we have strong leadership, effective governance oversight and robust standards driving continuous improvement.



Why this is a priority and how we will bring it to life.

## It's a priority because:

Strong leadership – with informed leaders, Boards and Committees at every level of the game – is essential for the effective governance of and accountability for safeguarding. This includes:

- Regular oversight of progress reports and evidence demonstrating impact.
- Knowledge of risk management strategies on/offline.
- The evolution of culture and practice, informed by the voices of those with lived experience, children and adults at risk.

## What we'll do:

1. Ensure governance oversight via Board and Committee monitoring and reporting across the game.
2. Maintain, continuously improve and evolve policies and regulations.
3. Continue to align and evolve Standards and oversee the monitoring of compliance and culture.
4. Continue to support, engage with, and empower those with lived experience.
5. Collaborate with stakeholders in football, sport and the safeguarding sector to lobby Government and other agencies for change.

## Measures of success:

- a. Policies updated every three years or sooner in line with changes to legislation or guidance.
- b. The FA maintains national standards and demonstrates continuous improvement.
- c. County FAs, the ESFA and ISFA maintain Safeguarding 365 Standard and demonstrate continuous improvement.
- d. Premier League, EFL clubs and club community organisations (CCOs) maintain standards and demonstrate continuous improvement.
- e. Barclays Women's Super League and Barclays Women's Championship clubs meet Standards and demonstrate continuous improvement.
- f. National League System (Steps 1-4) and FA Women's National League clubs continuously improve against Standards and Licence requirements.
- g. The FA publishes its Annual Safeguarding Review & Reports.
- h. FA DBS checks include offer of Digital Identity checks by 2025/26.
- i. Number and nature of low-level concerns (LLCs) and safeguarding referrals and cases.



## What we WANT TO HEAR:

I'm so glad The FA moved to a new a Case Management System, it's easy to use and provides me with data I need to do my job effectively.

County FA DSO

## Our strategic objectives and interventions:

### OBJECTIVES

1. Ensure governance oversight via Board and/or Committee monitoring and reporting across the game.
2. Maintain, continuously improve and evolve Safeguarding Policies and Regulations
3. Continue to evolve Standards and ensure there is oversight and monitoring of compliance and culture.
4. Continue to support, engage with and empower those with lived experience.
5. Collaborate with stakeholders in football, sport, and the safeguarding sector to lobby Government and other agencies for change.

### INTERVENTIONS

- 1.1 FA Boards and Committees demonstrate accountability and engagement with Board Safeguarding Leads.
- 1.2 FA Annual Reviews continue to be published tracking KPIs, monitoring and demonstrating safeguarding culture and compliance.
- 1.3 Policy and Designated Person contact details are available and proactively shared with members, and/or those in the session.
- 1.4 Club child, or person-centred policies and practice re: data management, overnight stays, travel, social media, digital and complaints processes are in line with safer working practice and signed off by the Club Committee.
- 2.1 Policies, Regulations, Safer Recruitment and Safer Practice Guidance regularly reviewed, with reminders about professional boundaries and positions of trust consistently communicated.
- 3.1 Safeguarding 365 Standard for County FAs, the ESFA and ISFA refreshed, and each organisation maintains and delivers continuous improvement.
- 3.2 Work with National League System and FA Women's National League to ensure clubs continuously improve against Standards. Where appropriate, align standards.
- 3.3 Premier League and EFL to continue to oversee continuous improvements by their clubs against their Standards.
- 3.4 Women's Professional Leagues Limited (WPLL) works to align Safeguarding Standards for Barclays Women's Super League and Barclays Women's Championship to Premier League and EFL Standards. Consult with players and club staff to evolve safer working frameworks.
- 3.5 The FA maintains the National Safeguarding Children Standards, and it continuously improves in line with the Adult Safeguarding Standards.
- 3.6 The FA, England Teams, Player Pathway and Events all have risk assessments and safeguarding plans in place, with safeguarding and wellbeing at their core.
- 3.7 Continue to support third-party hirers to meet the safeguarding requirements at our venues.
- 3.8 Continue to ensure that safeguarding is embedded into the planning and delivery of major events and tournaments.
- 3.9 The FA develops referee management system, enabling the tracking of referee appointments, and therefore oversight of unregistered referees.
- 3.10 The FA continues to work with County FAs to encourage external coaching providers (private providers) to demonstrate safer working practice.
- 4.1 Continue to deliver a framework of support for survivors and engagement with those with lived experience of abuse in the game.
- 5.1 The FA collaborates with sports and more widely lobbies effectively for positive safeguarding change.



