



**New Zealand  
Football**

GUIDELINES FOR  
SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN  
& VULNERABLE ADULTS

• 2023 •



**New Zealand  
Football**

New Zealand Football (NZF) is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable football environment for all. We recognise our responsibility to lead and encourage safe practices to ensure the welfare and best interests of children and vulnerable adults.

**For further information on our Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy, [please click here.](#)**

# Introduction

These guidelines outline the steps that can be taken to safeguard children, vulnerable adults and those who work with them. They cover protocols for working with children and vulnerable adults, safety checking, the process for arranging police vetting, dealing with the results and what to do if abuse is suspected.

Although the guidelines are not enforceable against federations, clubs and football service providers (such as commercial entities), NZF strongly encourages all federations, clubs and football service providers to implement them to ensure the welfare

and best interests of children and vulnerable adults.

As part of its commitment to safety, NZF has developed a centralised police vetting service (NZF Police Vetting System) and will cover the costs of this service to clubs and other football service providers.

For the purpose of these guidelines, a child is aged under 18 years, and a vulnerable adult has a mental or physical impairment that means they need constant care from another person.

**“NZF strongly encourages all federations, clubs and football service providers to implement these guidelines to ensure the welfare and best interests of children and vulnerable adults.”**

# Guidelines for working with children and vulnerable adults

**The following protocols provide guidance to those working with children and vulnerable adults by outlining good practice in a range of situations to reduce the likelihood of harm.**

**Apply a person-centred approach where all children and vulnerable adults are treated equally and with dignity:**

- Activities should be appropriate for the age and development of the children or vulnerable adults
- Use positive and age-appropriate language when talking to or in the presence of children or vulnerable adults
- Create a safe and open environment that also reduces risk to staff and volunteers
- Exercise common sense
- Do not send children or vulnerable adults off to train alone and out of sight or supervision
- Ensure that all physical contact with children and vulnerable adults is relevant and appropriate to the activity
- Do not engage in intimate, overfamiliar or sexual relationships
- Ensure that any filming or photography is appropriate with prior consent given from parents or caregivers
- Do not drink alcohol, smoke or use electronic cigarettes in the presence of children or vulnerable adults and never offer these to them
- Do not engage in communication on a one-on-one basis (including through social media, texting or email) other than for relevant coach/athlete feedback or administration
- Do not allow parents, coaches, other children, or spectators to engage in any type of bullying behaviour (this includes cyber/text bullying)
- Do not bully or place unnecessary pressure on children or vulnerable adults

**Avoid situations where you are alone with children or vulnerable adults:**

- Avoid private or unobserved situations, including being alone with a child or vulnerable adult in the changing rooms. Have another adult present or at least one other player
- When entering changing rooms, ensure that you knock and announce yourself and try to have at least one other adult with you
- Avoid driving a child or vulnerable adult unaccompanied. If this is not practical, have them sit in the back seat
- Do not invite or encourage children or vulnerable adults to your home
- Always have another adult present when staying overnight anywhere with children or vulnerable adults

# Guidelines for safety checking

Whether you have paid staff or volunteers, you should be undertaking some degree of safety checking on anyone who may be required to work with children or vulnerable adults. As well as minimising the risk of harm coming to a child or vulnerable adult, this will also reduce the likelihood of an allegation of abuse or a complaint being made.

If you're employing staff, you'll probably be following a recruitment process that involves viewing their CV and checking references,

although it's less likely that volunteers will undergo a formal process.

NZF strongly recommends that all federations, clubs and other football service providers undertake police vetting for any paid staff or volunteers who have regular or overnight contact with children or vulnerable adults. Regular or overnight contact means the person has contact (other than merely incidental contact) with a child or vulnerable adult:



**Overnight**

Or



**At least once  
each week**

Or



**At least 4 days  
each month**

As part of the vetting process individuals are required to supply identification documents, which provides another layer of security to the safety checking process. NZF recommends that paid staff or volunteers who may be required to work with children or vulnerable adults do not do so until the safety checking process is complete and a satisfactory police vetting result obtained. NZF recommends that police vetting should be repeated every three years.

