

AFC CHILD SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTION POLICY (EDITION 2026)





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GENERAL SECRETARY'S FOREWORD

Dear friends,

It gives me great pleasure to present the latest edition of the AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy, which, by all accounts, further underlines the Confederation's commitment to protecting the rights and well-being of Children at all levels of the game.

At the heart of the AFC's Vision and Mission is the desire to confirm football as the Continent's most popular sport, and central to that outcome is our pledge to foster a secure and positive environment whilst championing the best Child safeguarding practices across the Asian football family.

As part of our efforts to achieve this bold objective, this policy is a tangible reflection of our unwavering dedication to creating a safe, inclusive, and empowering environment for every Child involved in football, ensuring they can participate and develop without fear of harm.

Football, as we all know, is more than a sport; it is a powerful platform for education, inclusion, and transformation. Through this comprehensive policy, we aim to harness the extensive reach of the beautiful game to raise awareness, implement robust preventive measures, and promote proactive safeguarding practices across our Member Associations (MAs), Regional Associations (RAs), and the broader football ecosystem.

Child safeguarding is not just a set of procedures; it is a concerted effort to shape a culture where every Child is valued, respected, and heard. This policy calls on all of the AFC's staff members, stakeholders, and partners to uphold these principles in every interaction and decision, placing the welfare of Children at the forefront of our hearts and minds.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Whether you are a coach, volunteer, administrator, or parent, your role is vital in ensuring Children are protected from harm and supported to thrive within our football community. We encourage everyone to familiarise themselves with this policy and actively contribute to its implementation.

As we move forward, let us strive to build a future where this policy serves not only as a guiding light but also a clarion call to activate meaningful, purposeful action.

Together, I am confident that we can create a lifelong journey where every Child in Asian football feels safe, supported, and inspired to reach their full potential in the best possible environment.

AFC General Secretary
Datuk Seri Windsor John

AFC CHILD SAFEGUARDING AND PROTECTION POLICY 2026

2. Introduction

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) affirms that, every Child has *“the right to live free from violence, exploitation and abuse”*.

The AFC champions the rights of all Children to be safe from abuse while participating in AFC programmes and activities.

This Policy is part of the AFC’s overall commitment to safeguard Children within the AFC football ecosystem and will be supplemented with further guidance, templates, knowledge-sharing and training to support Employees, Representatives, Officials, Member Associations and Regional Associations together with regional and community organisations.

The purpose of this Policy is to outline the responsibilities and obligations of Employees, Representatives and Officials with regard to Child Safeguarding and Child Protection, and to provide a framework and guiding principles to support Member Associations and Regional Associations in developing, implementing and straightening their responsibilities in Child Safeguarding and Protection measures including through adherence to the following principles:

1. Act in the Child’s best interests by promoting and prioritising the safety and wellbeing of Children;
2. Value, respect and listen to Children, allowing them the right to participate and freely express their opinions in matters affecting them;
3. Ensure all Children are free from any form of discrimination concerning race, skin colour, gender, disability, language, physical appearance, religion, political opinion, wealth, birth or any other status, sexual orientation, or ethnic, national, or social origin;
4. Uphold and promote a culture of Child Safeguarding regardless of function, level or position; and
5. Prevent and respond violence against Children, Child Abuse and Child exploitation.

The Policy is an evolving document that will be updated as needed to reflect legislative and best practice changes, in addition to feedback and consultation relating to the practical experience of persons and/or organisations within the AFC football ecosystem.

3. Definitions

In this Policy, capitalised terms shall have the following meanings, unless the context specifically indicates otherwise:

Term	Definition
Artificial Intelligence	Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the capacity of computers or other machines to exhibit or stimulate intelligent behaviour in the field of study concerned.
Bullying	Bullying involves the inappropriate use of power by one or more persons over another less powerful person or group and can be by an adult, another Child or by a group. Bullying is typically a pattern of inappropriate behaviour repeated over time. Bullying may take many forms that are often interrelated and may include but is not limited to: • verbal bullying including name calling, demeaning actions and threats; • physical bullying including hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping and spitting; • social bullying including ignoring, excluding, ostracising and, alienating; and/or • psychological bullying including spreading rumours, stalking, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions. For the avoidance of doubt, bullying also includes cyber bullying, which can also have lasting and damaging consequences. Cyber bullying is usually done via the internet, social media, SMS, MMS, email or other online platform(s).
Child	A person who is under the age of 18 years. The term “ Children ” shall be construed accordingly.
Child Abuse	Child Abuse is the mistreatment of a Child by an adult that has harmed, is harming or is likely to harm, endanger or put at risk that Child’s physical or emotional health, development or wellbeing. For the avoidance of doubt, this includes, but is not limited to: • Emotional or Psychological Abuse; • Bullying; • Grooming; • Sexual Abuse; • Neglect; and/or • Physical Abuse.

Child Safeguarding	Child Safeguarding is the proactive set of actions an organisation can take to keep Children safe from harm. It is a broad term encompassing, amongst other things, the prevention of Child Abuse, harm and exploitation.
Child Protection	Child protection is the prevention and response to abuse, neglect, exploitation, violence and the separation of Children, and the promotion of solutions in Children's best interests.
Child Safeguarding Officer/ point of contact	A designated individual responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the Child Safeguarding Policy within an organisation.
Club	Football teams or organisations, whether professional or amateur, that officially compete in leagues or competitions run or approved by a football authority.
Emotional or Psychological Abuse	Emotional or Psychological Abuse occurs when a Child does not receive the support or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological and social development. Such abuse may involve repeated rejection or threats to a Child. Constant criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridiculing and rejection or continuous apathy are all examples of emotional abuse. These behaviours can result or have the potential to result in significant damage to the Child's physical, intellectual or emotional wellbeing and development.
Employee(s)	All persons engaged in full or part-time service with the AFC under a contract of employment (whether on a permanent, fixed term or other basis). This includes, without limitation the AFC General Secretary, AFC Deputy General Secretaries, AFC Directors, Heads of Department/Unit and all other AFC staff members.
Football Association	The controlling body for football within a country or territory recognised by the AFC.
Member Association	A Football Association which is a member of the AFC.

Grooming	Grooming is a term used to describe what happens when a perpetrator of abuse builds a relationship with a Child with an intent to abuse them at some stage. There is no set pattern in relation to the Grooming of a Child. For some perpetrators, there will be a lengthy period of time before the abuse begins. The Child may be given special attention and/or be treated favourably and what starts as an apparently normal interaction, such as tickling, or physically embracing a Child, can develop into sexualised behaviours including Sexual Abuse of a Child. Grooming can take place in any setting where a relationship is formed, such as leisure, music, sports and religious activities, or in internet chat rooms, in social media or by other technological channels.
Leagues	Organised football competitions or championship structures that are conducted under the authority, sanction, or auspices of a recognised Football Association, and in which clubs participate on a regular or seasonal basis, whether at professional or amateur level.
Neglect	Neglect is the failure to provide the Child with basic needs including but not limited to food, clothing, shelter, adequate supervision, clean water, medical attention or supervision to the extent that the Child's health and development is, or is likely to be harmed. Categories of Neglect include physical neglect, medical neglect, abandonment or desertion, emotional neglect and educational neglect. The issue of neglect must be considered within the context of resources reasonably available at the time.
Officials	All office bearers, including but not limited to and members of various Committees, managers, coaches, trainers, match officials, medical officials, staff and any other person responsible for technical, medical and administrative matters in the AFC, Regional Associations, Football Associations, Leagues or Clubs as well as other persons obliged to comply with the AFC Statutes (except Players and Football Agents).

Physical Abuse	Physical Abuse occurs when a person subjects a Child to non-accidental injury and/or physically aggressive acts. The abuser may inflict an injury intentionally or inadvertently as a result of physical punishment or the aggressive treatment of a Child. Physically abusive behaviour includes, but is not limited to: • shoving, hitting, kicking, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning; and/or • excessive and/or physically harmful overtraining. It also includes giving Children unlawful or harmful substances such as drugs, alcohol, poison, tobacco or e-cigarettes.
Policy	This AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy.
Regional Association	A group of Member Associations recognised by the AFC that belong to the same geographic zone.
Representative (s)	Representative (s) means any natural person elected, appointed, authorised, accredited or engaged by the AFC to perform an official function or act on behalf of the AFC. This includes, without limitation, the AFC President, members of the AFC Executive Committee and other AFC committees, competitions or events, volunteers, and contractors, consultants or service providers engaged to perform official functions for the AFC. For the avoidance of doubt, sponsors, partners, media organisations, broadcasters and other commercial counterparties shall not be considered as Representatives solely by virtue of their relationship with the AFC.
Sexual Abuse	Sexual Abuse occurs when a person involves a Child in any sexual activity. Perpetrators of sexual abuse take advantage of their power, authority, influence, or position over the Child for their own or the benefit of others. Such actions constituting Sexual Abuse shall include without limitation: • making sexual comments to a Child; • engaging Children to participate in sexual conversations face to face, over the internet or on social media; • kissing or touching any intimate part of a Child's body including a Child's genitals, bottom or breasts; • oral or penetrative sex or other forms of sexual intercourse or conduct with a Child; and/or • encouraging a Child to view pornographic magazines, websites and videos.
Unacceptable Behaviour	Any behaviour or conduct which breaches this Policy or which is otherwise inconsistent with this Policy. Examples of Unacceptable Behaviour are outlined in Article 7.3.3.

For purposes of this Policy and provided the context so permits:

- (a) the singular shall include the plural and vice-versa;
- (b) the feminine gender shall include the masculine and vice-versa; and
- (c) reference to natural persons shall include any legal person or corporation.

4. Child Safeguarding and Child Protection In Practice

Focus: It is **reactive** and **case-specific**, dealing with situations where a Child is at risk or has been harmed.

Examples in Football:

- Reporting and responding to an allegation of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse by an Official.
- Investigating and acting on bullying within a team.
- Referring a youth player to Child protection authorities when there are concerns for their safety.

Aspect	Child Safeguarding	Child Protection
Focus	Prevention and risk reduction.	Response and intervention.
Approach	Systemic, proactive, and ongoing.	Case-specific, reactive, and immediate.
Scope in Football	Applies to all Children, staff, volunteers, facilities, and programmes	Applies when a particular Child (or group of Children) are at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation.
Examples	- Safe recruitment and screening of coaches/referees. - Codes of conduct for behaviour. - Education and awareness training. - Safe facilities, supervision, and travel.	- Responding to an allegation of abuse by a coach or referee. - Reporting a disclosure of neglect or exploitation to authorities. - Taking immediate protective action for a Child at risk.
Responsibility	Shared responsibility across the entire football community (administrators, coaches, referees, volunteers, parents, and players).	Managed by designated safeguarding officers in collaboration with statutory Child protection agencies and law enforcement.

