



**Football Association Wales**  
**Safeguarding Children's Policy**



## **Statement from the CEO of the Football Association of Wales (FAW)**

I am proud to introduce the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy for the Football Association of Wales (FAW). This policy represents our unwavering commitment to ensuring that every child and young person involved in football can enjoy the sport in a safe, supportive, and secure environment.

Football has the power to inspire and transform lives, offering young people countless opportunities for growth, confidence, and happiness. However, with this comes the responsibility to protect and nurture the children who participate in the sport. It is our duty to ensure that the sport we love remains a safe space, free from harm, where children are given the opportunity to thrive.

At FAW, we work closely with statutory agencies, safeguarding partners, and key organisations, such as the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU), to embed the highest standards of safeguarding across Welsh football. This policy outlines the frameworks and actions required to protect children, raise awareness, and take prompt action in response to concerns. It is designed to guide everyone involved in the sport, coaches, volunteers, players, and parents to recognise their role in safeguarding and to create an environment where children are not only safe but empowered to flourish.



This policy is a reflection of our deep commitment to safeguarding, and it will continually evolve to reflect the highest standards and best practices in child protection.

**Noel Mooney**  
**CE, Football Association of Wales**

**SEPTEMBER 2025**

## **Statement from the Independent Safeguarding Board Advisor**



As the Independent Safeguarding Board Advisor to the FAW, my role is to provide challenge, scrutiny, and assurance that safeguarding remains central to

every aspect of Welsh football. Safeguarding is not just a policy, it is a culture, one that requires openness, accountability, and the courage to learn and improve.

We know our policies and procedures must continually evolve to meet the highest possible standards. My commitment is to ensure that the voices of children, young people, and their families are at the heart of our decision-making, and that safeguarding practice across Welsh football is robust, transparent, and trusted.

I will continue to work alongside the FAW Board, safeguarding team, and partners to make sure that football in Wales is a safe, positive, and an inspiring environment for every child and young person.

**Gaynor McKeown**  
**Independent Safeguarding Board Advisor**  
**Football Association of Wales**

## Version Control

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Changes/collaboration</b>	<b>Author/Editor</b>	<b>Date sent back</b>
1.0	12/08/25	Created, separate policy for Online Safety and Online Safety Act. Updated  Harmful Sexual Behaviour added (feedback from Hydrant) Radicalisation	Natalie Chamberlain (Senior Safeguarding and Player Welfare Manager)	N/A
1.0	05/09/25	Sent to legal Counsel for feedback	Nick Lewis	10/09/25
1.0	05/09/25	Sent to Senior Equality, Diversity, Inclusion & Sustainability Manager for feedback – feedback by email – see audit document	Carys Ingram and Jason Webber	12/09/25
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1.0	05/09/25	Gaynor McKeown – see audit document	Independent Safeguarding Advisor to the Board	10/09/25
2.0	23/09/25	Sent to Board for approval	Approved by FAW Board	23/09/25

## Table of Contents

<b>Our Policy</b> .....	<b>6</b>	<b>Promoting Best Practice</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Legal and Regulatory Framework</b> .....	<b>8</b>	<b>Escalation and Professional Challenge</b> .....	<b>27</b>
<b>Data</b> .....	<b>9</b>	<b>Whistleblowing</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>The Voice of the Child</b> .....	<b>10</b>	<b>Operation Hydrant</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Scope</b> .....	<b>12</b>	<b>Appendix A Codes of Conduct</b> .....	<b>28</b>
<b>Intersectionality and Safeguarding</b> .....	<b>12</b>	<b>Appendix B Useful Contacts</b> .....	<b>29</b>
<b>Safer Recruitment and Training</b> .....	<b>14</b>	<b>Appendix C Training Pathway</b> .....	<b>30</b>
<b>Positions of Trust</b> .....	<b>14</b>		
<b>Recruitment and Managing Historic Convictions</b> .....	<b>14</b>		
<b>Categories of Abuse</b> .....	<b>16</b>		
<b>Other Forms of Harm</b> .....	<b>17</b>		
<b>Social Media</b> .....	<b>18</b>		
<b>Prevent Duty</b> .....	<b>19</b>		
<b>Violence Against Women and Girls</b> .....	<b>20</b>		
<b>Contextual Safeguarding in Football</b> .....	<b>21</b>		
<b>Information Sharing</b> .....	<b>21</b>		
<b>Levels of Concern</b> .....	<b>22</b>		

A young girl with blonde hair, wearing a red football kit, is running on a field. The kit features the 'Teejac' logo on the chest and 'Welcomes FURNITURE' on the front. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a fence.

# Football Association of Wales Children's Safeguarding Policy

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## **A child is anyone under the age of 18**

Our child protection policy was developed by working directly with children and young people to understand what makes them feel safe. We held discussions, listened to their ideas, and included their views on what helps protect them from harm. This ensures our policy is not only about protecting children but also reflects their lived experiences and priorities.

