



Safeguarding in Sport



Strategic Group 3-Year Plan 2026-2029

FOREWORD

The Safeguarding Sport Strategic Group (SSSG) Plan was established to create a multi-agency approach to lead the way in ensuring that children, young people¹ and adults² can enjoy sport and achieve their potential free from all forms of abuse and exploitation.

I want to thank all those who helped to develop and advise on the plan. We believe that by working together we will ensure everyone involved in sport will have a positive and safe experience of sport that will lead to healthier life choices and deliver a life-long love of sport and physical activity.

Marcella Leonard MBE

**Safeguarding Sport Strategic
Group Chairperson**

¹ A child or young person is defined as anyone under 18 years of age

² An adult for the purpose of this document will mean anyone over the age of 18. A sports leader, parent, carer, official, volunteer or supporter. For a full definition of an adult at risk of harm and in need of protection see Appendix 5.



AIM

To deliver the vision of ensuring every person can participate in sport and associated physical activities free from the risk of harm or abuse.

PURPOSE

- Develop a coordinated multi-agency approach to achieving the aim of safeguarding everyone in sport.
- To influence policy on safeguarding in sport and act as the voice for safeguarding in sport with government and other key bodies.

OBJECTIVES

To encourage progress that will ensure:

1. The SSSG is supported by senior representatives³ to enable sport and physical activity sectors to work together with statutory bodies at a strategic level to safeguard everyone in sport consistently.
2. The need for Adult Safeguarding within the sports sector becomes embedded within the culture of all sporting organisations in receipt of public funds.
3. The legal requirement to vet a person in regulated activity is introduced to ensure a level of parity across the Island of Ireland as many sports are All-Ireland bodies.
4. Sporting and physical activity providers who receive public funds or hire publicly funded facilities have attained the minimum Safeguarding Standards that are proportionate to their activity and capacity. This must include:
 - A policy statement demonstrating the organisation's commitment to safeguarding
 - Clear codes of behaviour that are communicated to all stakeholders
 - Approved safeguarding training to raise awareness that all participants have an equal right to protection from all forms of abuse⁴ or harm and that each person's rights are upheld.
 - Robust safe recruitment processes including vetting as standard practice.
5. Promote a culture in sport where everyone is free from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse and harm within the sports setting.

³ It is for each organisation to consider what level of staff attend the group and to ensure they have those alternative representatives adequately briefed.

⁴ The term "abuse or harm" can mean physical, sexual, emotional, domestic abuse, financial, ill-treatment, exploitation, institutional or neglect.

OBJECTIVE 1

OBJECTIVE 2

OBJECTIVE 3

OBJECTIVE 4

OBJECTIVE 5

The SSSG is supported by senior representatives to enable sport and physical activity sectors to work together with statutory bodies at a strategic level to safeguard everyone in sport consistently.

It is essential that all key stakeholders within the sports, physical activity and leisure sector and those with responsibility for safeguarding work together. This is to ensure children’s and adults’ participation in sport is carried out in a safe and fun environment in which everyone can achieve to the best of their ability.

ACTIVITY	LEAD	TIME
- SSSG meets at least 3 times per year as a full group. - Alternative representatives are allocated to attend in the absence of the core SSSG member representing the organisation. - Sub-groups are formed with relevant membership as and when required to enable sport and physical activity sectors to work together with statutory bodies at a strategic level to consistently safeguard children, young people and adults. - Information sharing and training opportunities are identified by member organisations. - Raise awareness at all levels and every opportunity of what is best practice in safeguarding in sport and the positive impact sport can have on a child’s or adults’ physical, cognitive and emotional development. - The SSSG is a consistent, collaborative support and advisory service for sport and physical activity on all matters relating to safeguarding.	All SSSG members	Annual reporting

OBJECTIVE 1

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The need for Adult Safeguarding within the sports sector becomes embedded within the culture of all sporting organisations in receipt of public funds.⁵