5. Scope of Application

5.1 Employees, Representatives and Officials

- 5.1.1 All Employees, Representatives and Officials are bound by this Policy.
- 5.1.2 As underlined in the definition of “Representatives” and “Officials”, the AFC also expects its contractors, consultants, service providers and others who may be temporarily engaged in the performance of work or services for the AFC to follow the Policy in connection with their work for the AFC. Any failure by a contractor, consultant, service provider or others engaged by the AFC to abide by this Policy may result in the termination of their relationship with the AFC.
- 5.1.3 The AFC expects all persons who are subject to and bound by this Policy to adhere to the principles contained herein. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary and/or other action being taken against the relevant individual. In appropriate cases, action may also be taken under the AFC Disciplinary and Ethics Code.
- 5.1.4 This Policy will continue to apply to a person, even after they have ceased any involvement (subject to this Policy’s terms) with the AFC, if disciplinary action against that person has commenced.

5.2 Member Associations and Regional Associations (MA/RA)

- 5.2.1 Member Associations and Regional Associations are encouraged to appoint a dedicated safeguarding officer or a designated point of contact point of contact, and to develop and implement effective policies and best practices aimed at ensuring the protection and safeguarding of Children at various levels of football within their respective jurisdictions.
- 5.2.2 The Policy Guidance for AFC Member Associations and Regional Associations as set out in Appendix 3 of this Policy shall serve as guidance to assist Member Associations and Regional Associations in the development and implementation of their Child Safeguarding policies and practices.

6. Commitment Statement

- 6.1 This Policy serves to uphold the AFC's core values and recognise that the welfare and interests of Children are paramount in the AFC's programmes and activities. The AFC Statutes, states that the AFC shall attribute particular attention to protecting the welfare and interests of Children and young adults throughout all types of Football and all related activities. This Policy aims to ensure that all Children:
- have a positive and enjoyable experience of football with the AFC in a safe and Child-centred/friendly environment; and
 - are protected from abuse whilst participating in AFC programmes and activities.
- 6.2 The AFC acknowledges that Children, including Children with impairments, disabilities and/or those from ethnic minority communities, can be particularly vulnerable to Child Abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps through the provision of the required manpower and resources to ensure their safety and wellbeing during AFC programmes and activities.
- 6.3 The AFC commits to the following:
- 6.3.1 Recognising and communicating to all Employees, Representatives and Officials through this Policy (and other means, where appropriate) that Children have the right to be protected from all forms of Child Abuse.
 - 6.3.2 Maintaining the AFC Child Safeguarding team to oversee the implementation and development of Child Safeguarding best practices within the AFC and to liaise with Member Associations and Regional Associations in respect of Child Safeguarding matters and best practices.
 - 6.3.3 Requiring Employees, Representatives and Officials to adhere to this Policy.
 - 6.3.4 Ensuring that all concerns relating to Child Abuse is responded to promptly, in a confidential manner and through established reporting lines in accordance with this Policy.
 - 6.3.5 Raising awareness and influencing others on the importance of safeguarding Children by using our policies and procedures to uphold our commitment and values.
 - 6.3.6 Providing effective management for Employees, Representatives and Officials through supervision, support, training and quality assurance measures.
 - 6.3.7 Ensuring appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents or concerns of Child Abuse and that support is provided to the individual(s) who raise or disclose concerns.
 - 6.3.8 Ensuring that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored in accordance with applicable laws.

- 6.3.9 Reducing the risk of employing and engaging unsuitable individuals by recruiting and selecting Employees, Representatives and Officials safely and ensuring appropriate probity and reference checks are completed.
- 6.3.10 Sharing information about Child Safeguarding and good practice with Children and their parent(s) or legal guardian(s).
- 6.3.11 Ensuring that Children and their parent(s) or guardian(s) know where to go for help if they have a concern.
- 6.3.12 Ensuring everyone within the AFC understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of Child Safeguarding and are provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of Child Abuse.
- 6.3.13 Reviewing this Policy and Child Safeguarding procedures periodically.
- 6.3.14 Striving to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to allow for the development and implementation of this Policy.
- 6.3.15 Developing opportunities for regular discussions at all levels to support a culture of openness, continuous improvement and accountability for Child Protection and Child wellbeing.
- 6.3.16 Encouraging policy development and implementation amongst Member Associations and Regional Associations.
- 6.3.17 Promoting Child Safeguarding across the Asian football ecosystem.
- 6.3.18 Advocating and promoting Child rights, and empowering and engaging Children in support of this Policy and its objectives.

7. Codes of Behaviour

7.1 This section outlines the required level(s) of professional conduct that Employees, Representatives and Officials must observe when working with or in the presence of Children during any AFC programme or activity or otherwise in an AFC context. This serves to supplement the AFC's expectations as set out in the AFC Code of Conduct and Employee Handbook.

7.2 These requirements play an important role in setting out the AFC's expectations of:

7.2.1 personal and professional boundaries;

7.2.2 ethical behaviour; and

7.2.3 appropriate and inappropriate behaviour when working with or in the presence of Children during any AFC programme or activity or otherwise in an AFC context.

7.3 The requirements are as follows:

7.3.1 Core Values

The standards of behaviour which Employees, Representatives and Officials are expected to observe when working with or in the presence of Children during any AFC programme or activity or otherwise in an AFC context are based on the following core values:

- a) to act in accordance with the vision, mission and values of the AFC;
- b) to display respect and courtesy towards Children;
- c) to prevent discrimination and harassment;
- d) to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of Children; and
- e) to report any Unacceptable Behaviour to help prevent the abuse of Children in the AFC community.

7.3.2 General Rules of Behaviour

When working with or in the presence of Children during any AFC programme or activity or otherwise in an AFC context, Employees, Representatives and Officials shall not:

- a) use, possess or be under the influence of any illegal drug(s);
- b) use or be under the influence of alcohol;
- c) be incapacitated by any other legal drug such as prescription or over-the-counter drugs;

- d) supply alcohol or drugs (including tobacco/e-cigarettes) to a Child participating in any AFC programmes/activities; and/or
- e) supply any substance that is banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

It is strongly recommended that Employees, Representatives and Officials familiarise themselves with and adhere to the Child Safeguarding Guidelines to Reduce and Mitigate Risk as set out under Appendix 2 of this Policy.

7.3.3 Unacceptable Behaviour

Employees, Representatives and Officials must not engage in any conduct that constitutes or may constitute Unacceptable Behaviour when working with or in the presence of Children during any AFC programme or activity or otherwise in an AFC context.

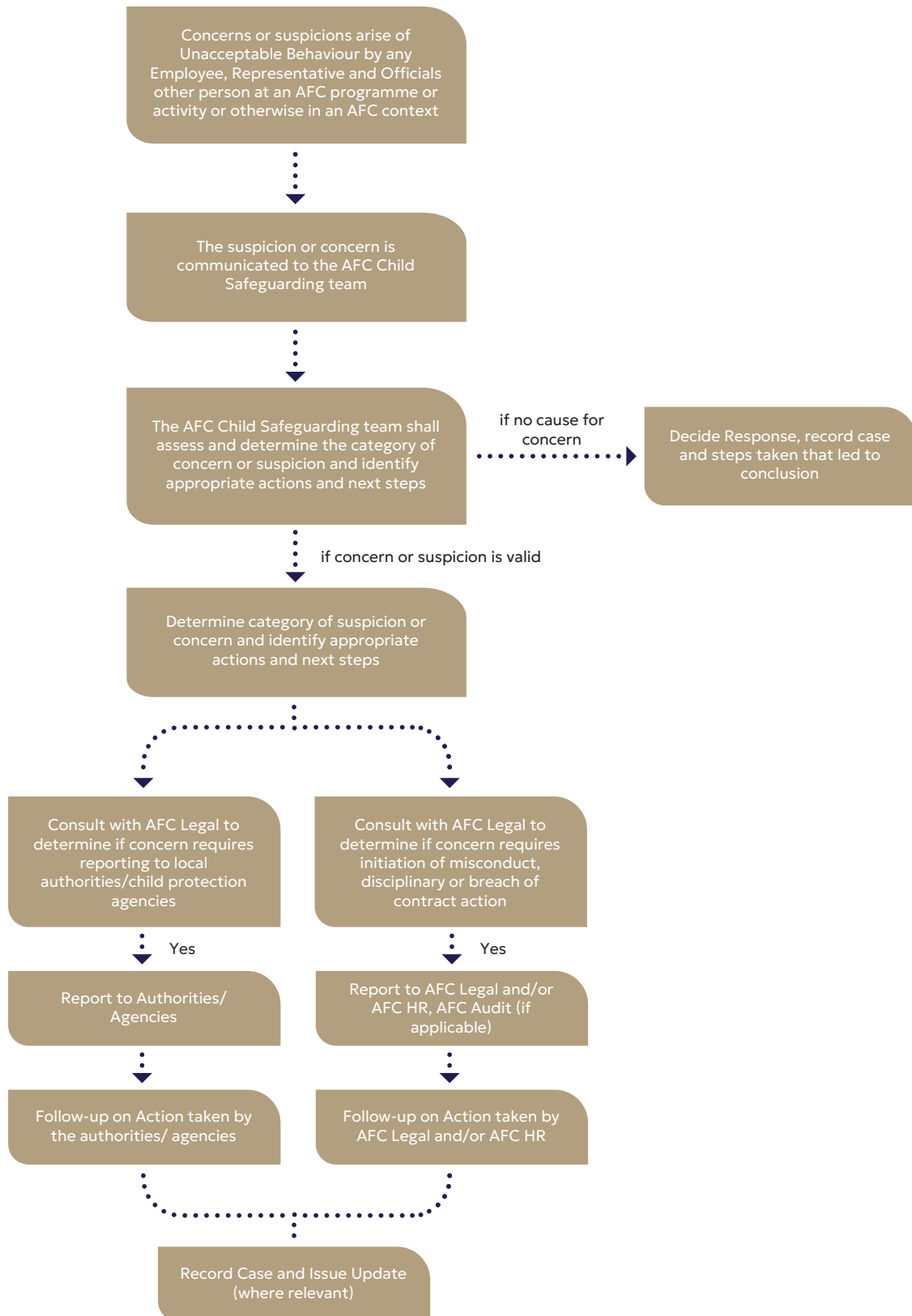
Without limitation, the following shall constitute Unacceptable Behaviour for the purposes of this Policy:

- a) any form of Child Abuse (which, for the avoidance of doubt, includes Physical Abuse, Emotional or Psychological Abuse, Bullying, Grooming, Sexual Abuse and Neglect) or similar conduct;
- b) any conduct that involves inappropriate or sexual handling of a Child, other than as part of delivering medical or allied health services, questioning or discussing sexual preference, experience or knowledge with a Child;
- c) any suggestive conduct including undressing in front of Children (including in dressing rooms, accommodation settings and bathroom areas which are in use by a Child);
- d) showing a Child any offensive written material or images, whether in hard copy or electronic form (e.g., any form of pornography including via social media platforms);
- e) taking or displaying photographs of a Child that are inappropriate, covert, and/or any photographs taken without the consent of the Child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s);
- f) contacting a Child for non-work-related matters; and/or
- g) engaging in any form of communication and/or activity with a Child outside the scope of any AFC programme or activity or for non-work-related matters.

