



Safeguarding Standards

Season 2025/26



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Introduction

The Premier League strives to deliver the highest standards of care and protection for Children and Adults at Risk and expects Clubs to demonstrate the same level of commitment. Safeguarding is a fundamental responsibility shared by everyone. Creating safe and supportive environments extends beyond policies and procedures and designated Safeguarding staff - it depends on active leadership, robust governance, ensuring Safeguarding is embedded in organisational values, strategic priorities, and daily operations.

Premier League Rules require Club procedures and practices to be consistent with these Safeguarding Standards, with progress and effectiveness reviewed through an independent audit process. These Standards provide a framework through which the Premier League works in partnership with Clubs to develop, implement, and sustain robust Safeguarding arrangements, while promoting a culture of continuous reflection, learning, and improvement.



Definitions

Activity(ies) refers to any activity or series of activities (whether in-person or online) organised by, on behalf of, or in the name of a Club, intended for, or involving the participation or attendance of, Children and/or Adults at Risk.

Adult(s) at Risk refers to any person(s) aged eighteen or over who has needs for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect and as a result of those care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.

Child(ren) refers to any person(s) who have not yet reached their eighteenth birthday.

Club means an association football club in membership of the Premier League.

Club-Affiliated Individual(s) refers to any person(s) connected to a Club (whether employed, volunteering, contracted, or involved in any other capacity) who has access to or influence over Children and Adults at Risk through the Club's Activities.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding Children is the action that is taken to promote their welfare and protect them from harm. This means:

- protecting Children from abuse and maltreatment;
- preventing harm to their mental and physical health or development;
- ensuring they grow up with the provision of safe and effective care; and
- taking action to enable all Children to have the best outcomes

Adult at Risk Safeguarding means protecting their right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect. It is about people and organisations working together to prevent and stop both the risks and experience of abuse or neglect, while at the same time making sure that their wellbeing is promoted.



Standard 1 – Leadership, governance and culture

Safeguarding is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

Proactive organisational leadership, strong governance, and fostering a culture of shared responsibility are essential to providing effective care and protection for Children and Adults at Risk. The requirements in this Standard aim to ensure that Clubs establish robust leadership and governance structures that embed Safeguarding in strategic planning, decision-making, and day-to-day operations.

1.1. There is demonstrable top-level commitment to Safeguarding which promotes practices and behaviours that value Children and Adults at Risk, creates a culture of accountability and drives continual improvement.

Leadership

Board

While Safeguarding staff play a vital operational role, ultimate responsibility for Safeguarding and its underlying culture rests with senior leaders.

The Club's Board is expected to provide proactive leadership on Safeguarding through strong governance and oversight. The Board must regularly review Safeguarding risks and reports, monitor progress against agreed strategic priorities, and ensure arrangements are robust and compliant with relevant legislation, statutory guidance, and football regulations. It must also champion a strong Safeguarding culture, promote continuous learning and improvement, and ensure that Safeguarding is integral to the Club's values, operations, and strategic priorities.

Head of Safeguarding

The Head of Safeguarding is responsible for leading on the delivery of the Club's strategic Safeguarding priorities and must ensure that the Board is kept regularly informed, including, without limitation, through regular written reports on themes and trends, progress against strategic priorities, cases, risks and controls.

Clubs must ensure that the Head of Safeguarding has the resources, backing, access to and support from senior leadership to fulfil their responsibilities effectively.



Governance and culture

Each Club is required to:

Governance

- Have an effective Safeguarding governance framework
- Have and implement a risk policy that outlines the Club's approach to identifying, assessing, mitigating and monitoring risks
- Maintain a Safeguarding risk register and risk management plan with specific actions and assigned accountability to address identified risks
- Implement measures to regularly review the effectiveness of its Safeguarding measures and make improvements as needed
- Ensure Safeguarding is a standing or regular Board agenda item

Culture

Foster a culture where:

- Safeguarding is recognised and delivered as a shared responsibility at all levels
- Safeguarding is central to everyday decisions, actions and behaviours
- Trust and accountability underpin all behaviours and relationships
- Everyone champions attitudes, behaviours and practices that promote and protect the rights, safety and welfare of Children and Adults at Risk
- Everyone is empowered to respond promptly and appropriately to concerns involving Children and Adults at Risk, including any action or inaction that has or may compromise their safety and welfare

1.2 There is a Safeguarding strategy and an adequately resourced implementation plan

Each Club is required to:

Strategy

Have a Board-approved long-term Safeguarding strategy that sets a clear vision, supports continuous improvement, and aligns with the Club's overarching organisational priorities. The strategy must be informed by risk, learning, and meaningful stakeholder consultation, in line with Safeguarding Standard 7.