Priority 2:

# EDUCATION & EMPOWERMENT

Educating to empower and help create an ever-safer culture.



Why this is a priority and how we will bring it to life.

## It's a priority because:

Effective education is at the heart of creating safer cultures and environments and ensuring everyone understands what acceptable behaviours are and how to raise any concerns. This includes:

- A mandatory safeguarding education offer.
- More flexible and accessible bite-size content.
- Content that increases understanding of contextual safeguarding risks.
- Tailored development content for specific roles.

## What we'll do:

1. Drive positive safeguarding behaviours on and offline and champion the voices of children, young people and adults at risk.
2. Empower and better equip participants in safeguarding practice.
3. Deliver our mandatory qualifications.
4. Deliver recommended and targeted resources and continuous professional development (CPD).

## Measures of success:

- a. A re-envisioned qualification programme on offer via England Football Learning by 2028.
- b. Number, repeat engagements and impact of CPD opportunities delivered.
- c. Actionable insight from environment and culture surveys informing policy and practice.
- d. 80k more parents/carers through the free, online 'Safeguarding Awareness for Parents/Carers' course.
- e. Insight from our annual Play Safe campaign to demonstrate significant engagement and impact.
- f. Bystander initiative launched with actionable insight, measuring impact and guiding development.



What we **WANT TO HEAR:**

When I saw ‘Flag It’, I got it! I can do something to help in a difficult situation. Now if a youth player doesn’t look or seem ok, I ask how they are doing and listen to what they say.

Adult player

Our **strategic objectives** and **interventions:**

OBJECTIVES	INTERVENTIONS
1. Drive positive safeguarding behaviours on and offline and champion the voices of children, young people and adults at risk.	1.1 Deliver co-ordinated approach to empowering children and adults at risk voices in football. 1.2 Educate re: acceptable behaviours, banter, contextual safeguarding, grooming behaviours. 1.3 Collaborate to support and safeguard under-18 referees and referees who may be adults at risk. 1.4 Support open-age clubs with their approaches to safeguarding and player welfare, including under-18s moving into adult football.
2. Empower and better equip participants to safeguard and support welfare.	2.1 Empower participants to recognise and overcome bystander behaviours, break the silence and raise and report concerns. 2.2 Promote resources to support mental health, wellbeing and resilience. 2.3 Educate parents/carers on their safeguarding responsibilities and the expected standards and behaviours to be adhered to. 2.4 Continue to educate elite first-team staff and players on safeguarding – Premier League, EFL, Barclays Women’s Super League, Barclays Women’s Championship and England – and provide age-specific content for all players. 2.5 Educate and signpost participants to information to keep them safe online and to support with managing societal issues that impact football e.g. knife crime, county lines <sup>1</sup> etc.
3. Deliver our mandatory course programme.	3.1 Continue to deliver mandatory qualification programme for those in specified roles, updating in line with legislation, policy and guidance. 3.2 Review and simplify mandatory qualification programme, seeking to minimise duplication for those with multiple football roles. 3.3 Embed and amplify Government messaging re: any new ‘Mandatory Reporting Duty’.
4. Deliver recommended and targeted resources and continuous professional development (CPD).	4.1 Promote the time-saving benefits of digital identity and roll-out of DBS checks 2025/26. 4.2 Deliver targeted and bite-size content on topics e.g. safer recruitment; disordered eating. 4.3 Collaborate with County FAs and support them to deliver a more nationally co-ordinated CPD offer for Club Welfare Officers, coaches etc. 4.4 Collaborate with stakeholders to share good practice, and co-ordinate CPD opportunities for designated persons.