8. Identification, Reporting Concerns and Action Process

- 8.1 Employees, Representatives and Officials must report any Child Safeguarding concerns or suspicions (i.e., any suspicion, allegation, disclosure, or observation of any Unacceptable Behaviour by any person) in a timely manner to the AFC Child Safeguarding team and, where necessary, external agencies, so that appropriate action can be taken to manage and address such concerns. The Child's immediate safety must always be the primary consideration, particularly where there is any risk of harm.
- 8.2 It is not the responsibility of Employees, Representatives and Officials to determine whether Child abuse has occurred. However, all Employees, Representatives and Officials have a duty to act upon any concerns, suspicions, or allegations of Child Abuse. Any such concerns must be reported to the AFC Safeguarding Team or, where necessary, the appropriate authorities, in line with AFC's Child Safeguarding policies and procedures.
- 8.3 Employees, Representatives and Officials must clearly and accurately document all relevant details of any concern, suspicion, allegation, disclosure, or observation of Unacceptable Behaviour using the AFC Child Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form. In circumstances when the form cannot be assessed or used, the information should be recorded using an alternative written format and transferred to the form as soon as reasonably practicable. Records must be factual, complete, and submitted promptly in accordance with AFC procedures. Individuals who fail to report any concern shall be in breach of this Policy, and such omission may result in disciplinary and/or other action being taken against such individuals by the relevant Member Associations and/or Regional Associations.
- 8.4 Upon receipt of a report, the AFC Child Safeguarding team will review the case, assess its seriousness, and determine the appropriate course of action. This may include referral to, or involvement of, relevant authorities where necessary. The case will be monitored to ensure that the Child receives appropriate support and that all relevant parties are effectively coordinated.
- 8.5 All reports, investigation records and related documentation shall be treated as strictly confidential and shall be disclosed strictly on a need-to-know basis. The AFC reserves the right to determine the manner, scope and recipients of any disclosure required for safeguarding, regulatory, disciplinary or legal purposes.
- 8.6 The AFC Child Safeguarding Reporting Flowchart as appended under Article 8.9 below sets out the process to be followed when managing a reported concern or suspicion that has been reported to the AFC Child Safeguarding team.
- 8.7 All concerns or suspicions of Child Abuse or Neglect involving any Employee, Representative and/or Official within any AFC programme or activity or otherwise in an AFC context may be reported to the AFC Child Safeguarding team at safeguarding@the-afc.com. All reports shall be submitted with the AFC Child Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form as set out under Article 8.10 below.
- 8.8 For the avoidance of doubt, concerns and suspicions of Unacceptable Behaviour by third parties (i.e., not Employees, Representatives and Officials) shall still be reported to the AFC Child Safeguarding team and, where appropriate, directly to the local authorities.

Child Safeguarding Reporting Flowchart



Notes:

When identifying appropriate action(s) and next steps, due regard must be given to the category of suspicion or concern reported. In determining the appropriate response, the AFC Child Safeguarding team may assess such matters based on the following levels of risk:

Levels of Risk	Description
Low Risk	No harm or impact to Child
Moderate Risk	Slight harm or impact to Child, with ability to mitigate any harm or impact sustained
High Risk	Significant harm and impact to Child requiring urgent/ immediate intervention

The description of risks as outlined above is not intended to be exhaustive. Risks that do not fall within these categories may be identified during the process of verification and assessment.

8.10 Child Safeguarding Incident Reporting Form



CHILD SAFEGUARDING INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

Your Information				
Name				
Contact Number				
Email				
Name of organisation (if not AFC)				Your Role
Personal Information of the Child				
Name				Date of birth
Gender	Male ☐	Female ☐	Non-binary ☐	Another description (please state) ☐
Contact information – parent/carer				
Name(s)				
Address				
Contact Number(s)				
Email				
Incident details*				
Date and time of incident				
Please tick one	☐ I am reporting my own concern		☐ I am responding to concerns raised by someone else – please fill in their details:	
Name of person raising concern			Role within football or relationship to the child	
Contact number(s)				
Email				

Details of the incident or concerns (include other relevant information, such as description of any injuries and/or disclosure made by a child)

*Attach a separate sheet if more space is required (e.g. multiple witnesses)

CHILD SAFEGUARDING INCIDENT REPORTING FORM

Child's account of the incident (if disclosed by the child to you)

--

Please provide the names of any witness to the incident

--

Name of witness (please indicate if a child)		Role within football (Coach, Official, Player)	
Contact Number(s)			
Email			

Details of any person involved in this incident or alleged to have caused the incident/injury

Name		Role within football (Coach, Official, Player)	
Contact Number(s)			
Email			

Please provide details of any action taken to date (Contacted AFC, removal of persons involved in incident, police contacted *See next section)

--

Has the incident been reported to any external agencies?	☐ No	☐ Yes – please provide further details:
Name of organisation/agency		
Contact Person		
Contact Number(s)		
Email		

Agreed action or advice given

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Declaration

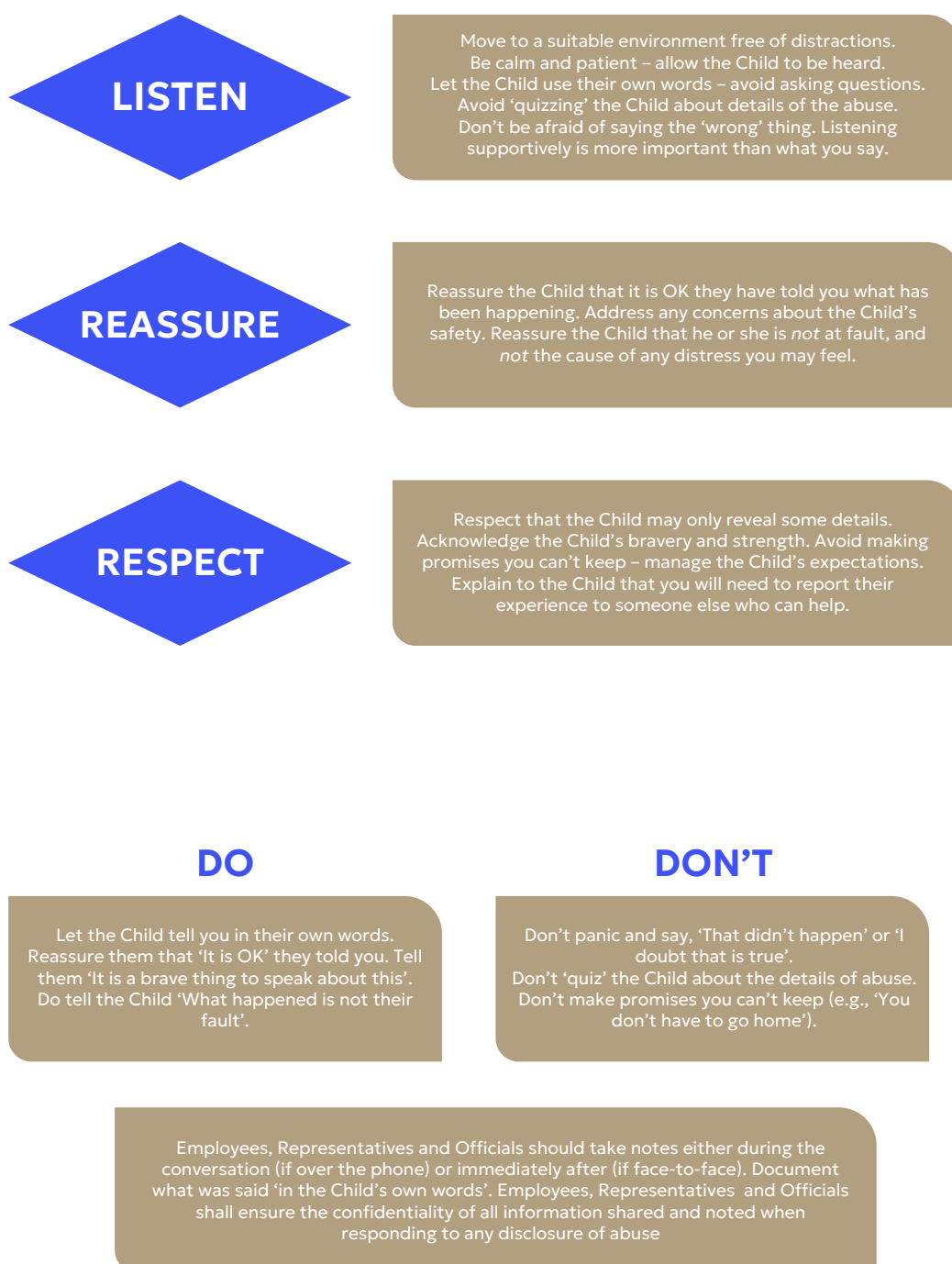
Your signature	
Full Name	
Date	

Contact your Safeguarding Officer in line with the AFC's reporting procedures

Safeguarding Officer's name	
Date Reported	

8.11 Responding to a Child's Disclosure of Abuse

The AFC recognises that Children may disclose their experiences of Child Abuse to Employees, Representatives and Officials. Employees, Representatives and Officials shall observe the following guidance notes when handling such matters. It should be noted that Employees, Representatives and Officials should, if the circumstances allow, contact the AFC Child Safeguarding team before initiating any conversations, but it is acknowledged that the Child's interests must come first and a conversation should not be rejected.



