

SAFE SPORT

PROJECT REPORT

A CALL FOR A BOLD NEW
APPROACH AND VISION FOR
SAFE SPORT IN THE UK





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1. CO-CHAIRS' FOREWORD:

MILLIONS OF PEOPLE ENJOY SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY EVERY WEEK IN THE UK. COMMITTED COACHES AND VOLUNTEERS ARE WORKING INCREDIBLY HARD TO CREATE SAFE SPORTS ENVIRONMENTS.

But they are also appealing for better support and structures that work with them, not against them. And we know there remain widespread experiences of harm and trauma with serious long-term consequences. Our current system is fragmented, inconsistent and creaking.

Sports leaders have recognised the need to hear and respond to those voices across sport calling for change across all the United Kingdom. 146 organisations and over 200 voices fed into this report alongside many more conversations. It's the first time the sports sector has come together on this issue, and we both feel honoured to lead an Expert Working Group to tackle this issue at a system level and grateful to everyone who has contributed.

This report is the outcome of the first step in the journey towards redesigning sport to be safe for everyone. Transforming the approach and systems for ensuring safe sport and its implementation will challenge us. We will have to accept that despite good intentions and progress, the impact of our collective action has not had the desired

outcome and there is still significant work to do. It will require a continuing commitment to an agreed vision and to collaborate across the sector. This is an incredible opportunity to drive comprehensive transformational change and help position sport positively at the heart of our communities.

WE CALL FOR ALL NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES ACROSS THE UK AND THE FIVE SPORTS COUNCILS TO LEAD THE SECTOR AND BE BOLD AND BRAVE BY ADOPTING THESE RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUPPORTING MORE DETAILED PLANNING, FEASIBILITY AND IMPLEMENTATION TO ENSURE SAFE ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL INVOLVED IN SPORT.

Sarah and Andy

Sarah Powell (CEO, British Gymnastics)
Andy Salmon (CEO, Swim England),

Safe Sport Project Co-Chairs

2. CONSULTATION

THE SAFE SPORT PROJECT'S FINDINGS HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED FOLLOWING EXTENSIVE CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS ACROSS SPORT, THROUGHOUT THE UK AND INTERNATIONALLY.

Alongside those overseeing, managing and delivering sports, we have spoken to people who have experienced harm and trauma in sport, and those who have been respondents in cases. The Safe Sport project is extremely grateful to everyone who gave their time to input into this project, and in particular those with lived experience for whom sharing their insight was difficult and sensitive. Thank you.

SAFE SPORT EXPERT WORKING GROUP MEMBERS:

CO-CHAIRS:

Andy Salmon, CEO, Swim England
Sarah Powell, CEO, British Gymnastics

Richard Watson, Senior Safeguarding Manager, Cricket Regulator

Mhairi McLennan, Athlete and CEO of Kyniska Advocacy

Dr Cath Bishop, Olympian, leadership & culture expert

John Finlay, Sports lawyer and safe sport expert

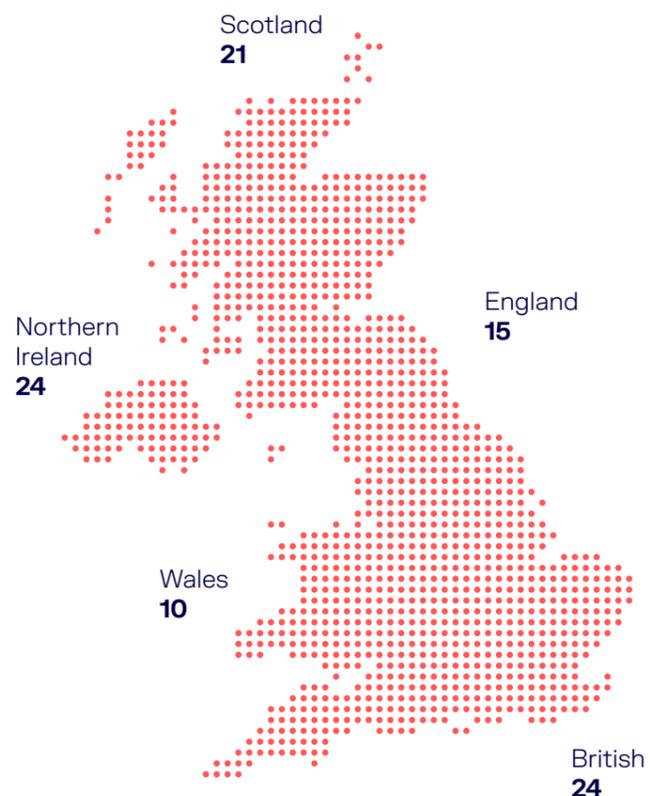
Maria Clarke, Sports lawyer and international sports governance, integrity and safe sport expert

PROJECT LEAD:

Dean Hardman

CONSULTATION
x 149

| | |
|--|---|
| 94 NGBs (including, CEOs, Safe Sport leads, coaches, administrators, legal) | 3 Sports clubs |
| 13 Sports Councils/Gov depts | 3 Universities |
| 21 Delivery partners | 2 Venue operators |
| 10 People who have experienced harm | 3 Safe sport organisations from overseas |



“ We need a framework for kindness, empathy, inclusion.”

