



Downpatrick Youth Football League
Safeguarding Children & Young People
& Vetting Checks

Season 2025/26

www.dyfl.co.uk



AFFILIATED TO
NORTHERN IRELAND YOUTH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION
www.niyfa.co.uk




PLEASE NOTE THE SHORT AND FULL VERSIONS OF THE IFA SAFEGUARDING POLICIES ARE
AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD FROM YOUR LEAGUE WEBSITE.

Irish Football Association



Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football Policy

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1. Our Club/League/Organisation acknowledges its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of every child and young person and is committed to providing a safe environment for all. A child is any person under the age of 18. We adopt the Irish FA Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football Policy and Procedures and will apply this across our club/league/organisation.

Our Club/League/Organisation endorses and adopts the following key safeguarding principles:

- the welfare of the child is paramount;
 - all children and young people have a right to be treated equally regardless of their age, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marital status or civil partnership, race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, ability or disability. There are no circumstances where abuse is acceptable.
 - ensuring that all allegations of abuse are responded to promptly, in a confidential manner and in line with statutory and Irish FA guidelines;
 - sharing information about concerns with safeguarding agencies that need to know and involving children and young people and their parents or guardians if appropriate.
2. Our Club/League/Organisation has a role to play in safeguarding the welfare of all children and young people by protecting them from all forms of abuse, including bullying, and creating a safe playing environment. It is accepted that the Irish FA's Articles of Association in relation to Safeguarding Children and Young People apply to everyone in affiliated football whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, including coaches/managers, volunteers, match officials, medical staff or other club officials/representatives.
 3. We adopt the Irish FA's Safe Recruitment guidelines and, as a minimum, we will ensure:
 - We will meet with potential volunteer(s), ascertain their motivation for taking up their prospective role and interview people before appointing them;
 - Ask for and follow up with appropriate references before appointing someone;
 - We will communicate their full role and responsibilities within our club prior to them taking up a role;
 - All those in regulated activity (coaching, providing transport or medical/physiotherapy on behalf of the club, supervising overnight stays/residential) complete an Enhanced Disclosure Check through AccessNI in accordance with Irish FA procedures prior to us offering them a role. This will be updated every three years;
 - All those acting on behalf of our club will attend Irish FA-approved safeguarding children and young people training relevant to their role. This will be refreshed every three years.
 - In the case of Leagues/Games Centres, we will take all reasonable steps to ensure participating clubs/coaches have followed safe recruitment procedures.

If there are concerns regarding the appropriateness of an individual who is already involved in affiliated youth football or who has approached us to become part of our football club, guidance will be sought from the Irish FA.

We accept that the Irish FA will consider the relevance and significance of the information obtained via AccessNI checks and that all suitability decisions will be made in accordance with legislation and in the best interests of children and young people.

We accept that the Irish FA aims to prevent people with a history of relevant and significant offending from having contact with children or young people and the opportunity to influence policies or practice with children or young people. This is to prevent direct sexual or physical harm to any person and to minimise the risk of 'grooming' within football.

4. Our Club/League/Organisation has appointed a Designated Child Safeguarding Officer (DCSO) in accordance with Irish FA Articles of Association.

The post holder will have completed Irish FA safeguarding training relevant to their role as well as a suitable AccessNI check. The DCSO is the first point of contact for all club members regarding concerns about the welfare of any child or young person.

The DCSO will play a proactive role in increasing awareness of respect, poor practice and abuse amongst club members and regularly communicate with the club management committee/ Board. The DCSO may liaise directly with the Irish FA Safeguarding Team for advice and guidance on potential safeguarding issues and inform them of any referrals to statutory services.

