

## Summary Mandate Now Review of:

### ‘Grassroots Football Safeguarding Children’

“It’s a policy on which little reliance should be placed” – Mandate Now

The NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit makes the following statement on p7 of ‘Grassroots Football Safeguarding Children’

## Endorsement from the NSPCC, Child Protection in Sport Unit



On behalf of the NSPCC, Child Protection in Sport Unit I am delighted to recognise the great work being carried out across grassroots football and applaud your policies and procedures. It’s well documented that by ‘working together’ safeguards are more effective in supporting and protecting children and young people. With an estimated 5 million children and young people involved in football is essential that there is a clear understanding of what is acceptable behaviour and how to report any concerns.

I’d like to thank all of the volunteers working hard to make football safe – not sorry.

.....”I applaud your policies and procedures.”

Anne Tiivas – Director Child Protection in Sport Unit

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne Tiivas'.

Anne Tiivas

Director, Child Protection in Sport Unit

Section 6 'Responding to concerns, allegations and disclosures (Page 34) of the FA's policy document:

## Section 6

**6.0 Responding to concerns, allegations and disclosures\***

There is a legal and moral responsibility to report any concerns about a child or young person in any context.

In stark contrast to this statement is this extract from Government Consultation 'Reporting and Acting on Child Abuse and Neglect' which closed on 13/10/16. The outcome is awaited imminently.

Reporting and acting on child abuse and neglect Government consultation

6. There is currently no general legal requirement on those working with children to report either known or suspected child abuse or neglect. Statutory guidance, however, is very clear that those who work with children and families **should** report to the local authority children's social care **immediately** if they think a child may have been or is likely to be abused or neglected. While statutory guidance does not impose an absolute legal requirement to comply, it does require practitioners and organisations to take it into account and, if they depart from it, to have clear reasons for doing so.

Throughout the FA document, there is confusion about reporting concerns: who should report and whether they should report within rather than reporting externally to the Local Authority for independent advice / assessment (triage). The extract from the Government consultation says: **Reporting and Acting on Child Abuse** featured above clearly states: *those who work with children and families "should" report to children's social care immediately if they think a child may have been or is likely to have been abused or neglected.*

Observations on:

**Grassroots Football Safeguarding Policy Document**

- There is confusion about who should/must/must not be subjected to a Criminal Records Check (Page 5).

- Document incorrectly claims that there is a legal obligation to report child abuse concerns (Page 29 see highlighted in Section 6 and extracts above next to Government’s admission in writing that there is no legal obligation to report known or suspected abuse).
- Even though there is a claimed legal obligation, the actual procedures for reporting child abuse concerns are merely “guidelines”. There is no mention of either legal or FA disciplinary sanctions for failing to follow them ( Page 30 – see also note on page 38 below flowchart ).
- Whilst a CWO (Club Welfare Officer) can be temporarily suspended and or fined for non adherence to the CWO Code of Conduct, there is no procedure for temporarily suspending a member of staff following the report of a child protection concern pending investigation (Page 49).
- The wording of the document is internally inconsistent, sometimes talking of the “Club Welfare Officer” and elsewhere of the “Designated Person for Child Protection”, without ever mentioning the two are the same or not (Page 32).
- The document has many pages of “padding” text, descriptive text containing no procedures. (Commented upon at page 9 of full document).

Observations on:

### **Club Template**

- Very abbreviated version of the grassroots procedures. Many clubs will believe that this document is all they have to do, and so won’t bother to read the much longer grassroots policy. So this document has to be clear and correct about reporting abuse. It isn’t.
- Poorly written procedures for reporting child protection concerns. It is very unclear who is expected to report what to whom and under what circumstances.
- A mention is made of the need to follow the Grassroots procedures, but the reporting procedure in the document is different from the grassroots procedure referred to for example: the grassroots procedure has flowcharts for different circumstances describing amongst other things, to whom the CWO reports concerns. Nobody will have any idea which to follow (see page 37 + 38 on the FA document).
- In para 6 (Pages 2 & 3) of the Club Template policy document – no mention is made of making a referral to the Local Authority. The thrust appears to be for concerns to be dealt with in house contrary to the extract from the Government consultation in the header of the document.