



Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport



Child Protection in Sport Unit
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Information for Sports Leaders and Volunteers

Coaches and volunteers involved in young people's sport have a great opportunity to be a positive role model and help build an individual's confidence. This summary explains what you should do to keep young people safe and make sure they have fun.

It also helps you think about what responsibilities you have.



Sports Leaders are there to make sure young people learn skills, enjoy the activity, and keep safe. It means they should respect young people and consider their safety by:

- Being reliable and planning ahead for tournaments/sessions
- Being fair and letting them have their say
- Making them feel safe and ensuring ratios are appropriate
- Letting them take part
- Encouraging them by giving constructive feedback
- Being a good role model and treating all with respect and dignity
- Not showing favouritism
- Never condoning bullying or abusive language
- Providing manual/physical support in an open manner according to agreed guidelines
- Working in an open environment
- Adhering to sports' governing body supervision guidelines
- Holding a register of those who attend each session with accurate records
- Agreeing to safe recruitment procedures (including vetting)
- Ensuring they maintain healthy, positive, and professional relationships with athletes, and never abusing the position of trust they have been given
- Keeping up to date with technical skills and using accepted techniques and programmes
- Making sure that young people do not feel uncomfortable

Sports Leaders must make sure that:

- The activity is FUN
- They have the right qualifications for their role
- They carry out a risk assessment and that the equipment/environment used is safe
- They work to a code of conduct
- They treat young people as individuals

Sports Leaders should not:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Allow children/young people to use foul, sexualised, or discriminatory language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child/young person, even in fun
- Have sexual relationships with young athletes and must challenge any problematic power relationships where there is a potential or actual abuse of trust
- Engage in sexual relationships with any athlete under 18 years of age while that unequal power relationship exists
- Reduce a child/young person to tears as a form of control
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Over-train their athletes
- Invite or allow children to stay at the leaders home

Contact your own sport's governing body for sport specific Code of Conduct.

Information for Sports Leaders and Volunteers

Young People's Responsibility

Just like sports leaders, young people have responsibilities to make the activity fun and safe. This means respecting the Sports Leaders, who are there to help young people, by:

- Sticking to the rules of the activity
- Not making insulting comments or swearing at the Sports Leader, other helpers, and/or other members of the club
- Being prepared and on time for sessions/training
- Doing their best at all times
- Giving their friends a second chance if they make a mistake
- Welcoming new members
- Saying NO to bullying

Parents and Supporters

They should be there to support Sports Leaders in running the club. As supporters they should:

- Help out when asked
- Be enthusiastic and cheer the young people on, but not embarrass them
- Never argue with the Coach or Referee in public
- Drop their young person off and collect them on time
- Listen to any concerns Sports Leaders may have
- Remember the young person is involved in sport for their own needs, not the adults
- Make sure the young people have the correct kit/equipment

Parents and young people should be supported with sport specific guidelines about responsibility.



Photography and Videoing

Photographs can be used as a means of identifying children when they are accompanied with personal information, but it is important to remember that while the desire to take photos is perfectly normal and many young people are keen to promote their success, there are a few key points to remember to **reduce any risk**:

- If the child is named, avoid using their photograph
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the child
- Remember to seek permission to take photographs of children from the parents and young person
- Appoint a designated photographer
- Parental photos are fine; it is about having an understanding of the risks and being vigilant, do not allow strangers to take photos of children
- Consider what is appropriate dress
- Manage the use of smart phones

Transport

Club officials point out that clubs can not operate without the goodwill of parents taking on roles as volunteer drivers. There is an extra responsibility on the club when asking someone to volunteer to provide transport on behalf of the club. Adults in clubs should:

- Ensure there is adequate insurance on their car and that they follow the rules of the road
- Ensure they do not carry more than the permitted number of passengers
- Avoid being alone with one passenger; put young passengers in the back seat; have central drop off locations; and seek parental permission when transporting on a regular basis
- Inform parents with young people about the transport plans; listen to what the young people have to say; and be sure they are happy with the transport arrangements
- Keep parents informed who will be transporting their child, why and how long the journey will take
- Alternate the drivers and which child is to be dropped off last
- Ensure the driver should have a point of contact/mobile phone



- Ensure the drivers are vetted
- Ensure seatbelts are worn at all times and booster seats are used when required
- Make sure there is supervision in the rear of minibuses and coaches

Physical Contact

Physical contact during sport should always be intended to meet the child's needs, NOT the adult's. The adult will probably use appropriate contact when the aim is to assist in development of the skill or activity, or for safety reasons, e.g. to prevent or treat an injury. This should be in an open environment with the permission and understanding of the participant.

In general:

- Contact should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the participant - don't do something that a child can do for themselves
- Never engage in inappropriate touching such as touching of groin, genital areas, buttocks, breasts, or any other part of the body that might cause a child distress or embarrassment

There are a number of principles that should be followed when the activity involves physical contact.