NGB F

“ I never knew what was going on with my case. No updates, no clarity. The entire process retraumatized me. There was no sensitivity to my mental health.”

Sportsperson E

“ We do limited work around participant voice – we encourage reporting concerns but nothing else.”

NGB F

“ There needs to be more regulation around who is allowed to work in sports. The power dynamics in sports make it easy for abuse to be hidden or ignored.”

Sportsperson D

“ We want to focus more on culture - providing a better framework for the sport.”

NGB G (CEO)

“ Communicating with children is a skill which isn't adequately reflected in coaching development.”

Delivery Partner B

“ The safeguarding team need more support; people don't understand how difficult it is dealing with cases all the time.”

NGB G

“ Support was a joke. A few phone calls and a tick-box exercise.”

Sportsperson H

3. OUR MISSION & AMBITION

THE MISSION OF THE SAFE SPORT PROJECT:

To design a comprehensive and integrated approach to safe sport throughout the UK, which prioritises the enjoyment, fulfilment and wellbeing of every person involved in sport.

OUR AMBITION:

For sport to reach its potential to enhance and transform lives across our communities, whether that means:

- Individual fulfilment, wellbeing or resilience, as part of supporting healthy, active citizens.
- Safe, positive and enriching experiences of sport.
- Greater community cohesion, belonging and positive social change through education, health and economic agendas.
- Enhanced, inspiration, development and performance which enables participants to thrive through sport.

Sport won't reach this potential unless everyone feels safe to participate in sport across the UK.

Survivor led – refers to the critical involvement of those with lived experience as part of the proposed structures and processes, and the importance of their views being part of the co-design process.

Trauma informed – refers to recognising the ongoing traumatic impact those who have experienced harm can experience, and to the practice of reducing the negative impacts of trauma experiences and supporting mental and physical health outcomes.

Participant – refers to any person involved in any capacity in sport, including athletes, sportspeople, coaches, volunteers, officials, parents/carers, safe sport personnel, employees and support personnel.

Safe sport – refers to keeping all participants safe from harm. It encompasses phrases such as safeguarding, child protection and welfare, and addresses all endeavours which contribute to that aim.

4. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FOLLOWING WIDESPREAD CONSULTATION AND ANALYSIS, THE SAFE SPORT PROJECT HAS CONCLUDED THAT ENSURING SPORT IS SAFE ACROSS THE UK REQUIRES:

- **A New Vision for Safe Sport** based on a desire to see a comprehensive and integrated approach to creating and fostering safe communities in sport along with **an ongoing commitment and ambition from Sports Councils and NGB leaders** to continue to prioritise and shift resources towards programmes and cultures which seek to prevent harm, rather than those resources being disproportionately consumed by reacting to cases of harm.
- **Central leadership** to drive forward a step change in the way safe sport is being delivered across the UK, recognising the devolved nature of sport and the different legislation, with it being recommended that this is in the form of a new independent body.
- A **comprehensive strategy comprising a single framework**, standardised codes of practice, and the ability to hold the sector to account which is co-created with stakeholders.
- **A trusted, independent and consistent complaints and resolution function** to support complainants to raise concerns and to triage them, manage significant, sensitive and complex cases, provide mechanisms for early resolution and have efficient, fair and cost-effective case management systems, including hearing functions.
- All **service provision** to be delivered in a manner consistent with the Design Principles outlined in this report.
- **The funding of safe sport to be reviewed and reallocated** over time to align with, and enable the achievement of, the safe sport strategy and framework.

1 To seek support from sports and the Sports Councils for the recommendations and next steps of this report - **April 2025.**

2 To appoint a Safe Sport Oversight Group and executive team - **July 2025.**

3 Identify short-term opportunities to provide practical support to the sector - **July 2025.**

4 Detailed scoping of functions and services required by the sector - **October 2025.**

5 Delivery options criteria and assessment model finalised - **October 2025.**

6 Feasibility work complete and recommended delivery option confirmed - **December 2025.**





5. CURRENT LANDSCAPE

ACROSS THE UK, NUMEROUS SPORTS CLUBS, WELFARE OFFICERS, NGB PERSONNEL INCLUDING SAFEGUARDING TEAMS, EXECs AND BOARDS ARE PROACTIVELY FOSTERING SAFE AND INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTS FOR PARTICIPANTS.

Many organisations have comprehensive safeguarding policies, established codes of conduct, and ensure staff and volunteers receive training to protect children and young people in sport.

