



For All

PLAY  
SAFE



# BUILDING AN EVER-SAFER CULTURE

THE FA SAFEGUARDING STRATEGY TO 2024  
ANNUAL REVIEW & REPORT – YEAR 1



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# PROGRESS MADE, BUT SAFEGUARDING IS A CONSTANT PRIORITY

Having a strategy in place to define the direction we want to head is vital for every area of The FA. That's step one and in safeguarding's case we published our strategy *Building an Ever-Safer Culture* in February this year.

However, step two is equally important – checking in and formally reporting on progress made, to ensure we're on track and vitally, identify areas where we need to improve.

Workstreams related to our strategy began last year, so the report you're reading is a review of the last 12 months, with two more years of the strategy period to run to the end of the 2023/24 season.

In the period covered in this document, The FA Board and Senior Management Team received refresher training and regular updates on how we're performing against the safeguarding measures we've set. Safeguarding is a constant agenda item. In her first three months in post, Debbie Hewitt, MBE, our new Chair met with The FA Survivor Group to hear of the important value they bring to The FA's work.

Across all of the focus areas in the strategy, we've been making good progress and you'll see that we've provided some statistics and brought the work to life with the various case studies in this document. There is some great work happening across the game and we could have written many more.

Three of the key interventions I want to mention from the last 12 months are:

- The inaugural safeguarding in football weekend last November, which kicked-off off our ongoing Play Safe campaign to continue to drive awareness across the game.
- Our new safeguarding awareness course for parents and carers, making them aware of the vital role they can play and crucially, how to report their concerns.



- Child-centred innovative research we are undertaking with Chichester University, giving us a far greater insight into how children's voices are being and can be empowered at club level.

We are reviewing the recently-published Whyte Review into British Gymnastics to identify areas of transferable learning for us to address in football, as well as seeking to influence the Government review of the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Of course, we will continue to produce annual reports, but in reality, safeguarding is a 365-day-a-year operation and is everyone's responsibility. We will continue to take a leadership role and our ongoing intention is that safeguarding remains a priority at every level of the game.



**Mark Bullingham**  
Chief Executive, The FA

# OUR PURPOSE, APPROACH AND PRINCIPLES

Football's lead organisations in England are united by a threefold safeguarding purpose:

## WE WILL:

1. Implement preventative safeguarding measures and create fun, safe football environments.
2. Make the reporting of concerns as easy as possible.
3. Ensure safeguarding, child and adult protection concerns are investigated swiftly and thoroughly in conjunction with statutory agencies – and with demonstrable outcomes.

						
						
MARK BULLINGHAM Chief Executive, The FA	RICHARD MASTERS Chief Executive, Premier League	TREVOR BIRCH Chief Executive, EFL	DAWN AIREY Chair, FA Women's Super League and FA Women's Championship Board	MAHETA MOLANGO Chief Executive, PFA	RICHARD BEVAN Chief Executive, LMA	MIKE RILEY Managing Director, PGMOL

- **Our approach:** The above chart reflects the collaborative safeguarding work that goes on every day across the football landscape. This work extends beyond the football bodies and for example, encompasses the group set up to ensure survivor voices are heard. It also means working closely with statutory bodies and organisations such as those listed in the second columns on **pages 29** and 30. Crucially, collaboration also means ensuring the voice of the child is heard – this may sound obvious, but is often overlooked.

- **Our principles:** Our safeguarding work is based on the five principles on page 13 of Building an Ever-Safer Culture, our main Safeguarding Strategy, which you'll find **here**.



# OUR FIVE FOCUS AREAS AND STRATEGIC GOALS

Our strategy has five focus areas, each with its own strategic goal:

FOCUS AREA	STRATEGIC GOAL
<b>1. LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE</b>	To provide strong leadership of safeguarding across the game and deliver effective governance frameworks.
<b>2. STANDARDS</b>	To clearly communicate the expected standards, regulations, and policies across the game and to support those in designated safeguarding roles to drive and monitor safeguarding practice and culture.
<b>3. PREVENTION</b>	To create ever-safer football environments through robust recruitment processes, driving safer working practice and culture, utilising insight and delivering clear messaging and inspirational campaigns.
<b>4. EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT</b>	To deliver accessible, impactful safeguarding education programmes, resources and information to help create ever-safer football environments for children and adults at risk.
<b>5. PROTECTION</b>	To make the reporting of concerns as easy as possible, continue to build strong partnerships with statutory agencies in managing abuse cases, provide guidance on managing low-level concerns and deliver robust case management by The FA.

From pages 8-28 inclusive, you'll read about the work we've undertaken in the last 12 months against each of the above focus areas. Within that work, we've listed a number of interventions which reflect recommendations made in Clive Sheldon QC's independent report into allegations of non-recent child sexual abuse in football, published in March 2021.

# YEAR 1 IN NUMBERS

## 1. LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

**100%**

of FA Board and Senior Management Team received safeguarding refresher training.

**92%**

of County FA Board Directors up to date with safeguarding training.

**83**

**INDIVIDUALS**

individuals and family members accessed Sporting Chance support this season.

**£175,695**

awarded by FA Benevolent Fund this season to survivors of abuse in football.

**41**

individuals supported this season via Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) Survivor Support Advocate Service.

## 2. STANDARDS

**63%**

of County FAs, English and Independent Schools Associations (52) independently assessed to date this year.

**100%**

of Premier League clubs (20) independently assessed this season.

**43%**

of EFL clubs independently assessed this season, as part of a rolling programme through which all clubs have been assessed by Barnado's.

**100%**

of BWSL & BWC clubs (24) meet policy and safeguarding officer requirements.



## YEAR 1 IN NUMBERS

### 3. PREVENTION

**78%**

of under-18 team grassroots coaches in-date with safeguarding training. County FAs working with clubs to ensure everyone in regulated activity is trained.

**97,468**

DBS checks undertaken August 2021 – June 2022.

**100%**

of 148 events at Wembley, St. George's Park or England teams 'on the road' risk-assessed. All have safeguarding plans.

**100%**

of 101 events linked to UEFA Women's EURO 2022 (fixtures, national promotion programme and fan parties) risk-assessed. All have safeguarding plans.

**42%**

of parents/carers of youth players are aware of Play Safe (see page 18).

**57%**

of parents/carers think grassroots football is safer, having seen the Play Safe campaign.

### 4. EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

**109K**

learners completed safeguarding courses

**97.1%**

of learners feel confident/very confident in their safeguarding skills and knowledge having completed The FA Safeguarding Children course.

**1,705**

completed new Safeguarding Awareness for Parents/Carers' course (launched May 2022).

**4.8/5**

average post-course confidence rating by parents/carers.

### 5. PROTECTION

**91%**

referrals received by FA initially assessed in two working days.