9. Applicable Laws

- 9.1 The Policy is subject to all applicable laws, regulations, decisions/rulings and decrees in the countries or other territories within which such provisions are to be exercised and, in particular, all applicable local, state and federal laws relating without limitation to data protection and Child Safeguarding.

Employees, Representatives, Officials, Member Associations and Regional Associations agree to fully comply with, such laws, regulations, decisions/rulings and decrees and any applicable technical and other industry standards.

10. Recruitment Procedures

- 10.1 The AFC is committed to ensuring that recruitment and screening practices that reduce the risk of Child Abuse are observed when recruiting for Child-facing roles.

For the purposes of this Policy, the AFC defines a 'Child-facing role' as one where a person is:

- working directly with Children on a regular basis (not incidentally or one-off); and/or
- providing assistance, programmes or services to Children on behalf of the AFC.

- 10.2 The AFC Human Resources Department (where appropriate, in consultation with the AFC Child Safeguarding team) will assist Heads of Departments/Units and the AFC Management when recruiting for Child-facing roles, taking into consideration the provisions of the Child Safeguarding Recruitment Guide as set out under Appendix 1.

11. Enforcement

This AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy has been adopted on 26 August 2026 and comes into force with immediate effect. For the avoidance of doubt, this Policy shall replace and supersede the AFC Child Safeguarding Policy (Edition 2022).

12. Appendices

- 1) AFC Child Safeguarding Recruitment Guide
- 2) AFC Child Safeguarding Guidelines to Reduce and Mitigate Risk
 1. Use of Dressing Rooms and Shared Facilities
 2. Use of Social Media
 3. Use of Children's Images and/or Audio-Visual Recordings
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- 4) Member Associations' Competitions and Football Events

APPENDIX 1: AFC CHILD SAFEGUARDING RECRUITMENT GUIDE

1. Recruitment checklist

The implementation of robust recruitment procedures will help the AFC ensure that only suitable applicants are employed in Child-facing roles to reduce the risk of employment or engagement of unsuitable individuals. From advertising to conducting interviews and background checks on applicants, it is important that each step is considered and applied where necessary.

This checklist and guide will assist any Employee involved in the recruitment of Child-facing roles to observe and undertake certain steps in the recruitment process. It includes objectives and examples for:

- Selection criteria in job descriptions.
- Advertising with a Child-safe intent.
- Interviews including behavioural-based questions and questions about motives for wanting to work with Children.
- Pre-employment screening including police/probity checks, identity checks (including international police record checks where necessary) and qualification checks.
- Reference checks over the telephone with recent managers/supervisors.
- Probation periods and performance reviews.

**AFC departments shall adopt this checklist entirely and use all relevant components as referred to below alongside existing recruitment procedures.*

A. Selection criteria in job descriptions

Developing the job description and appropriate selection criteria for the position is a vital first step in reducing the risk of employing someone who poses a risk to Children. It will also ensure that all applicants have the specific knowledge and skills required for the position. Roles involving interaction with Children should explicitly include reference to safeguarding job descriptions. If the role is identified as Child-facing, hiring departments must clearly indicate the same in the job description to the Human Resource department.

Examples of appropriate selection criteria language may include:

- “Must have experience working with Children”; and/or
- “Must be able to demonstrate an understanding of appropriate professional standards when working with Children”.

Remember to ensure that the selection criteria provides for the safety of all Children. Your applicants should have the opportunity to indicate their understanding of, or any experience they have, in working with Children with diverse needs and/or backgrounds. For example:

- Children living with a disability
- Children from a diverse range of cultural/linguistic backgrounds

B. Advertising with a Child Safe intent

When recruiting, advertising provides a good opportunity to demonstrate the AFC's commitment to Child Safeguarding in addition to deterring potential candidates who may be seeking an opportunity to harm Children. Roles involving interaction with Children should explicitly include a reference to Child Safeguarding principles and values in the advertisements.

It is imperative that the AFC promotes the safety, participation and empowerment of all Children.

A suggested statement may be:

'The AFC promotes the safety, wellbeing and inclusion of all Children. Applicants are encouraged to elaborate on experience they may have working with Children safely.'

C. Interviews

The interview process is a critical step in selecting the right people for the AFC's Child-facing roles and in identifying any person who may pose a risk to Children.

An open-ended style of behavioural-based questioning will give insight into the applicant's values, attitudes and understanding of professional boundaries and accountability. Some useful questions may include:

- Can you share your motivations for wanting to work with Children?
- How would the Children you have worked with previously describe you?
- Can you describe a time when you had to manage a Child whose behaviour you found challenging?
- Can you tell us about a time when you had to comfort a distressed Child?
- What boundaries are important when working with Children?
- If you were concerned about the actions or behaviour of a co-worker towards Children, how would you respond?
- How would you involve Children in their own protection as part of our programmes?
- Can you describe a situation where you had to respond to a safeguarding concern involving a Child? What steps did you take?

- How do you ensure that Children feel safe, respected and listened to in your role?
- How do you manage confidentiality when dealing with sensitive information about Children?
- How do you ensure that your own behaviour consistently models appropriate conduct for Children?
- What would you do if a child disclosed something to you that made you concerned for their safety?

Interview panel members should be instructed to take note of their own thoughts and feelings when interacting with the applicant. Always ask for more information if the applicant does not provide sufficient information in his or her responses. Furthermore, take notice of any warning signs (often referred to as ‘red flags’) such as:

- Unexplained lengthy gaps in employment history
- The applicant says they do not value or ‘need’ supervision
- The applicant objects or criticises the need for a code of conduct
- The applicant is evasive or inconsistent in his or her answer

D. Pre-employment screening

Screening applicants (including for paid and volunteer positions) is an essential tool for helping prevent people who may abuse Children from being employed by the AFC. Police/probity checks from countries the applicant has recently worked in can provide insight into any prior criminal convictions. At the very least, a self-declaration form (or national equivalent) should be signed when a reliable criminal record check is not available. This can include broader questions about whether the individual has ever been subject to a disciplinary investigation. All such checks must be completed before the individual starts working in his/her role.

Additional checks will confirm the identity of the applicant and that their application and responses have been truthful.

- Have you checked the identity of the applicant (for example, that their driver’s licence/passport has the same name they have provided you)?
- Did you see a certified copy of the applicant’s qualifications (if required)?

E. Reference checks

The AFC aims to require each applicant to provide the contact details of at least two referees, as this can provide insight into the applicant’s character and skills. All reference checks will be undertaken as preferred over the phone by the AFC.

Managers, particularly the most recent, are likely to provide you with the most accurate reference.

***Where possible, referees that can provide insights into the applicant's experience working with Children should be contacted as first preference.**

When speaking with referees, always seek to establish the referee's relationship with the applicant, including:

- How long the applicant and referee worked together
- The specifics of the position
- The applicant's perceived strengths and weaknesses
- Whether the referee would hire the person again, particularly in a role working with Children
- Whether they have any concerns about the applicant working with Children

Additionally, ask references directly about any concerns they may have about the applicant working with Children. To help introduce this difficult topic, you could say you have some specific questions about Child safety because your organisation takes Child safety seriously.

Ask behaviour-based questions like:

- What did the applicant do when (for example, they had to comfort a distressed Child)?
- Do you have any concerns about the applicant's attitude towards people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds/people with a disability?

F. Probation

Probation periods can help the AFC assess any new worker's performance and suitability for the job before confirming their permanent employment. The length of probation periods can vary and are usually between **three (3) and six (6) months**.

The AFC will consider whether the person should receive closer supervision and/or additional training throughout the probation period. A probation period can offer an opportunity to set goals with inexperienced workers and identify training, supervision and other support needs.

Induction and performance review in relation to Policy awareness is recommended at bi-annual intervals for all employees.

G. Contacting the AFC Child Safeguarding team for further information

The AFC Child Safeguarding team can assist you with any questions or further information if needed.

APPENDIX 2: AFC CHILD SAFEGUARDING GUIDELINES TO REDUCE AND MITIGATE RISK

The AFC is committed to ensuring that Children participating in or involved in AFC programmes and activities are protected from Child Abuse. Football, like many sports, has potential areas of risk which require attention. The following are examples of risks and encouraged behavioural actions to reduce and mitigate any Unacceptable Behaviour in relation to such risks:

1. Use of Dressing Rooms and Shared Facilities

It is important to monitor and maintain the safety of Children when utilising certain facilities during AFC programmes and activities, including dressing rooms and shared facilities.

Children can be vulnerable to abuse in dressing rooms due to common activities of dressing/undressing, use of shower areas and toilets and because they are less supervised than at many other times (for example, whilst on the pitch).

The risk of Child-to-Child inappropriate conduct, such as Bullying or sexual harassment, may be prevalent when Coaches or Employees are not supervising Children. This is especially true in dressing rooms.

To reduce the risk of misconduct or Child Abuse in dressing rooms and shared facilities it is recommended that:

- An Employee, Representative or Official assist or supervise all operational affairs of the Child/Children involved in the AFC programme or activity.
- Where facilities are used by both adults and Children at the same time, there must be access to separate changing, showering and toilet areas.
- Under no circumstances should adults undress in front of Children in dressing rooms.
- Adults must not change or shower at the same time as Children using the same facilities.
- For mixed-gender activities, separate dressing rooms must be available for boys and girls. If only one dressing room is available, the boys and girls must use these dressing rooms alternately at different time slots.
- If a Child feels uncomfortable changing or showering in the dressing rooms, then no pressure should be placed on him/her to do so. Instead, he/she should be encouraged to do so at home, the hotel or in the official accommodation.
- If Children living with a disability need to use facilities, make sure they are accessible, and the Child and his/her parent(s) or legal guardian(s) participate in deciding if and how they should be assisted.

- The use of mobile phones and/or photographic equipment with video recording capabilities by Employees, Representatives and Officials or any other persons including Children themselves, is prohibited when Children are utilising the dressing rooms to dress or shower.
- Where no dressing room facilities are available, Children and their parent(s) or legal guardian(s) should be made aware of this prior to the game and advised to make alternative arrangements and take appropriate additional clothing.
- Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) should be excluded from entering the dressing room unless it is absolutely necessary (e.g., injured Child and/or distressed Child). In such circumstances, preferably only a parent or legal guardian of the same sex as the Child may enter the dressing room. At least one member of the coaching staff of the same sex as the Child involved should be present with the parent or legal guardian when other Children are in the dressing room, especially if the parent or legal guardian of the same sex as the Child is not available to accompany the Child.
- Except for Employees, Representatives and Officials that are authorised to assist the Children in dressing rooms or any facilities as required, all other Employees, Representatives, Officials and any other persons, especially those of the opposite sex, should not be in the dressing room when Children are utilising such facilities to change or shower.