## **Our Policy**

As part of our safeguarding policy we will:

- promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

- value, listen to and respect children.
- ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation.
- adopt safeguarding best practice through our policies, procedures and code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding.
- is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people.
- provide effective management for staff and through supervision, support and training.
- staff and volunteers know about our policies, procedures and behaviour codes and follow them confidently and competently.
- ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of all incidents or concerns, from lower-level concerns and poor practice to abuse.
- provide support to the individual(s) who raise or report the concern.
- ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored.
- prevent the employment or deployment of unsuitable individuals by recruiting and selecting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- appoint a nominated safeguarding lead for children and young people, a deputy and a lead board member for safeguarding.
- develop and implement an effective online safety policy and related procedures.
- share information about safeguarding and good practice with children and their parents via leaflets, posters, group work and one-to-one discussions.
- make sure that children, young people and their parents know where to go for help if they have a concern.

The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved in football. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal or exclusion from football.

This policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner following changes in legislation, government guidance, or any significant change or event.

## **In addition:**

- The FAW Safeguarding Team will produce an annual safeguarding report for the FAW Board.
- The Safeguarding Lead will attend quarterly board meetings to provide updates and highlight risks, trends, and good practice.
- Regular spot-checks will be carried out at clubs to monitor safeguarding practice and ensure compliance.
- Our Grassroots Safeguarding Executives will work closely with Areas, Leagues and Clubs to ensure compliance.

This policy was last reviewed on **30/08/26**

## **Legal and Regulatory Framework**

The FAW is committed to working within the framework of Welsh and UK safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance, including but not limited to:

Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014  
Children Act 1989 and 2004

Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019, updated 2023)  
United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Sexual Offences Act 2003 (Positions of Trust provisions, updated 2022)

Equality Act 2010

Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (Prevent Duty)

It also reflects the standards and expectations of Sport Wales, the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU), and Welsh Government guidance including 'Working Together to Safeguard People.'



## Data

To ensure our child protection policy is grounded in current evidence, we reference the following Wales-specific data:

- An estimated 25,000 children in Wales experience some form of sexual abuse each year, though only a fraction are known to statutory agencies. The nature of abuse is evolving, particularly in online contexts. [GOV.WALES](#)
- Child criminal exploitation & county lines are recognised as serious abuse in Wales; the CLiC (County Lines in Cymru) project supports children in Cardiff, Swansea and surrounding regions, many of whom do not see themselves as victims. [St Giles](#)
- In 2024–25, Childline counsellors provided 162,018 counselling sessions to children and young people across the UK. [NSPCC Learning](#)
- In the same period, the NSPCC Helpline received 623 contacts from adults in the UK raising concerns about a child’s welfare in a
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- sports setting (up from 425 the previous year). [Child Protection in Sport Unit \(CPSU\)](#)

## Emerging Risks

We also recognise that threats to children are changing and increasing, specifically:

- **Online harm**, including grooming, exposure to harmful content, and image sharing.
- **Criminal exploitation**, such as county lines activity, which involves young people being coerced or manipulated to handle drugs, money or perform other criminal tasks.

All data will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect new evidence and maintain the relevance and strength of our safeguarding rationale.

## The Voice of the Child

We recognise that children and young people are not just participants in football, but rights-holders whose voices must shape how safeguarding is delivered.

Our approach is grounded in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Wales was the first nation in the UK to embed the UNCRC into domestic law through the *Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011*. This means every decision we make must give due regard to children's rights, including their right to be safe, to play, and to be heard in decisions that affect them.

### What this means in practice

- **Listening and acting:** We don't just seek children's views, we ensure their voices influence policies, training, and safeguarding decisions.
- **Safe spaces:** Football must be a place where children feel valued, supported, and able to be themselves.
- **Every child's voice matters:** Behaviour is communication. A change in mood, withdrawal,

or aggression may be a child's way of speaking to us. We must notice, listen, and respond.

- **Practical tools:** The FAW trauma informed Safeguarding **LENS** model guides us to:

### L – Look

Look beyond the behaviour and consider what may be driving it. A child's behaviour is often a form of communication.

- Ask yourself: *“What might this child be trying to tell me through their actions or emotions?”*
- Notice changes in behaviour – withdrawal, aggression, sudden silence, or risk-taking.
- Avoid judging or labelling; instead, be curious and compassionate.
- Remember: behaviour that challenges may be a sign of need, stress, or harm, not simply “bad behaviour.”

*(This principle is introduced in the FAW Safeguarding Award and should guide all responses to concerns.)*

### E – Explore

Use open questions, often referred to as **TED questions**:

- **Tell me** what has happened.
- **Explain to me** how that made you feel.
- **Describe** what will happen next.

When explaining next steps, you might say:  
*“I need to go away and speak to some people so that together we can work out a plan to help you.”*

### **N – Need**

Consider what the child needs right now, what barriers are they facing, do they need specialist services.