Shared ownership

Ensure the Safeguarding strategy is not viewed as the sole responsibility of designated Safeguarding staff, nor delivered exclusively by them. It must reflect a shared commitment to embedding Safeguarding as a core organisational responsibility.

Implementation

Have a well-resourced implementation plan with SMART objectives to support delivery of the Safeguarding strategy. This plan must ensure that Safeguarding is integrated into everyday practice and that progress can be effectively tracked, monitored, and sustained over time.



Standard 2 - Roles and responsibilities

While the Club's Board is ultimately responsible for ensuring that there are effective Safeguarding measures in place, there is a clear expectation that Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

2.1 There are dedicated staff with specific strategic and operational Safeguarding responsibilities

Required roles

Board-level Senior Safeguarding Lead responsible for ensuring Safeguarding remains a strategic priority, providing informed scrutiny and challenge, and serving as the Safeguarding champion at Board level in collaboration with the Head of Safeguarding.

Head of Safeguarding with the necessary skills and expertise responsible for leading on delivery of the Club's strategic Safeguarding priorities. This role must be full-time, with Safeguarding as the post holder's sole responsibility, unless alternative arrangements have been formally agreed with the Premier League. In accordance with the Rules, the Club Head of Safeguarding may delegate responsibilities to one or more other members of staff ('Safeguarding Officer(s)'). In such circumstance, the Head of Safeguarding must supervise the work of each Safeguarding Officer and ensure that they are properly trained and supported.

Academy Safeguarding Officer working under the direction and supervision of the Head of Safeguarding.

Safer Recruitment Lead responsible for overseeing consistent implementation of the Club's safer recruitment policies and procedures and ensuring robust record keeping.

Management, support and supervision

Each Club is required to ensure that its Safeguarding structures promote strong leadership and oversight, effective lines of communication, and appropriate support. This includes holding regular, minuted meetings between the Board-level Senior Safeguarding Lead and the Head of Safeguarding, as well as between the Head of Safeguarding and Safeguarding staff.

Safeguarding staff must have access to wellbeing support and reflective supervision, along with sufficient time and resources, and organisational backing to fulfil their responsibilities effectively and sustainably.

The Premier League Charitable Fund's Capability Code of Practice requires Club Community Organisation's to have a Designated Safeguarding Officer. The requirements of this role are set out in the Capability Code of Practice and referenced in these Safeguarding Standards for information.



2.2 There is a clear expectation and understanding that Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

Each Club is required to:

- Ensure that policies, procedures, and training make clear that Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility.
- Ensure that role descriptions clearly define Safeguarding responsibilities.
- Empower Club-Affiliated Individuals through procedures and training to exercise professional curiosity and their professional judgment in identifying Safeguarding risks and concerns and acting to protect the safety and welfare of Children and Adults at Risk.



Standard 3 – Prevention: policies, procedures and practice

There are robust Safeguarding and related policies and procedures in place to promote and protect the rights, safety and wellbeing of Children and Adults at Risk

Clear and comprehensive policies and procedures are essential to guide practices and behaviours that ensure effective, consistent care and protection for Children and Adults at Risk. This Standard outlines the requirements to create safe and supportive experiences, promote sound decision-making, reduce risk, and foster a culture of trust and accountability that prioritises the rights, safety, and welfare of Children and Adults at Risk.

Policies and procedures

3.1 There are robust Safeguarding policies and procedures in place

Each Club is required to:

- Have robust Safeguarding policies and procedures that are consistent with relevant legislation, statutory guidance, FA and Premier League regulations and guidance.
- Ensure alignment between Safeguarding and associated policies and procedures, for example, recruitment and selection, procurement, IT acceptable use, complaints, whistleblowing, domestic abuse, mental health and wellbeing, equality, diversity and inclusion, sexual harassment and bullying, and disciplinary procedures.
- Ensure that Safeguarding and related policies and procedures are reviewed at least annually or whenever there is a significant incident within the Club, or changes to relevant legislation, statutory guidance, football authority regulations or guidance.



Standards of practice and behaviour

3.2 The Club promotes and maintains high standards of practice and behaviour

Each Club is required to:

- Have a code of conduct/standards of practice and behaviour in place for all staff and Club-Affiliated Individuals.
- Have codes of conduct/behaviour expectations for parents, carers, and Activity spectators.
- Have behaviour policies for Children and Adults at Risk which recognise behaviour as a form of communication and prioritise educational and supportive responses. These policies should enable staff to address and respond to behaviour that falls short of expectations, while understanding possible causes and identifying underlying needs. Where there are concerns raised by a Child's or Adult at Risk's behaviour, assessments must be undertaken to determine whether there are any factors requiring protective and/or supportive intervention.

