

Southern Counties East Football League Safeguarding Children Policy

The Southern Counties East Football League recognises that Safeguarding is the responsibility of every adult involved in our League.

1. The Southern Counties East Football League acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of every child and young person who has been entrusted to its care and is committed to working to provide a safe environment for all members. A child or young person is anyone under the age of 18 engaged in any football activity. We subscribe to The Football Association's Safeguarding Children - Policy and Procedures and endorse and adopt the Policy Statement contained in that document.
2. The key principles of The FA Safeguarding Children Policy are that:
 - The child's welfare is, and must always be, the paramount consideration.
 - All children and young people have a right to be protected from abuse regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.
 - All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
 - Working in partnership with other organisations, children and young people and their parents/carers is essential. We acknowledge that every child or young person who plays or participates in football should be able to take part in an enjoyable and safe environment and be protected from poor practice and abuse.
3. The Southern Counties East Football League has a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people by protecting them from physical, sexual or emotional harm and from neglect or bullying. It is noted and accepted that The Football Association's Child Protection Regulation (see The FA Handbook) applies to everyone in football whether in a paid or voluntary capacity. This means whether you are a volunteer, match official, helper on club tours, football coach, club official or medical staff.
4. We endorse and adopt The FA's Responsible Recruitment guidelines for recruiting volunteers and we will:
 - Develop a role profile
 - Request identification documents
 - As a minimum meet and chat with the applicant(s) and where possible conduct interviews before appointing
 - Request and follow up with 2 references before appointing
 - Require an FA DBS Online Disclosures Team Enhanced Disclosure where appropriate in line with FA guidelines

- **All current Southern Counties East Football League members with direct access to children and young people will be required to complete a CRB Enhanced Disclosure via The FA DBS Online Disclosures Team.** If there are concerns regarding the appropriateness of an individual who is already involved or who has approached us to become part of The Southern Counties East Football League, guidance will be sought from The Football Association. It is noted and accepted that The FA will consider the relevance and significance of the information obtained via The FA DBS Online Disclosures Team Enhanced CRB Disclosure and that all decisions will be made in the best interests of children and young people.
5. All Southern Counties East Football League member clubs will be required to adopt the FA Safeguarding children policy which can be found here [1-2-grassroots-football-safeguarding-children-policy-procedures-colour-version.pdf](#). Member clubs are required to display a copy of the policy on their website and/or have a copy available at their home ground.
 6. All Southern Counties East Football League member clubs will be required to list all team management personnel, including but not limited to managers, assistant managers, coaches and physiotherapists on the FA Whole Game System. Those personnel must hold an in-date FA Player Welfare in Open Age Football qualification, and those with players under the age of 18 will be required to hold an in date enhanced Disclosure & Barring Certificate (DBS) which has been completed through the FA DBS Online Disclosures Team.
 7. The Southern Counties East Football League do not permit any children under the age of 16 to be present in the team technical areas during matches. If this rule is breached, the match official will stop the game until the child relocates to the spectator area. Children under 16 are also not permitted in the changing rooms.
 8. The Southern Counties East Football League supports The FA's Whistle blowing Policy. Any adult or young person with concerns about a colleague can 'whistle blow' by contacting 0800 169 1863 and asking for The FA's safeguarding team, or via email on safeguarding@TheFA.com or alternatively by going direct to the Police, Children's Services or the NSPCC. The Southern Counties East Football League encourages everyone to know about the policy and utilise it if necessary.
 9. The Southern Counties East Football League has appointed a League Welfare Officer (LWO) in line with the FA's role profile and required completion of the Safeguarding Children and Welfare Officers Workshop. The post holder will be involved with Welfare Officer training provided by The FA and/or CFA. The LWO is the first point of contact for all League committee members regarding concerns about the welfare of any child or young person. The LWO will liaise directly with the CFA Designated Safeguarding team and will be familiar with the procedures for referring any concerns. They will also play a proactive role in increasing awareness of Respect, poor practice and abuse amongst CWO and their members and League committee members. The LWO can be contacted at welfare@scefl.com and full contact details will be provided on the league website.

10. We acknowledge and endorse The FA's identification of bullying as a category of abuse. Bullying of any kind is not acceptable in our League. If bullying does occur, all players or parents/carers should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly. Incidents need to be reported to the relevant CWO or LWO or alternatively in cases of serious bullying we may contact the CFA Designated Safeguarding team.
11. Respect codes of conduct for Players, Parents/Spectators, Officials and Coaches have been implemented by The Southern Counties East Football League. In order to validate these Respect codes of conduct the League has clear actions it will take regarding repeated or serious misconduct at club level and acknowledges the possibility of potential sanctions which may be implemented by the CFA in more serious circumstances. All registering clubs will be required to adopt the Respect codes.
12. **Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.** If you are worried about a child, it is important that you report your concerns – no action is not an option.
- I. If you are worried about a child or young person then you need to report your concerns to the LWO.
 - II. If the issue is one of poor practice, they will either deal with the matter themselves or seek advice from the County FA Welfare Officer
 - III. If the concern is more serious – possible child abuse they will, where possible, contact the CFA Designated Safeguarding team first, then immediately contact the Police or Children's Services
 - IV. If the child needs immediate medical treatment take them to a hospital or call an ambulance and tell them this is a child protection concern. The County FA Welfare Officer will be informed of action taken.
 - V. If at any time the LWO is not contactable or the matter is serious then either contact the CFA Designated Safeguarding team directly, or call The FA/NSPCC 24 hour Helpline for advice on 0808 800 5000, or contact the Police or Children's Services

NB - The FA's Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures available via www.TheFA.com/Footballsafes click on the 'downloads' under Policy and Procedures, outlines in detail what to do if you are concerned about the welfare of a child and includes flow diagrams to describe this process. This is also covered within the Safeguarding Children workshop, where participants are given the opportunity to discuss how this feels and how best they can prepare themselves to deal with such a situation.

13. Further advice on Safeguarding Children matters can be obtained from:

- www.TheFA.com/Footballsafes
- CFA Designated Safeguarding team
- The FA Safeguarding Children enquiry line 0845 210 8080
- Emailing – Footballsafes@TheFA.com

This policy is adopted in January 2025 and will be reviewed annually. Next review date January 2026.