2. Use of Social Media

Misuse of information, communication and technology can put Children at considerable risk of:

- inappropriate access to, use or sharing of personal details (e.g. names, email addresses or phone numbers);
- unwanted contact from adults with wrongful intent;
- being sent offensive or otherwise inappropriate material;
- Online Bullying;
- grooming for Sexual Abuse; and/or
- Artificial Intelligence (AI)/Online Grooming or exploitation
 - o Online grooming typically begins with predators attempting to establish trust and build a rapport with a Child. AI enhances this process by automating the analysis of vast amounts of data, enabling predators to identify potential targets with greater precision. These algorithms can detect patterns of behavior, interests, and even emotional states, making grooming much easier to accomplish. For example, AI makes it possible for predators to impersonate a Child's coach, tricking kids into sending them messages or pictures. These impersonators use AI tools to

create a convincing false identity, making it incredibly difficult for Children to tell if they're actually talking to a real person or someone dangerous.

All Employees, Representatives and Officials who work with Children should ensure that their social media accounts are set up as securely as possible. Each website, app or device will require a slightly different configuration to set it up correctly.

There are, however, some key principles which apply to all forms of social media:

- Employees, Representatives and Officials shall not post any inappropriate photo, image or audio/video footage of a Child whether involved in AFC programmes, or activities or otherwise.
- Never give out your password, PIN or login details to any other person. These details should be kept private at all times. You should also ensure that you log out after use and don't leave your social media accounts open on a shared device as other people (including Children) could post in your name.
- Employees, Representatives and Officials should not be 'friends' or 'connected' with Children on personal social media platforms. Private chat functions within online platforms are often unmoderated and can leave adults open to accusations of improper use.
- If you need to communicate with Children associated with AFC programmes or activities, do so through official AFC communication (i.e., an AFC email account) or an AFC-appointed personnel or by group text message; approved apps/sites and/or phone calls to parent(s) or legal guardian(s); or via a post on an AFC approved platform, on a closed club or governing body page rather than via your personal profile.
- Remember that what you post online can be easily misinterpreted. When things are typed instead of said face to face it is often difficult to know the true meaning of the words and people can easily take offence to a post that was shared without intending to upset. This is especially true when online abbreviations, hashtags or emojis are used in place of words so before you post, consider how someone else might read your post.
- Never post or share messages, photos and/or audio-visual recordings which are unlawful or illegal including content that may be deemed abusive, discriminatory or sexually explicit.
- Employees, Representatives and Officials are personally responsible for content they publish on social media and must be aware that what they publish can affect their own image and the image of the AFC.
- Employees, Representatives and Officials must remain informed on the risks associated with AI and take appropriate measures to educate

Children under their supervision on how to recognise, avoid and report these risks.

- Be sure your online postings about the AFC or its activities are accurate and not misleading. It is advisable to refer any queries to the AFC Communications team at media@the-afc.com.

***Any online Grooming or inappropriate conduct towards Children via an electronic service is illegal and will be immediately reported to the AFC Child Safeguarding team and/or Legal and/or local authorities.**

The use of social media shall at all times be in accordance with the AFC's Social Media Policy.

3. Use of Children's Photos and/or Audio-Visual Recordings

The guidelines below set out the recommended best practices in order to reduce the risk of inappropriate use of Children's photos and/or audio-visual recordings.

- All photographers should be authorised and easily identified with a clear identification bib/tag/lanyard or badge.
- Consider using models or illustrations for promotional/advertising purposes where appropriate.
- Unsupervised access or one-to-one photography or video sessions with Children should not be allowed. At least one AFC Employee, Representative, Official and/or the Child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) should attend any one-to-one photography or video session if requested by the AFC.
- Obtain written permission from the Child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) prior to taking images of a Child.
- If there is a large event with many Children involved (e.g. Grassroots/Community events), seek consent with information and registration documents prior to the event. Additionally, it is recommended that event coordinators set up signage that indicates "Photography of today's event will occur. If you do not consent to your Child's image being captured and used, please speak to the event management team via (insert location/contact details)". This is an informed consent practice.
- For non-competition events, if an image is used, avoid naming or identifying the Child. If this is not possible, do not use both a first name and surname. This intentionally makes it harder to find a Child online if only the first name is provided.
- Avoid displaying personal information such as a Child's full name, residential address, email address or telephone numbers if images are being posted on websites or distributed in publications.
- Do not display information about hobbies, likes/dislikes, school, etc. as this information has the potential to be used as Grooming tools by online predators or other inappropriate persons.

- Photography or filming should not be permitted in changing areas, bathrooms or sleeping areas.
- Only use appropriate images of the Child relevant to football or approved activities. Ensure that the Child is suitably clothed.
- Reduce the ability for direct copying of pictures from a website to another source (i.e. disable the 'right mouse click' function).
- Clearly outline in a written contract to photographers who are engaged to take images and who will retain the images taken, include arrangements made for negatives, digital files and proofs, and outline any restrictions for use and sale. It is important to note that certain use of camera devices and/or sharing of images are inappropriate and not permitted, including images or images that are:
 - o indecent, inappropriate or suggestive;
 - o taken in changing rooms, toilets or other designated private areas;
 - o for the purposes of voyeurism or in an otherwise provocative or sexual manner; and/or
 - o used for commercial purposes without the consent of the subject (the person's image or likeness is used to endorse a product).
- Employees, Representatives and Officials access to photo/image gallery (including images and digital footage of Children). Protocols when accessing the AFC photo/image gallery shall include without limitation:
 - o Employees, Representatives and Officials must have a work-related reason for accessing the gallery;
 - o images of Children must not be sent to any person unless it relates to work;
 - o hard copies of images should be kept in a locked area (e.g. lockable drawer or filing cabinet);
 - o electronic images should be in a protected folder with restricted access;
 - o images should not be stored on unencrypted portable equipment such as laptops, memory sticks or mobile phones; and
 - o if personal equipment is used to take/download images and recordings of Children for work purposes, images must be deleted once the project/work is completed.

Any concerns or complaints of inappropriate image use must be raised with the AFC's Child Safeguarding team.

4. Transporting of Children

At certain times during AFC programmes and activities, you or an AFC Employee, Representative and/or Official may be required to travel to various locations with a Child. Employees, Representatives or Officials are allowed to drive a Child (or group of Children) to locations under the condition that the guidelines set out below are observed at all times:

Prior to traveling:

- ensure that the Child's parent or guardian has expressly consented for the Child to travel for the purposes of an AFC programme, event and/or activity requiring a vehicle.
- ensure you hold a valid and current driving licence.
- ensure you are not under the influence of alcohol or illicit drugs.
- ensure you inform your manager of the intended travel, the location and when you will leave and return from your trip.

During travel:

- whenever possible, travel in a group with another worker or more than one Child.
- ensure all Children are seated in the back seat of the car and fitted with seat belts before leaving. A worker is not allowed to drive a Child anywhere without a fitted seat belt or with a Child in the front seat (unless all rear seats are filled).
- ensure all Children alight the car on the sidewalk side of the road.
- take the most direct and convenient route without any unnecessary detours (e.g. do not run errands, take the scenic route, stop unnecessarily, etc.).
- do not detour Children to any secluded areas for any reason.
- do not leave a Child at a destination unaccompanied by another worker/ adult without prior arrangement.

Once you arrive/return:

- always advise your manager/supervisor of your arrival/return (via call, SMS, email, etc.).

During youth events and competitions, safe use of buses and minivan vehicles should include:

- always having a minimum of three (3) players (Children) in each vehicle.
- whenever possible, having a team official (or responsible adult) accompany the group in each vehicle.
- seat players (Children) in the rear of the vehicle rather than the seats directly behind the driver.

5. Travel and Overnight Stays with Children

Overnight stays in hotels, camps, and/or competition events are to occur only with the written authorisation from the management of the relevant AFC department. Written approval from the parents/ guardians of the Child/Children involved must be obtained. This approval needs to be prior to the event and in writing. Employees Representatives or Officials attending an overnight stay involving Children must be appropriately screened in accordance with the guidelines set out under the AFC Child Safeguarding Recruitment Guide.

Attendance by Children at formal events such as an awards event or regional conference is only permitted when a parent or guardian travels and attends the event with their Child or where express consent is provided by a parent or guardian to that effect. Practices and behaviour by all persons involved during an overnight stay must be consistent with the practices and behaviour expected during the delivery of our programmes/activities.

The AFC acknowledges that Children may attend overnight stays in hotels, camps, and/or competition venues throughout the region and requires several risk management standards be in place. Standards of conduct that must be observed by all persons involved during an overnight stay include:

- providing Children with privacy when in restrooms and changing areas;
- observing appropriate dress standards when Children are present – such as no exposure to any adult nudity, showering or undressing;
- not providing Children access to areas where they can be exposed to pornographic material (for example, through movies, television, the Internet, magazines, or literature);
- not leaving Children under the supervision or protection of unauthorised persons such as hotel staff, unauthorised parties or friends;
- providing sleeping arrangements that do not compromise the safety of Children such as unsupervised sleeping arrangements or an adult sleeping in the same bed as a Child. Having adults sleep in rooms adjacent to a Child's room (or as close as possible) affords easy monitoring of Children's rooms;
- the right of Children to contact their parent/ guardian, or others, if they feel unsafe, uncomfortable or distressed during the stay;

- subject to the AFC's direction regarding the use of mobile devices during AFC events and activities, not removing a Child's access to their mobile phone or ability to be contactable whilst away from their families/ guardians; and
- an expectation that parents/ guardians can, if they wish, make contact with the Child.

6. AFC Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment Tool

This risk assessment tool provides some examples of potential risks of harm that may occur during an AFC programme or activity when working or volunteering with Children. Some examples of risk and how they can be mitigated are provided in the templates below (organisational-level risk assessment and activity-by-activity risk assessment).

The examples do not cover every potential risk and this assessment should be adapted accordingly and reviewed regularly before the implementation of new programmes and activities to ensure the best possible plan has been put in place.

This assessment should be adapted to fit with the way your team works with Children.

