



Leighton United Football Club

GUIDANCE FOR REPORTING SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS AND INCIDENTS

All incidents of child abuse, concerns or suspicion of abuse must be reported immediately to one of the Club Welfare Officers (CWO).

Coaches/team managers and other members of staff must not try and resolve a matter themselves, regardless of how well they know those concerned.

This procedure must be followed if anyone associated with the club suspects that a child is being abused, neglected, or bullied. Doing so will enable the best possible support to be provided for the child, help the reporter deal effectively and efficiently with the issue, and ensure that correct and appropriate action is taken.

Doing nothing is not an option.

Step 1: Responding to the child

- Create a safe environment by:
 - Staying calm and not rushing into inappropriate actions.
 - Keeping questions to a minimum.
 - Reassure the child stating it is not their fault.
 - Listen very carefully, demonstrate that they are being taken seriously and that they are believed.
- Assess if the child might be in immediate need of medical treatment. If so, the child or young person will be taken to hospital, or an ambulance called. Medical staff should be advised it is a child protection issue.
- Do not make promises. Explain that others will have to be informed (people who can help them) in order to help.
- Let the child talk and be very clear over what the child says. Avoid closed questions (i.e. those requiring only yes or no answers). The child must use their own words. The law is very strict in relation to children being led by the use of words or suggestions.
- Write down or record electronically everything that was discussed in as much detail as possible. It is important to do this as soon after the incident as possible in order that the details are accurate.
- Ensure the record is dated.

- **Maintain confidentiality. Do not discuss with anyone (including parents/carers) until advice has been sought from one of the Club Welfare Officers.**
- Do not take sole responsibility.

Remember it is not the reporter's responsibility to determine whether abuse has taken place, but reporters do have a responsibility to report any suspicions, however small these might be.

Step 2: Reporting concerns

Record facts, not opinions, including:

- The child's name, address, date of birth.
- The date, time, and location of the incident.
- The nature of the allegation.
- Observations of the child's behavioural and emotional state.
- Exactly what the child said and the reporter's responses.
- Description of any visible injuries.
- Observations made by others.
- Any actions taken (e.g. name, address, phone number, position of people contacted).
- Ensure a clear distinction is made between fact, opinion, and hearsay.
- Reporter's knowledge and relationship with the child or young person.
- Names and designations of those to whom concerns were passed and the timing.

Send the report promptly to one of the CWOs.

A course of action will then be decided by the CWO. There are usually two options:

Option 1: Sharing with the parents/carers:

If considered appropriate, the initial worries may be discussed by the CWO with the parents/carers. For example, if there has been a change in the child's behaviour, it is probably best to seek information from parents/carers on anything that may shed light on this change. If concerns still remain then Option 2 should be followed.

Option 2: Sharing with professionals:

If Option 1 has been followed and there is still concern, or if Option 1 is not considered appropriate (e.g. allegations of sexual, physical abuse by the parents/carers), then appropriate professionals will be contacted by a CWO. These might include the County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer, the Child Protection contact at the child's or young person's school (if applicable), or if an emergency the duty officer at local Children's Social Care or the Police, explaining it involves a child protection issue.

The child's or young person's name, role, address, age and contact number should be given, together with a clear, accurate record of the circumstances and the child's behavioural and emotional state, what the child has said, and what action has been taken.

- Social Services or the Police should then advise the CWO on what to do next, including when and how to inform parents. They will also take responsibility for ensuring appropriate investigations are undertaken.
- If a child needs urgent medical attention as a result of suspected abuse, then this must be done as a matter of urgency. Children's Social Care must be informed immediately by the CWO.
- All information regarding the case should be recorded in detail and held as a confidential file by the CWO.

The child's welfare is and must always be the paramount consideration.

Other Ways of Reporting Concerns

- **If a Club Welfare Officer is not available** then concerns can be raised with the County FA Designated Safeguarding Officer, by emailing the FA Case Management Safeguarding Team at Safeguarding@TheFA.com or if urgent and none of these can be contacted, the NSPCC 24 hour helpline on 0808 800 5000. If a child is thought to be at immediate risk, call the local Police or Children's Social Care.

Further Advice

- Advice can be found in the safeguarding area of the FA website: <https://www.thefa.com/football-rules-governance/safeguarding>
An image of the first page of the current edition is shown below:



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HOW TO REPORT SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS

FOR CLUB/LEAGUE

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