Police vetting is not necessary for people who assist on an occasional basis and do not have regular or overnight contact with children or vulnerable adults.

# NZF Police Vetting System and process

To support the safeguarding process, the NZF Police Vetting System will allow football clubs and other football service providers to undertake police vetting for eligible workers. This will be underpinned by the following structure:

## Safeguarding Manager

NZF has a designated Safeguarding Manager whose role is to support the implementation of these guidelines and manage the administration of the NZF Police Vetting System. Training for this role is provided by FIFA.


## Safeguarding Advisors

Each federation has a designated Safeguarding Advisor, who will be the point of contact for the NZF Safeguarding Manager as well as the Safeguarding Officers within clubs and other football service providers. The Safeguarding Advisor's role is to lead the rollout of police vetting for clubs and other football service providers within their area, and to be the designated person to whom clubs can report concerns relating to potential abuse. Training for Safeguarding Advisors will be provided by Safeguarding Children and costs of training will be borne by NZF.

## Safeguarding Officers

Clubs and other football service providers should appoint at least one Safeguarding Officer, who will be the point of contact for the NZF Safeguarding Manager and federation Safeguarding Advisors. The Safeguarding Officer's role is to manage the vetting process within their club including verifying the identity of the individuals being vetted and accessing the NZF Police Vetting System to view the vetting results for their club/football service provider. They will be required to register as a club Safeguarding Officer in the NZF Police Vetting System and undertake training as part of the registration process.

**Further support is available through the Sport NZ safeguarding online module [click here](#).**



**“Clubs and other football service providers should appoint at least one Safeguarding Officer”**

## Vetting process

Individuals being vetted will need to complete a secure online vetting form and submit their details into the [NZF Police Vetting System](#), view a short training video and then provide their identification documents to their club or football service provider Safeguarding Officer, who will verify that they have viewed the individuals ID within the NZF Police Vetting System.

Once verification of ID is complete, the NZF Safeguarding Manager will upload individuals' details to the NZ Police vetting website, after which the NZF Police Vetting System will display "Submitted" alongside each individual's name.

## Information released by NZ Police

Results are usually available to NZF from NZ Police within 20 working days after being uploaded.

Information released by NZ Police may include:

- Criminal conviction history
- Information on active charges and warrants to arrest
- Driving demerit points or licence suspension
- Any interaction with Police, including as a victim, even if there have not been charges, charges have been withdrawn or dismissed, or if the person has been acquitted of a charge
- Any other relevant information received or obtained by the NZ Police

Information is treated on a strictly confidential basis and access to this information is restricted to the NZF Safeguarding Manager and, if required, the Review Panel and Appeal Panel. No information is provided to local club administrators unless prior consent is provided by the person concerned.

## Assessing vetting results

New Zealand Football's aim is to ensure a safe environment for children and vulnerable adults, rather than to disqualify volunteers for minor criminal offences. The existence of a conviction or other adverse information will not necessarily mean that the individual shouldn't be involved in football.

If the police vet is released with "No Result" the NZF Safeguarding Manager will update the NZF Police Vetting System to show the individual's status as "Confirmed". This will be visible to the club or other football service provider Safeguarding Officer and no further action is required.

If the police vet is released "with results" it will be reviewed by a Review Panel, which will consider whether the results could impact upon the individual's interactions with children or vulnerable adults.

Refer to the [Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults policy](#) for information about the make-up of the Review Panel. If the Review Panel considers that the results would not impact upon the individual's role, then the individual's status will be updated within the system to "Confirmed".