A. Risk assessment template (organisational level)

Terms used:

- Potential risk of harm to Children - identified risks to Children participating in football.
- Likelihood of harm happening - the likelihood of the risk occurring: Low, Medium or High.
- Required policy, activity or guideline needed in response
- which policy, activity or guideline is required to address the risk?
- Responsibility – who is responsible for reducing the risk?

POTENTIAL RISK TO CHILDREN	LIKELIHOOD OF HARM: (LOW, MED, HIGH)	REQUIRED POLICY, PROCEDURE, GUIDELINE OR ACTIVITY	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING THIS AREA OF RISK?	FURTHER ACTION (IF NEEDED) EXAMPLES BELOW
AFC EMPLOYEES REPRESENTATIVES & OFFICIALS				
Recruiting inappropriate people to work with Children	High	- Safe Recruitment - Child Safeguarding training and induction	Recruiting managers, Human Resources, Child Safeguarding team	Background and reference checks.
Lack of Child Safeguarding training for employees, officials, volunteers, contractors	Medium	- Child Safeguarding training and induction - AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy	Child Safeguarding team, Human Resources and department superiors	
Other adults who may have access to Children – e.g., security, medical	High	- Child Safeguarding training - AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy	Child Safeguarding team and relevant departments involved	Identify who these groups of adults are and thereafter assess the risks and develop any necessary guidance that are context specific. Implement steps to mitigate risks as referred to under this Policy as a first step of action.
FACILITIES AND ACCOMMODATION				
Unauthorised access to Children's activity areas (changing rooms, bathrooms)	High	AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy	Child Safeguarding team, Competitions and Events team and any other departments involved in such an area	Clarify responsibilities before a match/training session. To ensure the right signage is in place and to additionally brief all Employees, Representatives and/or Officials.
Children and adults sharing the same accommodation or facilities	High	AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy	Security and Events team	Plan ahead to create the safest possible environment, which shall include CCTV and guards on site.
TRANSPORT AND TRAVEL				
Transporting Children between venues/ training without approval	High Low (If it is in a bus/minivan)	AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy	Security and Events team	Plan ahead to create the safest possible environment which could include ensuring that such vehicle is a van or a bus with many people per vehicle, indirectly reducing the risk of any form of abuse and always ensuring an AFC Representative, Employee and/or Official is present.
Unvetted drivers employed to transport Children	Medium	- AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy - Safe Recruitment	Security and Events team	Plan ahead to create the safest possible environment.
Unregulated travelling and trips away	High	- AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy - Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s)	Security and Events team	Extensive early planning required. Ensure there is a checklist for trips away and ensure there are enough trained and vetted adults to supervise. To obtain parent(s) or legal guardian(s) consent.

COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA				
Inappropriate use of social media and communication by under-18 players	Low	- Player's Code of Conduct - Social Media guidance for under-18 players	Child Safeguarding team and Grassroots department	To encourage AFC Employees/Representatives/ Officials to report such matters to the AFC Child Safeguarding team if such links or pages are found online. AFC Child Safeguarding team to conduct random checks on their social media.
Inappropriate use of social media and communication by adults with Children (under 18 years old)	Medium	- AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy - Guidance of communication with Children under 18	Child Safeguarding team and Communications team	To encourage AFC Employees/Representatives/ Officials to report such matters to the AFC Child Safeguarding team if such links or pages are found online. AFC Child Safeguarding team to conduct random checks on their social media.
COMPLAINTS AND DISCIPLINE				
Concern about behaviour of an adult towards a Child or group of Children	High	Clear Reporting Guidelines as outlined in the AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy	Child Safeguarding team, Legal and Human Resources	Report concern to Safeguarding Officer. Immediate action needed.

B. Risk assessment template (activity level): to be completed at the start of every new project/activity

What contact will you have with Children through this work project?	What potential risks to Children can you identify?	What steps will you take to mitigate these risks?	Who is responsible for ensuring these steps are taken?	Please confirm date when the action was completed
Will the contact be face to face and/or online/digital? • What activities will Children be involved in? • Will the Children be photographed, filmed or asked to share their stories? • Will parent(s) or legal guardian(s) be present or are staff/volunteers acting <i>in loco-parentis</i>?	• Are there any risks inherent in these activities? • Who will be present? • Will these people be MA/RA staff/volunteers or third parties? • What will the environment be like? • What physical or emotional issues may arise?	• What have/ will you include in your safeguarding planning? • Who is your designated safeguarding contact for this activity? • What support will be available for the Children present? • How will concerns be managed should they arise? • What safeguarding information will everyone involved receive at the start of the activity?		
Please confirm that this risk assessment has been copied to the AFC's Safeguarding Officer or designated point of contact			Your name and role: _____	

APPENDIX 3: POLICY GUIDANCE FOR AFC MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS AND REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Note: *This document should only be used as guidance. Member Associations and Regional Associations will have to take into account their own local laws, procedures and practices when devising policies and procedures.*

The AFC, as the governing body of football in Asia, emphasises the importance of each Member Association and Regional Association having policies, procedures and guidelines to ensure that these organisations are safe for Children. The AFC has developed this policy guidance summary to assist its Member Associations and Regional Associations in developing and implementing their Child Safeguarding policies and best practices.

Member Associations and Regional Associations are encouraged to appoint a suitable and dedicated Child Safeguarding point of contact within their organisation, who should be provided with the necessary support, training and resources to facilitate Child Safeguarding initiatives, including the development of a safeguarding policy. The Child Safeguarding point of contact will act as a point of reference and as a coordinator. A vital role of the Child Safeguarding point of contact is to work closely with key internal and external partners to develop and implement safeguarding procedures, especially procedures for responding to suspected cases of abuse. This person will also liaise with the AFC on relevant topics.

Member Associations and Regional Associations should ensure that the following key areas are met when developing a Child Safeguarding policy:

- strive to ensure that the policy is adhered to by its members, affiliates and stakeholders and their staff and officials;
- advocate and promote Child rights, empowering and engaging Children in support of the policy;
- proactively share resources and experience in the development of Child Safeguarding initiatives in football as they are identified;
- develop opportunities for regular discussion at all levels to support a culture of continuous improvement and accountability in respect of Child protection. For example, in team meetings or regular forums, include Child Safeguarding as a regular agenda item; and
- strive to ensure that adequate resources are allocated to allow effective implementation of the policy.

Member Associations and Regional Associations are encouraged to have in place the following:

1. a Code of Conduct (that identifies clear professional standards of conduct when working with, or in the presence of Children).
2. clear procedures for responding to allegations of Child Abuse, which includes the implementation of local laws and internal processes.

3. sound recruitment screening processes for Employees/volunteers who are engaged to work with Children (including criminal record checks and background/reference checks).

Your organisation's Child Safeguarding policy should:

- demonstrate your organisation's commitment to the safety and wellbeing of Children.
- identify to leaders, staff and volunteers the actions required and both individual and collective responsibilities to prevent harm and keep Children safe.
- promote and protect the rights of Children.
- clarify the roles and responsibilities in relation to recognising and responding to Child Abuse.
- refer to relevant legislative requirements and to the organisation's other policies, procedures and guidelines for keeping Children safe.
- be specific to the size, nature and risks of your organisation and the services /programmes it provides to Children.
- be easy for people to access and understand.

In developing a Child Safeguarding policy or any best practices, each Member Association and Regional Association shall be solely responsible for all matters concerning the development, implementation and enforcement of their respective policies and practices.

APPENDIX 4: MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS' COMPETITIONS AND FOOTBALL EVENTS

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APPENDIX 4: MEMBER ASSOCIATIONS' COMPETITIONS AND FOOTBALL EVENTS

Introduction

Children are central to the spirit of football. Their safety, dignity, and well-being must be upheld as a fundamental priority in every facet of the game's delivery, from grassroots to elite levels. While competitions and events provide meaningful opportunities for Children's growth, learning, and enjoyment, they can also expose them to potential harm if robust safeguarding measures are not effectively implemented and monitored.

These guidelines aim to complement the AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy in reducing and mitigating the potential risks to Children's safety and well-being and provide practical steps and examples to help the AFC and all stakeholders embed safeguarding principles into the planning, delivery, and evaluation of football events. Whether at the grassroots or elite level, everyone involved in the game has a role to play in protecting Children and promoting a culture of safety and respect.

By implementing these guidelines, the AFC reaffirms their collective responsibility to uphold Children's rights and ensure that football remains a positive, protective, and enjoyable experience for every Child.

Scope of Application

These guidelines are designed to safeguard all Children who may be involved in football competitions, matches and events under the jurisdiction of the Member Associations. This includes, but is not limited to:

- players participating in youth tournaments.
- Children's involvement in fan engagement activities
- Officials under eighteen (18) years of age.
- ball crew supporting matchday operations.
- flag bearers involved in opening ceremonies or promotional activities approved by the AFC.
- player chaperones accompanying teams or individual players.
- youth volunteers engaged in event logistics or support roles.
- parents attending matches and football festivals.

These guidelines apply, but are not limited to:

1. before, during, and after football competitions, matches, events or finals;

2. Child Safeguarding Officers, Officials, employees, Representatives, and volunteers participating in these events.

All persons involved in a youth football competition or event have a duty to:

1. Ensure a safe environment
2. Ensure safe equipment
3. Adhere to the AFC Child Safeguarding measures to prevent any risk of Children being abused or harmed.

Responsibilities of those involved in youth football competitions

All competition organisers, clubs, and associations must ensure that the environments in which players are training, participating in (official match or otherwise), and all other related activities take place are properly safeguarded.

Child Safeguarding Officers of each participating Member Association shall:

- serve as the primary point of contact and lead for all safeguarding matters within the team delegation. This role must be designated, though it does not need to be exclusive and may be assigned to any team official (e.g., the team doctor). It applies only to youth competitions.
- liaise with the competition Child Safeguarding Officer (or if unavailable at the competition/ football event) the AFC's safeguarding team to ensure that safeguarding measures are in place to ensure the safety and well-being of the team and that concerns or allegations are properly managed;
- take all reasonable steps to ensure that the players' mental and physical well-being is prioritised;
- ensure that everyone in the team knows the channels available for reporting concerns;
- complete the AFC Certificate in Child Safeguarding (ACCS) Insights course and submit the certificate of completion to safeguarding@the-afc.com prior to the competition

The host of the competition/ football event, officials, employees, representatives and volunteers who are involved in youth football competitions shall:

- ensure that the safest possible conditions are provided for participants.
- adhere to the AFC Child Safeguarding Policy and promote Child safeguarding before, during and after youth football events.
- report any safeguarding concerns or disclosures in a timely and appropriate manner.

