



First Appearance and Travel policy
Ilkeston Town Football Club

Implementation Date:	April 2025
Agreed By:	MF/AN
Next Review Date:	April 2026



THE
**NATIONAL
LEAGUE**
EST. 1978



**ISTHMIAN
LEAGUE**



**NORTHERN
PREMIER
LEAGUE**



SOUTHERN LEAGUE

Statement:

Whenever Ilkeston Town FC makes the decision to include a young person under the age of 18 in the first team, or development squad we have a duty of care to ensure their safety. The aim, whilst ensuring the safety, is that the young person can grow their confidence, self-esteem and develop their skills.

When inviting a young player under 18 to a senior or first team game we will consider all the risks and put in place some safeguards.

Therefore, the inclusion of a young person into the squad will be carefully planned, and preparations made well in advance to ensure that any concerns from the player, parents or carers are addressed. We will ensure their safety of first appearances and travel through following our Safeguarding policies and procedures and those of the FA.

Purpose:

This Toolkit has been designed to help Welfare Officers and Designated Safeguarding Officers to prepare and think things through in advance to support your club in safeguarding their young players on their debut. This guidance provides information on good working practices which will be regularly reviewed and, where appropriate, improvements made. Suggestions to improve working practice and safety are welcomed from any source. The information contained in this document has been developed by EFL Clubs and is seen as good practice to support the transition of young players into the adult game, therefore we have adopted this for Steps 1-4. Please ensure you read through the whole document before making any plans.

DBS checks:

Questions have been asked in the past regarding those travelling to an away game, for example;

When a player U18 is staying overnight at a hotel as part of the senior team, does everyone travelling need a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and must the First Team Manager have a DBS when a player who is U18 is involved in a First Team game?"

Answer: *Not all travelling need to be DBS checked, HOWEVER, The Manager must be!*

Away game travel:

If the debut of the young player is going to occur during an away game, then ensure that at least one person travelling has a DBS. The DBS document will state if the person has clearance for work with the children's workforce or for work with the adult workforce. Those medical professionals who work with both adults and with U18s will require '**child and adult workforce**' on their DBS certificate. The club physio is likely to already have an existing DBS certificate.

Speaking with the player, his parents and all other interested parties, before any debut, would ensure that all of those involved will know what to expect, especially if the team is travelling to an away game. It is important to ensure that everybody understands that no single person is solely responsible for the care of the young player. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Therefore, all of those involved should be made aware of their personal responsibilities when a young player is making his debut for the first team. Whilst this policy is written around a debut appearance, the principle will apply for more regular senior appearances. **Note:** The younger the player is, the more vulnerable they may be.

Additional vulnerabilities to consider include:

1. the excitement and anxiety of playing for the first team or senior squad;
2. their keenness to do well and to impress and please the manager, coaches and team;
3. travelling to an away game as the only U18;
4. wanting to be one of the 'grown-ups' but being cautious and reminded of the code-of-conduct for U18s.

Step1 – Talking to parents/carers:

Talk to parents outlining some of the issues detailed in a) – e) below then follow up with a letter enclosing a consent form. Ask the parents / carers to sign and return the consent form. Template examples of a letter to parents / carers, a consent form and Code of Conduct are enclosed as Appendix 1- 3.

- a) Outline what a great achievement it is that their son/daughter has been offered the opportunity to debut with the First Team. If the match is an away game, explain that they are likely to be the only U18 travelling (if that is the case). Explain that they may have been called up, but that does not automatically mean they will play on the day.
- b) Explain that you understand that their son/daughter may be thrilled at the prospect of playing but you are aware that they may also be nervous and even a little anxious. Also, tell them that you will be speaking to them (or have already done so) to reassure them and ensure they are comfortable and knows what to expect.
- c) Explain that if away travel is involved, they will be in a hotel room alone and will not be sharing with any of the other players. The only exception to this would be if two U18s are travelling with the team, in which case they can share a room. Likewise, a child's parent or guardian may also wish to attend and share a room.
- d) Explain that you intend to 'buddy up' their son/daughter with one of the senior players. Seek their support, explain that you would like them to talk to their son/daughter to prepare them and try to ensure they know that this is a great opportunity, which should be enjoyed. Parents / carers should reinforce the fact that if they are uncomfortable about anything they should talk to someone they trust.
- e) Explain that the reasons you are going through this process with them is to try to ensure that everything goes as smoothly as possible for their potential first team appearance.

Step 2 -Talking to the player:

It is highly likely to have been the Academy Manager or First Team Manager who has informed the player that they have been called up. The information in a) – g) below is a follow up conversation which should be undertaken by either the Club Welfare Officer (CWO) / Designated Safeguarding Officer (DSO) or by another appropriate person who the player knows and trusts. Therefore, the timescales for talking to players and parents may be interchangeable.