ACTIVITY	LEAD	TIME
Adult Safeguarding expertise and guidance is available to support all sports organisations in NI.	Sport NI/DfC	2026-29
Adult safeguarding standards are established for all funded NGB’s to include requirement to have: • Adult Safeguarding Policy • Safer recruitment processes • Codes of Conduct • Reporting procedures • Staff skill development • Systems for including the voice of the stakeholder • Monitoring overseeing implementation processes	Service provider/SSSG members	March 2026
Adult safeguarding training is provided for those working/volunteering within sport.	Service provider/SSSG members	March 2027
Management/Executive Board adult safeguarding training becomes a requirement of funding.	Service provider/Sport NI	March 2027

⁵ Any changes in safeguarding standards in NI will take into consideration recommendations made through the UK Safe Sport work.

OBJECTIVE 1

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The legal requirement to vet⁶ a person in regulated activity is introduced to ensure a level of parity across the Island of Ireland as many sports are All-Ireland bodies.

Most people who want to work with children or adults are well-motivated and without them voluntary and community sports clubs could not operate. Unfortunately, some individuals will try to use voluntary and sports clubs/activities to gain inappropriate contact with children or adults who may be at risk, therefore we need clubs to have robust safe recruitment procedures and to use AccessNI as part of those procedures. This should apply to all sports and physical activity volunteers, coaches, leaders etc. working with young people prior to commencement of position, to include:

- Publicly funded sports and physical activity organisations
- ‘Recognised’ sports organisations
- Sports and physical activities, and their respective organising bodies.

ACTIVITY	LEAD	TIME
Vetting those engaging in regulated activity prior to commencement of role becomes a: • Coaching requirement for those in regulated activity working, coaching or instructing children or adults at risk of harm and in need of protection⁷. • Funding requirement for any organisation accessing public funds or hiring public facilities. • Legal requirement for all those in regulated activity and their employer/ voluntary organisation.	NSPCC Sport/ Sport NI SSSG SSSG	Annual reporting Annual reporting NI Assembly mandate 2027-2031
Confirm written support from other partners to introduce a legal requirement for vetting those in regulated activity to include: • Cross-party political support for a change in the law to introduce a legal requirement for vetting • All Party Group for Sport and Physical Recreation • NGB All Ireland lead officer forum	SSSG SSSG NSPCC Sport	May 2026 Feb 2025- Completed Feb 2026

6 Apply for an AccessNI Enhanced Disclosure with a Barred List check

7 The term “vulnerable adult” is used in the SGV (NI) Order 2007 and is generally defined for vetting purposes as someone aged 18 or older who, due to a disability, age, or illness, may need community care services and is unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation. In NI we use the wider term “adults at risk of harm and in need of protection” - See Appendix 5 for more detail

OBJECTIVE 1

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Sporting and physical activity providers who receive public funds or hire publicly funded facilities have attained the minimum Safeguarding Standards⁸ that are proportionate to their activity and capacity. This must include:

- a. A policy statement demonstrating the organisation’s commitment to safeguarding**
- b. Clear codes of behaviour that are communicated to all stakeholders**
- c. Approved safeguarding training to raise awareness that all participants have an equal right to protection from all forms of abuse or harm and that each person’s rights are upheld.**
- d. Robust safe recruitment processes including vetting as standard practice.**

It is essential that a consistent and comprehensive framework of policies, standards, and systems to deal with safeguarding issues is in place to reduce the risk of harm to children in order that children, young persons and adults can enjoy their sport free from fear of harm.

The Standards for Safeguarding Children and Young People and those for Adult Safeguarding have been established and will be reviewed by members of the SSSG to consider their implications and appliance in sport. They are designed to inform and direct the actions of publicly funded and recognised sporting organisations along with physical activity providers.

These Standards provide a mechanism for recognising progress in the implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures. The Standards should also increase public confidence in sporting organisations’ ability to safeguard children, young people and adults. They will require publicly funded and recognised sporting organisations, along with physical activity providers, to raise the profile of their safeguarding practices and fully implement their safeguarding procedures.