### **S – Safeguard, Signpost, Support**

**Safeguard:** Take immediate steps to ensure the child is safe from harm. This may include removing them from a situation, contacting the Club Safeguarding Officer, or escalating concerns directly if the risk is urgent.

**Signpost:** Provide clear information about where the child, young person, or their family can access further help and advice. This might include helplines (e.g. Childline), local authority services, or specialist support organisations.



**Support:** Offer reassurance and ongoing encouragement. Let the child know they have been heard, they did the right thing in speaking up, and that support will continue as the process moves forward.

## Scope

This policy applies to all levels of football under the jurisdiction of the FAW, including:

### **Grassroots and elite programmes**

#### **Area Associations**

**Coaches, referees, volunteers, match officials, parents, and carers**

#### **Affiliate members**

**All FAW staff, some contractors, and third-party providers**

**All affiliated clubs and leagues must adopt and align with this policy as a condition of membership and accreditation.**

## Intersectionality and Safeguarding

Children and young people often experience multiple, overlapping factors that can affect their vulnerability, access to support, and the way abuse or poor practice impacts them. This is known as **intersectionality**.

For example:

- A deaf child from a minoritised ethnic background may face additional barriers to disclosing abuse.
- A young person questioning their gender identity may be more vulnerable to online bullying or exclusion.
- Children living in poverty may be at increased risk of neglect or exploitation and may lack access to safe spaces outside football.
- A looked-after child may have experienced trauma, making them more susceptible to grooming or peer-on-peer abuse.
- To ensure safeguarding practice recognises the whole child and the intersecting aspects of their identity.
- To adapt safeguarding responses so they are inclusive, culturally competent, trauma-informed, and accessible.
- To actively challenge discrimination, prejudice, and bias within football environments, embedding anti-discriminatory practice

- To provide mandatory and ongoing training and resources to staff, volunteers, and clubs on recognising and responding to intersectional safeguarding risks.
- To co-design safeguarding resources with children and young people, amplifying their voices in decision-making.
- To regularly monitor and evaluate safeguarding practices through an EDI lens, ensuring accountability and continual improvement.
- To work with specialist organisations (e.g. domestic abuse services, LGBTQ+ and youth organisations) to strengthen support pathways

By embedding an intersectional approach, we ensure that safeguarding in Welsh football does not overlook the unique needs and lived experiences of the children and young people we serve.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility. Everyone involved in football has a duty to safeguard children and promote their welfare.

### **Key roles include:**

**FAW Board:** Strategic oversight and accountability for safeguarding.

**FAW Safeguarding Team:** Strategic and Operational leadership, case management, policy, implementation, and liaison with statutory bodies.

**Area and League Safeguarding Officers:** Support clubs, monitor safeguarding, escalate concerns.

**Club Safeguarding Officers:** First point of contact for concerns, implement policy locally, support staff, players, and families.

**Coaches and Volunteers:** Follow codes of conduct, promote best practice, report concerns.

**Children and Parents:** Know their rights and how to raise concerns safely.

## **Safer Recruitment and Training**

The FAW is committed to ensuring all staff and volunteers are suitable and prepared for roles involving children. Recruitment and training steps include:

- Clear job descriptions and role expectations.
- Application forms with self-disclosure of relevant convictions.
- Enhanced barred DBS checks for regulated activity roles.
- Two verified references.
- Mandatory safeguarding training relevant to role (renewed every 3 years).
- Signing of Codes of Conduct.
- Comprehensive induction, including safeguarding procedures.
- Training will cover child protection and safeguarding in practice.

## **Positions of Trust**

In June 2022, UK law was updated to extend the Sexual Offences Act 2003 to cover individuals in sporting and faith-based roles, specifically adding Section 22A. This now criminalises any sexual activity

between adults in a position of trust, such as coaches, instructors, trainers, or supervisors which includes 16- or 17-year-olds under their charge.

The FAW enforces a strict zero-tolerance policy in line with this law. All coaches, referees, officials, staff, and volunteers must understand the heightened responsibility that comes with these roles and the potential power imbalance it entails. Any sexual or intimate conduct with 16- or 17-year-olds in their care is treated as a criminal offence, not merely a disciplinary matter. We also take inappropriate or sexualised communications extremely seriously. Grooming, boundary violations, or exploitative contact, whether in person or online, inside and outside of football are considered abuses of trust and will be dealt with robustly.

## **Consequences for breaches:**

- Immediate referral to statutory agencies (police, local authority).
- Suspension from duties (pending investigation).
- Potential permanent exclusion from all football-related roles.

- Notification of relevant regulatory bodies (e.g. Disclosure and Barring Service).