**100%**

of referrals received by The FA that met thresholds for referral to statutory agencies were referred.

# LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

## STRATEGIC GOAL:

To provide strong leadership of safeguarding standards across the game and deliver effective governance frameworks.

### What we said we'd do

1. Continually improving the ways in which we measure the impact of the safeguarding measures that are implemented.

2. Continuing to deliver safeguarding training and continuous professional development (CPD) to The FA Board and the Boards of all County FAs and Affiliated Associations.

3. Continuing to engage with and support The FA Board Safeguarding Champion and enhance the support for the County FA Board Champions.

4. Continuing to partner with Sporting Chance to provide therapeutic support to survivors, support the work of The FA Benevolent Fund and the PFA in relation to the Survivor Support Advocate Service.

5. Support The FA Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group (FASSSAG) to input to football's work and exert their influence more widely in sport and society.

### What's happened?

- Measures' framework in place to track all strategic actions. Shared with FA Board and FA Survivor Group.
- Insight work underway to assess impact of public-facing campaigns, e.g. Play Safe.

- 100% of FA Board members refresher trained via the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU), September 2021.
- 92% of all 50 County FA Board, English Schools FA and Independent Schools FA Board members are up to date with safeguarding training<sup>1</sup>. Non-compliant Board members will be standing down at forthcoming Annual General Meetings<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> NSPCC CPSU will have independently verified this for 33 County FAs by end July 2022, as part of Safeguarding 365 compliance assessments – also see Standards' focus area, starting on page 12.

- FA Board Safeguarding Champion Kate Tinsley met FA Safeguarding leads regularly, and proactively contributed to FA Board safeguarding discussions. Role profile revised to cover Welfare and Safety, in line with the UK Sports Governance Code.
- All 52 County FAs, English Schools FA and Independent Schools FA have a named Board Safeguarding Champion, a number with independent safeguarding expertise.
- 30 County FA Board Safeguarding Champions joined FA-hosted webinar, with input from the NSPCC CPSU (Child Protection in Sport Unit) and Kate Tinsley.

- Since January 2017, The FA has funded Sporting Chance to deliver direct therapeutic support for all who have requested it, reaching 269 individuals with lived experience of non-recent child sexual abuse in football, or their family members. 83 supported this season.
- Since May 2019, The FA Benevolent Fund has received 75 applications, and supported people with £409,480 of awards (£176k this season).
- Since November 2019, over 100 individuals assisted via the PFA Survivor Support Advocate Service with guidance, signposting, support, and advocacy, including 41 this season. See case study on **page 10**.

- The independently-chaired FASSSAG met eight times, including with new FA Chair Debbie Hewitt MBE in her first 100 days in post.
- The Group inputted to safeguarding workstreams including:
  - The new FA Safeguarding Strategy published in February 2022 and related performance measurement framework
  - The new FA-led Play Safe campaign – See case study on **page 19**.
  - A new Safeguarding Awareness course for Parents/Carers by England Football Learning – See case study on **page 24**.



Reporting on focus area 1:

# LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

## (continued)

Specific activity based on Sheldon Report recommendations:

### What we said we'd do

6. Regular safeguarding refresher training every three years for The FA Board and Senior Management Team.

7. Safeguarding training every three years, for the Boards of all men's and women's professional clubs, across the Premier League, EFL, Barclays Women's Super League (BWSL) and Barclays Women's Championship (BWC).

8. Enhance the advocacy for safeguarding at Board level, through the appointment of and engagement with additional Board Safeguarding Champions e.g., in the women's professional game.

9. Publish a safeguarding report at the end of each season, providing a position statement and progress updates on safeguarding across the game

### What's happened?

- FA Board trained annually as per item 2 on previous page.
- 100% of FA Senior Management Directors safeguarding refresher trained via NSPCC CPSU in January 2022.

- All clubs must ensure Board members receive annual safeguarding training. This is subject to regular audit. The Premier League has developed bespoke safeguarding leadership, governance and culture training to support clubs.
- All 72 EFL club Board members are required to complete the newly-released, bespoke EFL Board of Directors' mandatory course by 1st August 2022.
- The BWSL and BWC Board safeguarding trained via NSPCC CPSU, November 2021. Bespoke solution being developed for the 24 women's professional game clubs for 2022/23.

- The BWSL and BWC Board Champion engages with the safeguarding team in relation to all strategic developments.
- Safeguarding is woven into the new FA Women's National League strategy 'Empowering for Success', published May 2022 and WNL clubs have safeguarding requirements to meet in line with the rest of adult open-age football.

- The Safeguarding Strategy Year 1 Review you are reading is the report on the 2021/22 season.



## Case study, looking at:

### Swift access to survivor support

Early in the 2021/22 season, the Survivor Support Advocate (SSA) service, funded by the PFA and The FA, saw the 100th person reach out to access the services. As you'll see below, that number has now been well surpassed.

In the two-and-a-half years of operating the service it has reached men and women from ages 14 to 72. These have mostly been former players, including former Premier League and international players. But this has also included officials from grassroots football through to the professional game.

Ian Ackley, who runs the SSA service, offers a confidential 'ear' to survivors of any form of abuse in football. As someone with lived experience of abuse in football himself, he is familiar with the landscape and processes that may be encountered, something many individuals contacting the service have found beneficial.

"As part of my work, I've been able to support and signpost individuals who were not aware of The FA's offer of a period of funded confidential therapeutic support, such as therapy or counselling provided via Sporting Chance," notes Ian.

"This support can often be accessed swiftly, starting with Sporting Chance undertaking an assessment with the individual to identify their needs. Sporting Chance has supported eligible individuals who live all over the UK and as far away as Australia," says Ian.

The SSA service has also worked closely with The FA and PFA Benevolent Funds, which have assisted and supported with planned interventions and support, as well as responding effectively, where some individuals have needed immediate crisis interventions.

#### Examples of support provided by the SSA service include:

- Mediation with clubs for individuals
- Signposting for advice on debt, housing issues and/or benefits entitlements
- Assistance with countless benevolent fund applications for eligible individuals, where help and assistance have been afforded for wide variety of reasons
- Support through the initial criminal and civil reporting processes, through in some cases to securing successful civil claims, and beyond.



Professional  
Footballers'  
Association



## Case study, looking at:

### The role of Nottinghamshire FA's Board Safeguarding Champion

The County FA Safeguarding 365 (S365) Standard requires every County FA to have a named Board Safeguarding Champion (BSC). They must be appointed against a specific role profile, go through a formal induction as well as training and continuing professional development.