Child Safeguarding guidelines for potential risk areas

The following information provides risk management strategies for the identified risk areas for Children in football.

The risk areas include:

1. Access and accreditation
2. Operational Transport and Travel Protocols for Member Associations' Competitions and Events
3. Competition and Event Transport and Accommodation Procedures
4. First aid and injury
5. Physical contact with Children
6. Social Media and Electronic Protocols during Member Associations' Competitions and Events
7. Photography and Video Protocols for Member Associations' Competitions and Events
8. Child Protection Reporting Flowchart
9. Code of Behaviour for Employees, Representatives and Officials involved in Youth Competitions and Football Events
10. Code of Behaviour for Players

1. Access and accreditation

Unauthorised access to Children must be strictly prohibited at all times to ensure their safety and well-being.

Any individual who is under investigation for, or has been accused of, Child abuse or inappropriate behaviour must be denied access to Children with immediate effect. Their accreditation should be suspended or revoked pending the outcome of investigations, in accordance with the AFC's Child safeguarding and disciplinary procedures.

2. Operational Transport and Travel Protocols for Member Associations' Competitions and Events

Ensure that start and finish times, as well as the drop-off and pick-up locations, are clearly communicated and that the arrangements for player collection are clearly understood.

Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) who wish for their Children to travel home unaccompanied, taking into account the Child's age and maturity, should be required to provide consent in writing (SMS and/or email).

Ensure with parent(s) or legal guardian(s) understand that Children should not be dropped off before the designated time and are expected to be collected promptly upon conclusion of the Competition or Event. Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) should also be informed of the procedures to follow if they anticipate being late to pick up their Children.

3. Competition and Event Transport and Accommodation Procedures

Where it is necessary to transport Children, the following good practice is required:

- all vehicles and drivers are correctly insured.
- all drivers have a valid and appropriate license.
- all reasonable safety measures are available (e.g. fitted, working seatbelts)
- there is an appropriate ratio of adults per Child.

The Representative should be discouraged from transporting Children to activities by car. However, where this cannot be avoided, the following protocols should be followed to ensure the safeguarding of Children and to provide transparency for all concerned:

- where possible, have another adult accompany the Representative on the journey.
- the Child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) should be informed in advance that the Child is being transported, including the expected arrival time.
- another member of staff should be informed that a Child is being transported, including details of the route and the anticipated duration of the journey.
- take all reasonable safety measures (e.g. ensure Children are in the back seat and seatbelts are worn).

Travelling

There should be procedures in place to manage emergencies, including the appointment of a designated home contact person, (an individual within the organisation who is not involved in the competition). This person should serve as the main point of contact for Coaches and parent(s) or legal guardian(s).

Risk assessment

Potential areas of risk should be identified at the planning stage and appropriate safeguards should be put in place to manage them. Risk assessment should be an ongoing process throughout the competition.

Involving Children and parent(s) or legal guardian(s)

A planning session with the Children should be held to discuss the proposed programme and to develop an agreed code of conduct for the competition. This ensures that both Coaches and Children have a shared understanding of expectations and behaviour standards.

A meeting with parent(s) or legal guardian(s) should be held to share information about the trip, respond to any questions and facilitate joint decisions-making where appropriate. Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) must provide emergency contact details.

In the event of an emergency at home during the competition, parent(s) or legal guardian(s) should be encouraged to contact the Coaches so that arrangements can be made to support the Child

Travel arrangements

If the competition or event involves international travel, those in charge should ensure they are aware of local emergency procedures and how to respond to any concerns regarding the wellbeing of Children. Children and accompanying adults should be informed of any local customs and any differences to Child Protection legislation for the country being visited.

Supervision

Competitions or events should be planned to involve at least two (2) adults and should include both female and male volunteers. The number of adults required for appropriate supervision will be determined based on the needs of the group as well as the size, age and vulnerabilities of the Children involved.

All adults supervising the competition should read the AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy and Code of Behaviour prior to the trip. The Code of Behaviour is included at the end of this Policy.

Accommodation

Find out as much as possible in advance about the venue/accommodation; whenever possible, a pre-event visit should be conducted.

The health and safety of any accommodation should be assessed, including the security and suitability of sleeping arrangements to ensure appropriate supervision and access in case of emergency.

Sharing arrangements should be appropriate in terms of age and gender, and parent(s) or legal guardian(s) and Children should be consulted in advance regarding arrangements.

The facilities checklist should include:

- being appropriately licensed

- having adequate and relevant insurance cover
- having health and safety policy and procedures
- having adequate security arrangements
- having staff that are qualified and trained.

During the Competition or Event

Organisers should have clear roles and responsibilities and must remember that they are always in a position of trust. As such, they should always adhere to the Code of Behaviour and ensure that any concerns about a Child are reported to management during the competition or event.

The use of alcohol and/or drugs, as well as engaging in sexual relationships between Children should not be allowed, even where local legislation may differ from that of the participants' country of origin.

Organisers must ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the supervision and risk assessment of activities during free time.

Group leaders should keep an overview of the wellbeing of all Children, making sure they check in with them daily in order to identify any issues early and resolve them promptly.

Children may be encouraged to participate in this process. For example, participating in a debriefing at the end of each day or by completing a daily diary to communicate both positive and negative experiences they wish to share with the group leaders.

After the Competition or Event

It is recommended that everyone involved in the competition or event, including the Children, participate in a debrief session to reflect on what went well, what did not go well and what could be improved in the future.

4. First aid and injury

Persons responsible for the organisation and delivery of youth football events or activities must be made aware of any pre-existing medical conditions, or medicines being taken by participants or existing injuries and treatment required. This information can be shared by parent(s) or legal guardian(s) completing a pre-event registration form to ensure that the participant is fit to participate before their Child participates in football.

The following protocols should be followed:

- have accessible and well-resourced first aid facilities and a functional communication system (landline telephone and mobile phone) at the venue.

- where possible, access to medical advice and/or assistance should be made available.
- only individuals with a current, recognised first aid qualification should treat injuries to ensure immediate care until professional medical help arrives.
- inform parent(s) or legal guardian(s) as soon as possible of any injury and action taken.
- a Critical Incident Form should be completed if a Child sustains a significant injury and the details of any treatment provided should be duly recorded and the Child's parent(s) or legal guardian(s)' informed accordingly.
- the circumstances of any accidents that occur should be recorded, reviewed, and steps taken to help prevent recurrence and promote long-term improvements.

5. Physical Contact with Children

Any necessary physical contact during sessions should be respectful and be sensitive to the needs and wishes of the Child and should take place in a culture of dignity and respect. Officials need to encourage Children to speak out if they feel uncomfortable.

Demonstrating a technical skill or movement required in football training (the "Technique")

In the first instance, techniques should be delivered by demonstration (either by the coach or an athlete who can display the technique safely).

If physical support is necessary, this should be clearly explained to the Child in advance and they should be given the chance to opt out. Physical support should be provided openly and must always be proportionate to the circumstances.

Supporting Children with Personal Care

If it is necessary to help a Child with personal care (e.g. using the toilet or changing), this should be agreed in advance with the Child and parent(s) or legal guardian(s). The representative should work with parent(s) or legal guardian(s) and Children to develop practiced routines for personal care, such as help with getting changed for Children, so that parent(s) or legal guardian(s) and Children know what to expect. Helpers should not take on the responsibility for tasks for which they are not appropriately trained (e.g. manual assistance for a Child with a physical disability).

6. Social Media and Electronic Protocols during AFC Competitions and Events

Electronic communication, social media, and emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence (AI) are advancing very rapidly, meaning the ways in which information is created, shared, and received are constantly evolving. This provides an accessible and convenient way for clubs, Member Associations and competition coordinators to promote their activities and communicate easily with Children.

Unfortunately, it can also put Children at risk, which is why safeguards must be effectively implemented.

Adults who seek to harm Children have been known to use electronic devices and social media to groom Children. It is also recognised that Children can be harmed by the behaviours and actions of other Children, for example online bullying.

The following protocols should be followed to safeguard everyone when communicating electronically including by means of social media:

- all communication with Children must be open, transparent and appropriate.
- children and their parent(s) or legal guardian(s) should be informed about the communication approach that is in place and should also be given information on how to keep themselves safe and who to report any concerns to.
- messages should only be sent to communicate details of meeting points, training, match details, competition results etc. The same message should be sent to every member of the group/team, never to only one Child.
- it should always be clear that it is the clubs and Member Associations that is communicating information – one-to-one messaging arrangements between sports volunteers/staff should be strongly discouraged and safeguards should be in place and settings adjusted to prevent this from happening.
- messages should never contain any offensive, abusive or inappropriate language.
- written permission shall be sought from parent(s) or legal guardian(s) to communicate with Children.
- parent(s) or legal guardian(s) should be copied into any messages their Child receives.
- all concerns about the inappropriate use of electronic communication and social media should be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour. This may include the concerns being reported to police.
- where phone numbers/email addresses of Children are required, these should be kept securely in a locked cabinet or password-protected electronic file or database.
- the number of people with access to Children's details should be kept to a practical minimum.

Group Chats

Where a site or app allows for two-way communication between an adult and a Child (or amongst a group of Children), close monitoring is required. From time-to-time group chats can be used to target individuals or to engage in messaging that can cause upset and embarrassment to Children.

Any offending comments should be removed by the club/association and appropriate procedures should be used to address poor practice or Code of Behaviour breaches.

7. Photography and Video Protocols for Member Associations' Competitions and Events

Children must be protected from those who would seek to use images and videos to place them at risk of harm. Written consent should always be obtained from the Children's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) before any photography or filming takes place.

Images and video clips can be used to celebrate achievements, promote your activities, and let people know about your team or club. Footage is also recorded for performance development reasons. The aim of these protocols is not to prevent such activity, but to ensure that Children are protected from those who would seek to take images and/or video footage in a way that harms Children or places them at risk of harm.

Use of Images and Information

Information published on the websites or through social media must never include personal information that could identify a Child (e.g. home address, email address, telephone number of a Child). Credit for achievements by a Child should be restricted to first names, e.g. Cindy was the Youth Player of the Year 2022.

Children must never be portrayed in a demeaning, tasteless or provocative manner. Children should never be portrayed in a state of partial undress, other than when depicting an action shot within the context of the sport. Attire such as tracksuits or t-shirts may be more appropriate.

Management of photography and videos

Reasonable steps must be taken to promote the safe use of photography and filming at events and activities. The Representatives and Officials have the right to prohibit the use of photography, film or video at their own events or activities at a private venue.

