

# PREVENTING SEXUAL VIOLENCE



Preventing sexual violence against children and young people in and through sport

## — If safeguards aren't put in place what can make sport a more vulnerable context for violence to occur?

- ▶ There may be a lack of regulated boundaries regarding relationships on and off line in sport between adults or young leaders in positions of trust. These need to be subject to codes of conduct so that everyone is clear about boundaries.
- ▶ Sport has been less regulated than more formal settings like schools.
- ▶ It is largely run by volunteers, who may not have access to the information, training and support they need to put safeguards in place; be unaware of the indicators of sexual violence; and may not be confident in how to respond to concerns or allegations.
- ▶ Physical contact as part of coaching practice can present opportunities for unwanted contact if not regulated.
- ▶ The culture in sport means that sexually abusive so-called 'initiation' ceremonies have been accepted as being just part of the sport and not questioned as potentially criminal offences. These can also traumatize child or young person witnesses and adult bystanders.

Advice should be sought from statutory agencies where a risk assessment involves sexual violence or sexually inappropriate behaviour which may require a specialist or forensic assessment.

## — Putting in place practical prevention measures

Creating a high quality, child centred environment where children and young people understand their rights and feel confident to discuss things which worry them is essential to prevent sexual violence.

Parents need to ask questions about their children's sport:

- ▶ coach qualifications;
- ▶ staff/volunteer experience;
- ▶ staff/volunteer background checks.

**'If you wouldn't leave your wallet or purse with a group of strangers you don't know and you have never met, how much more valuable is your child?'**

(Anne Tiivas, Westminster Media Forum, October 2017)

## — Preventative measures

In previous fact sheets we have talked about the steps which need to be taken to prevent sexual violence in sport and to respond to concerns. For organisations, see fact sheet 4.

A good practice example of what safeguards need to be put in place and how to go about this is the International Safeguards for Children in Sport and accompanying guidance for sports governing bodies. These have been tested by over 50 organisations from National Olympic Committees to small sport for development organisations.

Pro Safe Sport+ Put an end to sexual harassment and abuse against children in sport (Erasmus+)

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Risks of all forms of abuse increase with a child or young person's performance level, when:

- ▶ children and young people start to travel away from home and normal safeguards;
- ▶ talented and elite young people depend on their coaches and entourages for success and selection;
- ▶ elite sport is characterised by a "win at all costs" approach. Talented children and young people gradually enter an adult performance world where they are "often children by age but adults by way of life. This is referred to as status confusion" (source: Safeguarding YouthSport-ICES 2015 – [www.safeguardingyouthsport.eu](http://www.safeguardingyouthsport.eu));
- ▶ some children and young people are made more at risk of abuse by our lack of awareness and action to safeguard them. For instance, disabled young people who may be dependent on the adults who are abusing them for participation and progression in sport, young people who are LGBT who may be discriminated against, for example their sexual orientation may be misperceived as a sexual risk.

## — The eight safeguards

The International Safeguards for Children in Sport are:

- ▶ Developing your Policy;
- ▶ Procedures for Responding to Safeguarding Concerns;
- ▶ Advice and Support;
- ▶ Minimising Risks to Children and Young People;
- ▶ Guidelines for Behaviour;
- ▶ Recruiting, Training and Communicating;
- ▶ Working with Partners;
- ▶ Monitoring and Evaluation.

The guidance notes provide step by step help and practical advice and examples from a range of organisations across the globe who took part in the pilot. The guidance notes are referenced below.

## — Key References

New IOC resources "Safeguarding athletes from harassment and abuse in sport" IOC Toolkit for IFs and NOCs:

<http://sha.olympic.org/home.html>

You can find the IOC Press release related to the launch, below. The direct link to the toolkit website is here:

<https://hub.olympic.org/safeguarding/>

Download the Safeguarding resources:

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/?s=International+Safeguards+for+Children+in+Sport>

Download the Guidance notes:

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/?s=International+Safeguards+for+Children+in+Sport>

The Netherlands Olympic Committee and Dutch Sports Confederation (NOC\*NSF) has been developing policies and practices to prevent what is called sexual intimidation in Dutch sport since 1996. The toolkit sexual intimidation policy:

<http://www.nocnsf.nl/stream/toolkit-seksuele-intimidatie>

The policy framework a safe and respectful sport environment:

<https://sportplezier.nl>

National Action Plan: Austria's Approach to Fight Sexualised Violence in Sport:

[http://www.100sport.at/de/menu\\_main/news/newsshow-bm-klug-initiiert-strategiegruppe](http://www.100sport.at/de/menu_main/news/newsshow-bm-klug-initiiert-strategiegruppe)

Guide for the Prevention of Sexual Harassment in Sport in the Czech Republic:

<http://www.olympic.cz/upload/files/g9vmztko05-prevence-sex-obtezovani.pdf>

Play by the Rules was developed in 2001 by the South Australian Department for Sport and Recreation as an interactive education and information website on discrimination, sexual harassment and child protection in sport:

<https://www.playbytherules.net.au>

The Irish Sports Council and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland published the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Sport in 2000:

[http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Participation/Code\\_of\\_Ethics/Code\\_of\\_Ethics\\_Manual/](http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/Participation/Code_of_Ethics/Code_of_Ethics_Manual/)

## — Assessing organisational risk

Sports organisations need to identify potential risks as part of good governance. Safeguarding risks should form part of this process as well as health and safety. Sports should develop and maintain risk registers. These should both cover assessments of risk and describe controls to minimise or remove potential hazards or risks. For sports events, safeguarding plans should be put in place which are relevant to the competition level.

<https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/2015/safe-sports-events-management-tool/>

## — Assessing risks presented by individuals

This may form part of a recruitment process where safeguarding checks reveal concerns about an individual's suitability to work with children. Equally, concerns may arise during or following safeguarding or a child protection investigation. Sports organisations may need to make an assessment of risk and/or suitability. This must involve a structured approach to assessment informed by good practice which enables an organisation to make informed and defensible decisions. Examples of this include:

<https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/2015/rfl-interview-risk-assessment-checklist/>

<https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/2013/safe-recruitment-and-selection-procedures/>

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