- ✓ Independent organisations provide resources, training, and support to strengthen safeguarding efforts.
- ✓ Tools such as self-assessment checklists, best practice guidance, and consultancy services help sports bodies uphold safeguarding standards and support adults in sport.
- ✓ These collaborative efforts have significantly contributed to safer sporting environments across the nation.

However, our consultation has revealed that:

- ! The current system is fragmented, inconsistent, distrusted, lacks coherence, and has significant gaps in leadership, accountability and coordination.
- ! Culture reviews and complex complaints have cost sport millions of pounds across community and high performance sport.
- ! Sport is being consumed by managing cases of harm leaving limited time or resource to focus on prevention.
- ! The approach to safe sport and the systems supporting it are not person-centred leading to procedural, institutionalised and often adversarial approaches which are further harming complainants.
- ! Victims see sports' systems as inadequate, dismissive and lacking in transparency.
- ! The fragmentation enables abusers to move within the system and re-offend.
- ! Safe sport education, skills, competence and practical help is inconsistent leading some within sport to breaking point.
- ! There is limited evaluation, or centralised collation, of insights and data, which is preventing the identification and sharing of learnings.

6. WHERE WE'RE GOING: THE SHIFT TO SAFE SPORT

A SHIFT IN CULTURE (ATTITUDES, BEHAVIOURS, LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES), APPROACH AND SYSTEM (PROCESSES, POLICIES) IS NEEDED TO TRULY EMBED SAFE SPORT.

| AT ITS WORST... | WHERE WE ARE AIMING FOR |
|---|---|
| Lack of clear leadership and direction across the UK. | Committed and strong leadership with a comprehensive and integrated strategy for safe sport in all levels of sport, allowing collaboration to enhance delivery. |
| A compliance-heavy, legalistic system that is slow and costs sport £millions. | Leaders taking responsibility to proactively build safe sporting communities. |
| A reactive, adversarial approach with limited mediation. | A clear framework of standards, principles, and data-driven insights to strengthen the system. |
| Limited formal mechanisms for learning from complaints to improve safeguarding practices. | A caring, proactive process for those impacted by harm, with early intervention and support. |
| Limited support for coaches, leaders, and safeguarding officers. | Redirecting resources toward building safer communities, rather than increasing case management costs. |
| A lack of centralised data, research, resource and insights to drive change. | Embedding safe sport at the heart of every sporting experience—recreational to elite. |



7 A VISION FOR SAFE SPORT

A COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED SAFE SPORT SYSTEM AND CULTURE SHOULD:

- Ensure **consistent** standards, delivery, training, education and improve safe sport experiences.
- Ensure **greater independence, rigour and care** for those who suffer trauma in sport.
- **Support and connect** skilled safe sport and welfare practitioners and coaches.
- **Gather data** to understand better how abuse and harm happens and how to prevent it in future.
- **Focus resources on strengthening environments,** leadership and mediation techniques, rather than legal proceedings.
- **Enable safe sport and physical activity environments** where people can thrive regardless of ability, geography or type of sport.
- Enable sports to **work proactively** to build safe sports communities, avoiding reactive, expensive interventions that often come too late.
- Involve a **wider cross-section of people** from across sport to guide and lead, including **those who have experienced harm in sport.**
- Support the UK to **become a global leader in safe sport** by collaborating with international experts and learning from established independent models in countries like Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.
- **Embed safe sport as a core practice** across all levels, with leaders driving cultural change and ensuring sport aligns with broader societal expectations on safety and responsibility.

“There should be an independent body, not tied to the NGB, to handle these cases. The sport can't mark its own homework.”

Sportsperson A

“We need pragmatic advice—sometimes we want to be told what to do.”

LSO A

“Current processes are too expensive and legalistic in nature with hearings, panels, and barristers being used by both the NGB and the respondent.”

NGB E



“Sport organisations need to involve people with lived experience in policy-making. They understand the impact of abuse better than anyone and can help design more effective safeguarding measures.”

Sportsperson F

“We want to focus more on culture—providing a better framework for the sport.”

NGB G (CEO)



8. RECOMMENDATIONS

THE SAFE SPORT PROJECT'S RECOMMENDATIONS ADDRESS ALL KEY FINDINGS AND WILL HELP DRIVE THE NECESSARY CHANGE THROUGHOUT SPORTS ACROSS THE UK.

A DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR A COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED SAFE SPORT SYSTEM & CULTURE

From the consultation, and experience from other countries, the Working Group considers that a comprehensive and integrated system and approach for safe sport should be designed based on the following Design Principles.

Person-Centred & Participant Voices

Adopt a person-centred approach (i.e. from the perspective of the sportsperson, coach, volunteer, official etc. and especially the victim), including engaging and listening to the voices of all participants (including the victims of abuse), and accommodating the varying needs of participants in sports.