⁸ Safeguarding Children and Young People Standards and Keeping Adults Safe: A Shared Responsibility

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Activities	Lead	Time
All publicly funded sports governing bodies have: • Policies and procedures in place to respond to safeguarding issues in sport. • Produced a safeguarding plan. • A safeguarding training requirement in place for those working/ volunteering within sport. • Reviewed their safeguarding policies every three years subject to legislative changes or in relevant updates in practice.	DfC/Sport NI DfC/Sport NI NSPCC Sport/NGBs NSPCC Sport/Sport NI	
Opportunities are provided for staff, athletes and volunteers to: • Have their voice heard and participate in meaningful contribution into how their sport or activity is delivered. • Develop and understand the need to comply with Code of Conduct. • Be aware of standards of behaviour expected of all stakeholders, and how to contact their Designated Safeguarding Officer.	SSSG NGBs NGBs	
Joint campaigns for signposting resources to help children, young people and adults deal with the challenges they may face and recognise how sport can respond and minimise the external threats or risks to everyone’s rights e.g. social media impact on their sporting experience.	SSSG	
A strategic subgroup shall audit and review the safeguarding in sport standards on a three-yearly basis (subject to legislative changes or relevant updates in practice).	SSSG	
All those with an organisational (NGB/HQ) lead responsibility for safeguarding have access to expert advice on safeguarding and continuous professional development and learning opportunities.	SSSG	
Those agencies providing public funding or hiring facilities to sports clubs or physical activity providers must require evidence of the applicant’s commitment to safeguarding.	SSSG	

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Promote a culture in sport where everyone is free from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse and harm within the sports setting.

Activities	Lead	Time
Support the Ending Violence against Women and Girls Strategy ⁹ .	SSSG	Ongoing reporting
Proactively challenge misogyny within sport, which ranges from disrespecting women and promotion of harmful stereotypes to physical and sexual violence.	SSSG	Ongoing reporting
Support children, young people and adults through education programmes in sport to develop healthy, respectful relationships, where they can participate in sport in a safe environment and be a confident positive bystander able to support their team-mates.	SSSG	Ongoing reporting
Provide practical guidance for sports officials/coaches on how to respond to children and adults living with situations of domestic¹⁰ abuse or a history of violence. To include: • Raising awareness • Role modelling and challenging misogynistic language and behaviour • Dealing with parental rights to participation • Sharing information • Responding to concerns • Confidentiality	Service providers / CPSU / Women’s Aid/ PSNI	Ongoing reporting

⁹ www.executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk/topics/ending-violence-against-women-and-girls

¹⁰ To include stalking/online abuse/sexual harassment/coercive control in any setting, involving parents, children, officials or coaches etc

APPENDIX 1

SAFEGUARDING IN SPORT STRATEGIC PLAN GLOSSARY

Adult: is anyone aged 18 or over.

Adult at risk of harm: is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) Personal characteristics which may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.
AND/OR
- b) Life circumstances which may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions.

Adult in need of protection: is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

- a) Personal characteristics AND/OR
- b) Life circumstances AND
- c) Who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests; AND
- d) Where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed

Adult Safeguarding: is protecting a person's right to live in safety, free from abuse and neglect.

Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC): this is a requirement for targeted services – i.e. all organisations or groups that have volunteers or staff who are required to be vetted at any level under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland)

Order 2007 for working with adults. If an organisation or group does not have staff or volunteers who are required to be vetted, then it is not compulsory to have an ASC. However, having an ASC is identified as good practice for every group or organisation. All providers of targeted services are required to have an ASC and an adult safeguarding policy which demonstrates a zero tolerance of harm to adults. Members of the public, voluntary and community groups NOT required to have an Adult Safeguarding Champion (ASC) should report all adults at risk or in need of protection safeguarding concerns directly to the Health and Social Care (HSC) Trust Adult Protection Gateway Service. They can do so by phoning the Trust's single point of contact telephone number.

Capacity: refers to the ability to make a decision at a particular time, for example when under considerable stress. The starting assumption must always be that a person has the capacity to make a decision unless it can be established that they lack capacity.