At Nottinghamshire FA (NFA), the BSC is Tracey Newcomb, a qualified social worker. After an extensive career as a senior manager, Tracey works independently as a senior consultant in the field of children's services improvement. She's now been the NFA BSC for three years and is an invaluable part of the NFA's extended safeguarding team.

"I took on this role because I really wanted to offer something to the county I've lived in all my life," Tracey reflects. "I have a passion for exercise and understand the value of sport to young people. On the NFA Board, as I see my role as advising, guiding and supporting using my specialist safeguarding knowledge in safeguarding."

"I regularly liaise with Rachael Wilks, the NFA Designated Safeguarding Officer. She's a former Police Officer, and like me, is absolutely passionate about safeguarding children and adults."

"Apart from themes and issues arising from the NFA safeguarding team's day-to-day work, last season there were three incidents of teenagers collapsing whilst playing football. Tragically, two were fatal. It's been devastating for the families and Rachael has led tirelessly and compassionately."

"She's liaised with The FA safeguarding and medical teams as well as providing guidance and support to the affected clubs. She's also provided reassurance more widely across the NFA club network. Where I've been able to add value is offering clinical support and professional guidance."



# STANDARDS

## STRATEGIC GOAL:

*To communicate clearly the expected standards, regulations and policies across the game and to support those in designated safeguarding roles to drive and monitor safeguarding practice and culture.*

### What we said we'd do

- |  |   |  |  |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|
| <p>1. Continuing to demonstrate that The FA meets and evolves in line with the NSPCC CPSU Standards.</p> | <p>2. Collaborating with the Premier League and EFL as they ensure their independently assessed Standards are met across their club membership.</p> | <p>3. Ensuring all Barclays Women's Super League and Barclays Women's Championship clubs meet the required safeguarding standards as per their club licence.</p> | <p>4. Supporting the independent assessment of every County FA and Affiliated Association<sup>1</sup> against The FA's bespoke 'Safeguarding 365' Standard and ensuring all compliance requirements are met.</p> | <p>5. Ensuring The FA meets and continues to evolve in line with the Ann Craft Trust Safeguarding Adults' Framework<sup>2</sup> to develop standards and promote best practice when working with adults in football.</p> | <p>6. Reviewing the safeguarding provision within men's clubs in the National League System (NLS) and women's clubs in The FA Women's National League (FA WNL) and supporting their development.</p> |
|--|---|--|--|--|--|

### What's happened?

- |   |   |  |  |  |   |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In October 2021, the NSPCC CPSU confirmed The FA continues to meet the standards for safeguarding and protecting children in sport.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Premier League and EFL require their clubs to demonstrate they meet their safeguarding standards.</li> <li>This season all 20 Premier League clubs and 31 EFL clubs have been independently assessed.</li> <li>Where relevant, actions have been identified for clubs to implement continuous improvements.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>100% BWSL and BWC clubs met the policy and DSO licence requirements.</li> <li>65% met training, DBS checks and induction requirements. Clubs will be required to achieve 100% before next season or be monitored on a time-phased action plan to do so.</li> <li>We've sought player feedback on safeguarding and welfare to inform policy, guidance, and practice.</li> <li>An agreement reached that during 2022/23 all 24 clubs will have full time Designated Safeguarding and Welfare Officers.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>31 County FAs independently assessed by the NSPCC CPSU against the mandatory FA Safeguarding 365 Standard.</li> <li>100% have demonstrated that they continue to meet standards to date, with 27 identified as having aspects of their work that exceed the Standards. The remaining 21 County FAs will be assessed by end December 2022. Where relevant, actions have been identified for County FAs to implement continuous improvements.</li> </ul> <p><sup>1</sup> Affiliated Associations are national bodies who govern specific areas of the game, such as the English Schools FA (ESFA), the Independent Schools FA (ISFA) and the football associations of the various armed forces.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Specialist input made by the Ann Craft Trust, with key Safeguarding Adults work e.g. England Teams' Safeguarding Adults Policy.</li> <li>Risk assessment and safeguarding plans implemented for FA Disability Cup, 11th/12th June 2022.</li> </ul> <p><sup>2</sup>In 2022/23 we will gather evidence in line with the Safeguarding Adults' standards.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FA has developed a safeguarding standard for NLS clubs in steps 1-4. To be communicated in 2022/23 with implementation guidance.</li> <li>Safeguarding is referenced in the new FA WNL strategy 'Empowering for Success', published May 2022.</li> </ul> |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|



# STANDARDS (continued)

## What we said we'd do

7. Regularly reviewing and updating our safeguarding regulations, policies and procedures.

8. Providing ongoing support and training for the network of designated safeguarding persons (Board Champions, organisation Senior Leads and Designated Officers) across the game.

9. Ensuring that those in regulated activity working with children's (under-18) and adult teams - including adult disability teams - who have not yet undertaken safeguarding training, do so.

10. Refreshing and publishing updates to the series of FA safeguarding guidance notes which can be found [here](#) on various topics, and proactively promoting them across the game.

## What's happened?

- FA Safeguarding Policies being updated for 2022/23 season given recent legislative changes which seek to prevent abuse by those in positions of trust.
- FA Safeguarding Regulations amended to explicitly include the duty to report any incident, facts or matters regarding abuse or harm against a child, and/or any sexual offence against anyone (whether an adult or child). This will enable The FA to assess for any transferable risk of harm.

- Training opportunities provided for those in designated safeguarding roles, i.e.:
  - County FAs: Managing Safeguarding in your County workshops; Safeguarding Adults; Effective use of Technology; FA Thresholds for Referrals and a webinar for Board Safeguarding Champions. In addition, County FAs accessed third-party training e.g. via local authorities, National Working Group and NSPCC.
  - Premier League Clubs and Club Community Organisations: Board Safeguarding Leadership and Governance; Accredited Safeguarding Officer Learning and Development Programme; Embedding Children's Rights; Allegation Management; Safer Recruitment; Risks linked to Online Gaming; the Government's Prevent Duty; Safeguarding Adults at Risk. Also facilitation of peer support and practice-sharing events.
  - EFL Clubs: DSO Level 3 qualification; Adverse Childhood Experiences; Contextual Safeguarding; Child Sexual Exploitation;

Introduction to Domestic Abuse; Recognising and Dealing with Bullying Issues; Mental Health First Aid (Youth and Adult); Safeguarding Investigations and Decision-Making; Online safety; Training for Senior Safeguarding Managers with NSPCC and Safer Recruitment.

- EFL Trust: Level 3 DSO Qualification; Safer Recruitment; Safer Culture; Safeguarding Adults at Risk & Mixed Age Activities; Safeguarding Online Activities; Writing a Safeguarding Policy; Responding to Low-Level Concerns; Safeguarding Walking Football. EFL Trust also hosted monthly DSO sessions to network and share best practice.
- BWSL and BWC Clubs: FA Thresholds for Referrals. Via regular forums, topics discussed included: application of Sheldon recommendations to women's professional game; managing allegations and concerns; FA safeguarding strategy and policy; reflective practice and learnings.

