



THE SHOT PAPERS · 2026

THE FEDERATION QUESTION.

In every federation room we walk into, the same question arrives, and it deserves better than a verbal reassurance: if your players carry our ID, do we siphon your members, your data and your commercial revenue? This paper is the answer, in writing, as commitments a governing body can hold us to.

FOR NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES · CONFEDERATIONS · LEAGUES

SHOT Clubhouse Limited · Company no. 16350767 · 86-90 Paul Street, London EC2A 4NE

shotclubhouse.com



NO. AND HERE IT IS IN WRITING

The question is fair, so the answer should cost us something. A founder's verbal reassurance is worth exactly what it costs to give. This paper puts the answer on paper, as five commitments a governing body can quote back at us in any negotiation, any renewal, any dispute.

1. **Tenants, not landlords.** The federation issues credentials against the ID under its own authority. Its member data remains its own property, exportable at any time. SHOT holds the identity rail, not the relationship.
2. **Identity, not revenue.** SHOT does not license, sell or monetise identity data, and does not profile on the ID. The commercial layer of sport, sponsorship, broadcast and membership fees, stays with the rights holder. This is a standing commitment, not a current preference.
3. **Portability is the trust guarantee.** The person keeps their credential if they leave any platform, including ours. A credential the issuer cannot hold hostage is precisely why a federation can adopt it without strategic risk.
4. **Complementary, not competitive.** Existing registration and connect systems are systems of record for the affiliated. The ID reaches the unaffiliated majority those systems cannot see, and hands the federation honest sight of its true participation base for the first time.
5. **The federation gains, concretely.** Safeguarding architecture it does not have to build, participation data it has never had, and free tooling for its grassroots clubs.

The principle underneath all five: infrastructure earns trust by being unable to betray it. Not unwilling. Unable. The rest of this paper explains what "unable" means in architecture, not adjectives.

Part one states the objection in its strongest form, because it deserves that. Part two looks at why the answers federations have been offered so far fail them. Parts three and four set out the five commitments in full. Part five gives you the checklist to hold any identity partner against, including us. The last page is an open offer to test all of it.

1 THE QUESTION, STATED PROPERLY

The rooms vary. The question does not. Sometimes it arrives politely, late in the meeting, as "and where does the data sit?" Sometimes it arrives with no wrapping at all.

I have sat in enough of these rooms now to know the shape of the moment. The presentation lands well, the safeguarding architecture gets nods, the grassroots tooling gets genuine warmth, and then the most senior person in the room leans back and asks the question their board sent them in to ask. In its strongest form it goes like this:

"If our players carry your ID, what stops your platform becoming the relationship, our members becoming your users, our data becoming your asset, and our sponsors becoming your customers?"

THE FEDERATION QUESTION, AS ASKED IN EVERY ROOM

I want to answer that question at full strength, not a softened version of it. Because it is not paranoia. It is pattern recognition, and the pattern is real.

THE FEAR IS RATIONAL

Other industries have watched this film. A platform arrives as a helpful service layer, aggregates the audience, learns the customer better than the incumbent ever did, and then rents both back at a price of its choosing. In one widely reported case from retail, a data business built on privileged access to a retailer's customer identity scheme saw its reported profit collapse by more than 80 per cent within a year of that access being restricted; whoever owns the identity layer holds the whip hand, and everyone else discovers they were renting. Publishers learned the same lesson from social platforms. Music learned it from streaming. A governing body that has spent a century building its membership, its data and its commercial rights is right to ask whether an identity layer is the first chapter of that story.

So take the objection at its full weight. There are three distinct siphons hiding inside it. The member siphon: the daily relationship moves to the platform, and the federation becomes a logo on someone else's product. The data siphon: the platform ends up knowing the federation's audience better than the federation does, and sells that knowledge. The revenue siphon: sponsors and broadcasters start buying the platform's aggregated audience instead of the federation's rights. If any of the three happens, the federation has funded the thing that replaces it.

Any identity partner who waves this away has either not thought about it or is hoping you have not. Our answer is not that the fear is silly. Our answer is that we have designed the system so that the fear cannot come true, and put the design where you can check it.

2 WHY THE CURRENT ANSWERS FAIL

Federations have been offered two kinds of digital answer so far, and each fails in a different way. One dies with the contract. The other only ever sees a fraction of the sport.

THE PROPRIETARY MEMBER APP DIES WITH THE CONTRACT

The first answer is the branded member app: built by a supplier, skinned in the federation's colours, licensed by the year. It works until the relationship does not. At renewal, the supplier's pricing power is the switching cost: the members' accounts, history and habits are locked inside the supplier's database, so leaving means asking every member to start again. And when the contract does end, the member's identity ends with it, because it was never the member's to keep. A decade of engagement, deleted by procurement. The federation carried the strategic risk all along; it just paid annually for the privilege.