Charitable organisations duties to refer:

This includes those organisations registered as charities following the Significant Incident Reporting procedures required by the Charity Commission www.charitycommissionni.org.uk/charity-essentials/safeguarding-resources/

Children: This refers to any young person under the age of 18. All children irrespective of their ethnicity, social backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientation, religious belief, and political persuasion.

Consent: is a clear indication of a willingness to participate in an activity or to accept a service. An adult at risk may signal consent verbally, by gesture, by willing participation or in writing. Decisions with more serious consequences will require more formal consideration of consent and appropriate steps should be taken to ensure consent is valid. No one can give, or withhold, consent on behalf of another adult unless special provision for particular purposes has been made for this, usually in law.

Domestic abuse: is a pattern of behaviour which is characterised by the exercise of control and the misuse of power by one person over another by using threatening behaviour, physical violence or other controlling behaviours including psychological, sexual, financial, or emotional abuse – known as coercive control. Domestic abuse can take many forms and isn't limited to one form of abuse like physical violence.

Abusive relationships can be between intimate partners or family members, irrespective of age, gender, or sexual orientation. It affects all socioeconomic, racial, faith and cultural backgrounds. Domestic abuse is a crime in Northern Ireland and the behaviour is never acceptable.

Everyone: This includes those who organise sport at NGB (publicly funded and recognised sporting organisations) or local club level, coaches, parents, young people, officials, sponsors, those who hire facilities or award grants, and those who set government priorities at departmental level that impact on the welfare of children and adults.

Key stakeholders: To include members of the Safeguarding in Sport Strategic Group.

Local Adult Safeguarding Partnerships (LASPs): the five LASPs are located within, and accountable to, their respective HSC Trusts. Their role is to implement the Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership (NIASP) Strategic Plan, policy and operational procedures locally.

Each LASP has responsibility to promote all aspects of safeguarding activity in its area and to promote multi-disciplinary, multi-agency and interagency cooperation, including the sharing of learning and best practice.

Parents and carers: This refers to those who provide primary care for children including guardians and carers.

Publicly-funded sporting organisation: Those sports organisations who receive funding from public bodies to deliver their activities either through service level agreements or one-off grants.

Recognised sports: As defined by the joint Home Nations sports council's criteria.

Reporting: All sports organisations are clear on their duty to respond to non-recent cases of abuse as well as any current cases of child abuse/harm. Adults in sport have the confidence and competence in recognising, responding, recording and reporting concerns.





Safeguarding Aware: Though there is very limited legal requirement for any sports organisation to implement safeguarding practices this does not take away from broad responsibility to act to safeguard those in their care. This is not just about legal or moral duty to refer but about the preventative work organisations put in place.

Safeguarding in Sport Standards:

This refers to standards agreed by SSSG and based on Our Duty to Care guidance. A sport's governing bodies can require clubs to confirm they have taken specific actions to implement safeguarding standards at club level (this may include appointing a club safeguarding lead or AccessNI checking all those in regulated activity) as a condition of either affiliation or via a service level agreement with clubs.

Sports Organisations: A body that primarily exists to promote, develop and derive success from all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels.

Throughout sport: This means children, young people, parents, officials, volunteers, staff, coaches, etc.

Training: Workshops are regularly reviewed and updated based on user feedback and changes in legislation or good practice guidance. Training requirements are outlined in the SSSG "Briefing Paper on Safeguarding Training in Sport" available from paul.stephenson@nspcc.org.uk

Vetting Checks: Appropriately vetted means to agreed standards within the sports industry of who to check and when to renew vetting checks i.e. every 3 - 5 years.

APPENDIX 2

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SAFEGUARDING IN SPORT¹¹

STRATEGIC GROUP (NI) (UPDATED SEPT 2025)

Background: In 2000, the Irish Sports Council (ISC) and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland (Sport NI) produced the first edition of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport to help safeguard and protect children and young people in sport. For the latest version of this visit Sport Ireland’s Ethics pages¹². Both Sport Ireland and Sport NI are now working to develop an all-Ireland resource to support the safeguarding of adults to include training standards.