5. We acknowledge the Irish FA's identification of bullying as a form of abuse. Bullying of any kind is not acceptable at our club. If bullying does occur, all players and parents/carers should be able to access our anti-bullying policy and know that incidents will be dealt with appropriately. Incidents need to be reported to the DCSO. In cases of serious bullying we may seek advice from the Irish FA.
6. Codes of conduct for players, parents/spectators, officials and coaches have been implemented by our club. All those involved in our club have a responsibility to adhere to the positive behaviours outlined in the relevant code of conduct. Any behavioural issues will be addressed by our DCSO and sanctions may be imposed depending on the seriousness, intent, regularity and potential impact of behaviour in breach of the relevant code.
7. Blowing the whistle on practice or behaviour which compromises the safety and welfare of children and young people who participate in our club activities can be daunting. Volunteers who whistle-blow about concerning practice or behaviour at our club should be reassured that they will be believed and supported. Children and young people should be encouraged to disclose to a trusted adult, either internal or external to our club. Parents and guardians can voice their concerns, where appropriate, to the head coach/programme manager. You may contact the Irish FA on 028 9066 9458 should you wish to discuss any concerns.
8. The safety of the child will always be paramount. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and we know that inaction is not an option. If anyone is worried about a child, it is important that they report their concerns to the DCSO who may deal with reported concerns as follows:
 - i. Our DCSO will endeavour to address poor practice concerns with the support of our management structure. Where necessary we may seek advice from the Irish FA Safeguarding Team.
 - ii. Our DCSO may make referrals about more serious concerns to the Irish FA or, in an emergency, statutory services.
 - iii. We aim to meet the immediate needs of the child. If they require medical treatment, we may call an ambulance and tell them it is a child protection concern.
 - iv. Our DCSO will keep records of the actions taken and inform the Irish FA of any allegations of abuse or serious cases of poor practice.
 - v. If at any time our DCSO is not available, or the matter is clearly serious, all our members should be aware that they can:
 - Contact our club chairperson;
 - Contact the Irish FA's Safeguarding Team on 028 9066 9458;
 - Contact the Police on 101; and/or
 - Health and Social Care Trusts.



In Northern Ireland each health trust has a Gateway team to deal with initial reports of abuse and to provide contacts for ongoing professional liaison and advice on concerns.

Northern HSC Trust Tel 0300 1234 333 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

South Eastern HSC Trust Tel 0300 1000 300 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

Southern HSC Trust Tel 0800 7837 745 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

Belfast HSC Trust Tel 028 9050 7000 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

Western HSC Trust Tel 028 7131 4090 (0900-1700) Out of hours 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

You can also call the NSPCC 24-hour Helpline for advice on 0808 800 5000 or text 88858 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

Additional contacts are available on the Irish FA Safeguarding App at <https://www.irishfa.com/irish-fa-foundation/grassroots-and-youth-football/safeguarding>

Members of _____ Committee understand procedures.

We commit to ensuring our members are aware of and have access to our policies.

Role	Name	Contact details
Chairperson		
Designated Child Safeguarding Officer (DCSO)		
Deputy DCSO		
Secretary		

APPENDIX 3 - VETTING CHECKS

To register an official, all clubs, leagues, affiliated bodies and Associations must follow appropriate selection procedures ensuring they are satisfied with the applicant/volunteer. This process should include but is not limited to:

An application process.

- Confirmation of any experience working with children.
- Previous coaching experience.
- A commitment to engage in additional training as required by the club.
- Reference checking.

If satisfied with the applicant/volunteer, the club, league or association/affiliated body must ensure that all volunteers engaging in Regulated Activity complete an Enhanced Disclosure Vetting Check prior to confirmation of their membership.

To allow the Irish FA/**NIYFA** to assess the suitability of a club official to take up membership of the **NIYFA**, the club, league/association or affiliated body must ensure that the club official engaging in Regulated Activity completes a satisfactory vetting check.