- Registered under-18 teams must name coaches working with them.
- In grassroots youth football solely for under-18s, 78% of coaches of under-18 team have an-in-date safeguarding training record.
- County FAs continue to work with clubs to ensure we achieve the goal of everyone in regulated activity being trained.
- In adult teams with 16-17-year-old registered players, the data is subject to change, as these players may join and/or leave teams at different points in the season. We continue to strive to monitor this data effectively. Also see Education & Empowerment focus area, point 15, [page 23](#).

- The following guidance documents have been updated:
  - 1.7 Abuse of Trust:
  - 5.4 Travel, Trips and Tournaments - advice and permissions:
  - 7.4 Fake News – what to trust online;
  - 7.5 How to ask an adult for help.
- Multiple updates were made at the relevant times to The FA's Covid-19 Safeguarding Risk Assessment guidance and template document.

## Reporting on focus area 2:

# STANDARDS (continued)

### Specific activity based on Sheldon Report recommendations:

#### What we said we'd do

**11.** Ensure that clubs proactively share their welfare/safeguarding officer's contact details, as well as their policy and procedures with their players and their parents/carers when players join and at the beginning of each new season.

**12.** Incorporate into the Safeguarding 365 Standard a review of the clubs' safeguarding policies and practices, including overnight stays, away travel and trips, use of social media, and coaching in a digital environment and obtain the views of children and young people.

**13.** Ensure that the designated safeguarding persons in professional clubs regularly report to their club's Board on safeguarding matters. At every Premier League and English Football League (EFL) Championship club, there should be a dedicated, full-time, salaried post, with suitable qualifications and experience. In EFL Leagues 1 & 2, there should be, as a minimum, a part-time salaried post, with suitable qualifications and experience, and 50% of their time should be dedicated to safeguarding.

#### What's happened?

- The Premier League and EFL Standards require clubs to do this, and club's actions are independently audited.
- In grassroots football, The FA undertook a survey of over 500 clubs to sense-check club proactivity. This indicated:
  - 80% adopted The FA's Safeguarding Children policy template. 1% stated they did not have a Safeguarding Children policy – these clubs were contacted immediately to address this.
  - Almost all clubs share their policy with their members; two-thirds make it available online and at least one-third make it available as hard copy.
  - Clubs are most likely to share their policy at the start of the season with two-thirds sharing it when someone joins.
- This insight, as well as learning from County FA proactive work with clubs, informs how we continue to check and challenge club practice and support clubs to be proactive and transparent with this information.

- The grassroots club survey also provided insight into club practice highlighting:
  - How Covid-19 impacted club activity in relation travel and overnight stays.
  - 1 in 5 clubs hosted online coaching sessions for under-18s.
  - 6 in 10 clubs stated they always required parent/carer supervision in these sessions.
  - At least half of clubs said they only worked in groups when running sessions online with under-18s.
  - Half the clubs enabled children to contribute to the way the team/club runs e.g., via surveys or asking their captains for feedback. This insight, alongside County FA Safeguarding 365 desktop reviews of club policies, informs how we best support, check and challenge club practice.

- Safeguarding is a standing Board agenda item for the Premier League and EFL.
- The Premier League and EFL Safeguarding Standards require club boards to provide effective leadership and governance over safeguarding arrangements.
- The Premier League standards also state the minimum staffing requirements, ensuring clubs meet this recommendation.
- The EFL introduced minimum staffing requirements via a regulation for the 2021/22 season. EFL Club Chief Executives completed a self-certification in November 2021 stating that they met the staffing requirements. This is also checked as part of the independent audit process to ensure that all Clubs are compliant.





Case study, looking at:

## Safeguarding 365 Standard for County FAs

As reflected in the title, safeguarding is ever-present throughout the County FA year. The Safeguarding 365 (S365) manual itself details the mandatory standards that County FAs must meet in six areas: governance and leadership, operational delivery, listening to the voice of and supporting under-18s, football disciplinary, case management and compliance monitoring.

All 52 County FAs, as well as the English Schools FA (ESFA) and the Independent Schools FA (ISFA), are independently assessed by the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) against the S365 standards.

Of the County FAs assessed to date, the NSPCC CPSU identified 27 which have exceeded the S365 standards, others which have specific areas of good practice, and a few with areas where they need to improve. Examples of Counties who exceeded the standards include:

Essex FA were applauded for their 360-degree review of clubs with 20+ teams, providing each club with a safeguarding development report to support everyday safeguarding practice. In addition, like many County FAs, Essex FA has supported other safeguarding-related initiatives (see here), including raising awareness that under-18 referees are still learning and abuse towards them is unacceptable.

East Riding FA were highlighted for running an innovative ‘Wellness Champions’ programme. It saw Club Welfare Officers support children and young people’s mental health and wellbeing – helping combat the negative impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. You can read more about this initiative here.

The CPSU noted that most County FAs had successfully embedded safeguarding into their operational culture. Specific examples included: ‘Welfare Wednesdays’ (Dorset FA); monthly whole-team safeguarding meetings (Staffordshire FA); in-person/virtual support and the use of local partnerships to deliver continuous professional development (CPD) for Club Welfare Officers (many County FAs, including Liverpool FA, London FA, Surrey FA, Wiltshire FA, Nottinghamshire FA and Cheshire FA).





Case study, looking at:

## Collaborative working exemplified by Wolverhampton Wanderers FC



There's an established network of safeguarding leads at clubs throughout the country, operating at every level of the game.

One such lead is Lisa Carter, Head of Safeguarding at Premier League club Wolverhampton Wanderers. We asked her how she interacts with the safeguarding network in the men's professional game.

"I look to both the Premier League and colleagues in my role across other clubs for support and guidance. It can be easy to operate in a silo and slip into 'marking' our own work.

"We operate in accordance to safeguarding standards defined by the Premier League and we are regularly audited against those standards. Independent scrutiny is crucial to ensure we remain diligent and focused. All clubs' heads of safeguarding that I've had the privilege of working with are continuously trying to drive improvements. We absolutely want to do better and learn from mistakes of the past.

"Safeguarding's about asking tough questions and it can be about pushing and insisting that we put the child at the centre of our thinking and decision-making. It's about high standards with no exceptions. It's about difficult questions and holding a mirror up to our own practice and being open to hear any feedback or criticism.

"Both the Premier League and colleagues within clubs have a significant role to play in asking questions of colleagues but also sharing best practice, innovative ideas and thinking. While we may work for our own clubs, I like to think that we are working collaboratively together to benefit football and everyone within it."