Safer recruitment

3.3 There are robust safer recruitment procedures in place to prevent unsuitable individuals from working with, having access to, or influence over Children and Adults at Risk

Each Club is required to ensure that its procedures and practices are consistent with the Premier League's Safer Recruitment Guidance.

Creating safe experiences

3.4 The Club has effective measures to promote and protect the safety and welfare of Children and Adults at Risk involved in its Activities or engaging with any product, service, or content delivered or commissioned by the Club

Each Club is required to ensure that its procedures and practices are consistent with the Premier League's Creating Safe Experiences Guidance.



Additional needs and vulnerability

3.5 There are robust measures for identifying, meeting and monitoring additional needs and vulnerability

Each Club is required to:

- Implement proactive and effective measures to identify and respond to additional needs and vulnerability among Children and Adults at Risk. This includes ensuring that support is tailored, timely, and regularly monitored to meet individual needs and circumstances.
- Adopt an approach that recognises the broad and sometimes complex factors that may contribute to vulnerability. These may include family life and experiences, adverse childhood experiences, involvement with statutory services, the impact of protected characteristics on lived experience, learning needs, disabilities, physical or mental health concerns.
- Ensure accountability and continuity of care by maintaining clear and accurate records detailing identified additional needs or vulnerabilities, the support provided, and any engagement or information-sharing with external partners, such as schools, other clubs, or local partner agencies.

Care and accommodation

3.6 There are robust governance measures, policies and procedures in place for care and accommodation arrangements

Each Club is required to ensure that its procedures and practices are consistent with the Premier League's Care and Accommodation Guidance.

Prevent Duty

3.7 There are effective measures for protecting against extremism and radicalisation

Each Club is required to ensure that its procedures and practices are consistent with the Premier League's Prevent Duty Guidance.



Standard 4 – Educating and empowering

Everyone is trained and empowered to fulfil their Safeguarding responsibilities, to access support and report concerns

Ensuring that everyone understands and feels confident in their Safeguarding responsibilities is essential to creating environments that provide effective care and protection for Children and Adults at Risk. The requirements in this Standard aim to build shared understanding, strengthen confidence, and ensure Safeguarding is clearly communicated and embedded in everyday practice, behaviours and decision-making.

4.1 Everyone is made aware of their Safeguarding responsibilities and the Club's expectations when commencing their role

Each Club is required to:

- Implement a robust induction process with training that includes familiarisation with policies and procedures, expected standards of practice and behaviour, the role and responsibilities of designated Safeguarding staff and how to contact them (including out-of-hours and emergency contacts), and provides the Premier League's Guidance for Safer Working Practice.
- Ensure completion of the Premier League's Safeguarding e-learning module (or an appropriate equivalent) before commencing their role or as part of the induction process.
- Ensure that relevant academy staff have read and understand Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.



4.2 There is a clear commitment to developing a workforce who are competent and empowered to create safe environments, recognise Safeguarding concerns and risks, and to take appropriate action to protect the rights, safety and welfare of Children and Adults at Risk

Each Club is required to:

- Have and deliver a Safeguarding workforce development plan, or ensure that Safeguarding is embedded within a wider Club workforce development plan, to ensure that everyone, particularly Club-Affiliated Individuals, receive regular Safeguarding training appropriate to their responsibilities and responsive to updates in policies and procedures, and role or Activity-specific expectations and risks.
- Ensure accurate Safeguarding training attendance records are maintained.
- Implement measures to assess the effectiveness of the Safeguarding workforce development plan.
- Regularly review and update the Safeguarding workforce development plan taking risk, themes/trends, learning, stakeholder feedback, changes to legislation and statutory guidance, football authority requirements and guidance into consideration.



Mandatory training

Each Club is required to:

- Ensure its Board members and directors (including the Senior Safeguarding Lead) receive the Premier League's Safeguarding leadership, governance and culture training within two months of their appointment, succeeded by annual continuing professional development.
- Ensure designated Safeguarding staff receive annual continuing professional development.
- Ensure staff involved in recruitment and selection receive safer recruitment training refreshed every three years.
- Deliver an ongoing programme of training and awareness-raising measures addressing sexual misconduct and relationship-based harm, including ensuring that academy and first team players, as well as those working with them, receive the Premier League's Safeguarding and healthy relationships training (or an appropriate equivalent approved by the Premier League).
- Ensure that its Safeguarding workforce development plan supports the embedding of a trauma-informed understanding and approach.