The application process is as follows:

- When satisfied with the applicant, the club will issue a hard copy of the AccessNI application form to each applicant. This application can be found at <https://www.irishfa.com/irish-fa-foundation/grassroots-and-youth-football/safeguarding>
- Each applicant must complete the application full, including the online registration for an Enhanced Disclosure Check (against the Barred list if the work is unsupervised).
- Each applicant must return the application form to the club welfare officer or chairperson along with 3 pieces of identification for identity checking.
- Each applicant should, if necessary, submit the self-declaration form outlining any relevant cautions and/or convictions to Kevin Doyle, Irish FA Safeguarding Manager, NFS Windsor Park, Belfast, BT12 6LU.
- The club welfare officer/chairperson should record the name, dob and AccessNI reference number and forward the application form and copies of identification to Kevin Doyle, Irish FA Safeguarding Manager, NFS Windsor Park, Belfast, BT12 6LU. All information should be included on the relevant online club registration system.
- On receipt of the completed application the Irish FA will:
 - Process the application to AccessNI.
 - Receive notification from AccessNI outlining:
 - (i) **Nothing to disclose** – The Irish FA/**NIYFA** will inform the club welfare officer/chairperson that the individual could be considered for appointment.
 - (ii) **Certificate Issued** – The Irish FA will request from the applicant, the original disclosure certificate and a full explanation of any disclosures outlined within. The applicant may provide or be required to provide relevant additional information allowing the Irish FA to assess the individual's suitability to fulfil their proposed role. This may include but is not limited to written references and/or additional reports relating to the convictions. The applicant may be required to attend an interview as part of the assessment process. The Irish FA will inform the club, league or affiliated body if the applicant has been successful and any measures that should be put in place to manage any identified risk. The club/league/affiliated body may be required to engage in this assessment process.

- (iii) **Further information required** – the Irish FA may be required to request additional information from the applicant for the purposes of progressing the application.

This decision will be taken by the Irish FA Case Management Panel.

The Irish FA is committed to equal opportunities for all and does not preclude applicants with criminal convictions. Convictions will only be considered when relevant to the position that the applicant has applied for.

Applicants whose disclosure certificate returns information in relation to their criminal record will be judged on a case-by-case basis. Disclosures do not necessarily preclude a person from taking a role within affiliated youth football.

The assessment of suitability will depend on several factors:

- the nature of the position.
- the self-disclosure of any prosecutions or convictions.
- the seriousness, timing and any possible pattern that emerges of any information disclosed.
- the potential of reoffending to cause harm to young people/vulnerable adults.

The following information is considered:

- Age of applicant now and at the time of the offence.
- Type and nature of the offence.
- Number of offences on record.
- Pattern of offending or date since last offence.
- Contact with young people and/vulnerable adults.
- Any mitigating factors.
- Any aggravating factors.
- Disclosure by applicant.
- Cooperation with case management process.

Disclosure of certain types of convictions/prosecutions may automatically preclude the applicant from a position working with children. Examples of offences that may prohibit an applicant are:

- Any offence of a sexual nature.
- Any offence against a child.
- An offence that causes gross bodily harm.
- An offence of kidnapping.
- A series of continuous offending that might cause concern for the well-being of children.

Any applicant who submits inaccurate information (at any stage of the process), omits relevant information, or does not engage meaningfully in the assessment process may not be permitted to take up membership of the NIYFA either temporarily or permanently.

All documentation will be returned to the applicant on completion of the process. The Irish FA will retain confirmation of the decision to grant membership or not.

All clubs, leagues, affiliated and associated bodies must ensure they maintain accurate and up to date record of all club officials including confirmation of vetting checks and safeguarding training, both of which should be updated every 3 years.

Appeals

An appeals process can be made available to any individual who is subject to a decision made by the CMP.

- All requests must be submitted in writing, by special-delivery post, within 14 days after the date the decision was intimated in writing to the individual concerned.

- A fee of £75 must be enclosed with the appeal. The fee shall be returned only where the appeal is upheld or not heard.
- The request must clearly identify the decision the individual wishes to appeal, on what grounds they wish to make the appeal, and reasons as to why it would be unfair not to change the decision. Evidence must also be submitted to support the claim.
- The Appeals Panel will exclude any person who sat on the original CMP.
- Where an appeal has been rejected or not heard, the initial decision made by the CMP will stand.
- The Appeals Panel will notify the individual, in writing, of the outcome of the appeal process.

Should an individual wish to withdraw their appeal prior to the hearing taking place, they must notify the Irish FA's Safeguarding Team in writing. In such cases, the original decision made by the CMP will be upheld. The individual may also be subject to a cancellation fee.