### **Recruitment and Managing Historic Convictions**

In 2023, changes to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (Exceptions) Order and DBS filtering rules reinforced that sexual offences are never filtered or considered “spent” for roles involving children. This means that:

- Any conviction, or a caution for a sexual offence will always appear on an Enhanced DBS check where the role involves children.
- Individuals convicted or cautioned for certain sexual offences are also automatically placed on the children’s barred list under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006, making it a criminal offence for them to apply for or work in regulated activity with children.
- It is also a criminal offence for a club or organisation to knowingly allow a barred individual to work with children.

### **Historic Convictions**

From 2025, as the FAW works to ensure that all positions of trust within the adult game are subject to DBS checks where there is a likelihood or reasonable expectation of contact with children, the FAW will not permit any individual with a sexual offence on record, regardless of when the offence took place, to work in a position of trust or regulated activity with children. Exceptional circumstances may be considered and will be assessed by the Independent Safeguarding Panel.

This will lead to more robust standards that align with safeguarding requirements for children and young people. Therefore, the following will no longer be acceptable:

- If an Enhanced DBS check reveals a sexual offence conviction or caution, regardless of when it occurred, the individual will be removed from any role involving children or regulated activity.
- If the conviction results in barred list inclusion, the individual must be suspended immediately and the matter referred to the DBS and

statutory agencies (e.g. Local Authority Designated Officer, police).

- If the conviction does not appear on the barred list (for example, historic offences predating the list), the FAW will still apply a zero-tolerance approach: the individual is unsuitable to hold a position of trust with children.

If the FAW is formally notified of, or becomes aware through police information/intelligence or statutory agencies, that an individual has been arrested, investigated, or is the subject of credible safeguarding concerns relating to sexual offences, but has not been cautioned or convicted, the case will be referred to the Independent Safeguarding Panel.

The Panel will assess the information on the balance of probabilities and determine whether it is safe and appropriate for the individual to continue in any position of trust or regulated activity with children.

### **Club Responsibilities**

Clubs must:

- Ensure all staff and volunteers in regulated activity hold a valid Enhanced DBS with barred list check.
- Immediately act if an individual with a relevant conviction is identified in a child-facing role.
- Co-operate with FAW safeguarding spot-checks and provide evidence of compliance.

## Categories of Abuse (Wales Safeguarding Procedures)

We recognise the following categories of abuse:

- **Physical abuse** – hitting, shaking, burning, poisoning, or otherwise causing harm to a child.
- **Sexual abuse** – forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, including online.
- **Emotional abuse** – persistent emotional ill-treatment, such as humiliating, isolating, or frightening a child.
- **Neglect** – persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and emotional needs.
- **Financial abuse** – exploitation of a child for financial gain, including theft, coercion, benefit fraud, or controlling their access to money, possessions, or opportunities.

<https://www.safeguarding.wales>

## Other Forms of Harm

- **Bullying & Cyberbullying** – Childline:  
<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/types-bullying>

- **Grooming** – NSPCC:  
<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-is-child-abuse/types-of-abuse/grooming>
- **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)** – Welsh Government:  
[Protecting children from sexual exploitation | NSPCC Learning](#)
- **Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE) & County Lines** – Barnardo's Cymru:  
[Protecting children from child criminal exploitation | NSPCC Learning](#)



- **Harmful Sexual Behaviour** – NSPCC: **Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) or peer-on-peer sexual abuse | NSPCC Learning**
- **Domestic Abuse** – Live Fear Free (24/7 Helpline for Wales): **<https://gov.wales/live-fear-free>**
- **Online Harm & Internet Safety** – Internet Matters: **<https://www.internetmatters.org>**
- **Abuse of Trust** – NSPCC: **Preventing abuse in positions of trust | NSPCC Learning**

## Harmful Sexual Behaviour

Harmful sexual behaviour among young people in sport is increasingly recognised as a serious safeguarding concern. The Hydrant Programme, previously known as Operation Hydrant, continues to highlight the prevalence of sexual harm occurring in institutional and recreational settings, including sports venues. In response, FAW reaffirms its zero-tolerance stance: all reported incidents will be taken seriously and fully investigated. Guidance on recognising and responding to harmful sexual

behaviour in sport is available from the CPSU, including a comprehensive briefing titled **“Recognising and responding to harmful sexual behaviour displayed by young people in sport”**. Additional multi-agency frameworks, such as the NSPCC’s Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) framework offer practical tools for assessing, auditing, and responding to such behaviour in a structured and informed.

## Social Media

95% of children aged 7–15 in Wales used the internet at home in 2017–18; 71% used tablets or similar devices. [safeguarding.wales](https://safeguarding.wales)

All participants must adhere to the FAW Social Media & Communications Policy and Procedure, which sets out clear expectations for safe, respectful, and professional use of digital platforms.

The FAW also provides a **Club Online Safety Policy template**, available for download, to help clubs manage digital communication and media responsibly.