<sup>1</sup>Click [here](#) for more information.



Priority 3:

## MANAGING CONCERNS

Enabling reporting and handling safeguarding referrals in a safe and effective way.



Why this is a priority and how we will bring it to life.

### It's a priority because:

A steady flow of safeguarding referrals is a positive indicator that a safeguarding framework is working. This is underpinned by the workstreams in the other two priority areas and by:

- Easily understood and accessible ways to report concerns.
- Strong partnerships with statutory agencies and football stakeholders.
- Robust case management policies, systems and practice.
- Quality Assurance and the sharing of information and learning from cases.

### What we'll do:

1. Continue to raise awareness of ways of reporting.
2. Provide targeted and consistent guidance and support re managing low-level concerns (LLCs).
3. Support the designated persons' network to respond to and manage concerns and referrals effectively.
4. Deliver robust FA investigations, systems, data and Quality Assurance.

### Measures of success:

- a. New Case Management System (CMS) adopted across County FAs, ESFA and ISFA.
- b. CMS enables efficient management of low-level concerns and safeguarding concerns, providing actionable data.
- c. Updated policy and regulations delivered.
- d. Low-level concerns policy widely communicated to clubs.
- e. County FA low-level concerns data tracked for patterns and learning shared to reduce risk.
- f. Number of FA consultations on thresholds, and organisations and participants through FA threshold training.
- g. Quality Assurance Framework provides The FA with actionable insight, informing policy and practice.

What we **WANT TO HEAR:**

I feel more confident now in managing complaints and low-level concerns – the training and ongoing support from the County FA DSO was really helpful.

Club Welfare Officer



**PRIORITY 3: MANAGING CONCERNS (CONTINUED)**

Our **strategic objectives** and **interventions:**

OBJECTIVES	INTERVENTIONS
1. Continue to raise awareness of ways of reporting.	1.1 Ensure that reporting content remains clear and impactful, as part of the review outlined in Education and Empowerment Intervention 3.2. 1.2 Collaborate with all sectors to raise awareness and understanding of any new 'Mandatory Reporting Duty' in society. 1.3 Develop additional accessible content to signpost ways of reporting for participants e.g. linked to Education and Empowerment Intervention 2.1. 1.4 Widely promote the awareness course for parents and carers outlined in Education and Empowerment Intervention 2.3, which covers how to report concerns.
2. Provide targeted and consistent guidance and support re managing low-level concerns (LLCs).	2.1 Widely promote Low-Level Concern Policy, support learning and guidance and consider measures that can be implemented for cases where there are more than three low-level concerns. 2.2 Explore education, and sanctions (for clubs and individuals) where non-compliance occurs or persists. 2.3 Review County FA low-level concern, safeguarding and discipline processes, to remove duplication and increase efficiency. Review discipline processes to ensure they are child-centred and child and adult-at-risk friendly.
3. Support designated persons to respond to and manage concerns and referrals effectively.	3.1 Continue to provide training and consultation on thresholds and how to manage concerns that arise in football, or that The FA becomes aware of through football. 3.2 Engage designated persons with the review of TheFA.com content and provide flexible content in formats they can readily use. 3.3 Collaborate with statutory agencies to optimise information-sharing and partnership working.
4. Deliver robust FA investigations, systems, data and Quality Assurance.	4.1 Embed consistent use of new Case Management System. Review and implement learning re: referrals relating to child-on-child, adult-on-child and adult-on-adult cases. 4.2 Utilise learning from Quality Assurance measures, data, audit and case reviews to evolve policy and practice . 4.3 Work to ensure systems provide easy access to relevant data e.g. safeguarding, discipline, club visits. 4.4 Review and where possible strengthen safeguarding arrangements re: agents, intermediaries and talent scouts.



