



# Safer Recruitment of Volunteers in Grassroots Football

## Responsibility

The intentions of most people who work with children and young people in football are good. However, The FA recognises its responsibilities to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people participating in football by providing a safe and enjoyable environment. Sound recruitment and selection procedures will help to screen out those who are not suitable. By adopting the points outlined in these guidelines, you will be putting in place the best possible practice to protect children and young people whenever a volunteer is sought to work with them. When clubs or leagues recruit new members, all reasonable steps must be taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children and young people. In addition, a club's or leagues volunteer selection processes must be consistent and fair at all times. While these guidelines have special emphasis on recruiting volunteers to work with children and young people, they could easily be applied to recruitment of all volunteers, as well as paid staff.

## 1. Planning

The first stage of any recruitment process involves planning. Club or league officials need to draw up a role profile, which highlights the main areas of a voluntary role. They should also decide upon the skills and experience that an individual would need to fulfil the requirements of the role. A club or league's recruitment process must be developed in such a way that they treat every applicant in a fair and consistent manner.

## 2. Advertising

In order to attract new volunteers, it may be necessary to advertise outside the club itself, for example - utilising the club website, newsletter / e-zine, social media (e.g. Twitter, club Facebook page), sports hall notice board, local school, may also be beneficial. The advertisement should reflect the club or league's Safeguarding Children Policy and it should contain the skills and experience required and the duties to be undertaken. However, it should not discriminate in terms of age, race gender or disability.

## 3. Application Form

Clubs and leagues should use application forms to collect information on each applicant. The FA's Volunteer Application Form can be adapted for a club or league's use. Each applicant's information is then collected in a consistent way. At least two officials should work together to consider all the application forms to ensure that they are scrutinised fairly and equitably. It is very important that clubs or leagues also ask for identification documents to confirm the identity of the applicant – for example: a passport or driving license providing photo ID.

#### **4. Meeting / Interview**

It is highly recommended that club or league officials meet with everyone who has applied for the post or offered to volunteer before any decisions about taking them on are made. More than one official should be present. The meeting/interview will enable the club or league to explore further the information provided in the application form. The questions to be asked should be prepared in advance and should provide the applicant with the opportunity to recount previous experiences and give examples of how they have or would handle situations. Whilst it is important to gain information about an applicant's technical abilities, it is also necessary to explore their attitudes and commitment to child welfare.

Below are examples of questions that could be used to discover this information:

- Tell us about any previous experience you have working with children or young people.
- Give a child-related scenario and ask the applicants what they would do. For example: 'It is a winter evening and the training session has finished. A parent has not arrived to pick up their child – what would you do?' The applicant would be expected to say that they would stay with the child and contact the parents to find out where they were.
- 'Is there anything we should know that could affect your suitability to work with children or young people?'

You should also ask applicants to bring along certificates or other proof of any qualifications to the meeting or interview – for example, a coaching certificate or proof of attendance at any safeguarding children courses.

#### **5. References**

At least two references should be requested from individuals who are not related to the applicant. The FA's Volunteer Reference Form can be adapted for club or league use. One reference should be associated with the applicant's place of work and, if possible, one that demonstrates that the individual has been involved in sport, particularly children's football, previously. References should be followed up; ideally before they begin to work at the club or league. If you decide to let them volunteer before taking up the role then they must not be left alone with children or young people at any time. If the references raise any concerns, you are advised to contact The FA Safeguarding Children Department for advice and guidance.

## **6. Criminal Record Checks (CRCs)**

CRC's are another tool in the recruitment procedure. A Disclosure and Barring Service Enhanced Check with or without Barred List, tells The FA about a person's recorded offences. It can indicate that a person is not a suitable person to work with children – for example: if they have a history of sexual offending. It may also tell The FA that further investigations are required – for example: if the person has a history of drug dealing or racist offending. Volunteers and others in football should be assured that The FA will take into account the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (ROA), 1974 and only consider offences which we are entitled to in relation to the ROA Exceptions Order, 1975. The FA will only share information with those who are involved in the recruitment decision. The club will only be told whether or not a person is considered suitable to work with children. Applications for CRCs should be dealt with by the Club Welfare Officer. If an applicant claims to have a DBS Enhanced check, the club should seek advice from The FA CRB or check the Online Safeguarding Service via Member Services. Further information can be found at [TheFA.com/governance/safeguarding](http://TheFA.com/governance/safeguarding)

## **7. Recruitment Decisions**

It's important to consider all the information you receive via the application form, confirmation of identity, the outcome of the take-up of references and whether the person is accepted by The FA following their Criminal Records Check. This information should then be considered alongside the outcome of the meeting/interview to make an informed decision as to whether or not to accept them into the club or league.

### **8. Once in post**

It's important that once a new volunteer is at the club or league, follow up action is taken – for example:

- ensuring that new volunteers are made aware of and sign up to the club's Safeguarding Children policy and procedures, best practice guidelines and codes of conduct ensuring that they attend The FA's Safeguarding Children Workshop, or that they update this
- a statement of their roles and responsibilities is prepared and that they are agreed to by the new volunteer
- initially, a period of supervision/observation or mentoring could be introduced to support the new volunteer

## **9. Summary**

Safeguarding Children is about putting in place the best possible practices and procedures. This will protect not only the child but also the Club and the adults helping out with U18s in football. If you require any further support or guidance relating to children and young people, please contact your CFA Welfare Officer.

## **10. Contacts**

FA Criminal Records Body (FA CRB): E: [FAchecks@TheFA.com](mailto:FAchecks@TheFA.com) T: 0845 210 8080  
[TheFA.com/governance/safeguarding](https://TheFA.com/governance/safeguarding)