

How big a problem is child abuse in sport?

There is no evidence to show that child abuse is a widespread or growing problem in sport. The NSPCC knows that abuse can occur in any setting where people have access to children. There are a growing number of cases where sports coaches have seriously abused children in their care.

We are also aware of a number of reported cases of bullying by coaches and other adults. We also have reported cases of over training and lack of attention to the developmental needs of children and young people.

The sheer number of children and adults involved in sport means that statistically there are bound to be some adults who want to use sport to gain access to children to abuse them. Statistics from a study in England and Wales (Home Office 1999) showed that of men born in 1953, 7 in 1000 had a conviction against a child by the time they were 40. In Northern Ireland the number of people with a caution or conviction for sexual offences is **10,500**. The CPSU in Northern Ireland are also aware of a number of cases of inappropriate individuals having been involved in coaching in various sports. The NSPCC Child Protection Helpline, Swimline and the English FA Child Protection Helpline receive calls about child abuse that have taken place in a sporting environment. A growing number of adults and young people are beginning to talk openly about their experiences of abuse that occurred whilst they were involved in sport.