# WIDER DEVELOPMENTS

Developments in sport and/or society that may have an impact on football and that we will need to respond or adapt to in this strategy cycle.

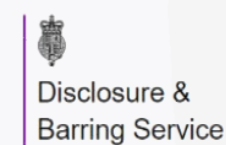
## The Whyte Review & SE/UKS Response

### The Whyte Review



- Utilising transferable learning re: culture of emotional and physical abuse.
- Sport England/UK Sport made 19 commitments, including a review of standards, sport-wide register of coaches, cross-sport local Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) network.
- The FA is inputting to a cross-sport 'Safe Sport Project', reviewing the safeguarding systems across sport.

## Review of Disclosure and Barring Service



- Government response to independent review in March 2023 is awaited.
- The FA has highlighted to DCMS the importance of this response being prioritised by Government.
- The FA to lobby alongside sport and wider stakeholders for Government position and action.

## IICSA, IICSA Changemakers, and Government



- Implementation of IICSA Report recommendations including Mandatory Reporting in society in the Criminal Justice Bill.
- Work with IICSA Changemakers and The FA Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group (FASSSAG) to lobby Government.



## REPORTING CONCERNS

If a child, young person or adult is in immediate danger, the advice is **ALWAYS** to call 999.

Anyone who has a safeguarding concern at any level of the game, related to a child and/or adult at risk, including child-on-child abuse, or the behaviour of an adult towards an under-18-year-old, or an adult who may be at risk of harm in football, must refer it to The FA's safeguarding team via [Safeguarding@TheFA.com](mailto:Safeguarding@TheFA.com).

Anyone who is concerned about misconduct between adults in grassroots football and NLS Steps 5-6, should report the concerns to their County FA. In men's and women's professional football and NLS Steps 1-4, concerns should be reported to The FA Integrity team via [integrity@TheFA.com](mailto:integrity@TheFA.com)

The safeguarding and integrity teams are staffed by professionals who are experienced in dealing with these concerns.

It is important to state that anything urgent, where there may be an immediate risk of harm to a child, or an adult at risk, must be reported to the police, children or adult social care in your area.

Referring non-immediate risk of harm concerns can be done via a club, league or County FA/Affiliated Association – all have a Designated Safeguarding Person. Alternatively, The FA can be emailed directly at [Safeguarding@TheFA.com](mailto:Safeguarding@TheFA.com)

If clubs or the County FA DSO cannot be contacted, call the NSPCC Helpline for expert advice and support on 0808 800 5000 or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

Concerns that someone may be behaving inappropriately or seeking to groom a child in an online environment should be reported to [www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre](http://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre). Reports made there will be directed to the team at the National Crime Agency. The relevant County FA should also be informed, or The FA at [Safeguarding@TheFA.com](mailto:Safeguarding@TheFA.com)

Victims of non-recent abuse in football should contact the NSPCC or The FA at [Safeguarding@TheFA.com](mailto:Safeguarding@TheFA.com)

### 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 emailing The FA's Safeguarding Team at: [Safeguarding@TheFA.com](mailto:Safeguarding@TheFA.com)

Alternatively, whistle-blowing concerns can be reported:

- Direct to the local Police or Children's Social Care services, or
- The NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit at [cpsu@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:cpsu@nspcc.org.uk), or
- The NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000 or email: [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk)

# FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

To find out more about safeguarding measures in football – and in general – please contact the organisations below. All relevant phone numbers and email addresses can be found by visiting the specific organisation’s website.