Key principles:

- Communicating responsibly and inclusively

- Avoiding private 1:1 messaging with children
- Requiring parental consent for any image or video sharing
- Handling online concerns promptly by reporting them to the Club, League, Area Safeguarding officer or FAW Safeguarding
- Using privacy settings, avoiding posting while emotionally compromised, and following broader legal obligations

### **FAW social media and communications policy**

#### **Prevent Duty**

The Prevent Duty is part of the UK Government's counter-terrorism strategy (*CONTEST*) and places a legal duty on organisations working with children to safeguard them from the risk of radicalisation and being drawn into extremism.

Although cases are rare in football, the game provides a powerful platform to protect children and young people from harmful ideologies and to promote tolerance, respect, and inclusion. With access to online sites it's important we are vigilant to the threat this poses to children.

#### **Our Commitment**

- **Awareness:** Staff and volunteers will be made aware of the risks of radicalisation, extremist influence, and hate-based behaviours, especially those spread online.
- **Training:** Prevent awareness will form part of safeguarding training at Levels 3, equipping staff to recognise signs of concern.
- **Online safety:** We recognise that many children are radicalised via online platforms including social media, gaming chats, and messaging apps. We will educate staff, volunteers, parents, and children to be aware of these risks and how to respond
- **Proportionate response:** Prevent will always be applied proportionately, focusing on safeguarding and support rather than surveillance or criminalisation
- **Partnership:** Concerns will be referred to the FAW Safeguarding Team immediately and, where appropriate, to the local authority Prevent team or the police

## Signs of Concern

Children may be at risk if they:

- Express extremist or hate-based views.
- Show increased isolation, secrecy, or intolerance of difference.
- Use extremist online material or become heavily involved in extremist online groups
- Are contacted online by individuals or groups encouraging harmful beliefs or behaviours.

## Responding to Concerns

- Concerns should be reported using the **Respond-Record-Report-Refer** process.
- Where appropriate, referrals may be made to **Channel**, a statutory programme providing early support for individuals vulnerable to radicalisation

## Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)

The FAW are committed to tackling all forms of **violence against women and girls (VAWG)**. This includes domestic abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviours, and controlling or coercive behaviour.

Football has a unique platform to challenge harmful attitudes, promote respect, and create environments where women and girls feel safe and valued.

## Our Commitment

- **Zero Tolerance:** We will not tolerate harassment, abuse, intimidation, or discrimination of women and girls in football. We will listen to and center the voices of women and girls in shaping safer football environments.
- **Safe environments:** Clubs and leagues will ensure that girls and women are provided with safe, inclusive environments where their rights are respected, resources are accessible, and specialist referral pathways are in place.
- **Cultural change:** Football is committed to challenging sexism, misogyny, and gender-based violence, recognising that these behaviours have no place in our game. We will work with equality partners to promote leadership opportunities for women and ensure accountability across all levels of the game.

- DBS safeguarding: Any information disclosed on a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check relating to violence against women, domestic abuse, or sexual offences will be taken extremely seriously. Such offences are incompatible with roles that involve responsibility for children or young people.
- Awareness and education: Safeguarding training at Levels 2 and 3 will include VAWG awareness, equipping staff and volunteers to recognise signs of harm and challenge harmful attitudes.
- Legal framework: Our work aligns with the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015, which places a duty on organisations in Wales to prevent violence, protect victims, and support cultural change.
- Safe environments: Clubs and leagues will ensure that girls and women are provided with safe, inclusive environments where their rights are respected.
- Cultural change: Football is committed to challenging sexism, misogyny, and gender-based violence, recognising that these behaviours have no place in our game.

## **Contextual Safeguarding in Football**

In football, safeguarding extends beyond the family home into the environments where children train, play, and socialise. Young people may face risks from peer pressure, bullying, exploitation, or inappropriate behaviour within teams, clubs, or even online through sporting networks. By applying contextual safeguarding, we recognise these wider influences and work with coaches, parents, and the football community to create safe, supportive spaces on and off the pitch.

## **Information Sharing**

The FAW is committed to working transparently and in partnership with statutory agencies, clubs, and families to ensure children are protected and supported.

## **Key principles:**

- The welfare of the child is always the primary consideration.
- Information will only be shared when it is lawful, necessary, and proportionate.

- Consent will be sought where appropriate, but safeguarding concerns may override the need for consent.
- Only relevant information will be shared, and only with those who need to know.
- All records of information sharing will be accurate, timely, and stored securely in line with data protection legislation.

#### **When to share information:**

- If a child is at risk of harm.
- To prevent crime or serious harm.
- When required by statutory duty or law.
- When it will support the child's safety, welfare, or wellbeing.

#### **Further guidance:**

The FAW [Information Sharing Policy](#) provides clear guidance for staff and volunteers on when and how to share information safely and appropriately. It should be read alongside this safeguarding policy.

## **Levels of Safeguarding Concerns**

The FAW recognises that safeguarding concerns exist on a scale, but every concern is important and must be taken seriously. This guidance that follows is designed to help staff and volunteers understand how to respond to safeguarding concerns.