THE REGISTRATION SYSTEM SEES ONLY THE REGISTERED

The second answer is the official registration and connect infrastructure that governing bodies run, nationally and internationally. These systems do their regulatory job well: eligibility, transfers, discipline, the record of who is allowed to play. But they are systems of record for the affiliated, and the affiliated are a fraction of the sport. One national governing body told us it has around 400,000 registered players in a sport that, on its own estimate, some 12 million people in its country actually play. That is not a criticism of the system; counting the unregistered was never its job. But it means participation strategy, funding bids and sponsorship valuations are being built on the visible sliver, while the majority of the sport happens where no governing body can see it.

AND THE GROUND IS MOVING UNDER BOTH

Meanwhile the environment is getting harder. Under-16 social media restrictions are live in one major market and arriving in the UK in spring 2027, and the regulator's own guidance in the first market tells sport organisations that clubs may still post content but their under-16 members can no longer receive it. Online safety duties carry real fines. Half the web's traffic is no longer human. Federations will need verified, safeguarded, portable digital identity for their communities whether or not SHOT exists. The only open question is on whose terms they get it.

400k / 12m

registered players vs people who actually play, one sport, one country

As told to SHOT by a national governing body, 2026; anonymised, not independently verified

4.7m

under-16 accounts removed within days of one country's social media ban

National online safety regulator, Dec 2025

51%

of web traffic was automated, not human, in 2024

Security vendor telemetry (Imperva), 2025; flag as vendor data

£122.9bn

annual social value of community sport in England, funded partly on participation numbers nobody fully trusts

Sport England, 2023/24

3 THE ANSWER, IN WRITING

Three commitments answer the three siphons directly. Each is a design decision already made, not a promise waiting on goodwill.

COMMITMENT ONE: TENANTS, NOT LANDLORDS

The federation issues membership credentials against the Sport Head ID under its own authority, on its own domain, in its own colours. Its member records remain its own property: exportable in full, at any time, without asking us. What SHOT operates is the rail underneath: credential issuance, verification, the safeguarding plumbing, the age assurance. The relationship between a governing body and its members took a century to build and it is not ours to own. We hold the identity rail. The federation holds the relationship, the register and the rights. If a federation ever chooses to leave, it walks out with every member record it walked in with, and everything it built on top.

COMMITMENT TWO: IDENTITY, NOT REVENUE

SHOT does not license, sell or monetise identity data. We do not profile people on the ID, and we do not build advertising audiences from it. The commercial layer of sport, sponsorship, broadcast rights and membership fees, stays with the rights holder, where it has always belonged; a sponsor who wants a federation's audience buys it from the federation, not from us. Our revenue comes from the infrastructure itself: verification services and premium tooling, sold for what they do rather than for what they know. Identity is the rail, never the product. This is a standing commitment, and I will say it as plainly as it can be said: if our business model ever required breaking it, the model would be wrong, not the commitment.

COMMITMENT THREE: PORTABILITY IS THE TRUST GUARANTEE

The credential belongs to the person who carries it. It is built on the open verifiable-credential standards used across the wider identity world, which means any organisation with standard software can check it is genuine without asking our permission or touching our servers, the same way a browser checks a website certificate. If a player leaves a club, a federation, or any platform, including ours, the credential and the record it carries go with them.

Read that again from a federation's chair, because this is the point most easily missed. A credential we cannot hold hostage is a credential we cannot use as a weapon in a renewal negotiation. Our position gives us no lock on your members, which means our discipline has to come from being better every year, not from trapping anyone. That is exactly why a governing body can adopt this without strategic risk: the exit door is built into the architecture, and it is always unlocked.

4 WHAT THE FEDERATION ACTUALLY GETS

The last two commitments turn the question around. The honest case for the ID is not that it does no harm to a governing body. It is that it does work no governing body's systems can do.

COMMITMENT FOUR: COMPLEMENTARY, NOT COMPETITIVE

The registration and connect systems that governing bodies already run are systems of record for the affiliated, and they should stay exactly that. They answer the regulatory questions: is this player registered, eligible, transferred correctly. The Sport Head ID answers a different question about a different population: who is actually in the sport. The park kickabouts, the unaffiliated five-a-side leagues, the kids on the far pitch who have never touched a registration form. Where a federation wants it, one registration can update both ledgers, the member joining through the federation's own portal and the official registration record resolving automatically behind the scenes. Nothing is duplicated and nothing is displaced.

This is the census argument, and it lands hardest here. A body that reports 400,000 registered players in a sport 12 million people play is not misgoverning; it is governing blind, because nothing exists to count the rest. An opt-in, privacy-first identity layer across the whole of a sport gives its governing body, for the first time, honest aggregate sight of its true participation base: how many, where, what age, staying or fading. Not individual surveillance; anonymised, aggregate numbers a federation can put in front of a government, a funder or a sponsor without crossing its fingers.

COMMITMENT FIVE: THREE THINGS THE FEDERATION GAINS ON DAY ONE

1

SAFEGUARDING ARCHITECTURE IT DOES NOT HAVE TO BUILD

Age-tiered accounts, parental consent recorded properly and portably, messaging rules enforced by structure rather than settings, and age assurance that meets the regulatory wave head on. Built, maintained and audited at our cost, not the federation's.