- a) Congratulate the player on being selected to join the first team squad. Explain that they may have been called up, but that does not automatically mean they will actually play on the day. Be diplomatic in preparing them for this possible disappointment.
- b) Discuss with the player that while you understand that they must be very proud at the prospect of playing, you also understand that they may be nervous and even a little anxious.

- c) Explain that you will try to identify a 'Buddy' for them, and this may be a senior player who can provide support for them during their possible debut. Ask them if there is someone, they think they would feel comfortable with. However, be clear that this may not necessarily be the person who is identified as their 'Buddy'.
- d) Explain to the player that they do not have to tolerate any unacceptable 'banter' or behaviour and that they need to set their own boundaries and know what 'line' must not be crossed personally. Explain that there may quite a bit of 'down-time' and they should think about what they take with him to fill the time.
- e) They also need to know that if the team are travelling to an away game, they will be staying in a separate hotel room and should not share a room with any adult over 18 (Unless it is a parent or guardian).
- f) Outline what is expected of them in respect of a 'code of conduct'. That is what their personal responsibilities are during the trip. This includes, specifically, ensuring that they understand they must have no access to alcohol (including the mini bar); no access to adult television or any adult materials: they should not engage in gambling; that they should use any social media platform in a responsible manner, in line with any club policy and must be careful about comments which may be misinterpreted or insulting to others in any way; clarify that they must not make any inappropriate comments about the football environment. The club may have additional responsibilities to add to this list.
- g) Ensure the player, knows, and understands that if they have ANY concerns, they can speak to their 'Buddy', Welfare Officer / DSO, or someone else that they trust.

Step 3 – Talking to the `Buddy`

As the CWO/DSO you will need to identify who may be the most suitable 'Buddy' for the young player. You may need to seek advice on this from the Academy Manager or other members of staff. Remember, however, to be sensitive when deciding on this issue. The idea is to try to support the player through a well-planned transition and not to create an environment where they 'stand out more' and is the focus of more attention.

Also remember the 'Buddy' should be someone that the player will feel comfortable with, however, it should be one of the senior players.

When you talk to the 'Buddy', it is important to stress that they are not responsible for the care of the young player. You are simply asking them to be a sympathetic ear, if required, and a mentor for the young player.

Step 4 – Talking to the person with the DBS

As stated earlier a First Team or Development Squad Match is not an activity designed for U18s, therefore DBS are not required by all the adults involved. However, to provide additional safeguards, one member of the support team should have an FA DBS certificate and be cleared through The FA for work in football. Generally, the club physio may hold an appropriate disclosure.

When you talk to the physio, or other person with the appropriate DBS, it is important to stress that they are not solely responsible for the care of the young player during any trip. The young player will not need constant independent supervision. You are simply asking them to be available for the

young player, if required.

Young people over 16 years of age are often capable and legitimately entitled to live independently. A one-night stay in a hotel room alone is something young players may already have done as part of family holidays.

Step 5 – Talking to the Manager and the team

Realistically, it may be only a few days before a game when you are informed that a young player is going to be called up. Therefore, the best approach for ensuring everyone knows and understands their responsibilities when a young player is called up is to ensure that as CWO/DSO you address this issue during an in-house safeguarding training session.

Through well planned training and using this guidance as part of a club education programme, you should be better prepared for last minute confirmations of call-up which may occur a couple of days before an important game.

When delivering training, the key message would be:

- a) Young players U18 are defined in law as a children and adults working with children need to not only protect those young players, but to also demonstrate standards of behaviour which do not leave the adults open to allegations against themselves.
- b) If the game involves away travel, players U18 should be in a hotel room alone and should not share with an adult over 18.
- c) An exception to this would be if two U18s are travelling with the team, in which case they can share a room.
- d) Players and staff should not encourage young players U18 to engage in any inappropriate activities such as gambling; the use of alcohol or other inappropriate or illegal substances; or watching or engaging in any inappropriate adult behaviours.
- e) Regardless of what experiences they, as experienced older players, encountered in the past, especially on their debut for the first team, players and all staff should recognise the vulnerability of young players U18 and the risks associated with encouraging young players to engage in inappropriate activities.
- f) It is important to remember that the younger the player, the more vulnerable they will be.
- g) The best way to inspire young players to play well and fulfil their potential is to provide encouragement and praise, especially during times of challenge and anxiety, such as on their debut for the first team. Providing positive role models in the form of more experienced players who demonstrate appropriate behaviour can help the player and the club.

All staff that work with young players are in a position of trust. Young players, parents and carers must have confidence that any professional football club working with children will ensure that they provide a professional, trained workforce that understand their roles and responsibilities when working with U18s.

Planning and preparing for the time when U18s will be called up for a first team or senior appearance can only help to provide protection for; the players U18, the senior players, the club, the business and The Brand. It will also provide reassurance for families that their son will be provided with the right guidance and support during his development.

If further clarification on any issue is needed, then please contact: (Name of Club Designated Safeguarding Officer and contact details)

Club Welfare Officer / Safeguarding Officer

Name: Mark Frost

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