## Reporting on focus area 3:

# PREVENTION

## STRATEGIC GOAL:

*To create ever-safe football environments through robust recruitment process, driving safer working practice and culture, utilising insight and delivering clear messaging and inspirational campaigns.*

### What we said we'd do

1. Reviewing and updating The FA safer recruitment policy for all staff and consultants.
2. Processing 70-75k DBS Checks each season and risk-assessing and managing the checks that include content indicating criminal convictions, cautions or additional information that may be relevant to safeguarding children and or adults at risk. This directly links to Focus Area 5: Protection.
3. Continuing to embed safeguarding in all relevant FA strategies and participation programmes.
4. Ensuring safer working practice is maintained across all England teams, at Wembley events, at England 'on the road' events, and at UEFA Women's EURO 2022.
5. Piloting and then launching a safeguarding self-audit tool for grassroots clubs' committees to track their progress in

### What's happened?

- FA HR staff received refresher training on safer recruitment processes and DBS eligibility.
- A working group has been reviewing processes and practice.
- FA HR Safer Recruitment Policy being updated for 2022/23 season.
- 97,468 DBS Checks undertaken August 2021 – June 2022. Likely to be 100,000+ by end July. These checks include high volumes of renewals.
- The checks enabled The FA and professional clubs to screen out anyone with a known history indicating they may pose a risk of harm to children or adults at risk.
- Multiple existing and new FA programmes have been supported including:
  - Weetabix Wildcats' safeguards reviewed each season, and further compliance checks added for providers not using The FA's Events platform.
  - The FA affiliation process for national Small-Sided Football (SSF) providers reviewed, with changes to be implemented in 2022/23.
  - The Goal Click and Football Your Way disability football projects were supported, with 'Safeguards for under-18s involved in FA media activity' guidance.
- The Premier League has processes in place to embed effective safeguarding measures in partnership work and has longstanding requirements placed on clubs to do the same. The EFL has embedded safeguarding in its commissioned activity and programmes.
- 148 events were delivered at Wembley, St George's Park or 'on the road'. All were risk-assessed and had event safeguarding plans in place.
- Our Event Safeguarding Advisors (ESAs) managed the 63 concerns that arose at these events and 17 referrals<sup>1</sup> were made to statutory agencies as a result.
- 101 events are being delivered in support of UEFA Women's EURO 2022, including the fixtures across 10 venues, a national promotion programme, fan parties and associated legacy activities. Risk assessments and safeguarding plans are in place for all this activity.
- This work is planned for 2023/24, informed by responses from the club survey we undertook.

<sup>1</sup> These referrals were about child or adult welfare at our venues.

## Reporting on focus area 3:

# PREVENTION (continued)

Specific activity based on Sheldon Report recommendations:

### What we said we'd do

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|--|---|---|---|
| <p>6. Promoting the UK Government's safeguarding guidance for out of-school settings to parents/carers who may access football activity via unaffiliated private football providers.</p> | <p>7. Continuing to evolve The FA's Respect campaign messaging to influence behaviour on the sidelines of youth matches and abuse towards referees.</p> | <p>8. Launch an ongoing safeguarding awareness campaign, to signpost those involved in football, including parents and families, towards information on safeguarding and minimising risk.</p> | <p>9. Work with stakeholders across the game and devote one day of the year to a National Day of Safeguarding in Football every season.</p> |
|--|---|---|---|

### What's happened?

- |  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This guidance for parents/carers is reflected in:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– FA guidance notes 8.1 'Questions you should ask' for parents/carers.</li><li>– The FA Play Safe campaign.</li><li>– The new Safeguarding Awareness course for parents/carers in football.</li></ul></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Extensive review of The FA Respect programme completed to ensure it's having the desired impact. As a result, an action plan will be delivered during 2022/23.</li><li>• We will continue to drive positive behaviours and assess what further interventions are needed to tackle undesirable and unacceptable behaviours.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Play Safe campaign launched 20th/21st November 2021 – see case study on <b>page 19</b>.</li><li>• Monitoring shows that parent/carers awareness of the campaign is 43%, with 55% of them feeling football is safer, having seen the campaign. 79% of parents/carers feel positively about the campaign – see case study on <b>page 19</b>.</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• National Safeguarding Weekend is main iteration of Play Safe campaign (see case study on page 18). Nevertheless, safeguarding is 365 days a year and 24/7 throughout football.</li><li>• National Football Safeguarding Weekend ran on 20th/21st November 2021 across the game.</li><li>• The 2022/23 Play Safe-branded weekend will be 17th/18th September 2022.</li></ul> |
|--|--|--|---|



## Case study, looking at:

### How Play Safe supports everyone to embed safeguarding

Play Safe is the ongoing national FA-led campaign designed to raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding in football.

It's run in partnership with the NSPCC and has the full backing of the Premier League, EFL, Barclays Women's Super League and Barclays Women's Championship. It's also supported and being run across every other level of the game.

It comes to the fore in three ways at various key points in the year:

- **National Safeguarding Weekend:** this ran across 20th/21st November 2021 and launched Play Safe, with the full support of The FA's Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group – as reported in The FA Safeguarding Strategy. It will run on 17th/18th September 2022, with a focus on conveying to parents/carers the vital safeguarding role they can play. Short films and other digital assets will be provided to County FAs, leagues and clubs throughout the country, with a request that they are used to positively influence parents, ideally encouraging them to take the new Safeguarding Awareness course for Parents/Carers from England Football Learning, The FA's educational arm.
- **Other FA safeguarding initiatives:** for example, the safeguarding course for parents/carers mentioned above. Promoted by England Football Learning it carries the Play Safe branding on this page.
- **Third-party safeguarding initiatives:** Play Safe was used to support Safer Internet Day in February 2022. It will also be used to support Anti-Bullying Week and Parents in Sport Week later this year. It will again support these campaigns in future years.

Safeguarding messages can be multi-faceted and the aim of Play Safe is to have one core message across football to everyone who participates in football in any way:

Play Safe by ensuring best safeguarding practices are embedded in everything you do – and everyone understands the role they play.





## Case study, looking at:

### Taking a child-centred approach to football's future

A total of eight County FA and professional club community organisations united to pilot various programmes as part of building the Youth Retention Hub, an initiative to help retain 12-18-year-old male players.

Key to the overall pilot was gaining insight from the participants themselves on the formats they enjoyed most and which would engage them going forwards. Gaining such insight is all part of building a culture where children and young people feel their views are valued, listened to and acted upon.