Comprehensive, Integrated & Holistic

The approach needs to address all elements of safe sport, from prevention and education to addressing harm in a way that is integrated, consistent and comprehensive across the UK. It should reduce duplication and minimise inefficiencies and enable sector wide trends and issues to be identified early.

Ownership and Accountability

The approach should provide clarity of ownership, responsibility and accountability for all the bodies involved in supporting the delivery of the vision.

Understandable & Accessible

The approach must be transparent, easy to understand and navigate for those dealing with all sport-related harm, which can work across the UK from recreational to elite sport. Have robust, good quality, timely and impartial decision making, and approaches that meet the needs of the people involved, and provide choice to those involved, which in turn fosters the support, confidence and trust of people in sport.

Clear & Consistent

The approach needs to ensure there is clarity and consistency in the standards and language used in safe sport so that everyone involved in sport knows what being safe in sport means. There must be clarity on the jurisdictions of geography and authority.

Independence & Impartiality

The approach will incorporate sufficient independence, where required, to build trust and confidence in its use and application.

Research & Data Informed

Effective and reliable data collation and sharing of timely insights, utilising research and communities of practice to inform and evolve over time.

Viable & Sustainable

A resource-effective solution which is sustainable and feasible. It needs to take account of the priorities and needs of those who will resource it.



B A FRAMEWORK FOR SAFE SPORT

THERE SHOULD BE CLEAR FRAMEWORK FOR SAFE SPORT, DEVELOPED COLLABORATIVELY WITH NGBS, PARTICIPANTS, COACHES, THOSE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE AND WIDER PARTNERS, E.G. POLICE, LEISURE SECTOR ETC, TO ENSURE CONSISTENCY AND EFFECTIVENESS IN BUILDING SAFE SPORT ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL.

The framework should be drafted around a set of principles/standards which can be applied in a flexible way to different types of sports and recognises the devolved nature of sport in the UK and would not conflict with differing legislation and/or processes, e.g. around safe recruitment checks.

To recognise the difference within NGBs across the sector and across the UK, a pragmatic approach to implementation and compliance would be necessary which permits derogation from the framework if the overall spirit of the framework is still adhered to.

The Safe Sport Framework will include:

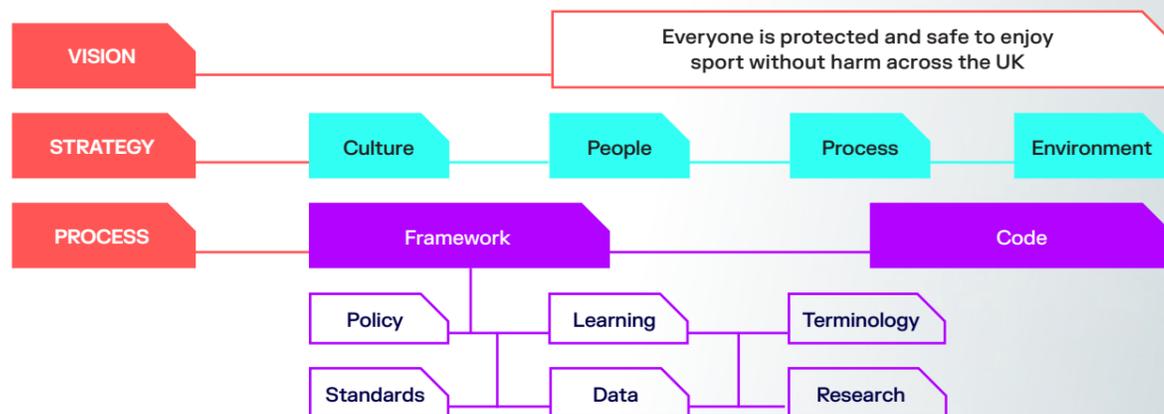
- The strategy including the vision, key values and priorities.
- Clearly defined roles, responsibilities and metrics for stakeholders in sport.
- Principles for engaging providers who support safe sport such as training providers and those in case management and dispute resolution.
- Standardised principles, policies, processes, procedures and terminology, including for complaint and case management.

- The use of data for insight and learning.
- The commitments required from NGBs to uphold safe sport, including committing to a constant process of learning and reflection.

A Safe Sport Code of Practice will outline a set of unified standards and principles of expected (and prohibited) behaviours in sport to ensure consistency across sport.

NGBs will:

- Remain responsible for overall safety within their own sport.
- Remain responsible for the management of all cases except those which are significant, sensitive and complex, supported by the lead entity.
- Adopt and implement the Safe Sport Framework and the Code of Practice including alignment of their policies and procedures.
- Collaborate with the lead entity to implement ongoing learning, reflection and continuous improvement in safe sport delivery.





