

Safeguarding in Sport

Introduction

Any club offering a sport or activity to children or young people has a responsibility to safeguard them. Abuse can take place in any environment, including sport. Whether the organisation is governed by a governing body of sport or a local authority, is part of the school's extra curriculum activity or run by a youth group or charity, children and young people must be protected from harm and safeguarding arrangements to identify and report any concerns must be put in place and adhered to.

In light of recent investigations made into the Professional Footballers Association following from the allegations of abuse, it is imperative for organisations and staff members to remember abuse will not be limited to those participating in or offering sporting opportunities at premier / championship level¹.

All organisations must remember:

- The welfare of the child is paramount;
- All participants, whatever their age, gender, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs, sexual identity or disability, have an equal right to be safe and protected;
- All suspicions, concerns or allegations of harm must be taken seriously and responded to appropriately.

Some children may be in situations that mean they are at risk or suffering significant harm, this could be from within their home, school, community or a sporting environment. These children need to be protected and it is important that professionals know what they need to do if a safeguarding concern is raised.

Why are children at risk in sporting environments?

Sporting activities are encouraged and promoted as a way of improving health and wellbeing of children as well as a way of inclusion into society for disadvantaged children and young people. All children are at risk of harm and this abuse can be perpetrated by those who are in a position of trust. As with all types of abuse, the imbalance of power and control created by adults can, at times, prove difficult to challenge in organisations.

Children not only need to be safeguarded from individuals in a position of trust who may abuse them, organisations have a responsibility to ensure that staff and professionals must also be aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and be able to respond to them in an effective and supportive environment. Missing the signs of abuse due to lack of training or proper safeguarding arrangements put in place may result in the child being put at risk.

¹ [Briefing: Safeguarding Culture in Sport, Farrer & Co](#)

Some risk factors include:

- Children being taken away from their homes due to matches, tournaments or training;
- One to one training session with coaches. This would particularly be the case in professional training settings;
- The immediate trust of professionals in the sporting environment, insofar that Children and Young People (CYP), parents and other professionals have a genuine belief that coaches want to further the career of the child.

Which Organisations need safeguarding arrangements in place?

Voluntary organisations and private sector providers play an important role in delivering services to children. They should have the arrangements in place in the same way as organisations in the public sector, and need to work effectively with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB).

Some examples include:

- Riding schools;
- Swimming / Rugby / Football / Cricket clubs;
- Gymnastic classes;
- Hockey / Netball teams;
- Athletics;
- Tennis / Table tennis;
- Bowling.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list as there are many different types of sporting activities. This also includes sporting activities which are directed solely at those children with disabilities.

Organisational Responsibility

The governing body of sport must have a safeguarding and protecting children policy and procedure that professionals should read to ensure sessions meet the requirements of the policy. Any classes or clubs which are affiliated to schools must adhere to the schools safeguarding policy. Voluntary and Community organisations providing sporting activities must also have safeguarding arrangements in place.

Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015 (http://www.workingtogetheronline.co.uk/chapters/chapter_two.html) sets out the responsibilities for all organisations including those providing sporting activities to children and young people, they are not exempt from having safeguarding arrangements in place. Essentially all organisations must have the following:

- Safeguarding Policy

The policy must be clear and ensures a safe and positive environment is provided. The policy should set out the duty of care towards the C&YP and be publicised, promoted and is compulsory for all staff and volunteers. The policy must be reviewed regularly

and kept up to date.

- Code of Conduct

Setting out what is appropriate and acceptable behaviour from all staff members' is the key element of the code of conduct. This code must also be aimed at parents and other children themselves. A culture of listening to children and young people's wishes and feelings must be created and promoted. It must also be clear that discrimination or prejudice of any form is unacceptable and this can apply to: race, culture, age, gender, sexuality, religion or disability.

- Preventative Arrangements

Policies and procedures must be established and actively enforced. Safe Recruitment of both paid and volunteer staff must be followed. DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks are not enough to satisfy the recruitment of individuals working with CYP; references must be checked, taster sessions for potential employees/volunteers must be encouraged, as well as ensuring all staff members have undergone safeguarding training. All organisations must follow a safe recruitment process. If organisations do not have a safe recruitment policy they must follow their Local Safeguarding Boards procedure.

- Reporting Abuse Procedure and Systems

Step-by-step guidance must be provided to all staff members and volunteers should they be concerned about a child or young person or an allegation is made against another staff member. There must be at least two Designated Safeguarding Officers in any given setting. A clear line of accountability and reporting procedure must be established. Professionals must be aware of who they need to report to should they be concerned and what the procedure of this entails. This also includes a clear procedure on Whistleblowing. Please refer to your organisations whistleblowing policy.

- Recording/Monitoring System

All incidents, allegations of abuse and complaints must be recorded and clubs should have arrangements in place to monitor that these are in line with the child protection policy. Any incident must be recorded in writing.

The Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) (<https://thecpsu.org.uk/>) provides advice and support regarding safeguarding children in the sporting environment. If you are part of a governing body, they will also be able to give you more information.

The CPSU have many resources to ensure safeguarding arrangements are put in place including a Self Assessment Tool (<https://thecpsu.org.uk/self-assessment-tool/>) which will take organisations through the particular standards which must be met (<https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/2013/standards-for-safeguarding-and-protecting-children-in-sport/>).

Professionals Working in the Sporting Environment

Paid and volunteer staff need to be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, how they should know how to respond to child protection concerns and make a referral to local authority children's social care or the police if necessary.

Those who work with CYP are in a position of trust, they create a dynamic environment in which children learn and develop. However, professionals are also in a position where they may notice something about one of the children in their care that might indicate that the child is at risk outside of the sporting environment. In this instance professionals must follow the procedures set out in their safeguarding policy.

Professionals should:

- Ensure they have had the appropriate training in safeguarding to better their practice;
- Challenge negative behaviour from both CYP and other staff members;
- Demonstrate proper personal behaviour and act within the organisations' safeguarding policy;
- Keep the child at the centre of their work at all times;
- Keep children safe whether on premises or away at tournaments/matches.

Resources

What do I need to know to help safeguard and protect the children I coach?

<http://www.cswsport.org.uk/upload/public/coaching/good-practise/SCUK-Safeguarding-protecting-children.pdf>

Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU)

<https://thecpsu.org.uk/>

Safeguarding Culture in Sport, Farrer & Co http://www.farrer.co.uk/News/Briefings/Safeguarding-Culture-in-Sport/?utm_source=vuture&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=cpsu%20briefing:%20safeguarding%20culture%20in%20sport