Here's what some of the young players said:

Programme pilot name	Quote
Me Fit	"It is very good to improve mental health and makes you feel good about yourself."
Turn Up and Play	"I learned how to develop my football skills."
Vevo Cam	"I was able to see how I performed at both training and matches and what I was doing right and what I needed to improve on to make me a better player."
Small-Sided Leagues	"We play five-a-side in school so it's good to play it on a weekend."
Funky Futsal	"The fact of being able to meet new people and have fun with them."

In line with safer working practice, all the pilot programmes had a safeguarding plan in place requiring them to:

- Have a safeguarding risk assessment and plan for all activity;
- Gain informed parent/carer consent;
- Appoint a safeguarding lead;
- Comply with appropriate staff to player ratios;
- Ensure DBS checks and safeguarding training requirements were met;
- Inform everyone involved, including children/young people, to be aware of the expected behaviours – on and offline – and how to report a concern should one arise, and
- Capture children's views and experience.



**"The Youth Retention Hub is an important project in helping to shape our future engagement in Youth Football," notes Andy Dyke, FA National Development Manager. "It's allowed us to test a range of interventions, but crucially have young people as the main feedback source. It all means the interventions for these age groups going forward will be shaped by the players themselves."**

**Andy Dyke, FA National Development Manager**



Reporting on focus area 4:

# EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

## STRATEGIC GOAL:

*To deliver accessible, impactful safeguarding education programmes, resources and information to help create ever-safe football environments for children and adults at risk.*

### What we said we'd do

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|--|--|--|---|--|
| <p>1. Instilling a child/adult at risk-centred approach and embedding this via wider FA programmes, educational courses and general messaging.</p> | <p>2. Delivering safeguarding refresher training for all FA staff and consultants.</p> | <p>3. The Premier League continuing to deliver workforce learning and development opportunities, empowering children, young people and their parents/ carers, and working with the NSPCC to enhance child-centred interventions.</p> | <p>4. Providing safeguarding training for the designated safeguarding persons across the men's National League System and The FA Women's National League.</p> | <p>5. Reviewing, revising and re-launching the free 'Safeguarding for Committee Members' course run by England Football Learning, to ensure it is also meets the needs of grassroots adult open-age clubs.</p> |
|--|--|--|---|--|

### What's happened?

- |   |  |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child/player-centred principles are core to the way in which The FA shapes the thinking re: the future development of grassroots football. See case study on <a href="#">page 19</a>.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refresher training delivered to 100% of FA Senior Management Team.</li> <li>Briefings delivered to relevant FA Departments on GDPR and safeguarding requirements re: photography and filming of under-18s.</li> <li>1:1 sessions delivered for Senior Commercial Partnerships Managers.</li> <li>Briefings and refresher training delivered to targeted groups working with England Teams and those operating the Wembley Stadium Sensory Rooms.</li> <li>Training delivered to FA staff and consultants involved with UEFA Women's EURO 2022.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Premier League continues to deliver regular national training and awareness events, as well as training to clubs through individual support plans.</li> <li>Working in partnership with the NSPCC and other key partners, children and young people have access to information, support and training on safeguarding and wellbeing.</li> <li>The Premier League is running a pilot programme with three clubs to strengthen the voice of children and young people and the role of a child rights-based approach.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Alliance and Leagues Committees to receive training in 2022/23 season.</li> <li>NSPCC CPSU delivered training for The FA Women's National League Committee in May 2022.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safeguarding for Committee Members' course reviewed for 2022/23 season – increasing focus on committees' governance responsibilities.</li> <li>Consulting on content and delivery, for those leading adult open-age clubs and leagues for 2022/23 season.</li> </ul> |
|---|--|---|---|---|



## Reporting on focus area 4:

# EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT (continued)

### What we said we'd do

6. Continually evaluating, reviewing and improving critical courses to ensure they are high quality and provide appropriate support.

7. Evolving the e-learning Safeguarding Children course run by England Football Learning with contextualised webinar content and the opportunity for learners in different roles to interact with an expert tutor.

8. Continuing to embed safeguarding messages across all England Football Learning provision.

9. Continuing to align with the UK Government's plans and messaging to empower adults to identify risk and keep children safe as part of its Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) strategy.

10. Similarly, aligning FA messaging with the UK Government's compulsory relationships' education in primary schools and relationships and sex education in secondary schools.

11. Reviewing and enhancing the safeguarding adult's guidance published on The FA's website, promoting this information directly to adult players.

### What's happened?

- All England Football Learning courses are being reviewed to ensure they adhere to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
- Content is reviewed following legislative change and relevant amends made accordingly e.g. recent changes relating to those in positions of trust with 16/17-year-olds in sport.
- All courses are subject to ongoing monitoring and learner feedback to inform iterative changes.

- 97.1% of learners feel confident or very confident in their safeguarding skills and knowledge having completed this course.
- 95.2% of learners found the course activities to be engaging or very engaging.
- Loughborough University commissioned to research the impact of this course during 2022/23 and inform any future developments

- Key safeguarding messages shared via England Football Learning platforms e.g. podcasts, blogs, articles, and courses.
- Briefing delivered on the safeguarding course portfolio and key messages to the part-time Coach Developer workforce (~750 staff), supporting them to embed messaging in face-to-face delivery.

- All England Football Learning safeguarding courses are designed to empower adults in this way.
- The new Safeguarding Awareness for Parents/ Carers course empowers parents/carers in football and includes content on the potential risk of sexual abuse, grooming, exploitation, and reporting.

- This work is planned for 2022/23.

- This work is planned for 2022/23

## Reporting on focus area 4:

# EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT (continued)

### Specific activity based on Sheldon Report recommendations:

#### What we said we'd do

**12.** Build and launch a tailored safeguarding e-learning course aimed at parents/carers, including content to help them to understand grooming and how to regularly check in with their child(ren).

**13.** Ensure the child's voice is considered and resources created for children themselves to empower them to contribute their views and to know they can speak up if they are worried about something. Partner with external experts and develop age-appropriate toolkits to support clubs and organisations. Regularly assessing the impact and acting on the feedback.

**14.** Create and disseminate safeguarding resources to raise awareness with adult players on how to recognise that another player may be struggling with something and may need help.

**15.** Mandatory safeguarding training for anyone working in regulated activity<sup>1</sup>, who has not yet completed the training as part of an FA qualification.

#### What's happened?

- The bespoke 30-minute Safeguarding Awareness for Parents/Carers course was released in May 2022 covering this content, informed by parents/carers and The FA Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group (FASSSAG).
- Early feedback from learners shows:
  - 4.9/5 course rating
  - 4.8/5 relevance of content
  - 4.8/5 average post course confidence
  - Positive anecdotal feedback: "It's helpful in all areas and gives you the confidence and understanding to help people when they are vulnerable or need your help."

See case study on [page 22](#).