**If the Review Panel considers that the individual should not be allowed to continue in their role, the NZF Safeguarding Manager will contact the individual and ask them to step down. The Club Chair or other football service provider representative will also be advised that the person has been asked to step down, although they would not be provided with details of the offence.**

**"No information is provided to local club administrators unless prior consent is provided by the person concerned."**

## Offences that will disqualify a person from working with children and vulnerable adults

A conviction for any of the following offences would automatically disqualify a person from working with children and vulnerable adults:

- Murder
- Sexual offences
- Indecency offences resulting in imprisonment
- Kidnapping
- Offences connected to child prostitution
- Possession or publication of child pornography
- Assault and/or violence and/or harassment towards a child or vulnerable adult
- Recidivist drink driving resulting in imprisonment
- Possession of drugs for supply resulting in imprisonment
- Any other serious offence resulting in imprisonment

## Process to follow if an individual doesn't agree with the vetting result

If an individual thinks their vetting result is not factually correct, there is a process on the police vetting website to [follow this up with NZ Police](#).

If an individual doesn't agree with a decision that has been made by the Review Panel as to their suitability to be employed/volunteer within football they should raise an objection with the NZF Safeguarding Manager within 7 days, providing reasons and details as to why they should be allowed to continue in their role and providing any relevant documentation. For example, they may provide letters of support from their club or a person of good standing in the local community.

An Appeals Panel will consider the appeal during which the safety of vulnerable persons will be the paramount consideration.

Refer to the [Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults policy](#) for information about the make-up of the Appeals Panel. If the appeal is successful, the individual will be able to return to their role. If the appeal is unsuccessful, the individual will be contacted by the NZF Safeguarding Manager and asked to stand down indefinitely.

NZF acknowledges that throughout the vetting review and appeals process it has a duty of care to protect the personal information of those undertaking the vetting, and to act upon any information which it receives that may indicate that children and vulnerable adults are at risk. All information will be treated confidentially and on a "need to know" basis in line with NZF's Privacy policy, available on NZF's website.



**“Reporting a concern to a Federation Safeguarding Advisor or to the NZF Safeguarding Manager is really important to ensure that the concern is dealt with properly and consistently.”**

## **Suspected child abuse or vulnerable adult abuse**

Dealing with suspicions of child abuse or vulnerable adult abuse is difficult, and especially if the allegation is made against someone who is a staff member or volunteer. It's not the responsibility of NZF, federations, clubs or other football service providers to investigate suspected child or vulnerable adult abuse.

However, reporting a concern to a federation Safeguarding Advisor or to the NZF Safeguarding Manager is really important to ensure that the concern is dealt with properly and consistently by the relevant statutory authorities (Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children or NZ Police). Details of personnel appointed by NZF and federations to oversee safeguarding are available on their respective websites.