PROPOSED STRUCTURE FOR A COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED SAFE SPORT SYSTEM & CULTURE

IT IS RECOMMENDED TO ESTABLISH A NEW INDEPENDENT BODY TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP, COORDINATION AND TO DRIVE FORWARD EFFORTS TO KEEP SPORT SAFE. IT SHOULD:

- Provide leadership through a safe sport strategy and framework which provides the foundation for, and guides, the system.
- Develop a safe sport Code of Practice for sports and stakeholders to adopt to ensure their commitment to, and consistency of, standards, policies, procedures, assurance, data and learning.
- Seek input from stakeholders and communities, including participants, parents/carers, volunteers, coaches, and those who have suffered harm.
- Play a pivotal role in the co-ordination of services to support the system and NGBs, ensuring better integration, consistency, efficiency, standards of delivery and collaboration across the system.
- Be given the authority to create, implement and oversee the safe sport strategy, framework, and Code of Practice.
- Have the authority, although not a statutory body, to monitor, enforce and hold sport to account for ensuring the delivery of safe sport against the framework and Code of Practice.
- Drive efforts to improve interactions and collaboration between sport and other agencies such as Police, LADOs, the leisure sector, education, and the agencies and arms-length bodies that address other facets of sport that can cause harm - for example, selection/deselection issues, anti-doping, betting & gambling.
- Have a dedicated purpose and be 100% focused on its mission of driving the fundamental shift identified as necessary.
- The scope to deliver safe sport for all who participate should:
 - Be UK-wide (recognising devolution and the differences in each Home Nation)
 - Be sport-wide, from recreational to elite (with an initial focus on NGB recognised sport)
 - Encompass causes of harm associated with safeguarding and welfare (e.g. physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse and neglect,)
- The Safe Sport Oversight Group will scope and design the proposed governance, functions, funding and authority of the independent body as part of the next steps, which will include evaluation of different models and the production of a Business Case for agreement with relevant partners and funding bodies.



RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDED LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

Careful consideration has been given to the nature of the body required to provide the stewardship and leadership for safe sport. Analysis was undertaken to consider a range of stewardship options, including the creation of an Independent Regulator/Sport Ombudsman, enhancing remits of existing organisations, through to a working group/committee of stakeholder representatives.

This report finds that a new leadership body will improve trust, credibility and confidence in its ability to be effective by avoiding any preconceived perceptions/imperfections that existing entities have or are perceived to have, by providing independence from existing organisations.

As part of the scoping and feasibility work, it will be essential to consider all potential delivery models to inform the Business Case and develop the most effective approach to deliver the intended outcomes.

This recommendation echoes the recent establishment of the Creative Industries Independent Standards Authority (CIISA) to “uphold and improve standards of behaviour across the creative industries and to prevent and tackle all forms of bullying and harassment.” CIISA has set a strategic goal to set standards and create a single point of independent accountability and learning to enable and embed safe and inclusive workplace practices.

Establishing an independent body across devolved administrations would not be without its challenges, however an inclusive and flexible approach can be taken to ensure that the benefits of coordination, consistency and togetherness outweigh any potential challenges. The National Integrity Framework model in Australia is a useful reference as it is a national body and framework which recognises the different legislative jurisdictions of the individual states, and is drafted and applied in a manner which is suitable for all sports.

D INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS AND RESOLUTION FUNCTION

CURRENTLY, THOSE WHO EXPERIENCE HARM IN SPORT FREQUENTLY SUFFER FURTHER TRAUMA FROM THE RESPONSE FROM THEIR SPORT. THEY ALSO DISTRUST CURRENT PROCESSES WHERE SPORT, IN EFFECT, INVESTIGATES ITSELF.

NGBs, and those involved, can incur significant costs in seeking to resolve complex cases. Sport and all involved are often left in a worse place.

It is recommended that an independent complaint and resolution function be established across the UK to provide a trusted, trauma-informed and safe process to support complainants, respondents and NGBs managing significant, sensitive and complex complaints (with the definition of 'significant, sensitive and complex cases' being decided with sports).

Independent provision would be provided for:

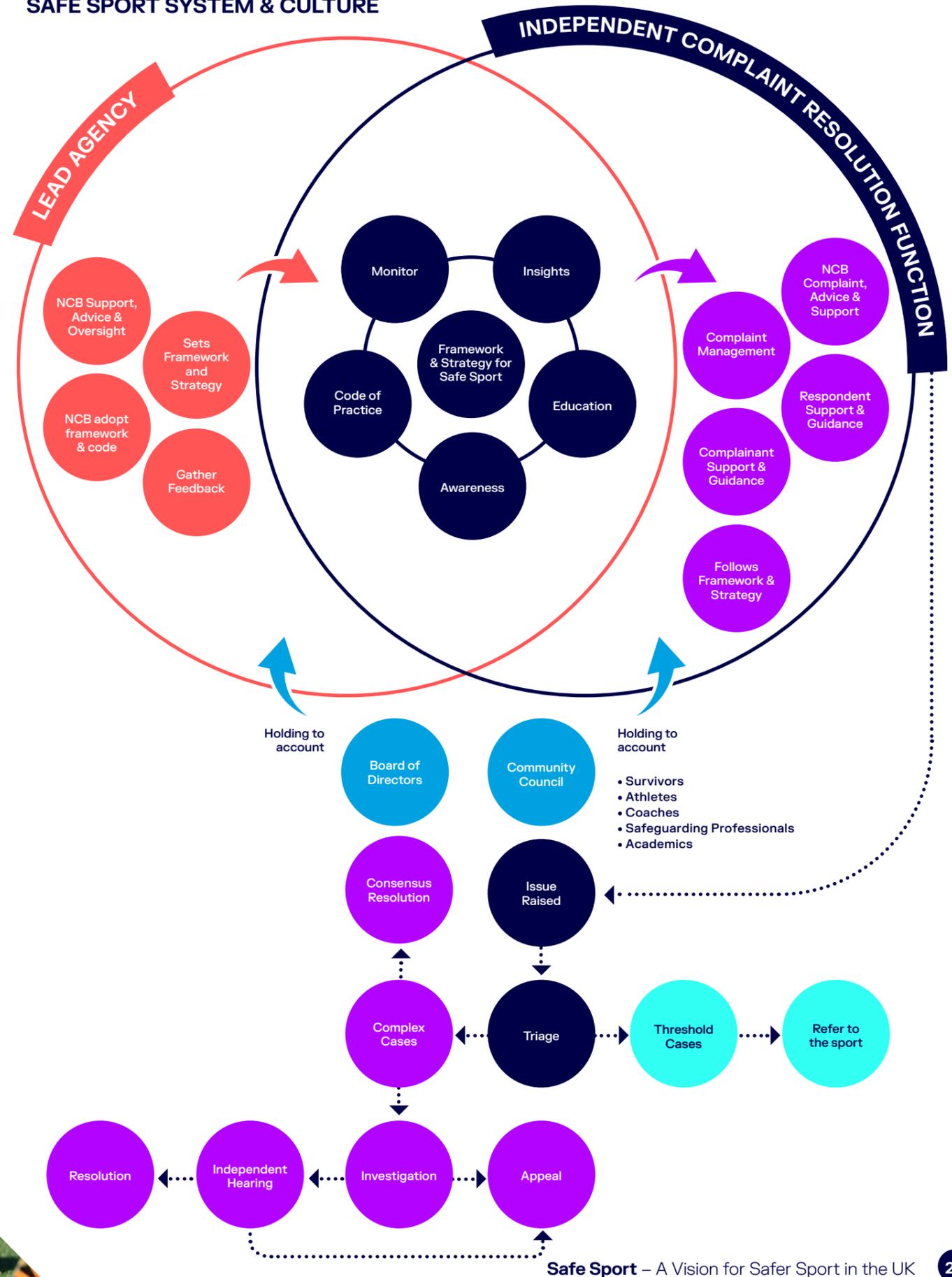
- Confidential reporting of concerns/complaints
- Triaging
- Support/guidance for all parties
- Consensus based resolution processes, e.g. mediation, facilitated early dispute resolution
- Investigation/fact finding
- Decision-making, e.g. decision to issue a charge or not
- Hearings (including sanctions)
- Appeals

It is important to note that there will be cases where consensus based resolution processes are not suitable due to the severity of the concerns, the level of risk involved, and/or the wishes of the individuals concerned. However, such practice can be beneficial at returning participants to sport in a way which supports those who have been harmed to feel safe returning, improves conduct for those whose actions caused harm, and recognises the harm that has been caused.

The primary purpose of the provision would be to ensure the process of complaint management does not cause further harm to participants. Complaint management processes must ensure that individuals who have reported a concern have the opportunity to provide input into the investigation, that their voice is heard and that their views are considered in relation to the approach taken, with choice of resolution being offered where appropriate. The provision would include dedicated experts in safe sport who are trauma informed.

How this function is governed, managed and operates requires further detailed consideration, including integration with existing systems where appropriate.

PROPOSED STRUCTURE FOR A COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED SAFE SPORT SYSTEM & CULTURE





E ALIGNING FUNDING & DELIVERY

CURRENTLY SIGNIFICANT FUNDING IS ALREADY SPENT ON SAFE SPORT BUT THE EXTENSIVE CONSULTATION HAS SHOWN THAT IT IS AD HOC, NOT COORDINATED AND IS NOT HAVING THE MAXIMUM IMPACT ON PREVENTING HARM OR IMPROVING SPORT:

- It is often unfocused, duplicative and inefficient.
- Existing roles and processes focusing on safe sport are often duplicated and poorly aligned.
- There are people with safe sport expertise but the talent pool is not co-ordinated, aligned or supported sufficiently, and not all of sport has this expertise.
- NGBs and individuals have spent vast amounts of time and money on lengthy legal processes, often with unsatisfactory outcomes for all involved, reputational damage for sport and no clear way to learn how to improve for the future.