**Remember:** what you see or hear may be just one piece of a wider jigsaw. When joined with information from another agency, it could be critical to protecting a child.

### **Recognising Abuse & Poor Practice.**

All staff and volunteers must be able to recognise the signs and indicators of abuse or poor practice. Safeguarding concerns may occur inside or outside football but must always be taken seriously and reported.

### **Level 1 – Lower-Level Concerns / Early Concerns – Dealt with by Club**

Minor breaches of the Code of Conduct or behaviour that, while not meeting the threshold for harm, could compromise welfare or set unsafe precedents.

Usually managed at Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO) level.

**Examples include:**

- Use of inappropriate language (one-off).
- Parent arguing on the touchline.
- A player being left unsupervised for a short period.
- Name calling or minor fall-outs between peers.

**Level 2 – Significant Concerns – Dealt with by the League or Area but escalation can be considered**

Repeated or more serious breaches of conduct. May require oversight by the League or Area Safeguarding Officer, with escalation to the FAW Safeguarding Team if necessary.

**Examples include:**

- A coach regularly using intimidating or aggressive behaviour.
- Persistent bullying or exclusion of a player.
- Coach attending training under the influence of alcohol.

- Criminal behaviour outside football which raises safeguarding or reputational risks.

**Level 3 – Serious Safeguarding Concerns – Dealt with by FAW Safeguarding**

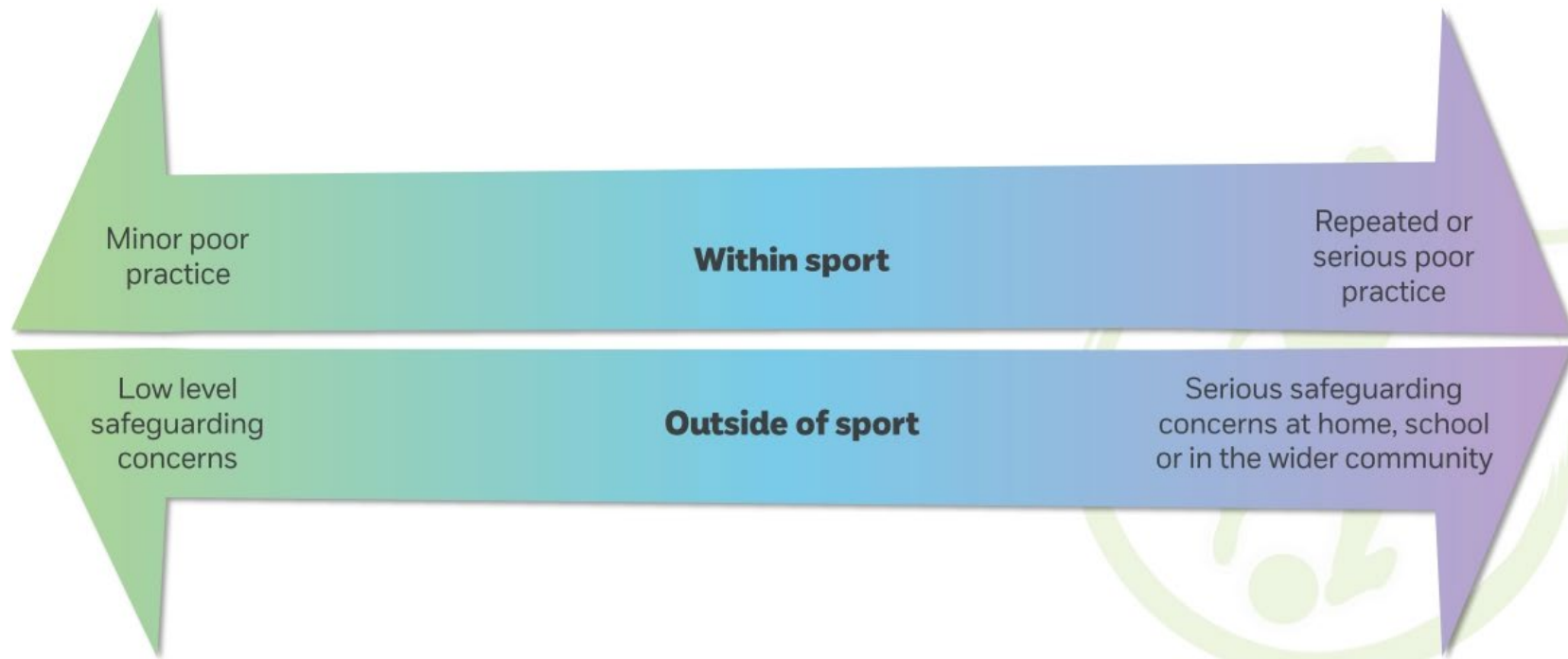
Allegations or behaviour that meet the statutory harm threshold. Must be escalated immediately to the FAW Safeguarding Team and referred to statutory agencies (Police/Local Authority).