- Chichester University commissioned by The FA to undertake three phases of research, which alongside work being led by the Premier League and three of its clubs, will inform a long-term strategy to empower children's voices in football.
- Phase 1 completed of the Chichester University research exploring child-centred cultures in clubs and identifying good practice.
- Phases 2 and 3 will be delivered early in 2022/23 season. The phases look at: understanding children's experiences of culture in football clubs; interpreting the findings and planning interventions.
- All 52 County FAs, English and Independent School's Associations deliver strategies and interventions to engage the voices of children and young people.

- This work is planned by the Premier League for 2022/23
- The Premier League has developed safeguarding and healthy relationship training for first-team players and staff, which will be made available to all member clubs.

- Please see the Standards' focus area, point 9, [page 13](#).



Case study, looking at:

## Football’s first bespoke safeguarding course for parents/carers

May 2022 saw the launch of the first bespoke safeguarding awareness course for parents/carers.

Developed by England Football Learning – The FA’s education arm – the 30-minute free online has so far achieved an approval rating of 4.9/5 from parents and carers.

Emphasising the needs and wellbeing of children, the course outlines the forms, signs and indicators of abuse, including ‘grooming’. It also includes a checklist of the safeguards that should be in place at a child’s club or football setting, and how to verify these are in place. Crucially, it also covers the ways in which concerns can be reported through recognised channels.

The course has been welcomed by The FA Survivor Support and Safeguarding Advisory Group (FASSSAG). “We wish there had been a course like this when we were children, leading to spotting the signs that things were not ‘right’,” says the Group. “Sadly, there are still cases of abuse in football and sport today. This means it’s so important that everyone – in this case parents and carers – recognises the signs and indicators that a child may be at risk of being groomed or abused and importantly, knows what to do.”

We’ve had positive feedback via the evaluations, so the last word goes to a parent who’s taken the course:

**“As a parent, coach and chairman of our club, I will push this course to all our parents to be aware of potential problems not only for our club, but also for other clubs we may come across during our football sessions.”**

To take the course, go [here](#).



ENGLAND FOOTBALL  
**LEARNING**







Case study, looking at:

## Championing children's rights and voices in the Premier League

The Premier League is leading an 18-month pilot project with three clubs, aimed at enhancing the experience of children and young people in its activities.

The pilot focuses on the value of a child rights-based approach and strengthening the voices of children and young people, further supporting and embedding a holistic club approach to safeguarding, wellbeing and empowerment.

This pilot aims to:

- Provide input and insights to co-develop new child rights-based approaches, so these can be implemented across activities, policies, training and practice;
- Develop innovative measures for capturing the views and experiences of children, young people and their parents/carers to enhance policies and practice which impact on their experience;
- Develop and deliver training to children and young people, their parents/carers and staff at all levels – from Board-level through to operational delivery; and
- Identify benchmarks of good practice to inform the Elite Player Performance Plan (EPPP) review, including requirements placed on clubs and processes assessing compliance and impact.

Outputs to date include children's rights' training for club board members, academy staff and parents/carers. The next phase of the project will bring children and young people from pilot clubs together to drive the overall project forward.

As Jess Addicott, Premier League Head of Safeguarding, said:

**“This is an important project building on existing good practice and developing new and inspiring initiatives which place children and young people at the centre.”**



The Premier League's safeguarding strategy can be found [here](#). This outlines the League's commitment to safeguarding and the work being undertaken both centrally and by clubs to support children, young people and adults at risk.



# PROTECTION

## STRATEGIC GOAL:

*To make the reporting of concerns as easy as possible, continue to build strong partnerships with statutory agencies, provide guidance on managing low-level concerns and deliver robust case management by The FA.*

### What we said we'd do

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|--|--|---|---|---|--|
| <p>1. Continuing to investigate all safeguarding-related allegations and concerns in line with internal policies and procedures.</p> | <p>2. Refreshing our policy around 'low-level' concerns, taking on board the learning from Clive Sheldon QC's Review as well as more recent publications to drive a safeguarding culture at all levels of the game. We will also continue to and learn from other sectors so we can assist clubs and organisations dealing with such concerns.</p> | <p>3. Continuing to deliver training on the types of concerns that must be referred to The FA, to all Designated Safeguarding Officers at County FAs/ Affiliated Associations and men's and women's professional clubs (from the Premier League down to Step 4 and Tiers 1 &amp; 2 of the women's pyramid).</p> | <p>4. Constantly improving awareness of the ways to report safeguarding concerns via all lead football organisations.</p> | <p>5. Utilising The FA's Quality Assurance Framework to provide insight and patterns of concerns about the referrals made into The FA and drive improvements in the way we manage concerns in football.</p> | <p>6. Continue to provide anonymised case data to Sport England-funded prevalence studies, to help gain a picture of the prevalence and type of concerns arising across sport.</p> |
|--|--|---|---|---|--|

### What's happened?

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|--|--|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>91% of referrals<sup>1</sup> to The FA had an initial assessment within two working days of receipt.</li> <li>100% of cases assessed by The FA that met the threshold for referral to statutory agencies were referred.</li> <li>FA Board regularly apprised of statistics and analysis relating to caseloads.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Project group set up and reviewing County FAs approach to managing low-level concerns.</li> <li>Refreshed policy drafted and being consulted on.</li> <li>Developments to case management system underway to improve efficiency and effectiveness of low-level concern case management for County FAs.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Threshold for Referrals' training delivered to representatives from the Premier League, Premier League Club Community Organisations, EFL Championship and League One, Barclays WSL and Barclays Women's Championship Clubs, 12 County FAs, the English Schools FA and the Independent Schools FA.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We continuously strive to increase awareness through everything we do. These messages are core to new interventions launched this season including:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safeguarding Awareness course for Parents/ Carers;</li> <li>Play Safe campaign.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We have a Quality Assurance Framework for the safeguarding case management team's work which comprises two different models:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Audit model: monthly thematic as well as case file audits by the QA Manager.</li> <li>Data prevalence model: quarterly analysis of data.</li> </ul> </li> <li>The above data collection and analysis enables assessment of impact, understanding of training needs, identifying inconsistencies and trends, as well as strategy development.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In collaboration with Sport England and the NSPCC CPSU, we continue to provide anonymised safeguarding case management data to assist with the overall understanding of abuse concerns in sport.</li> </ul> |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|

<sup>1</sup>KPI for this area is 90% so has been exceeded.





Case study, looking at:

## The FA Safeguarding Case Management Team – what it is and what it does

The FA Safeguarding Case Management Team (SCMT) exists to investigate and assess allegations and concerns about individuals who may pose a risk of harm to children and adults at risk in the football environment.

The team comprises 12 professionally-trained Safeguarding Case Officers (SCO), three Safeguarding Case Managers, a Professional Game Safeguarding Manager and a Quality Assurance Manager. It's led by the Head of Safeguarding Case Management.