- The adult should only use physical contact if their aim is to:
 - Develop sports skills or techniques
 - To treat an injury
 - To prevent an injury or accident from occurring
 - To meet the requirements of the sport
- The adult should seek to explain the nature and reason for the physical contact to the child, reinforcing the teaching or coaching skill. Unless the situation is an emergency, the adult should ask the child for permission
- Any form of physical punishment of children is unlawful, as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour unless it is by way of physical intervention to prevent a young person from:
 - Harming themselves
 - Harming others
 - Damaging property

It is particularly important that adults understand this to ensure the safety of their youth members and to protect their own position as well as the overall reputation of the organisation in which they are involved.

Safe Recruitment Procedures

It is important that sport clubs ensure that those who work with young people are recruited using the following recommended procedures:

- Define the role the individual is applying for (job/role specification)
- Insist that a person applying for any post of responsibility within the club complete the relevant sports application form
- Obtain two references in writing (should only be sought for preferred applicants)
- Ensure that the individual completes the AccessNI Disclosure Process (proof of identity MUST be provided; checks should only be sought for preferred applicants).
- Set a probationary/trial period (six months for staff or long-term volunteers)

Information for Sports Leaders and Volunteers



- Interview the individual either formally or informally by two designated members (positions to be identified by the sport) to:
 - Assess the individual's experience of working with children or young people, and knowledge of safeguarding issues
 - Assess their commitment to promoting good practice
 - Assess their ability to communicate with children and young people (i.e. be approachable). One way of doing this is to consult young people or ask questions to examine how a person would respond to a particular scenario e.g. are they authoritarian or too relaxed in their approach?
- Ensure that the Management Committee ratifies appointments

Each sport will have their own process for managing information returned from AccessNI, and you should contact your own governing body or paul.stephenson@nspcc.org.uk for further information.

For further detailed information on AccessNI please visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni

Social Media

- Club page - Set up a club profile rather than staff/volunteer profiles. This avoids access from members to individual's profiles. Keep sections of the club's profile on "private" - allowing only club members access to it (the club can monitor this and accept or decline requests to join). The club should have followers not friends, and have a moderator in place
- Individuals - Lock down page to non-friends; those in authority should not have under 18's as their friends; and do not comment on individual players
- Respond to online bullying - what is said online should be treated as if said in real time
- Twitter - own opinions - disclaimer
- Stop and think first before you post



What is Child Abuse?

The Children (NI) Order 1995 uses the term 'significant harm' rather than 'child abuse'.

This includes: ill treatment, and the impairment of health or the impairment of development (physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and behavioural). 'Significant harm' is the 'threshold' or benchmark that justifies the state to intervene in family life.

Recognition, Responding and Reporting Child Abuse

Signs of abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental. A cluster or pattern of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. Indicators should be noted. It is important, however, to realise that all of these indicators can occur in other situations where abuse has not been a factor.

Bullying

The Northern Ireland Anti- Bullying Forum (www.endbullying.org.uk) defines bullying as the repeated use of power, by one or more persons, intentionally to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights or needs of another or others.

It can take many forms, but the three main types are:

1. Physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, and theft)
2. Verbal (e.g. racist or sectarian remarks, threats, and name-calling)
3. Emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of his peer group)

Grounds for Concern

Consider the possibility of child abuse if there are reasonable grounds for concern. Reasonable grounds for concern (adopted from the Area Child Protection Committee's Regional Policy and Procedures) exist when there is:

- A specific indication from a child that s/he has been abused
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way
- An injury or behaviour, which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation, but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, or dysfunctional behaviour
- Consistent indication over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect

Category Indicators

Abuse	Physical	Behavioural
Physical	Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas Bites Burns and scalds	Becoming withdrawn or aggressive. Reluctance to change clothing
Emotional	Drop in performance Crying	Regressive behaviour. Excessive clinginess
Neglect	Weight loss Untreated fractures	Changes in attendance. Reluctance to go home
Sexual	Torn or bloodstained clothing Inappropriate sexual awareness behaviour or language	Distrustful of adults. Sudden drop in performance

The above is only a sample list and is not exhaustive

Information for Sports Leaders and Volunteers



Responding to Child Abuse

If a young person discloses information of suspected abuse you should:

- Deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to talk about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened
- Stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying
- Listen compassionately, and take what the child is saying seriously
- Understand that the child has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be as positive as possible so that the child may be less concerned if talking to those involved in any further investigation
- Be honest with the child and tell them that it is not possible to keep information a secret
- Make no judgmental statements about the person against whom the allegation is made
- Not question the child unless the nature of what s/he is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as: "Can you explain to me what you mean by that?"
- Check out the concerns with the parents/guardians before making a report unless doing so would endanger the child or compromise any further investigation
- Give the child some indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents/guardians or Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCT). It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage

- Carefully record the details
- Pass on this information to the Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you

Never:

- Question unless for clarification
- Make promises you cannot keep
- Rush into actions that may be inappropriate
- Make/pass a judgment on alleged abuser
- Take sole responsibility; you consult the Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer so you can begin to protect the child and gain support for yourself

Recording

- Record keeping is of critical importance
- Recording should avoid:
 - Use of judgmental language
 - Giving your personal opinion
- Recording should be:
 - Factual, accurate and legible
 - Written in best interests of the child
 - Recorded using the child's exact words, where possible

Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse

The following steps should be taken in reporting child abuse to the statutory authorities:

- Observe and note dates, times, locations, and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information
- Report the matter as soon as possible to the club Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer with responsibility for reporting abuse. If the Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, s/he will make a report to the HSCT who has statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse. The National Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer should be informed as



soon as possible that there is a safeguarding issue to enable them to take responsibility for dealing with the matter or to support the club person and monitor the situation

- In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer is unable to contact a duty social worker, the police authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the HSCT
- If the Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist, s/he can informally consult with the local statutory agencies (clubs should ensure they have out-of-hours contact numbers for their local area, see below). S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report

A Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the statutory authorities will first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine any further investigation.

If you are concerned about possible abuse seek advice from statutory agencies or contact **the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000**. You can also contact the NSPCC for any general safeguarding enquiries 24/7 either by phone or emailing help@nspcc.org.uk

Remember - It is not the responsibility of anyone working in a paid or voluntary capacity, or those working in affiliated organisations, to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child abuse is taking place.

However, there is a responsibility to protect children in order that appropriate agencies can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the young person.

Key Responsibilities for Clubs and Organisations

To ensure clubs are able to implement safeguarding procedures the following are specific issues that need to be addressed considering: who has responsibility, target date for completion, what resources are required, and progress:

- Policy statement child-centred ethos
- Appointment of a Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer
- Codes of Conduct
- Recruitment practices and procedures
- Training
- Reporting procedures and pro-forma
- Communicating with stakeholders
- Monitoring implementation

For specific guidance on the following and more, visit the resources section of the Child Protection in Sport Unit website www.thecpsu.org.uk

- Anti-bullying guidance
- Away trips and hosting
- Guidelines of staffing/supervision ratios for children/young peoples activities
- Guidelines on transporting a child or young person in your car
- Photographs and images of children

For more information on Safeguarding in Sport please contact the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit on: **028 9035 1135** or paul.stephenson@nspcc.org.uk visit www.thecpsu.org.uk

Useful Contacts

Sport Northern Ireland
T: 028 9038 1222
E: coaching@sportni.net
E: clubmarkni@sportni.net
W: www.sportni.net

NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit
Paul Stephenson
T: 028 9035 1135
E: paul.stepheson@NSPCC.org.uk
W: www.thecpsu.org.uk

Health and Social Care Trusts in NI

Regional Emergency Social Work Service. Available 5.00pm-9.00am Monday to Thursday; and 5.00pm on Friday to 9.00am on Monday. There is a 24-hour cover over public holidays. **028 9504 9999**

Each trust will have a Gateway team to deal with reports of abuse and also more local contacts for ongoing professional liaison for advice on concerns

Northern HSC Trust	Tel: 0300 123 4333
South Eastern HSC Trust	Tel: 0300 100 0300
Southern HSC Trust	Tel: 0800 783 7745
Belfast HSC Trust	Tel: 028 9050 7000
Western HSC Trust	Tel: 028 7131 4090

First Aid Contacts

	Telephone	Website
St John Ambulance	0870 010 4950	www.sja.org.uk
British Red Cross	028 9024 6400	www.redcross.org.uk

Disability Sport Northern Ireland

	Telephone	Website
Disability Sports NI	028 9046 9925	www.dsni.co.uk
E-mail: email@dsni.co.uk		

General Contacts

	Telephone	Website
Access Northern Ireland	0300 200 7888	www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni
Booster Seat Legislation		www.gov.uk/child-car-seats-the-rules
Bullying		www.endbullying.org.uk
Child Exploitation Online Protection		www.ceop.gov.uk
Childline UK	0800 1111	www.childline.org.uk
Domestic Violence	0808 200 0247	www.womensaid.org.uk
Health		www.kidsallergies.co.uk
Internet Safety		www.iwf.org.uk
NI Sports Forum		www.nisf.net
NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000	www.nspcc.org.uk
Parents Advice		www.parentsadvicecentre.org
Police (Public Protection Units)	028 9065 02222	
Suicide Lifeline	0808 808 8000	www.lifelinehelpline.info
Suicide Samaritans	116 123	www.samaritans.org
Volunteer Now	028 9023 2020	www.volunteernow.co.uk

This document is available
in other accessible formats
on request, and online at
www.sportni.net

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