In 2008 the CPSU NI and Sport NI began a consultation with Sports Governing Bodies to agree minimum standards of practice for Governing Bodies (based on the [Keeping Children Safe](#) standards for the voluntary sector which was produced by Volunteer Now and sponsored by the Department of Health). The outcome of this was the development of Standards for Safeguarding Children and Young People in and through sport for governing bodies. The standards provide a baseline of good practice for governing bodies to work towards.

These standards raise awareness and help organisations know what they need to do to safeguard children involved in sport, and to minimise avoidable risks. When implemented fully and disseminated to club level, the standards should provide parents with increased confidence and peace of mind. Most important of all, they should help create safer environments for children, where those children can enjoy themselves and get the very best from their involvement in sport.

What is needed is the implementation of the multi-agency [Safeguarding in Sport Strategic Plan](#) which will help all agencies ensure that children, young people¹³ and adults can enjoy sport and achieve their potential free from all forms of abuse and exploitation. Consideration should be given to prioritisation of athlete welfare recommendations from the Department for Communities: [Active Living- More People, More Active, More of the Time](#) The focus on athlete welfare along with the standards set in [Keeping Adults Safe: A Shared Responsibility](#) will mean that NGB’s will need more support to imbed adult safeguarding culture with sport.

¹¹ Council of Europe European Sports charter (revised) definition of sport is “Sport means all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming relationships or obtaining results in competition at all levels.”

¹² www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/2020-01/safeguarding-guidance.pdf

¹³ Experience of sport by young people in Northern Ireland <https://datavis.nisra.gov.uk/communities/experience-of-sport-by-young-people-in-northern-ireland-2022.html>

Aim: To deliver the vision of ensuring every child, young person, and adult can participate in sport and associated physical activities free from the risk of harm or abuse.

Purpose

- Develop a coordinated multi-agency approach to achieving the aim of safeguarding everyone in sport
- To influence policy on safeguarding in sport and act as the voice for safeguarding in sport with government and other key bodies.

Principles

- Children, young people and adults have the right to enjoy sport free from all forms of harm, abuse, and exploitation
- Everyone has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children, young people and all adults involved in sport
- Sporting organisations have a duty of care to children, young people and adults who take part in their sport

Membership: The group will comprise of:

- Senior representatives who can make decisions on behalf of their organisations with skills/experience/competences that contribute to the aims and objectives of the strategic group.
- Organisations and their representatives will be added to the membership as and when required.

The list of organisations currently participating:

- Adult Safeguarding Lead
- Department for Communities
- Governing Bodies representatives for sports in NI¹⁴
 - Swimming
 - GAA
 - Football/Soccer
 - Athletics NI
 - Rugby
- Department of Health
- Health and Social Care Trust
- Local Government Safeguarding Network
- NI Sports Forum

- NSPCC Sport
- Police Service NI
- Safeguarding Board NI
- Sport Ireland
- Sport NI
- Volunteer Now
- Women’s Aid
- Co-opted individuals if/when necessary

Objective

1. The SSSG is supported by senior representatives to enable sport and physical activity sectors to work together with statutory bodies at a strategic level to safeguard everyone in sport consistently.
2. The need for Adult Safeguarding within the sports sector becomes embedded within the culture of all sporting organisations in receipt of public funds.
3. The legal requirement to vet a person in regulated activity is introduced to ensure a level of parity across the Island of Ireland as many sports are All-Ireland bodies.

4. Sporting and physical activity providers who receive public funds or hire publicly funded facilities have attained the minimum Safeguarding Standards that are proportionate to their activity and capacity. This must include:
 - A policy statement demonstrating the organisation’s commitment to safeguarding
 - Clear codes of behaviour that are communicated to all stakeholders
 - Approved safeguarding training to raise awareness that all participants have equal rights to protection from all forms of abuse or harm and that each person’s rights are upheld.
 - Robust safe recruitment processes including vetting as standard practice.

5. Promote a culture in sport where everyone is free from all forms of gender-based violence, abuse and harm within the sports setting.

Work plan: The strategic work plan (above) was developed with actions, clearly identified timescales and lead personnel.