It is proposed that:

- The funding of safe sport is reviewed and reallocated over time to align with, and enable the achievement of, the safe sport strategy and framework. The fundamental aim is to reduce the level of funding spent on lengthy legal cases, and continue to increasingly shift that spend towards

measures focused on prevention, learning and behavioural change, which over time should reduce harm from occurring and therefore reduce the number and nature of cases.

- Although there will be initial set up costs, it is expected that the lead entity and independent complaints and resolution function would be predominantly resourced through the better utilisation of existing funding, with other funding sources also considered.
- The lead entity would develop an approach for engagement with the various providers needed to support safe sport which is aligned to the safe sport strategy and framework.
- The Safe Sport Oversight Group will conduct further analysis to clarify resource requirements, and any implications, as part of the scoping and feasibility required for the next phase.

RECOMMENDED PHASED IMPLEMENTATION & SCOPING PLAN FOR A COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED SAFE SPORT SYSTEM

PHASE 1

Foundations & Stakeholder Alignment (Year 1-3)

Key Objectives:

- 🕒 Scoping, understanding current picture, developing a roadmap for integration into the existing sports ecosystem.
- 🕒 Identify and deliver opportunities for short-term improvements across the sector.
- 🕒 Ensure connectedness with the System Master Planning programme.

Actions:

- ✅ Immediate: Appoint the resource who will form the core team to lead the implementation and feasibility work.
- ✅ Establish a Community Council, including representatives from NGBs, Sports Councils, and individuals with lived experience (coaches, sportspeople, staff & practitioners).
- ✅ Develop and confirm the core responsibilities, services and functions required and consider all potential delivery models, along with a clear governance structure, resourcing and investment plan, and a final Business Case to determine the approach required to deliver the intended outcomes, and how it will be funded and be practicably deliverable.
- ✅ Conduct pilot projects with select NGBs.
- ✅ Develop the Safe Sport Strategy, Framework and Code of Practice.
- ✅ Subject to approval of the Business Case and securing funding, establish the lead entity.

PHASE 2

System Integration & Expansion (Year 3-5)

Key Objectives:

- 🕒 Expand the Safe Sport system across all NGBs.
- 🕒 Develop regulatory/monitoring mechanisms where needed.
- 🕒 Strengthen independent safeguarding processes.

Actions:

- ✅ Scale up the Safe Sport system, ensuring all NGBs adopt the Code of Practice and establish a formal agreement between the lead entity and NGBs to ensure ongoing accountability.
- ✅ Establish the independent complaints and resolution function.
- ✅ Begin expanded data collection & analysis. Create an insights report on safeguarding trends across sport in the UK.

PHASE 3

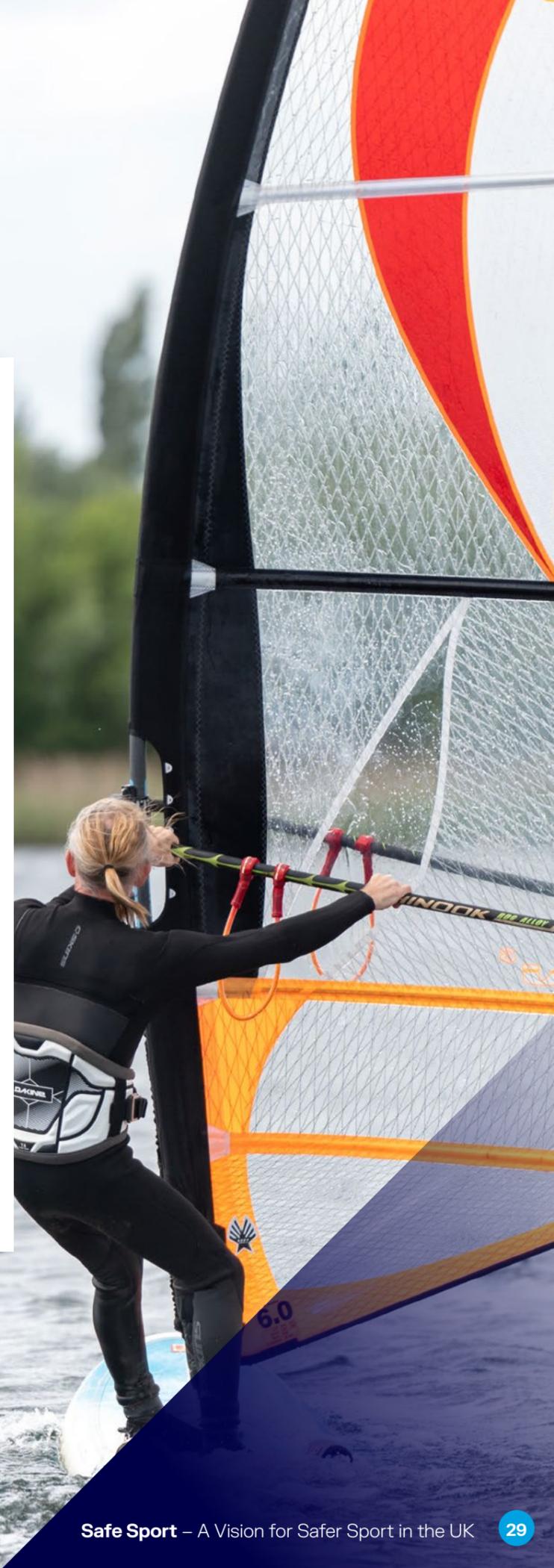
Full Implementation & Long-Term Sustainability (Year 5+)