	<a href="http://www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding">www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding</a>
COUNTY FOOTBALL ASSOCIATIONS	A list of all County FAs and contact details is available <a href="#">here</a> . Click on the specific County FA website to obtain the email address of the County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).
	<a href="http://www.premierleague.com/safeguarding">www.premierleague.com/safeguarding</a>
	<a href="http://www.premierleague.com/plcf/safeguarding">www.premierleague.com/plcf/safeguarding</a>
	<a href="http://www.efl.com/governance/safeguarding">www.efl.com/governance/safeguarding</a>
	<a href="http://www.eflinthecommunity.com/privacy-policy/">www.eflinthecommunity.com/privacy-policy/</a>
	<a href="https://womensleagues.TheFA.com/">https://womensleagues.TheFA.com/</a>
	<a href="http://www.thepfa.com">www.thepfa.com</a> <i>Note – services only available to PFA members</i>
	<a href="http://www.leaguemanagers.com">www.leaguemanagers.com</a> <i>Note – services only available to LMA members</i>
	<a href="http://www.leaguecoaches.com">www.leaguecoaches.com</a> <i>Note – services only available to LCA members</i>

To read about football bodies’ responsibilities and accountabilities, Appendix 1 and 2, from pages 31 to 35 inclusive of the document you’re reading.

	<a href="http://www.premierleague.com/referees">www.premierleague.com/referees</a> <i>Note – services only available to PGMOL members</i>
	<a href="https://www.anncrafttrust.org/">https://www.anncrafttrust.org/</a>
	<a href="http://www.childline.org.uk">www.childline.org.uk</a>
	<a href="http://www.nspcc.org.uk">www.nspcc.org.uk</a>
	<a href="https://thecpsu.org.uk/">https://thecpsu.org.uk/</a>
	<a href="http://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre">www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre</a>

## ADDITIONAL SERVICES FOR SURVIVORS

### The PFA Survivor Support Advocate

Survivor Support Advocate offering support and signposting for victims of all forms of child abuse in grassroots and professional football.

**E: [SupportAdvocate@thepfa.com](mailto:SupportAdvocate@thepfa.com)**

### The FA Benevolent Fund

Apart from its general remit, the Fund has provided financial assistance to survivors and is open to new applications. You can read more about the Fund and football’s other discretionary funding sources [here](#).

**E: [benevolentfund@TheFA.com](mailto:benevolentfund@TheFA.com)**

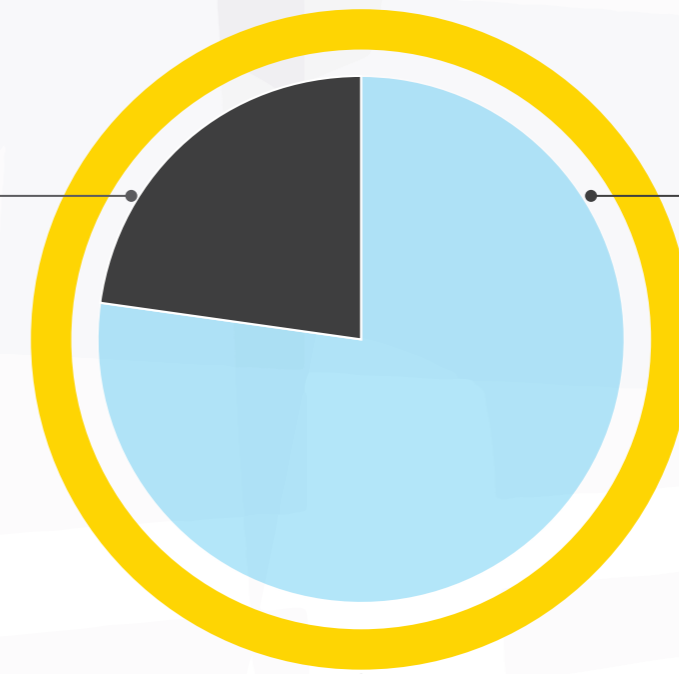
# APPENDIX 1

## FRAMEWORK OF FA RULES, REGULATIONS, POLICIES, CODES, MESSAGING AND GUIDANCE: SUPPORTING COMPLIANCE AND A SAFE, INCLUSIVE AND POSITIVE CULTURE ACROSS THE GAME.