14 These sports were identified as the sports with the largest youth membership who had allocated staff members to the safeguarding role and along with NISF (who represent all sports NGB’s) could best represent the NGB sector.

This will be reviewed in 2029 and each 3 years after.

How will we measure our work?:

The Group will identify meaningful outcome measures and collect appropriate data to reflect progress towards its objectives.

The Standards for Safeguarding in the sports sector will be the assessment tools for sports organisations to demonstrate they have reached a particular level.

Reviews: The group will review elements of the strategic plan and its effectiveness at each meeting with a summary report every 12 months against each of its objectives.

Compact of behaviours: The membership of the group will commit to:

- attending a minimum 2 group meetings annually (the main group will meet 3 times a year)
- share all communication and information across all Group members
- make timely decisions and act as to not hold up the Group priorities
- treat everyone with respect and dignity
- participate in allocated task and finish groups as and when necessary

Members of the group will expect:

- to be given reasonable time to make decisions
- open and honest discussions
- to be treated with respect and dignity

Meetings: Secretariat support will be provided by the NSPCC to include scheduling meetings, producing a meeting agenda, minutes, circulating relevant papers.

Topics for the agenda will be generated by the Group members and forwarded to the Chair for agreement no later than 7 working days prior to the meeting. Agenda and previous minutes will be circulated no later than 5 days prior to the meeting

These Terms of Reference and membership will be reviewed every 3 years.

The Independent Chairperson shall be appointed by recommendations from within the group. The Terms of Office for the Chair shall be 3 years before reviewing.

The SSSG shall also appoint a deputy chairperson to support the chairperson and as a natural progression to step into the role of chair for any unforeseen reason the independent chairperson cannot attend.

Non-members may be invited to group meetings if they are able to assist the group in achieving their purpose Task and finish groups will be organised if/when required with a ToR and timescale

Decisions will be made by the group as a consensus. If one cannot be made the final decision will be made by the Chair

AOB will only be allowed in exceptional circumstances and then only for mention.



APPENDIX 3

AGENCIES REPRESENTED AT THE SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN IN SPORT STRATEGIC GROUP

- Adult Safeguarding Lead
- Athletics NI
- Department for Communities
- Department of Health
- Health and Social Care Trust
- Irish Football Association
- Irish Rugby Football Union
- Local Government Safeguarding Network
- Northern Ireland Sports Forum
- NSPCC Sport formally Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU)
- Police Service of Northern Ireland
- Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland
- Sport Ireland
- Sport NI
- Swim Ireland
- Ulster Gaelic Athletic Association
- Volunteer Now
- Women's Aid Federation NI

External experts will be called on as and when required.



APPENDIX 4

TRAINING STANDARDS

Training recommendations from inquiries into safeguarding practice in sport

Sports-sector national governing bodies and funders briefing

Introduction

The aim of this briefing is to help national governing bodies (NGBs) and those who fund the sports and physical activity sector strengthen their child protection and safeguarding training by learning from the recommendations in previous reviews into sports organisations. The following points are only in reference to child safeguarding requirements and part of the SSSG’s role will be to work with the sector to create and approve adult safeguarding standards for sport.

Note: See [Learning from inquiries about safeguarding practice in sport](#) for a more detailed report, which includes a list of references and the safeguarding reviews considered in producing this briefing paper.

The full report identified six summary points of collective areas of concerns raised when the different safeguarding reports were reviewed. This paper only focuses on the training requirements recommendations.

Training requirements recommendations

Concern was repeatedly mentioned that staff and volunteers are not always required by sports organisations to attend tutor-led safeguarding training to enable them to learn from their peers or from experienced tutors. Consistent messages in the reviews highlight the importance of safeguarding training to raise awareness and understanding of roles and responsibilities, and that it must be made compulsory as part of club affiliation and coach award.

The fact that tutor-led safeguarding training is not compulsory undermines its priority and adds to an inconsistent approach across the sector. The importance of safeguarding training in building confidence and providing clarity of responsibility is highlighted by Edge Hill University:

“Increases in self-perceived confidence were higher among the tutor-led cohorts compared to the online cohort, particularly in understanding safeguarding. The impact of training on learner confidence was also stronger within the tutor-led cohorts for those with no prior training or experience.”