**Examples include:**

- Allegations of sexual or physical abuse.
- Grooming or online sexual communication.
- Serious neglect or exploitation.
- Radicalisation or extremist activity.

**Key Principle: When in doubt, escalate. Patterns of repeated lower-level issues should always be reviewed and may need escalation to Level 2 or 3.**

# The abuse threshold



## **Flowchart: Traffic Light Levels of Concerns**

This flowchart is designed to guide staff and volunteers when responding to safeguarding concerns. Every concern is important. Remember: what you see may be one piece of the jigsaw. If in doubt – escalate.

### **Level 1 – Lower-Level Concerns / Early Concerns**

**Minor breaches of conduct, usually managed at Club Safeguarding Officer level.**

**Examples: inappropriate language (one-off), parent arguing, player briefly left unsupervised, peer name calling.**

### **Level 2 – Significant Concerns**

**Repeated or more serious breaches, may require oversight by League/Area Safeguarding Officer, with escalation to FAW Safeguarding Team if necessary.**

**Examples: intimidating coaching behaviour, persistent bullying, coach under influence, criminal behaviour outside football.**

### **Level 3 – Serious Safeguarding Concerns**

**Allegations or behaviour meeting statutory harm threshold. Must be escalated immediately to FAW Safeguarding Team and referred to Police/Local Authority.**

**Examples: allegations of abuse, grooming, serious neglect, radicalisation/extremist activity.**

## **Respond – Record – Report – Refer Framework**

1. Respond: Listen calmly, reassure, and avoid promises you cannot keep.
2. Record: Write down facts as soon as possible.
3. Report: Share with the Club Safeguarding Officer.
4. Refer: If the threshold is met, concerns will be referred to statutory agencies.

## **Process**

1. Concerns should be recorded factually and reported without delay.
2. Neutral suspension may be applied while enquiries take place.
3. All complaints or allegations against staff, volunteers, referees, or officials will be managed in line with FAW safeguarding procedures.
4. Whistleblowers and those raising concerns will be supported and protected from victimisation.

## **Flowchart: Respond – Record – Report – Refer**

This flowchart provides a simple four-step process for responding to safeguarding concerns. Follow these steps every time a concern arises. If in doubt, escalate.

### **Respond**

**Stay calm, listen, reassure.**

**Use open TED questions if clarification is needed.**

**Do not promise confidentiality.**

### **Record**

**Write down facts as soon as possible, using the FAW SGI form.**

**Record what you saw, heard, or were told — not assumptions.**

### **Report**

**Share your concerns with your Club Safeguarding Officer immediately.**

**If urgent, contact the FAW Safeguarding Team directly.**

### **Refer**

**If the threshold for harm is met, the FAW Safeguarding Team will escalate to statutory agencies (Police/Local Authority).**

## **Promoting Best Practice**

Safeguarding is not only about responding to concerns but also about creating safe, positive environments where children can thrive. The FAW is committed to embedding best practice across all aspects of football.

Codes of Conduct:

- All participants – players, coaches, referees, volunteers, parents, and spectators – are required to follow the FAW Codes of Conduct.
- Codes of Conduct set out clear expectations of behaviour, and breaches will be addressed promptly.

Codes of conduct can all be found [here](#)

Safe Environments:

- Supervision ratios will be appropriate for the age and number of children.
- Changing facilities will be managed safely, with clear boundaries for children and adults.
- Transport arrangements will follow FAW guidance, avoiding situations where a child is left alone with an adult.
- First aid provision will always be available at training sessions and matches.

## **Escalation and Professional Challenge**

Safeguarding requires openness, accountability, and the confidence to professionally challenge decisions when necessary. If a concern has been raised but not acted upon, or if there is disagreement about thresholds for action, the following escalation pathway must be followed:

1. Raise the issue with the Club Safeguarding Officer.
2. If unresolved, or if it concerns the Club Safeguarding Officer, escalate to the League and Area Safeguarding Officer.
3. If still unresolved, escalate to the FAW Safeguarding Team.

All staff and volunteers should feel confident in escalating concerns – this is good practice. Appropriate challenge is encouraged where it is in the best interests of the child.

## **Whistleblowing**

The FAW is committed to a culture of safety and transparency. Whistleblowing is when an individual raises a concern about wrongdoing, risk, or malpractice that affects others.

- The FAW Whistleblowing Policy sets out how staff, volunteers, referees, or parents can raise concerns confidentially and without fear of reprisal..
- Concerns can also be raised externally via the NSPCC Whistleblowing Advice Line (0800 028 0285), which is available to professionals who feel unable to raise concerns internally.

The FAW will treat all whistleblowing disclosures seriously, investigate them fairly, and protect the individual raising the concern.

## **Operation Hydrant**

The FAW works in partnership with Operation Hydrant, the UK-wide police coordination hub for non-recent child sexual abuse. Where relevant, concerns or allegations may be referred through this pathway to ensure coordinated investigation and victim support.