**Adult teams: 23%<sup>1</sup>**  
Within these teams are an unknown number of adults at risk.

### Adults at Risk underpinned by:

- Safeguarding Adults Policy, Procedures and Regulations.
- Low-Level and Poor-Practice Concerns are managed by club, or organisation designated leads, or via County FA or FA Safeguarding colleagues.
- Safeguarding Referrals to The FA are managed by FA Safeguarding colleagues.



**Youth teams: 77%<sup>2</sup>**

### Children & Young People underpinned by:

- Safeguarding Children Policy, Procedures and Regulations.
- Low-Level and Poor-Practice Concerns, are managed by club, or organisation designated leads, or via County FA or FA Safeguarding colleagues.
- Safeguarding Referrals to The FA are managed by FA Safeguarding colleagues.

### All Participants

All affiliated football activity is underpinned by FA Rules, Regulations and policies to protect those who take part in it.

- Association Rules and Regulations.
- Equality Policy.
- Codes of Conduct.
- Health and Safety Policy and Guidance.
- Disciplinary Proceedings and or Integrity Investigations (including discrimination, sexual misconduct etc).
- Managed by club, or organisation, or via County FA or FA Disciplinary and or FA Integrity colleagues.

<sup>1&2</sup>Figures at October 2024 =  
Adult teams = 26,858  
Youth teams = 89,605



# APPENDIX 2

## FOOTBALL BODIES' RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES

The table below outlines the responsibilities and accountabilities of the different football bodies in England. Collectively we work to create safer environments in football. And when there are concerns, to ensure people know how and where to report them. This work demands our constant vigilance and professionalism.

ORGANISATION	DESCRIPTION	OVERVIEW OF KEY SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES
The Football Association (The FA)	<p>The governing body of football in England, from grassroots football to the professional game, including safeguarding responsibility for:</p> <p>All England men's, women's and Para teams, the female talent pathway; The National League System; The Women's Football Pyramid; The FA Women's National League; specific Cup competitions, including the men's and women's FA Cups; registered referees; coach education and development; Wembley Stadium and St. George's Park; the Safeguarding 365 Standard for County FAs and work with the Premier League, English Football League, Women's Professional Leagues Limited and all professional game bodies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides policy and regulatory framework for safeguarding children and adults across the game.</li> <li>Develops safeguarding policy, procedures and safer working practice guidance.</li> <li>Maintains and continues improves in line with National Standards for safeguarding children and adults in sport.</li> <li>Manages child protection concerns in collaboration with the statutory agencies and those arising from content on DBS certificates – in line with FA Regulations, including managing suspensions, other risk management measures and referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service.</li> <li>Operates the DBS Check service for anyone in affiliated English football working with children, young people and adults. The service extends from grassroots to the EFL and collaborates with the Premier League, which oversees the provision of checks in their clubs.</li> <li>Provides safeguarding awareness training for coaches, referees, medics, designated safeguarding officers and club committee members – the latter from grassroots football to the men's and women's National Leagues.</li> <li>Facilitates tailored training for those in designated roles in County FAs and develops resources and guidance for grassroots football.</li> <li>Commissions research and insight as required, to guide and evaluate the impact of the work.</li> <li>In collaboration with the Premier League, EFL, WPLL and County FAs, continually reviews compliance against safeguarding standards and measures.</li> <li>Works with colleagues to embed safeguarding in all relevant FA systems, processes, programmes, activities and events.</li> <li>Collaborates with all football bodies, the NSPCC CPSU and ACT via the Pro-Game Safeguarding Forum to share practice and strengthen safeguarding arrangements across the game.</li> </ul>