(Hartill M. et al, 2021; p.6)¹⁵

¹⁵ Hartill M. et al (2021). Safeguarding Education in Athletics: a comparative evaluation of training effect in three modes of entry-level safeguarding training delivered by UK Athletics. Edge Hill University, Ormskirk.



Key solutions to gaps in training

The training needs to focus not only on how to recognise and respond to child protection concerns but also assist in the development of a safe culture within the sport and how to communicate with young people. The focus of coach education should not only be about the sharing of skills and knowledge but how to retain young people in sport.

Who training is for

Appropriate training and/or information should be made available for:

- everyone who has a role in sport, parents and carers, from grassroots through to elite level
- all young people

Appropriate training and/or information should be **compulsory** for:

- the board and senior management – every three years or as part of the induction process for all new board members, focusing on their strategic role in implementing safeguarding procedures. There was a consistent message across the reviews calling for more management board ownership of safeguarding, with the need for board safeguarding training and a priority for appointing a board champion.
- all those in regulated activity – whether voluntary or paid – with a requirement to refresh their knowledge (continuous professional development) as a condition of their affiliation or their coaching award.

What training is required

Baseline awareness

All staff, coaches and volunteers should receive **safeguarding training** relevant and proportionate to the role they fulfil for the sport (see below). This training must clarify what procedures to follow and help attendees understand their role in protecting children, regardless of whether they work directly with children and young people or not.

Tutor-led training

For anyone in a role with regular or significant responsibility for children (for example, coaches, club welfare officers, team managers and chaperones), initial safeguarding training must be interactive or (as a minimum) include a significant interactive element. This guidance is informed by **research from Edge Hill University** commissioned by Sport England.

Training plans

As part of a sports organisation's 3- to 5-year safeguarding strategy, they should develop a training plan, with the resources and board or management ownership to ensure the targets are met.

Communication

Alongside the training and education resources for volunteers and coaches, information from sports organisations needs to be clearly communicated with parents and children. This should include communication appropriate to the age of the audience.

Online safety was highlighted in some of the reports as a specific area where communication to young people and their parents is important, including information about expectations around the use of social media, behaviour while using social media, and safeguarding issues across the online environment.

Focus and priority

There is a need for sports organisations to examine the style of coaching practice they want. Sports need to move from a culture of just focusing on increasing participation of young people to one of increasing retention of those young people to ensure a life-long involvement in and love of sport. This can only happen by increasing the focus on making the activity inclusive, safe, fun and enjoyable for all.

Monitoring

Organisations should build on current affiliation requirements and ensure training standards are in place within the sport. Systems should be put in place to note when an individual needs to refresh their knowledge with clear instruction on how to do this as part of their continuous professional development. This should be supported by an internal club self-auditing process to enable clubs at a local level to review their own possible training gaps among members, volunteers and staff.

Safeguarding Training

Who provides training

A number of sport [national governing bodies](#) (NGBs¹⁶) have their own safeguarding training, while others access generic training through their local sports partnership so you can contact your local council’s sports development officer for advice on accessing training.

Keeping Safe training though not sport specific should also be recognised as it was developed in partnership with the Department of Health and is quality assured by Volunteer Now.

Sport NI offers offer two different levels of safeguarding workshops both delivered either virtually or face to face. See below for more detail.

Training Guidance

The guidance sets out the accepted safeguarding workshop for sports in Northern Ireland together with any specific requirements for attendance and renewal of certification. NGBs must review and identify roles that require attendance at a safeguarding workshop.

Basic Safeguarding Workshops

[Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport \(SCYPiS\)](#)

Validation period: Volunteers should complete training within 3 months of taking up their role and refresh their safeguarding knowledge every 3 years (see below for more detail).

