

Sport and Recreation Alliance – Safeguarding Toolkit

Introduction

Sport has a unique role to play when it comes to providing a safe and enjoyable environment to all participants. In order to do this, sports need to carefully consider their safeguarding policies and procedures and pay consideration to how these can be implemented to create a safer environment.

We have put together the below guidance to provide sports clubs with an in depth understanding of the elements of safeguarding. The guidance is based on the best practice in the sector and includes signposts to various organisations who provide specialised advice and training on this matter.

Safeguarding in Sport: A Club Guide

Any club that offers a sport or activity has a responsibility to safeguard its participants in making sure they are all kept safe from harm. During these challenging times, sports clubs and other organisations are having to adapt their delivery and find innovative ways to engage with their members and participants. In an ever-increasing digital world, we hope that this resource will provide guidance to your organisation and ensure that every child, young person and adult is kept protected as they continue to enjoy sport and activity.

This resource provides guidance on the following topics:

- **Communicating with Participants**
- **Online Safety**
- **Policies**
- **Training & Further Guidance**

In addition to this, your national governing body will have requirements, guidelines and procedures around safeguarding for you to follow. Ensure that you contact them to find out whether anything has changed in light of Coronavirus and what tools and policies they have to support you.

Communicating with Participants

Any club or other delivery organisation must provide clear communication in several areas in order to safeguard its participants. Open communication lines are particularly important during this time to protect against social isolation and mental health and wellbeing.

You can help to tackle this by sharing regular news updates on your website or other social media platforms. Sharing campaigns, such as Sport England's #StayInWorkOut will also help to keep your members and participants engaged, as well as physically active. Some people may not use social media so you should also consider how you can adapt your communication model to suit everyone's needs. Providing an out of hours contact can help you to keep in touch with your participants, particularly those most vulnerable to social isolation.

In addition to this, your club should have appointed a Designated Safeguarding Lead or Club Welfare Officer to ensure that your safeguarding policy is being adhered to and children are protected. Everyone in the organisation, as well as participants must be made aware of who they are and how to contact them. You can find more information about what this role entails on the Child Protection in Sport Unit website, [here](#).

Online Safety

Communicating with your participants through digital platforms can help you to stay connected to one another. Although the digital world has helped us to stay more connected, online communication can also have its pitfalls; you should ensure that your own, and others privacy is protected by considering the following areas:

1. Social Media Safety Policy

A social media safety policy should outline how your club and its workforce should conduct themselves on the web. The policy can help to protect your club's reputation and provide protocol for sharing information about it. It is important that your social media safety policy is updated accordingly and shared with members, coaches and volunteers.

The policy should include guidance for the acceptable use of social media, including the use of appropriate language and a zero-tolerance approach to defamatory images. The policy should also include steps taken to minimise risk, such as removing any personal information and raising awareness around communication with vulnerable adults and individuals under 18.

2. Virtual Coaching

Depending on which platform you use, you must check the privacy and confidentiality settings. Ensuring these are secure will provide you with the reassurance that your rights are protected, as well as your data. With Zoom growing as the meeting platform of choice, the communications technology company have recently updated their [privacy policy](#). It is important that you check these policies before deciding whether to subscribe to your platform of choice.

Coaches delivering sessions online will need to ensure that they are covered by the right insurance to offer this. Your National Governing Body may be able to offer this if you are already insured as a deliverer with them. Coaches must also maintain and have the right qualifications to deliver online training sessions, just as they would for physical sessions. It is important that your member's can access any virtual sessions you offer, so make sure to check in with them; not everyone will have access to the internet!

For those accessing online coaching sessions, it is important that they aware of any standard expectations of behaviour as reflected in the code of conduct. Whilst this may also be highlighted in your social media policy, your code of conduct should also be updated to reflect a move to the virtual world. Similarly, reporting lines and procedures should be reviewed in the event of an online safeguarding issue. When this is updated, all members, staff, volunteers and coaches should be made aware of who to escalate to in the event of a cause for concern.

Finally, session plans should be reflective of the participants attending and be clearly communicated in advance to ensure everyone feels comfortable attending. Coaches must be aware of who is attending their session and must gather information beforehand to understand fitness levels, age, injuries or illnesses. Coaches will also need to ensure that all

participants attending have a safe space to participate in and with the appropriate equipment. Parents may have to assist their children with this set up.

Delivering Online Sessions to Under 18s

Below are the key safeguarding considerations for delivering online coaching sessions to U18s;

- One-to-one contact should not be used between a coach and an U18 participant; make sure the parents are involved if this is the case.
- Parents must be the recipients of any invitations to online coaching sessions and their email address must be the primary contact for all communication.
- Privacy and confidentiality settings must be reviewed by the host of the meeting to ensure they are appropriate, and no meeting should be recorded without the consent of a parent.
- A code of conduct should be relayed to the participants so that they are aware of the acceptable standard of behaviour.
- A risk assessment must be completed for all sessions, as would be done with physical sessions.
- Where possible, two coaches should deliver a session as well as the presence of a club safeguarding officer.
- Lines of reporting should be relayed to the participants in the case of concern and a contact detail for your Club Safeguarding or Welfare Officer should be provided.

Policies

Safeguarding policy

A safeguarding children's policy makes clear to everyone what is required in relation to the protection of children.

It helps foster a safe and positive environment for children and shows that a club is taking its duty of care seriously.

Safeguarding policies can vary a little depending on your sport or activity, but all policies must state:

- what the policy aim is, i.e. to safeguard children
- good practice guidelines
- guidance about the use of film, photography and social media
- information on the recruitment and training of staff and volunteers
- procedures in place to respond to allegations.

The policy should be written clearly and easily understood, approved by your clubs committee or management structure, publicised and promoted throughout the club and compulsory for all staff and volunteers.