2

PARTICIPATION DATA IT HAS NEVER HAD

Aggregate, anonymised, opt-in sight of the whole sport, not just the registered sliver. The evidence base for funding bids, government cases and sponsorship valuations, owned facts instead of estimates.

3

FREE TOOLING FOR ITS GRASSROOTS CLUBS

The club, team and coach layer is free, permanently. Every grassroots club in a federation's pyramid gets modern tools at no cost to the club or the body, which strengthens the federation's own delivery network without touching its budget.

None of the three competes with a single thing a federation sells. All three make what it sells more valuable.

5 THE PRINCIPLE

"Infrastructure earns trust by being unable to betray it. Not unwilling. Unable."

THE TEST FOR ANY IDENTITY LAYER IN SPORT, INCLUDING OURS

A promise is a posture; architecture is a guarantee. Promises change when boards change, when investors press, when a company is sold. So the commitments in this paper are not held up by our good intentions. They are held up by design decisions that would have to be publicly and visibly torn out for us to break them.

What "unable" means, concretely. The credential is held by the person and verifiable by anyone without our permission, so we cannot switch off a federation's members to win an argument. Member data is the federation's own and exportable in full, so we cannot ransom it at renewal. Our register of accredited issuers is published to a public, append-only log, so nobody, including us, can quietly rewrite who was trusted and when. Every verification uses selective disclosure, sharing only the fact being checked, and we capture the minimum data in the first place, so there is less to monetise even if someone one day wanted to. Each of these would have to be dismantled, in public, for the siphon to begin. That is the guarantee.

SIX QUESTIONS FOR ANY IDENTITY PARTNER, INCLUDING US

1. **If we leave, what leaves with us?** The right answer: all of your member data, and every member keeps their credential.
2. **Can our members' credentials be verified without the provider's permission?** If verification depends on the provider's goodwill, so does your federation.
3. **Does the provider license, sell or profile on identity data?** Get the answer in the contract, not the pitch.
4. **Does the provider's revenue depend on owning the relationship with our members?** Follow the money; the business model tells you the endgame.
5. **What happens to a member's identity when the contract ends?** If it dies with the contract, it was never theirs.
6. **Can the provider's trust decisions be audited publicly?** Accreditations and revocations should live on a log nobody can quietly edit.

Put these six questions to every platform that wants to sit under your members. Put them to us hardest of all, in writing, with the answers warranted in the agreement.



A STANDING OFFER

Words on a page are still words, even warranted ones. So here is the offer we make to any governing body, confederation or league that wants to test the model rather than take it on trust.

Pick one region, or one age group. Run the Sport Head ID underneath it for a season: your badge, your domain, your rules, your member records. Keep every record throughout and export them whenever you like. Put the six questions from part five into the agreement as warranties. At the end of the season, judge the model on what it did: the safeguarding load it lifted, the participation picture it revealed, the clubs it equipped for free, and whether a single member, byte of data or pound of commercial revenue moved anywhere it should not have. If we fail the test, you leave with everything, because that is the whole design.

SHOT's club and coach layer is free for every club, team, school and coach, permanently, and through our membership of the UN's Football for the Goals initiative each paid development plan funds a free licence for a club that could never pay for one. The identity layer described in this paper is what carries all of it: verified once, owned by the person, issued against by the bodies that govern the sport.

The federation question deserves to keep being asked. Ask it of us in every room, and hold this paper up while you do.

Take your SHOT. Own it. Make impact. · shotclubhouse.com

SOURCES

- Registered-versus-actual participation figures (400,000 registered against an estimated 12 million playing): as described to SHOT by a national governing body, 2026; anonymised and not independently verified
- Retail identity-scheme cautionary tale: widely reported financial press accounts of a retailer restricting its analytics partner's data access; parties deliberately unnamed here
- eSafety Commissioner (Australia), social media age restrictions in force 10 December 2025; ~4.7 million under-16 accounts removed; sector guidance for sport organisations
- UK Government, under-16 social media ban announcement, June 2026; regulations before Parliament by end 2026, in force spring 2027
- Ofcom / UK Government, Online Safety Act age-assurance duties enforceable since July 2025, with fines issued
- Imperva Bad Bot Report 2025: 51% of web traffic automated in 2024 (vendor telemetry)
- Sport England / Sheffield Hallam University / Manchester Metropolitan University, Social value of community sport and physical activity in England, 2023/24
- United Nations, Football for the Goals initiative (SHOT is a member; membership is not UN endorsement)
- W3C Verifiable Credentials and OpenID Connect open standards, on which credential portability and independent verification rest

Accounts described as what federations tell us are drawn from SHOT's own conversations with governing bodies during 2025-26 and are reported as experience, not measured statistics. Where evidence is second-hand or vendor-sourced, it is flagged in the text.