Expected attendees: any person working with, interacts with or who is involved in the planning/administration of activities or events with young people (according to the requirements of the NGB)

Renewal: Safeguarding C&YP certificate may be renewed by attendance at Safeguarding C&YP (face to face/virtual workshop) or Safeguarding Refresher (e-learning module see below) in line with *NGB recommendations*

During this training, you’ll learn to:

- Understand the potential importance of your role in the lives of children and young people

- Identify best practice procedures and behaviour to safeguard children and young people in sport.
- Recognise and respond if abuse/ poor practice is suspected.

Safeguarding Refresher [\(e-learning module available from Sport NI\)](#)

This is a free course aimed primarily at those who have previously attended a Sport Northern Ireland Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport tutor led workshop or equivalent. Individuals may want to refresh their knowledge or are required to do so by their sport’s governing body. Validation period: *every 3 years*

Expected attendees: any person having previously completed Safeguarding C&YPS workshop. This course can also be beneficial for parents and for all roles with regular responsibility for children and can be a useful precursor to a face-to-face workshop.

¹⁶ NGB can refer to National Governing Body or other organisation who are providing a service to children and young people.



Advanced Safeguarding Workshop – Role specific

Club Designated Safeguarding Officer Workshop

Pre-requisite: Participants must have attended the Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport workshop prior to attending this training.

Validation period: All those in DSO role should refresh their knowledge every three years, this can be through other NGB learning opportunities, repeating the course.

Expected attendees: any person taking on the role of Club Designated Safeguarding Officer or other club executive member.

The aim of the workshop is to enable participants to become familiar with the role of a club Designated Safeguarding Officer and develop their competence and confidence in carrying out this role within sport. During this training, you'll learn to:

- understand your roles and responsibilities
- be clear on actions to achieve a safer club
- consider difference between poor practice and abuse
- recognise and respond appropriately to a range of situations that give grounds for concern

Additional notes

- Validation period commences from the date of workshop completion
- Re-validation/ renewal of knowledge the Safeguarding in Sport Strategic Group (SSSG) recommend that this is every 3 years but understand the final decision remains dependent on the capacity of the NGB, but must not be beyond 5 yrs. When re-validation is required for the first time this can be done either via a face to face/ virtual workshop or the online refresher. NGB's can decide when a coach/volunteer/staff member must re-validate via attendance at a face-to-face workshop but this must not be beyond every 9 years.
- There is a grace period after the expiry date (recommended 4 months) in which the individual must complete the required workshop.
- There is an onus on both the individual & the club to ensure that valid safeguarding training is in place.

Sport NI workshop information and booking

For further information and to book a place on a Sport NI workshop, contact: Sport NI Education Department
Tel: 028 9038 1222 | Email: workshops@sportni.net

APPENDIX 5

DEFINITIONS

In recent years there has been a marked shift away from using the term ‘vulnerable’ to describe adults potentially at risk from harm or abuse. To assist working through and understanding this policy a number of key definitions need to be explained: **Adult at risk of harm:** is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

a) Personal characteristics which may include, but are not limited to, age, disability, special educational needs, illness, mental or physical frailty or impairment of, or disturbance in, the functioning of the mind or brain.

AND/OR

b) Life circumstances which may include, but are not limited to, isolation, socio-economic factors and environmental living conditions. **Adult in need of protection** is a person aged 18 or over, whose exposure to harm through abuse, exploitation or neglect may be increased by their:

a) Personal characteristics **AND/OR**

b) Life circumstances **AND**

c) Who is unable to protect their own well-being, property, assets, rights or other interests; **AND**

d) Where the action or inaction of another person or persons is causing, or is likely to cause, him/her to be harmed

A vulnerable adult for the purposes of vetting in NI is defined in Article 3 of the SVG Order as someone who has attained the age of 18 and

- is in residential accommodation;
- receives domiciliary care;
- receives any form of health care (treatment, therapy, palliative care);
- is detained in lawful custody;
- is under the supervision of a probation officer;
- receives a prescribed welfare service (supporting people);
- receives service/takes part in activity provided to specified persons (with any form of disability, age-specific needs, prescribed physical or mental health problem);
- is a Direct Payments recipient;
- requires assistance in the conduct of his/her own affairs.





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Updated December 2025