It is also very important that the policy is reviewed regularly or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation. This will ensure you are keeping up to date with best practice.

Code of Conduct

A code of conduct should set out what an acceptable standard of behaviour is and help to promote good practice. Individuals should be required to sign-up to abide by the relevant code and it should be made clear that failure to comply will result in action being taken by the club/organisation.

These standards of behaviour set a clear benchmark for everybody – so that they can understand what is acceptable and what is not. They can also help minimise opportunities for abuse and may prevent unfounded allegations from being aired.

There should be codes for:

- Parents
- Volunteers/staff
- Coaches
- Children

The Child Protection in Sport Unit has good examples of codes of conduct and these should be consulted when putting together your own. For adults, the code must set out the ethics of the organisation and provide guidance as to the expected behaviour of adults towards children.

It is essential that a culture among the staff and volunteers comes through – that children are listened to and respected. There must also be guidance on the acceptable behaviour of children towards other children and appropriate procedures, including disciplinary measures, for dealing with any unacceptable behaviour.

Any code of conduct must also make clear that discrimination or prejudice of any form is unacceptable, and this can apply to race, culture, age, gender, sexuality, religion or disability.

As mentioned, the codes should also be updated to reflect the virtual working domains and the expectations associated with online platform use.

Preventative Procedures

Prevention systems and procedures consist of measures to help minimise the possibility of children and young people being abused by those in a position of trust. By putting safeguards in place, your club can minimise potential risks that adults may pose to children and most importantly help prevent abuse.

What systems need to be in place?

Well firstly, and perhaps most obviously, you need to have policies and procedures in place for recruiting staff and volunteers who are going to have contact with children. These procedures assess the person's suitability for the role. For this, clubs should get at least two appropriate references for all staff and volunteers and evidence of identity and any relevant qualifications must be seen.

Make sure that you actually check the references to ensure the prospective staff and volunteers have the experience they say they have.

Having a formalised try-out session can also be a good way to determine how they may be around the children.

Adults should also complete a self-declaration about any previous convictions they may have in line with relevant legislation. This is a good procedure to use for people that do not meet the eligibility criteria for any other form of check.

Adults in roles which provide eligibility for criminal records checks should be required to undertake these in line with relevant legislation. You can find out more about the current [Disclosure and Barring Service here](#).

Clubs should ensure that safeguarding training is available to all staff and volunteers at a level appropriate to their responsibilities.

Reporting Abuse Procedures and Systems

Having systems and procedures in place should provide clear step-by-step guidance on what action clubs will take in different circumstances.

Again, support and guidance will be in place from your NGB on how to manage allegations and what procedures they would like you to go through so they can help you manage the process.

The procedures will likely clarify roles and responsibilities and the lines of communication both within the club and to outside authorities and ensure that complaints are recorded and dealt with.

Procedures and systems to deal with complaints also make sure that clubs comply with the relevant legislation and, most importantly, ensure a prompt and appropriate response to concerns about a child's welfare.

What else needs to be in place?

Firstly, all clubs should try to have a designated person who has clearly defined responsibilities in relation to child protection. This is really important as it ensures someone is always making sure the club has the appropriate safeguarding systems in place. Often this person will be the key link with the NGB and could be the 'Club Welfare Officer'.

Next, there should be clear and unambiguous procedures in place for child protection which are available to all parents, children, staff and volunteers. These must provide step-by-step guidance on what action to take if there are concerns about a child's safety or welfare.

These must include:

- who the procedures apply to?
- definitions of abuse
- how to respond to a child who says either they or another child is/are being abused
- how to respond to allegations against a member of staff/volunteer or another young person

- how to respond to concerns about a child's welfare where no specific disclosure/allegation is made
- what the appropriate use of video and photography at events is
- contact details for local social services and police, including out of hours contacts.

It is important here that there has also been a process set out for dealing with complaints about unacceptable behaviour towards children from parents and other children, with clear timescales for resolving the complaint.

Finally, clubs must make sure that they comply with all the relevant legislation in regard to recording incidents, concerns and referrals as well as securely storing them.

Monitoring System

Safeguarding policies and procedures must be implemented right throughout the club. It is no good having the perfect policy if it is not being applied; checks, reviews and updates are needed.

All incidents, allegations of abuse and complaints must be recorded, and clubs should have arrangements in place to monitor compliance with child protection policy. Safeguarding policies should be revised ideally at least every three years to accommodate the clubs changing needs and experience but also for changes in legislation. Views of those involved inside and outside the club can be very helpful and therefore clubs should have mechanisms in place to consult children as well as parents as part of any review.

Safeguarding children in sport is a fundamental part of running a sports club. Remember, putting the right policies, protections and procedures in place can help make sure you keep children in sport safe.

Training & Further Guidance

As well as ensuring a comprehensive induction process for staff and volunteers, it is vital that training is continuously kept up to date, particularly in advancement of the growing use of technology and adaptation of club services. Your National Governing Body may be able to offer you adapted qualifications for online delivery, but there are also several trusted experts in the sector which may be beneficial for you to explore.

[UK Coaching: Safeguarding and Protecting Children](#)

[UK Coaching: Safeguarding Adults](#)

[UK Coaching: Coaching Children \(Online Classroom\)](#)

[NSPCC: Child Protection in Sport Training](#)

[NSPCC: Online Safety Training](#)

[Child Protection in Sport Unit: Self-Assessment Tool](#)

Legal disclaimer

The information provided in this guidance is designed to provide helpful information on the matters discussed. This guidance should not be considered as legal advice. Should there be a need, please consult your NGB or legal advisor for your own situation. The Sport and Recreation Alliance will not take any liability arising from your use of this guidance.