4.3 Children and Adults at Risk are informed about their rights and are empowered to access support and report concerns

Each Club is required to:

- Ensure that Children and Adults at Risk are aware of their rights and know how to access advice, support, and report concerns.
- Ensure that academy players receive safeguarding education and information, including how to seek advice, access support, and report concerns.
- Ensure that parents and carers (including care and accommodation providers) are aware of the Club's Safeguarding policies and procedures, understand the role of designated Safeguarding staff, and know how to contact them for support or to report concerns. They must be included as key stakeholders in Safeguarding communication and awareness-raising efforts.
- Ensure that its Safeguarding team is involved in assessing the appropriateness of guest speakers or trainers, as well as any educational content and communications intended for Children and Adults at Risk. This involvement must ensure that both those delivering the content and the material itself are suitable for the intended audience and do not expose Children and Adults at Risk to harmful behaviours, attitudes, or ideologies. It is essential to be sensitive to individual experiences and mindful of the potential impact of sharing personal stories or discussing sensitive topics, with risks assessed and mitigated, and appropriate support provided.

4.4 Safeguarding, complaints and whistleblowing policies and procedures are accessible and widely promoted

Clubs are required to ensure that Safeguarding, complaints and whistleblowing procedures are easily understood and widely promoted to stakeholders. The Club's Safeguarding policies and procedures must be publicly available on its website, along with contact details for its Safeguarding team, which may be in the form of a generic email address and/or a contact form.



Standard 5 – Protection

There are effective measures in place for responding to Safeguarding concerns and allegations

While the primary focus of Club Safeguarding arrangements must be on prevention, there may be times when concerns arise about the safety and welfare of Children or Adults at Risk, or about the conduct of those working with them. Robust procedures and consistent responses are essential to ensure timely action, reduce risk, and support coordinated interventions. The requirements in this Standard seek to ensure that such concerns are managed with transparency and accountability.

Policies and procedures

5.1 There are robust policies and procedures for reporting and responding to all types of concern

Each Club is required to:

- Have robust procedures for reporting and responding to concerns about the safety and welfare of Children and Adults at Risk, allegations, and low-level concerns, aligned with statutory and football regulatory requirements.
- Have Safeguarding recording standards to ensure all concerns about the safety and welfare of Children and Adults at Risk, allegations, and low-level concerns, and responses to these, are documented accurately and consistently.
- Have a complaints procedure, including how Safeguarding complaints are responded to.
- Have a whistleblowing policy and procedures.



Recording system

5.2 There is an effective electronic case management system for recording and tracking Safeguarding concerns and allegations

Each Club is required to:

System

Have an electronic system for recording Safeguarding concerns which allows direct reporting, alerts Safeguarding staff immediately, complies with data protection requirements, restricts access appropriately, and supports risk and action tracking, and trend analysis.

Centralised records

Have centralised records to maintain a holistic view of concerns and allegations to reduce the risk of miscommunication, enable seamless transitions between levels of concern and risk, and prevent information from being missed or overlooked.

Risk and action oversight

Have effective recording systems that support timely risk assessment, early identification of issues, and informed decision-making. This must also enable monitoring of interventions and clearly flag escalating risks or needs to ensure swift, appropriate responses.



Practice

5.3 The Club's response to Safeguarding concerns and allegations is robust

Each Club is required to:

Safe responses

Ensure policies and procedures are applied consistently and effectively, prioritising the safety and welfare, and best interests of Children and Adults at Risk. Those managing responses to Safeguarding concerns and allegations must have the necessary skills and expertise.

Recording and decision-making

Ensure records demonstrate sound professional judgment, defensible decision-making, and where appropriate, how the voices of Children and Adults at Risk at, and their parents/carers have been considered in decision-making.

External consultation and referral

Consult with, and where necessary make high-quality referrals to, statutory agencies, The FA, and the Premier League in line with FA regulations and Premier League Rule S.13, and also make referrals to the Disclosure and Barring Service and other relevant professional or regulatory bodies as required.

Support and intervention

Ensure affected individuals receive appropriate and timely support that is accessible, inclusive, and responsive to diverse needs, and that all support and interventions are monitored, reviewed, and adapted as necessary.

Learning and continual improvement

Implement measures to identify learning following the response to Safeguarding concerns and allegations, using this insight to inform changes to policies and procedures as needed to and minimise the risk of recurrence.



Standard 6 – Working together

Working together underpins the Club’s approach to promoting and protecting the rights, safety and wellbeing of Children and Adults at Risk

Safeguarding is a shared responsibility that relies on meaningful collaboration. Creating safe, inclusive, and supportive environments cannot be achieved in isolation - it depends on everyone working together proactively, consistently, and with a united commitment. This Standard sets out the requirements Clubs are expected to meet to ensure a coordinated and collaborative approach to promoting and protecting the rights, safety, and welfare of Children and Adults at Risk.