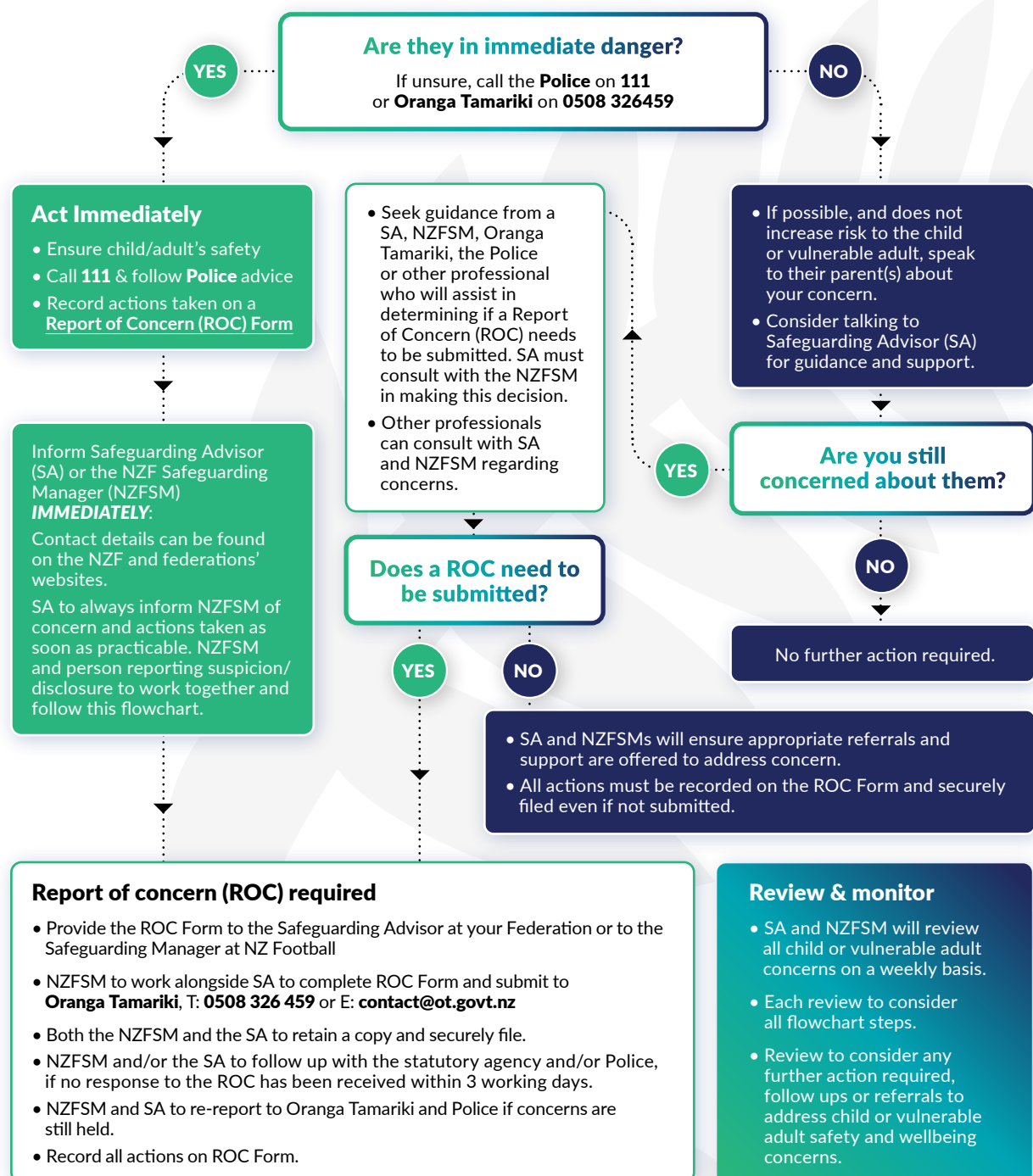
**The steps on the following page are recommended if abuse is suspected** 



# Procedure for responding to child or vulnerable adult abuse, neglect & wellbeing concerns

ALL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS ARE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW THIS PROCEDURE

Any staff member or volunteer may contact any professional for advice or contact Oranga Tamariki or the Police for advice or to make a Report of Concern (ROC) at any time. New Zealand Football will remain child-focused and not collude with any adult or organisation.



# Guidelines for working with children and vulnerable adults

If a child or vulnerable adult discloses abuse to you, it is important to take the situation seriously. Under no circumstances should you conduct your own investigation, but you should report it immediately to Oranga Tamariki and/or NZ Police. If the alleged perpetrator is a staff member or volunteer, the relevant federation Safeguarding Advisor and/or NZF Safeguarding Manager should also be informed.

The alleged perpetrator may be required to step down from their duties pending the formal outcome of the investigation; however, the action to be taken will depend on the circumstances. The information should be assessed and handled in a confidential manner, with the safety of the child or vulnerable adult of paramount concern.

Under the law any person who believes that a child or vulnerable adult has been or is likely to be harmed, may report the matter to Oranga Tamariki (child) or NZ Police (vulnerable adult). Provided the report is made in good faith, no civil, criminal or disciplinary proceedings may be brought against them.

## Further information and resources contact:



Oranga Tamariki: [orangatamariki.govt.nz](http://orangatamariki.govt.nz)

safeguarding@nzfootball.co.nz  
[nzfootball.co.nz/about/safeguarding/overview](http://nzfootball.co.nz/about/safeguarding/overview)

[NZF's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy](#)  
[Sport NZ Child Safeguarding online learning modules](#)