ORGANISATION	DESCRIPTION	OVERVIEW OF KEY SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES
Premier League	The Premier League is the organising body of the Premier League with responsibility for the competition, its Rule Book and the centralised broadcast and other commercial rights. The Premier League supports 164 football clubs to deliver community programmes across England and Wales, as well as women and girls' football and the grassroots game.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has long-standing safeguarding and safer recruitment rules which complement FA regulations. These are reviewed each season.</li> <li>Issues clubs with Safeguarding Standards detailing requirements.</li> <li>Commissions regular independent audits of internal and club safeguarding policies, procedures and practice.</li> <li>Requires clubs to have a board-level senior safeguarding lead, a dedicated full-time head of safeguarding and an academy safeguarding officer.</li> <li>Supports club understanding and compliance through guidance, training and work delivered against individual club support plans.</li> <li>Delivers workforce safeguarding training and awareness events regularly throughout each season.</li> <li>Delivers awareness raising measures and guidance to children, young people and adults to understand their rights and where they can get help or advice if they need it.</li> <li>Requires clubs to refer concerns to statutory agencies and football bodies.</li> <li>Collaborates with clubs and football bodies to share practice and strengthen safeguarding arrangements across the game.</li> </ul>
English Football League (EFL)	<p>The EFL is the largest single body of professional clubs in European football and is responsible for administering and regulating the EFL, the League Cup and the League Trophy, as well as reserve and youth football.</p> <p>The EFL supports two charitable organisations: League Football Education (LFE) and the EFL in the Community (EFLitC).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires all clubs to have a Safeguarding Senior Manager (SSM) reporting at board level, as well as a Club Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO).</li> <li>Issues a set of safeguarding standards detailing the expected requirements across all members Clubs.</li> <li>Inspects Clubs to ensure compliance and continuous improvement in the area of safeguarding. Clubs that operate an academy are independently audited by safeguarding specialists.</li> <li>Issues every club that operates a youth academy with strict safeguarding rules and procedures that complement FA Rules and Regulations at the start of each season.</li> <li>Requires adherence to safer recruitment practice.</li> <li>Maintains regular communication with clubs providing advice and guidance on all matters related to safeguarding.</li> <li>Requires Club Senior Safeguarding Manager and Designated Safeguarding Officers to attend compulsory training throughout the football season.</li> <li>Requires clubs to report and refer concerns to statutory agencies, The FA and the EFL.</li> </ul>

ORGANISATION	DESCRIPTION	OVERVIEW OF KEY SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES
Women's Professional Leagues Limited (WPLL)	The WPLL is the organising body of the Barclays Women's Super League and Barclays Women's Championship with responsibility for the League Handbook and its centralised broadcast and other commercial rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has safeguarding requirements for its member clubs and monitors compliance against these requirements.</li> <li>Requires all clubs to have a Safeguarding Policy, a Designated Safeguarding and Player Welfare Officer and a Board Safeguarding Champion.</li> <li>Supports club's understanding and compliance through guidance and training.</li> <li>Requires adherence to safer recruitment practice.</li> <li>Requires clubs to refer concerns to statutory agencies. The FA and WPLL.</li> <li>Collaborates with clubs and football bodies to share practice and strengthen safeguarding arrangements across the game.</li> </ul>
League Managers Association (LMA)	A member association which represents all managers who have worked or are working in the Premier League, EFL, Barclays Women's Super League and Barclays Women's Championship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a policy to guide its staff who work with children and young people.</li> <li>Provides support and guidance to its members on safeguarding issues, including advice from the LMA Legal Team on the application of the relevant Rules and Regulations and counselling support from its network of psychiatrists, psychologists and counsellors.</li> </ul>
Professional Game Match Officials Limited (PGMOL)	Appoints, trains, and develops referees and assistant referees to officiate across the Premier League, EFL, the Barclays Women's Super League and Barclays Women's Championship, the National League and The FA competitions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a Designated Safeguarding Officer.</li> <li>Has a named Senior Safeguarding lead.</li> <li>Has a Safeguarding minimum standards document which details PGMOL match officials and staff who engage in 'extra-curricular' activities in addition to their primary role, which may include supervised engagement with children, young people and adults at risk. These individuals will need to be on an approved list before carrying out the activity at hand. The approval criteria includes completion of an enhanced DBS Check and online safeguarding course.</li> </ul>
Professional Footballers Association (PFA)	A trade union which represents the interests of professional footballers who have played or are playing in the Premier League, EFL and The Barclays FA Women's Super League.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a policy to guide its staff who work with children and young people, requiring the relevant checks and training for staff in line with FA policy.</li> <li>Has a named Designated Safeguarding Lead.</li> <li>Has a Designated Safeguarding Officer.</li> <li>Provides support and guidance to its members.</li> <li>Promotes its online resource 'The PFA Safety Net' to young Academy Players, Parents, Guardians, Carers and Club personnel.</li> <li>Provides a national counselling service to its members.</li> </ul>

