



Merthyr Town Football Club

Under 14s Registration Scheme

Under the new directive issued by the National League Board:

- Children aged 13 and under are not permitted to enter National League, National League North, or National League South grounds unless accompanied by a responsible adult aged 18 or over.
- Tickets for children under 14 may only be purchased by an adult aged 18 or over.
- There is no requirement for children to carry formal identification, the registration scheme exists to issue a specific club membership/season ticket so that they don't have to carry a passport or birth certificate to matches.
- If a child appears to be unaccompanied, club officials or stewards may request contact details for a parent, guardian, or carer. The expectation is that this adult can be contacted promptly. Staff are instructed to securely shred or destroy any handwritten phone numbers immediately after the parent has been contacted and the issue is resolved. They must not be left lying around the stewards' room or in pockets.

This policy applies to all competitive fixtures and events where the ground is open to the public.

Can a child be safely refused entry to a Football Stadium?

The rule of thumb being that a child who is safe and well can be refused entry to a ground based on this directive. An example being the child may well have found their own way to the ground without adult supervision. By simply enforcing the ruling stating they cannot have entry does not then make them automatically vulnerable. Clearly risk needs to be established and this is dealt with in the stewards / staff guide.

(Age restriction and adult accompaniment regulation is common in football in the EPL and EFL. This commonly relates outside of football such as Cinemas, Licensed Events, Concerts, Comedy and Theatre shows, Theme Parks and Attractions, Leisure Centres).

Rationale for the Policy

The directive is grounded in safeguarding best practice and the operational realities of football grounds. Its purpose is preventative, not punitive.

Safeguarding Responsibilities

Football clubs have a duty of care to children attending their grounds. This includes:

- Reducing the risk of children becoming lost or separated.
- Ensuring children have access to a responsible adult in the event of distress, illness, or an incident.
- Aligning with wider safeguarding standards used across sport and licensed venues.

An accompanied entry requirement provides a clear and consistent safeguard.

Crowd and Child Safety

National League grounds can present challenges for young children, including:

- Large crowds and congestion at turnstiles and exits.
- Standing areas, uneven surfaces, and restricted sight lines.
- Elevated noise levels and heightened emotions during matches.

Requiring adult supervision helps ensure children can be supported appropriately in these environments.

Licensed Premises and Legal Context

Many National League grounds operate licensed bars and fall under local authority safety and licensing frameworks. Clear age-related access rules:

- Support compliance with licensing expectations.
- Reduce ambiguity for stewards and staff.
- Demonstrate that clubs have taken reasonable steps to manage risk.
- Is in line with National Policing Unit guidance.

Consistency Across the League

A single, clearly communicated policy:

- Avoids confusion between clubs.
- Supports stewards who work across multiple venues.
- Ensures fairness for supporters travelling to away fixtures.

Guidance on Enforcement

Enforcement should be clear, calm, and proportionate, with an emphasis on prevention through communication.

Ticket Sales (Primary Control Point)

Online ticketing

- Include a mandatory notice before checkout stating:
“Children aged 13 and under must be accompanied by a responsible adult aged 18 or over.”
- Require confirmation (tick box) that the purchaser is over 18 when buying a child ticket.
- Restrict child ticket purchases to adult accounts where systems allow.

In-person ticket sales

- Ticket office staff to:
 - Ask whether a child will be attending with an adult.
 - Decline sales where it is clear the child will attend alone.
- Display signage at ticket windows reinforcing the policy.

Ground Entry and Stewarding

- Stewards are briefed to observe rather than interrogate.
- If a child appears unaccompanied:
 - Politely ask who they are attending with.
 - If necessary, request contact details for a parent or guardian.
- If no responsible adult can be contacted, the child must be escorted to a designated safe space (such as the Ticket Office or Main Reception) and safeguarded in line with the Club’s Missing/Unaccompanied Child Procedure until safe collection arrangements are made.

Responsible Adult

Responsible Adult, defined as an individual aged eighteen (18) years or over who has been authorised by a parent, guardian or person with parental responsibility to supervise the child and who accepts responsibility for their welfare, behaviour and safety whilst within the Stadium footprint.

The Responsible Adult must remain present within the Ground for the duration of the Event and maintain reasonable oversight of the child at all times, brief and proportionate separation may occur for routine match-day activities such as accessing toilet facilities, purchasing refreshments or moving within the concourse, provided the supervising adult retains responsibility and remains contactable and within the Stadium.

The Club recognizes its duties under the Equality Act 2010. Where a child under 14 requires entry under unique circumstances (e.g., accompanied by a registered young carer under 18), applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis by the Club's Safeguarding Officer prior to match-day.

Ratios of Responsible Adult to children (Under 14)

Where one adult accompanies more than one child, supervision shall remain appropriate to the age, maturity and circumstances of those present, and Clubs should have regard to FA and NSPCC safeguarding principles. The Club enforces a maximum ratio of one responsible adult to three children under the age of 14.

Organised Parties and Trips

For organised parties including schools, academies, grass-roots teams or other youth groups, the visiting organisation shall retain primary safeguarding responsibility for its participants and must comply with its own educational visit or governing body safeguarding procedures, including adherence to FA safeguarding standards and Child Protection in Sport Unit guidance regarding supervision and duty of care.

Communications and Visibility

Clubs are encouraged to make the policy highly visible well in advance of match-day.

Club website

- Add the policy to:
 - Ticketing pages
 - Match-day information
 - Safeguarding or supporter information sections

Match-day programmes

- Include a short notice in the front pages or supporter information section.

Tickets and confirmations

- Print or include digitally:
“Under-14s must be accompanied by an adult aged 18+.”

Social media and pre-match posts

- Periodic reminders, particularly before high-attendance fixtures.

Signage at the Ground

- Clear signage at:
 - Ticket offices
 - Turnstiles

- Main entrances
- Use plain language and positive tone.

Example:

“For everyone’s safety, children aged 13 and under must attend with a responsible adult.”

Practical Additional Measures Used by Clubs

Based on common practice across non-league and professional football:

- **Named adult responsibility**
Encourage adults purchasing multiple child tickets to remain responsible for those children throughout the match.
- **Steward escalation process**
Provide stewards with a simple escalation route to a safeguarding lead or duty manager.
- **Away supporter coordination**
Include the policy in pre-match information sent to visiting clubs to avoid issues at away turnstiles.
- **Safeguarding alignment**
Ensure the policy is referenced in the club’s safeguarding documentation so staff understand it as part of normal practice, not an isolated rule.

Tone and Approach

Clubs are encouraged to apply this directive in a positive, professional, and consistent manner. The policy is not about restricting young supporters, but about:

- Keeping children safe.
- Supporting parents and carers.
- Protecting clubs and staff through clear, reasonable standards.

When communicated clearly and enforced sensibly, this approach strengthens trust between clubs and their communities while ensuring a safe match-day environment for all.

Other documents / guides to read in conjunction with this Directive:

- Ground Safety Officer, Steward, Staff Briefing
- Ticketing Age Restriction support
- Admittance Poster