6.1 There is a collaborative and cohesive approach to promoting and protecting the rights, safety and wellbeing of Children and Adults at Risk

Each Club is required to:

Club Activities

Have effective interdisciplinary approaches (including Safeguarding expertise) to identify, meet, and monitor the needs of Children and Adults at Risk, including those in academy and first team environments. This includes recognising and responding to additional needs, vulnerabilities, behavioural concerns, mental health or wellbeing issues to enable early intervention and provide effective support and/or protection. Safeguarding must also be reflected in key transition points (such as progression from academy to first team and moves between Clubs) to ensure continuity of care.

Club Community Organisation relationship

Each Club is required to have clear and effective safeguarding governance arrangements and a contractual agreement in place with its affiliated Club Community Organisation. This agreement must set out Safeguarding obligations and clarify whether the Club Community Organisation is governed by its parent Club’s safeguarding policies and procedures or operates partially or fully independently of them.



6.2 There are effective Safeguarding due diligence and quality assurance measures embedded in partnerships, commissioned services, licensed and affiliated Activities

Each Club is required to:

Procedures and practice

Have effective Safeguarding due diligence processes, set out either in a standalone Safeguarding due diligence policy and procedures or integrated within the Club's broader procurement policy and procedures. These should clearly outline the steps for assessing the adequacy of prospective partners' Safeguarding, safer recruitment, and, where relevant, subcontracting practices prior to engagement, as well as measures for overseeing and managing any identified Safeguarding risks throughout the partnership.

Governance

Ensure contractual agreements with third parties include robust Safeguarding clauses that clearly define required standards, specify the relevant policies and procedures to be followed, and outline the consequences and actions to be taken if Safeguarding obligations are not met. Clubs must also have quality assurance measures in place and ensure appropriate action is taken when procedures are breached, or obligations are not met.

Training and awareness

Ensure that all individuals involved in the delivery of Activities receive training on the Club's safeguarding policies, procedures, and expectations. This should be followed by regular training appropriate to their responsibilities and responsive to any updates in policies, procedures, or role or Activity-specific expectations and risks.



Standard 7 – Listening culture

There is a culture that promotes listening to and acting on the experiences and views of stakeholders to drive continual improvement

Establishing a culture that actively listens to and values the voices of stakeholders is fundamental to effective Safeguarding. By ensuring that stakeholder insights inform procedures and practices, Clubs can enhance trust, promote transparency, and drive continuous improvement. This Standard seeks to embed listening as an integral part of Club practice and culture, ensuring Safeguarding measures are inclusive, responsive, and informed.

7.1 The Club proactively seeks and acts on feedback from stakeholders on a regular basis to strengthen its Safeguarding arrangements

Each Club is required to:

Meaningful engagement

Provide safe, inclusive, and accessible ways for stakeholders to share their views, experiences, and concerns. These opportunities should encourage open dialogue and reflect a commitment to inclusive engagement and collaboration.

Listening and responding

Demonstrate that feedback shared by stakeholders is meaningfully considered and, where appropriate, used to strengthen Safeguarding procedures and practices and inform Safeguarding priorities. Feedback should be provided to ensure contributors understand their input is valued and how it has influenced or may lead to change.

Strengthening practices

Involve stakeholders in the regular review of engagement processes to support continuous improvement and ensure these mechanisms remain relevant, effective, and trusted.



7.2 There is a culture of listening to Children and Adults at Risk and taking account of their experiences and views to inform enhancements to the Club's approach to promoting and protecting their rights, safety and wellbeing

Each Club is required to:

Understanding vulnerability and risk

Implement a systematic approach to understanding whether Children and Adults at Risk feel safe, and to identifying any barriers that may increase vulnerability or prevent them from speaking out. This includes supporting those working with them to recognise and respond to behaviours that may be a form of communication, and to be professionally curious about the underlying needs they may reflect.

Meaningful engagement

Ensure that Children, Adults at Risk, and their parents/carers have access to a variety of safe, inclusive, and accessible ways to express their views and raise concerns. These opportunities must actively support open dialogue and demonstrate the Club's commitment to meaningful, inclusive engagement.

Voice-led practices

Demonstrate how the voices of Children, Adults at Risk, and their parents or carers have been meaningfully considered and used to inform procedures, practices, and priorities. Feedback must be provided to show their input is valued and its impact. They should be involved in reviewing engagement processes to maintain relevance, effectiveness, and trust.



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