Key Objectives:

- 🕒 Ensure long-term sustainability of the Safe Sport system.
- 🕒 Embed behaviour change within sport at all levels
- 🕒 Strengthen ongoing learning and system-wide improvement.

Actions:

- ✅ Ensure long-term funding stability, integrating Safe Sport initiatives into existing sport governance budgets.
- ✅ Expand the Safe Sport education and leadership program, embedding higher standards at all levels.
- ✅ Maintain a centralised safeguarding data hub, driving policy improvements and research-led interventions.
- ✅ Conduct regular independent reviews to assess progress and refine safeguarding strategies.
- ✅ Embed Safe Sport principles in sportsperson, coach, and leadership development pathways, ensuring cultural change is sustained.
- ✅ Ensure integration with other sporting regulatory bodies (e.g., football and cricket regulators).



F

RISKS AND CONSIDERATIONS

A COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED SAFE SPORT SYSTEM WILL FAIL IF:

- It does not have the support of most sports, and if the commitment to collaborate and belief in the vision of safe sport to be more of a force for good across our communities is not strong.
- There is apathy, resistance to change or fear of the short-term uncertainty and inconvenience such wholesale change may bring.
- Sports leaders want to prioritise their own control over collaborating within an improved and coherent safe sport system.
- Sports leaders don't trust each other to work together to make the shift required.
- Sports leaders don't commit resources to ensure the benefits of a coherent system can be realised.



Poor communication or critics could mislead external parties to see the need for an independent leadership body as 'just another regulator' or 'sports quango' – but the voices crying out for change, greater independence and for sport to play a positive role in society should provide strong arguments to rebut these.

In the short-term, it should be recognised that more cases could surface, as part of creating safer environments where people can speak up about the harm they experience. Sports should be supported to manage this impact. **Over the long-term**, there should be a major shift to more 'lower-level concerns and less complex legal cases.

The issues set out earlier in this report highlight the huge **risks of inaction** to address the current situation. Sports bodies have all acknowledged the need for change. To step back from that could lead to consequences including:

- Greater harm to people in sport with countless damaging ripples across sport and society.
- NGBs could suffer financial distress through legal costs of serious complaints.

- Sport's reputation suffers with huge impact on wider efforts to get the nation active and use sport for positive social change.

During all phases of implementation and scoping, it is essential that the Design Principles are adhered to, for example, by continuing with the inclusive consultative method used so far in this project to ensure that stakeholders continue to be included in meaningful ways.

During implementation and scoping, sports and existing service providers will need assistance to overcome any uncertainty or barriers to change, and appropriate day-to-day support should be given to provide organisations with the expertise and tools they need to implement change effectively.

Further consideration also needs to be given to aspects of Diversity, Inclusion, Equality & Social Mobility to ensure that any implementation meets the needs of the diverse population served by sport.

9. RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS FOR THE SAFE SPORT PROJECT

1 To seek support from sports and the Sports Councils for the recommendations and next steps of this report - **April 2025.**

2 To appoint a Safe Sport Oversight Group and executive team - **July 2025.**

3 Identify short-term opportunities to provide practical support to the sector - **July 2025.**

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10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND CREDITS

THE SAFE SPORT PROJECT IS EXTREMELY GRATEFUL TO EVERYONE WHO GAVE THEIR TIME TO INPUT INTO THIS PROJECT, AND IN PARTICULAR THOSE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE FOR WHOM SHARING THEIR INSIGHT WAS DIFFICULT AND SENSITIVE. THANK YOU.

The Safe Sport project developed from UK Sport's System Master Planning and the development of the work has been supported by Sport England, Sport Northern Ireland, Sport Scotland, Sport Wales and UK Sport and we are grateful for their ongoing support and commitment to making sport safer.

For any queries please email sportingsystem@uksport.gov.uk.

IMAGE CREDITS

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SAFE SPORT

PROJECT REPORT

A CALL FOR A BOLD NEW
APPROACH AND VISION FOR
SAFE SPORT IN THE UK