The SCOs and Managers all have extensive experience of child protection in a legal and/or statutory capacity and are supported by a Data Analyst and a Safeguarding Co-ordinator. All operate in line with The FA Safeguarding Regulations.

“Incidents or concerns may be referred to the team from a variety of different sources,” explains Sarah Walker, The FA Head of Safeguarding Case Management. “Referrals are an important and positive indicator that safeguarding awareness and action is embedded across the game.

“When a referral is received, an initial assessment is completed by one of the managers to consider the transferable risk of harm in the football environment. This could lead to safeguards being implemented such as an interim suspension, whilst an investigation is carried out.”

The team only undertakes a final risk assessment when statutory agency investigations have concluded. The SCMT final risk assessment and recommendations, which could include permanent suspensions, supervision, mentoring, education etc, are considered by the Safeguarding Review Panel, comprising independent safeguarding specialists.

Alongside The FA Regulatory Advocate team, SCMT constantly strives to strengthen The FA's Safeguarding Regulations. For example, next season the regulations explicitly include the duty to report any incident, facts or matters regarding abuse or harm against a child, and/or any sexual offence against anyone (whether an adult or child). The inclusion of offences against an adult, will enable The FA to assess for any transferable risk of harm to children.







## Case study, looking at:

# Support and innovation that's embedding safeguarding at Sunderland FC



When Sharon Brown joined Sunderland FC in February 2021, she had 20 years' safeguarding experience, but hadn't worked in football.

"It meant I had a swift learning curve, but the support I received from the EFL and The FA was invaluable," she recalls. "I had introductory calls with both as part of my induction and swiftly engaged in a host of mandatory training – all bespoke to Academy Football.

"Regular peer meetings with other northern-based men's and women's professional clubs continue to be a massive source of support. In fact, we're now setting up local groups for specialist peer supervision. I've found everyone so approachable for advice and guidance."

Sharon's work – and that of other EFL club DSOs – is backed by a framework comprising the 'EFL Safeguarding Standards', alongside the statutory Government guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and the EFL's 'Guide to Safer Working Practice'.

"It all means we can champion a culture of vigilance, where everyone's committed to working together with the child's best interests at the heart of all decision-making".

Looking ahead, Sharon – who is the club's head of safeguarding – is currently expanding the Electronic Case Management System at the club, as well as working with the club's head of analysis to introduce anonymous referrals on 'Kairos', the Black Cats' scheduling and communication platform.

As she says: "This enhances transparency and accountability and provides a safe place for parents, scholars and staff to anonymously share low-level concerns. More broadly, it's another component to ensure the club – and all its activities – delivers a safe space for all."



The EFL's safeguarding strategy can be found [here](#). This outlines the League's commitment to safeguarding and the work being undertaken both centrally and by clubs to support children, young people and adults at risk.

# OUR YEAR 2 TARGETS

## 1. LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

- Deliver FA Board refresher training and continued Board Champion engagement.
- Deliver Board training solution for all 24 BWSL and BWC Boards.

## 2. STANDARDS

- Ensure FA continues to demonstrate its safeguarding practice and culture meets the NSPCC CPSU standards.
- Assess remaining 27 County FAs against the Safeguarding 365 standards.
- Roll out the safeguarding standard for National League System (Steps 1-4) and support clubs to implement.
- Continue to deliver safeguarding training for those in designated safeguarding roles.
- Drive increased compliance:
  - All coaches in youth football to have completed DBS check and safeguarding training.
  - All coaches in adult football with 16/17-year-old players to have completed DBS check and safeguarding training.
- Continue to drive awareness, and check/challenge re grassroots club practice and culture.
- Oversee the requirement for Barclays Women's Super League and Barclays Women's Championship clubs to move to full-time Designated Safeguarding Officers and meet all licence requirements.



# OUR YEAR 2 TARGETS

## 3. PREVENTION

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- Continue to deliver safer recruitment guidance and DBS checks.
- Continue to risk-assess and deliver safeguarding plans for all FA and Wembley events.
- Deliver refreshed Respect campaign.
- Deliver second Play Safe-branded National Safeguarding Weekend in September 2022.
- Increase awareness of the Play Safe campaign and messaging from 42% to 65%.

## 4. EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

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- Complete 'Voice of Child' research and deliver strategic interventions based on it.
- Update all safeguarding courses in line with legislation.
- Deliver refreshed Safeguarding for Committee Members' course.
- Deliver new resources for those running adult open-age clubs and leagues.
- Complete research on impact of Safeguarding Children course, review findings and action accordingly.
- Continue to work towards getting 100,000 parents/carers through the Safeguarding Awareness course by the end of 2024.
- Deliver child-friendly resources for under-18 players.
- Deliver safeguarding resource and messaging for adult players.

## 5. PROTECTION

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- Deliver 'low-level concerns' project with County FAs, importantly seeking to drive greater consistency with the management of low-level concerns reported to County FAs and related support to grassroots clubs.





# REPORTING CONCERNS

Anyone who has a safeguarding concern 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.

Anyone who is concerned about misconduct between adults in grassroots football should report the concerns to their County FA and in men's and women's professional football should report their concern 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)

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

## 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.

	<p><a href="http://www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding">www.TheFA.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding</a></p>
<p>COUNTY FOOTBALL ASSOCIATIONS</p>	<p>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).</p>
	<p><a href="http://www.premierleague.com/safeguarding">www.premierleague.com/safeguarding</a></p>
	<p><a href="http://www.efl.com/-more/governance/safeguarding">www.efl.com/-more/governance/safeguarding</a></p>
	<p><a href="http://www.thepfa.co.uk">www.thepfa.co.uk</a> <i>Note – services only available to PFA members</i></p>
	<p><a href="http://www.leaguemanagers.com">www.leaguemanagers.com</a> <i>Note – services only available to LMA members</i></p>
 <p>PROFESSIONAL GAME MATCH OFFICIALS</p>	<p><a href="http://www.premierleague.com/referees">www.premierleague.com/referees</a> <i>Note – services only available to PGMOL members</i></p>

To read about football’s overarching safeguarding framework and football bodies’ responsibilities and accountabilities, see pages 36 to 40 inclusive of Building an Ever-Safer Culture, The FA Safeguarding Strategy to 2024. You can find it here.



[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)



[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)



[www.thecpsu.org.uk](http://www.thecpsu.org.uk)



[www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre](http://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre)

## 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 75 survivors to date 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)









**FOR ALL**

The Football Association  
Wembley Stadium  
London HA9 0WS  
**T:** +44 (0)800 169 1863  
**F:** +44 (0)800 169 1864  
**W:** TheFA.com