

## ‘Let’s make football safe - not sorry’

Referees are really taking this FA strapline to heart with 17,000 having already completed their FA CRB check. However there are still those who are yet to fully appreciate this message.

Whatever your views on modern society, the fact is protection of children is high on the agenda – partly because of some of the tragic cases which have occurred in recent times.

What is clear is we need everyone to understand why they are being asked to complete an FA CRB check.

For example, it doesn’t mean there’s any implication that there’s something untoward in your behaviour. It’s simply one way we can help avoid cases like that of the Soham schoolgirls, one of whose father, Kevin Wells, is a registered referee with the Cambridgeshire FA.



As Kevin says: “The Check and the training are quick, non-intrusive and really, really matter.”

“Do the right thing by our children. Please make sure you have an up-to-date CRB check in place – and you complete The FA’s ‘Safeguarding Children’ training.”

Remember it’s not just referees who are required to complete this process – so are coaches, managers, welfare officers and first-aiders.

It only takes a few minutes to complete a simple form so The FA’s own CRB Unit can initiate a check to ensure there’s been no criminal activity that might lead us to consider the person is a risk to children.

Needless to say, almost everyone is acceptable but identifying anyone who could pose a risk to children is so important to children, parents – and all of us working in football.

**If you’ve any questions when completing the form, we’re here to help and advise, so just email us at [crb@TheFA.com](mailto:crb@TheFA.com) or call us on our Freephone number 0800 085 0506.**

If you are worried about the process, please don’t be.

Apart from the CRB check, all referees need to understand what’s expected when working with children – and what to do if concerned about a child’s welfare.

“That’s why The FA’s ‘Safeguarding Children’ training is vital,” says Ian Blanchard, The FA’s Head of Refereeing. “The training looks at the issues referees and others face every week, because working with children isn’t just about having a CRB check. It’s about being aware



Ian Blanchard, FA head of refereeing

of poor practice, how best to avoid it and ultimately, how to deal with it.”

Whether someone works with, supervises or trains children, the training gives everyone a genuine understanding of child protection issues – and how we can all help ensure children play football in a fun and safe environment.

Many referees have seen additional benefits from the training, which they’ve been able to apply to their lives outside football – generally improving the way they safeguard their own children, grandchildren and other family members.

Of course, apart from having an undeniable duty of care towards children and young people, football also has a responsibility to parents and carers, who are increasingly asking people in football two questions:

- 1. Are you following the correct procedures when recruiting people to work with children?**
- 2. Are all the relevant people CRB-checked?**

The response has to be ‘yes’ in both cases if the integrity of clubs, leagues, County FAs and The FA is to be preserved.

“To support this integrity, we clearly need to back up our policy with sanctions,” continues Ian, “Otherwise it has no teeth.

“So any registered referee who does not have a CRB check in place and hasn’t taken our training will no longer be able to officiate.

“We really don’t want this to happen – because football really needs you. It simply cannot survive and flourish without referees.

“On the flipside, we’re equally aware that as a referee, you often work in a hostile environment. Improving behaviour towards match officials is a key objective of The FA and we intend to do all we can in the months and years ahead to address this issue.”

So what's your next step if you do need to complete an FA CRB check and complete your Safeguarding Children training? Simple- just call your County FA head office and they will explain and take you through the process. The full list of County FA tel nos and e.mail addresses is available at

[www.TheFA.com/CountyContacts](http://www.TheFA.com/CountyContacts)

*"I was really uncomfortable about having to do a CRB check. I thought my workmates and friends would get to know about stuff that had happened years ago; I'm not proud of it and I certainly didn't want it all raked up. The daft thing is I needn't have worried. No-one got to know what was on my CRB Disclosure except for the relevant staff at The FA, and their CRB Unit dealt with it. My privacy was never in doubt." Anonymous*

In the meantime, we've collated a list of frequently-asked questions – particularly about CRB checks. Hopefully they will reassure you even further:

### 1. What will show on my CRB Disclosure ?

Everybody has a different history so we can't tell you what will show but from our experience, 85% of all Disclosures are clear. This is partly because some old and minor offences are not shown.

### 2. What if something does show on my Disclosure?

This will depend what it is. The things taken into account include:

- How long ago it was;
- How serious it was;
- How old you were;
- What the Courts said;
- Whether a child or young person was harmed.

For more information please visit [www.TheFA.com/footballsafes](http://www.TheFA.com/footballsafes)

For a confidential conversation please call our Freephone number: 0800 085 0506

### 3. What if I have some past offences, but they were not serious ones?

Some things are so minor that The FA CRB Unit sends you a letter telling you not to worry and simply shreds its copy of the Disclosure.

The FA then simply records that you have been 'accepted'. NO other details are kept.

For example, we would shred Disclosures which contain old and minor possession of drugs offences, benefit and financial crimes, kerb crawling, car crimes, driving offences, old public order offences and youth offending.

### 4. What if the offence was quite serious?

Some offences are more worrying and The FA CRB Unit may write and ask you about them and ask for references – and sometimes for details of your Probation Officer.

The type of offences that lead to this type of enquiry include recent assaults, violence that has led to a prison sentence, recent drug use and supplying offences, racist offending, harassment, arson and indecent exposure.

### 5. What if it's more serious?

Some offences are serious even if they are very old.

This means a more detailed enquiry will take place. The kind of history that will lead to this type of enquiry includes rape, downloading indecent images of children, indecent assault, manslaughter, murder and recent supply of Class A drugs.

Some people with a serious history will be suspended.

Clearly, The FA has to be responsible as well as fair.

### 6. What if I'm suspended?

Your club, League or County (depending on which are relevant) will be told they cannot use you, but they will not be told why.

That remains private and The FA will shred any record of your offending so no-one can find out.

The normal FA appeals process applies and of course you can appeal against your suspension.

For more details about the appeals process please see Section 5.4.3 of The FA 'Safeguarding Children and Young People in football' policy and procedures.

This information is also available to download via TheFA.com. Go to [www.TheFA.com/footballsafes](http://www.TheFA.com/footballsafes) and click on 'Downloads' under the 'Responsible Recruitment' section.

*"I couldn't see the point of getting a CRB check. Well everyone can see what's happening on the pitch, can't they? Then I heard that a referee in our local association had been charged with indecent assault on a kid. He'd been using the same changing rooms as the players and was offering to mentor young referees. You wouldn't want him refereeing a kids' match, would you? Guess you just can't tell about some people, everyone thought he was a decent bloke – until now that is." Anonymous*