## **Further Monitoring and Compliance**

- The FAW Safeguarding Team will produce an annual safeguarding report for the FAW Board.
- The Safeguarding Lead will attend quarterly Board meetings to provide updates, highlight risks, trends, and good practice.
- Regular unannounced spot-checks will be carried out at clubs to monitor safeguarding practice and ensure compliance.

## **Appendix A:**

Codes of Conduct (players, coaches, referees, parents) – see FAW Safeguarding site.

## Our Commitment to Safeguarding Football - FAW Safeguarding

### **Appendix B:**

#### Useful Contacts

In an emergency, where a child is at immediate risk of harm, call **999**.

If you are worried about a child but it is not an emergency, the following contacts are available:

#### **National Contacts**

- **FAW Safeguarding Team**  
029 20435830 [Safeguarding@faw.cymru](mailto:Safeguarding@faw.cymru)
- **NSPCC Helpline** – for anyone concerned about a child  
0808 800 5000 <https://www.nspcc.org.uk>
- **Childline** – support for children and young people  
0800 1111 <https://www.childline.org.uk>
- **Live Fear Free (Wales)** – 24/7 helpline for domestic abuse, sexual violence, and VAWG  
0808 8010 800 <https://gov.wales/live-fear-free>



- **Dewis Cymru** – online directory of wellbeing and safeguarding support services across Wales  
<https://www.dewis.wales>

## **Regional Safeguarding Boards in Wales**

Safeguarding Boards bring together local authorities, health, police, probation, and other partners to protect children and adults at risk.

- **Cardiff & Vale Regional Safeguarding Board**  
<https://www.cavrp.org>
- **Cwm Taf Morgannwg Safeguarding Board**  
<https://www.ctmsb.co.uk>
- **Gwent Safeguarding Board**  
<https://www.gwentsafeguarding.org.uk>
- **Mid & West Wales Safeguarding Board**  
<https://www.cysur.wales>
- **North Wales Safeguarding Board**  
<https://www.northwalessafeguardingboard.wales>

## **Appendix C**

### **FAW Safeguarding Training Pathway**

#### **Level 1: FAW Safeguarding Award**

- Mandatory for all coaches, referees, staff, and volunteers working with children.
- Provides the core knowledge and skills to recognise, respond, record and report safeguarding concerns.
- Must be completed before taking up a role involving children.

### **Level 2: Safeguarding in Practice**

- Mandatory for all Area, League and Club Safeguarding Officers.
- Area and League Safeguarding officer to be trained up by December 2025
- Being rolled out across clubs in Wales through 2026.
- Club Safeguarding Officer will have 12 months from Jan 2026 to complete this training.
- Focuses on applying safeguarding practice in real-life football settings as well as trauma informed practice.

### **Level 3: Specialist Safeguarding CPD**

- Not mandatory, but completion of two Level 3 modules will recognise an individual as a Safeguarding Champion.
- Specialist topics include: trauma-informed practice, Prevent Duty, online safety, and tackling Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG).
- Provides advanced skills and ongoing professional development.

### **Refresher Training**

- All safeguarding training must be refreshed every 3 years to ensure knowledge remains current.

- Updates will also be provided following changes to legislation, FAW policy, or best practice guidance.

### **Monitoring Compliance**

- The FAW and club safeguarding officers will maintain records of training completed.
- Individuals who fail to complete mandatory training within the required timeframe will not be permitted to work with children until compliant.

### **Safeguarding Champions**

Safeguarding Champions are not an additional layer of bureaucracy – they are role models and leaders who help keep safeguarding knowledge and practice alive across Welsh football.

### **Appendix D**

#### **Intersectionality – Practical Guidance for Clubs, Coaches and Volunteers**

##### **What to look out for:**

- Children with disabilities being isolated, excluded from activities, or not having reasonable adjustments made.
- A child from a minority ethnic community being subjected to racist comments, stereotyping, or cultural insensitivity.
- A child questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity being bullied or excluded, particularly online.
- Looked-after children who may struggle with trust, attachment, or confidence due to past trauma.

- Children living in poverty unable to afford kit, travel, or extras – making them vulnerable to exclusion or exploitation.

### **Good practice responses:**

- Always ask the child what support they need – don't assume.
- Ensure safeguarding officers and coaches are trained in cultural competence and inclusion.
- Use accessible communication (easy-read, translation, visual aids, signposting to support apps like *Dewis Cymru*).
- Be alert to microaggressions, banter, or "jokes" that undermine identity – challenge them immediately.
- Build partnerships with local specialist services (e.g. Barnardo's, Stonewall Cymru, disability advocacy groups).

### **Remember:**

Intersectionality doesn't mean "more risk categories" – it means seeing the *whole child* and understanding how different aspects of their identity affect their safety, wellbeing, and ability to thrive in football.