Where photography or filming is permitted, and consent has been granted from parent(s) or legal guardian(s) and Children, the following protocols should be followed:

- establish a system to easily track photographers and their equipment. Only accredited photographers shall be permitted to photograph or film, and they must be clearly identifiable—such as by wearing a brightly coloured vest, badge, or sticker.
- Children must never be portrayed in a demeaning, tasteless or provocative manner. Children should never be shown in a state of partial undress, other than when depicting an action shot within the context of the sport. Attire such as tracksuits or t-shirts may be more appropriate.
- no unsupervised access or one-to-one sessions will be allowed unless this has been explicitly agreed upon with the Child and parent(s) or legal guardian(s).

- decisions about publishing images should reflect the best interests of the Child and should consider whether they might place the Child at risk.
- special care must be taken in relation to vulnerable Children such as those in care or fleeing physical harm.
- where photographs and/or video footage are used for training and development purposes, Officials must follow guidance on the appropriate use of the images, consent and safe storage of the information.
- all copies of videos and digital images must be stored in a secure place. These must not be kept for any longer than is necessary, having regard to the purposes for which they were taken.
- if there are concerns about indecent images of Children being taken or shared it must be reported immediately to the AFC Child Safeguarding Team.
- if a Child feels uncomfortable with their photos being taken, they may fill in the form below:

Media Consent

I **do / do not** agree to take part in media activities related to the event, including the publication of my photograph in newspapers and online. I understand that even if I do not give permission, I can still take part in the activity.

Signature (Child):

Name:

Date:

Signature (Parent(s) or legal guardian (s)):

Name:

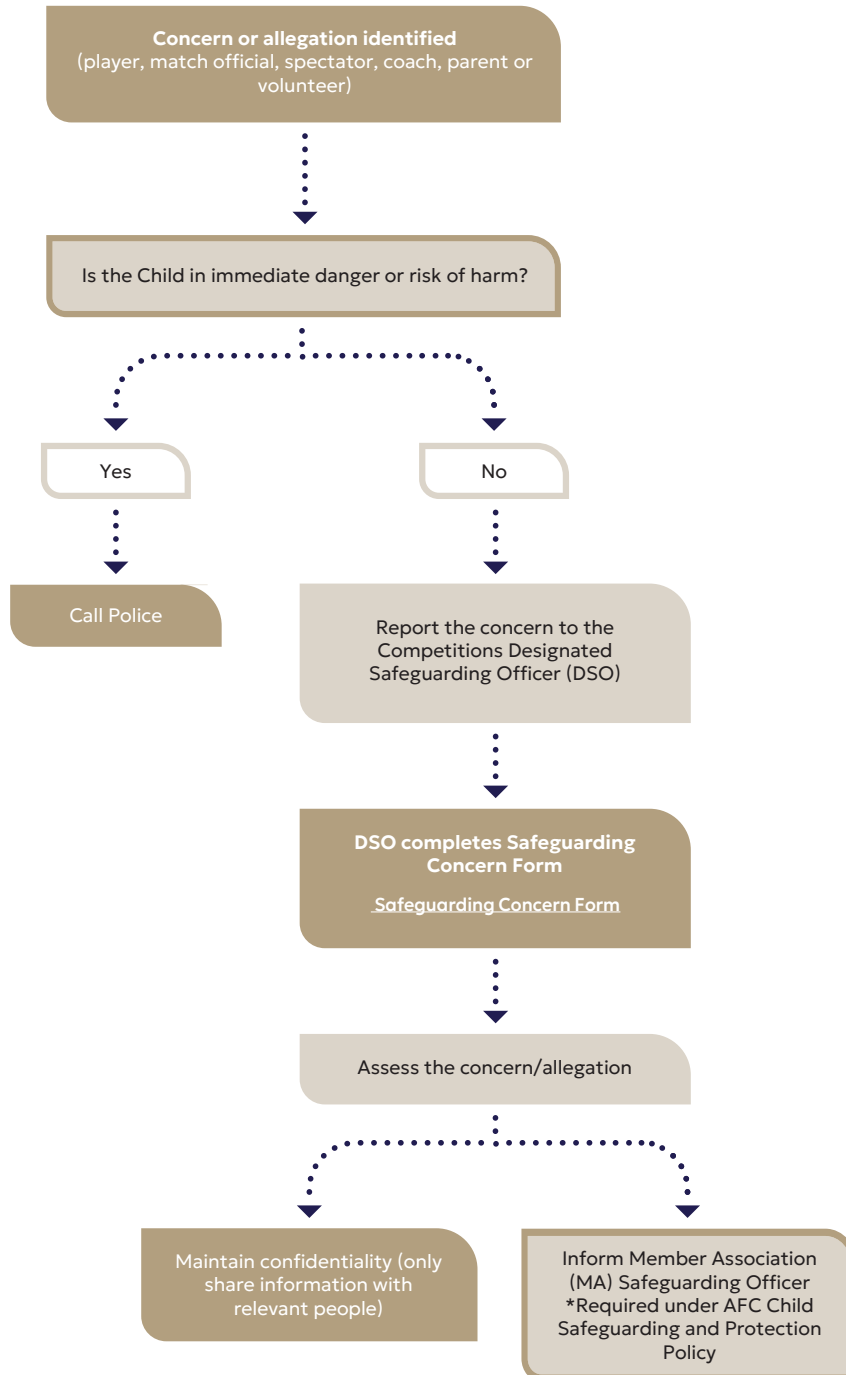
Date:

Concerns

Anyone behaving in a way that could reasonably be viewed as inappropriate in relation to filming or taking photographs should be reported immediately to the AFC Child Safeguarding team at safeguarding@the-afc.com.

Child Protection Reporting Flow Chart

Member Associations' Competitions and Football Events



Follow-up and support

*Ensure the Child receives appropriate care and support.

*Seek advice and support from the AFC, where appropriate, including through its safeguarding functions.

9. Code of Behaviour for Employees, Representatives and Officials involved in Youth Competitions and Football Events

This Code of Behaviour outlines the standards of behaviour expected from all officials involved in youth football competitions and events. It is intended to promote a positive, enjoyable, and safe environment for all Children participating in the game.

As an Official, I will lead by example on and off the field by:

- always respecting the rights, dignity and worth of all participants, regardless of age, race, skin colour, ethnic or social background, gender, disability, language, religion, political or other opinions, sexual orientation, or any other status;
- demonstrating and promoting good sportsmanship and fair play;
- celebrating the spirit of the game by encouraging positive behaviour and respect for the rules;
- never engaging in, or tolerating, any form of offensive, abusive, or insulting behaviour or language;
- supporting and recognising the efforts of all players, and valuing participation and personal development above winning at all costs.

When working with Children, I will:

- comply fully with the AFC Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy;
- prioritise the well-being, safety, and enjoyment of Children in all activities;
- take action to report any form of inappropriate behaviour;
- provide opportunities that are meaningful, inclusive, and empowering for all Children;
- refrain from humiliating or belittling Children, whether during training, competition, or at any other time;
- never engage in grooming or exploitative behaviour for personal or financial gain;
- never form or attempt to form any intimate emotional, physical, or sexual relationship with a player under the age of 18;
- never make sexually suggestive comments to Children;

- avoid all forms of inappropriate physical contact or sexually provocative games;
- ensure that all activities are age-appropriate and suitable to the ability and development level of the Children involved;
- work collaboratively with others (e.g., coaches, medical staff, the safeguarding points of contact) to act in the best interests of each Child;
- never use physical punishment or any form of abusive behaviour as a disciplinary method;
- ensure that Children are properly supervised at all times, including during travel, tournaments, and overnight stays;
- never share accommodation with a Child or allow unsupervised access to Children;
- respect Children's privacy in all settings, including not entering changing rooms or bathrooms without permission and only offering personal care when absolutely necessary and appropriate;
- ensure that any necessary medical or therapeutic treatment takes place in a safe, open, and appropriately supervised environment;
- avoid spending time alone with Children away from others;
- never share a room alone with a Child;
- not engage in inappropriate use of social media, which includes not engaging Children in private social media conversations and never posting comments or sharing images that could compromise their well-being or cause them harm;
- not post photographs or other information about Children or their families on my personal social media (e.g. Facebook or websites) or the club/organisation's social media, without the permission of the Children concerned and their parent(s) or legal guardian(s);
- share any concerns I have about the safety and well-being of Children, including about individual Children, with the appointed Child Safeguarding Officers or points of contact or, if not appointed, with the AFC Safeguarding Team.

I understand that by agreeing to this Code of Behaviour, I am committing to upholding the highest standards of professionalism, integrity, and care in my role. Any breach of this code may result in a disciplinary or other appropriate action being taken by the relevant Member Association in accordance with the applicable regulations, accreditation conditions, or disciplinary frameworks.

Signature:

Name:

Date:

10. Code of Behaviour for Players

This Code of Behaviour sets out the expected behaviour for all Children and young people participating in the AFC youth competitions and football events. It is designed to help ensure everyone's safety, dignity, and enjoyment of the game.

On and off the field, I understand and agree that:

- the accompanying adults are responsible for my safety and welfare from the time I leave the care of my parent(s) or legal guardian(s) until I return.
- i must always follow the instructions and advice of the accompanying adults.
- if, for some reason, I do not want to follow the team or the group, I will ask the accompanying adults for permission and explain my whereabouts.
- sccommodation is shared and whom I will share with will be agreed in advance. I will not sleep in any other room without permission.
- I will follow the rules intended for my own safety, including:
 - no alcohol consumption
 - no drug consumption
 - no smoking in the rooms or at any other time
- I will respect and help other Children participate fully by being a role model for good sportsmanship. I will lead by example, which includes not drinking alcohol, taking drugs, or using foul, racist, homophobic, or other discriminatory language.
- I will respect the rights, dignity and worth of every participant, and others involved, and never engage in verbal, physical or sexually provocative gestures or language.
- I will not engage in inappropriate or private communication with adults or other participants on social media or messaging platforms during the event.
- I understand that all event spaces, including accommodation, should be safe spaces for everyone, and I will behave in ways that promote safety and respect.
- I will report any accidents, inappropriate behaviour, or unsafe situations I witness to an accompanying adult immediately.

I have read and understand the agreed behaviour code. I agree to follow these rules and understand that if I break the code my parent(s) or legal guardian(s) will be informed, and I may be asked to leave the activity early.

Signature (Child):

Name:

Date:

Signature (Parent(s) or legal guardian(s):

Name:

Date:



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