

# The Football Association Anti-Bullying Policy for Football Clubs



## Recommended Guidelines

TheFA.com

### Statement of Intent

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our members so they can participate in football in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our club. If bullying does occur, all club members or parents should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a *TELLING* club. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the club welfare officer or any committee member.

### What is Bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

### Bullying can be:

- Emotional being unfriendly, excluding (emotionally and physically), sending hurtful text messages, tormenting (e.g. hiding football boots/shin guards, threatening gestures)
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.

### Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Individuals who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

This club have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

### Objectives of this Policy

- All club members, coaches, officials and parents/carers should have an understanding of what bullying is
- All club members, officials and coaching staff should know what the club policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported
- All players and parents/carers should know what the club policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises
- As a club we take bullying seriously. Players and parents/carers should be assured that they would be supported when bullying is reported
- Bullying will not be tolerated
- All club members, coaches, officials and parents/carers should have an appreciation of the signs and indicators of bullying.



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A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and they should investigate if a child:

- says he or she is being bullied
- is unwilling to go to club sessions
- becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- feels ill before training sessions
- comes home with clothes torn or training equipment damaged
- has possessions go 'missing'
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay the bully)
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above.

Or, in more extreme cases, if a child:

- starts stammering
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away.

These signs and behaviours may indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

### Procedures

1. Report bullying incidents to the club welfare officer or a member of the clubs committee or contact the County Football Association Child Protection Officer (CFA CPO)
2. In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be referred to the CFA CPO for advice and possibly to the FA Case Management System
3. Parents/carers should be informed and will be asked to come in for a meeting to discuss the problem



4. If necessary and appropriate, Police will be consulted
5. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly
6. An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour
7. If mediation fails and the bullying is seen to continue the club will initiate disciplinary action under the club constitution.

### Recommended Club Action

If the club decides it is appropriate for them to deal with the situation they should follow the procedure outlined below.

1. Reconciliation by getting the parties together. It may be that a genuine apology solves the problem
2. If this fails or is not appropriate a small panel (made up from chairman, club welfare officer, secretary, committee members) should meet with the parents/carers and child alleging bullying to get details of the allegation. Minutes should be taken for clarity, which should be agreed by all as a true account
3. The same three persons should meet with the alleged bully and parents/carers and put the incident raised to them to answer and give their view of the allegation. Minutes should again be taken and agreed

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4. If bullying has in their view taken place, the individual should be warned and put on notice of further action i.e. temporary or permanent suspension if the bullying continues. Consideration should be given as to whether a reconciliation meeting between parties is appropriate at this time
5. In some cases the parent/carers of the bully or bullied player can be asked to attend training sessions, if they are able to do so, and if appropriate. The club committee should monitor the situation for a given period to ensure the bullying is not being repeated
6. All coaches involved with both individuals should be made aware of the concerns and outcome of the process i.e. the warning.

### In the Case of Adults Reported to be Bullying Anyone Within the Club Under 18

1. The CFA CPO should always be informed and will advise on action to be taken where appropriate
2. It is anticipated that in most cases where the allegation is made regarding a team manager, official or coach, The FA's Child Protection and Best Practice awareness training may be recommended
3. More serious cases may be referred to the Police and/or Social Services.

### Prevention

- The club will have a written constitution, which includes what is acceptable and proper behaviour for all members of which the anti-bullying policy is one part
- All club members and parents will sign to accept the constitution upon joining the club
- The club welfare officer will raise awareness about bullying and why it matters, and if issues of bullying arise in the club, will consider meeting with members to discuss the issue openly and constructively.

This policy is based on guidance provided to schools by KIDSCAPE.

KIDSCAPE is a voluntary organisation committed to help prevent child bullying. KIDSCAPE can be contacted on 0207 730 3300 or you can access their website via [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

You may also wish to access [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk), another website designed to give advice and guidance to parents and children who are faced with dealing with bullying.

We would like to thank the ASA who have shared their Anti-Bullying Policy for Clubs on which this recommended FA Club Anti-Bullying Policy has been developed.