PREMIER LEAGUE AND EFL CHARITABLE FOUNDATIONS

ORGANISATION	DESCRIPTION	OVERVIEW OF KEY SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES
League Football Education (LFE)	LFE is a charity established in 2004 by The EFL and The PFA, with a primary purpose to deliver the Apprenticeship Programme at EFL clubs. LFE's responsibilities extend to the delivery of Life Skills to U9-U23 players, parents/guardians and club staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has a team of Regional Officers (ROs) who monitor and support the Apprenticeship Programme in EFL clubs.</li> <li>Provides Policies and Procedures for Regional Officers to support safeguarding arrangements in clubs.</li> <li>Manages a Study Programme with Club Community Organisations (CCO's).</li> <li>Has a Designated Safeguarding Officer, who works closely with the EFL Safeguarding Manager and sits on the EFL Safeguarding Strategy Group.</li> <li>Supports the EFL in monitoring the pre-16 Academy programme.</li> <li>Support learners after the completion of their apprenticeship, including tracking and monitoring calls and assistance with a range of transition opportunities, within and outside of football, in the UK and abroad.</li> </ul>
Premier League Charitable Fund	The Premier League Charitable Fund distributes funds on behalf of the Premier League and its partners to 92+ Club Community Organisations (CCOs) in the Premier League and English Football League. The Premier League Charitable Fund's goal is to help ensure that participants achieve their potential and positively impact their communities through the power of football.	<p>The Premier League Charitable Fund requires all CCOs receiving funding to comply with a range of safeguarding standards set out within a Capability Code of Practice. The standards cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership, governance and culture</li> <li>Roles and responsibilities</li> <li>Safeguarding policies, procedures and practice</li> <li>Educating and empowering</li> <li>Service delivery</li> <li>Managing incidents and allegations</li> <li>Listening culture</li> <li>The Premier League Charitable Fund commissions independent safeguarding audits of Premier League CCOs and offers safeguarding advice, support and training to CCOs.</li> </ul>
English Football League in the Community (EFLitC)	The EFLitC is the charitable arm of The EFL, supporting a network of Club Community Organisations (CCOs) to deliver and facilitate events, programme and activities within their local communities, often engaging with some of society's most vulnerable groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Along with the Premier League Charitable Fund, outlines safeguarding measures for CCOs to comply with and evidence via the Capability Code of Practice CCOP.</li> <li>Acts in an advisory capacity, supporting CCOs with ongoing safeguarding guidance &amp; training.</li> <li>Monitors safeguarding &amp; incident data from CCOs, observing trends and patterns, making recommendations and offering support &amp; guidance as required.</li> <li>Operates robust safeguarding policies, procedures and measures for the direct delivery of a range of projects and programmes involving children and adults at risk.</li> <li>EFLitC commissions independent learning reviews of CCO safeguarding arrangements each season.</li> </ul>



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