

Chapter 4

Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport for Development and Peace Programmes

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Despite all the potential gains that exist from taking part in sport, stakeholders across the Commonwealth are increasingly recognising and promoting that without deliberate efforts on the part of clubs and organisations, federations and policy-makers, we cannot be confident that children will always have a safe experience in sport. In response, a number of organisations working in sport and development came together to look at how sports provision could be kept safe, under the banner of the Safeguarding Children in Sport Working Group.

The group identified international standards as one key way to support the sports sector to work towards strengthening safeguarding, and has produced a draft set of child safeguarding standards with input from more than 30 organisations. The standards set out the actions that all organisations working in sport should have in place to ensure children are safe from harm.

During 2013–2016 a diverse range of more than 40 sporting organisations, representing different countries and stakeholder groups, are going to pilot the standards, identifying what works, what doesn't and what is needed to support implementation. Independent expert researchers will oversee the trial process.

The working group has identified national governments as critical drivers of change, with their significant potential to create a policy framework that supports their constituents to develop safeguards to protect sport participants. To this end, to support the development of policies and practice that protect children in sport, government agencies responsible for sport are encouraged to work closely with efforts to strengthen safeguarding in sport,

involve themselves in research into this issue and work with partner ministries (especially those responsible for child protection) to build links and share expertise, strengthening the links between sport and wider child protection networks.

4.1 Introduction

Millions of children and young people take part in sporting activities every day across the Commonwealth. For some children this is purely for recreation and fun. Others may participate in sport for development programmes. For some young people, sport may be their chosen future career, either as talented athletes, as coaches or as officials. Sport may also be used as a vehicle for diverting young people from anti-social or criminal behaviour.

All children have the right to participate in sport in a safe and enjoyable environment. Their rights are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Despite all the potential gains that exist from taking part in sport, stakeholders across the Commonwealth are increasingly recognising and promoting that without deliberate efforts on the part of clubs and organisations, federations and policy-makers, we cannot be confident that children will always have a safe experience in sport.

In 2010, the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre commissioned a review of the available empirical research and policy initiatives related to protecting children from violence in organised sport (2010). The purpose of the review was to inform the structures and policies required for preventing, reporting and responding appropriately to violence in children's sport.

The research found that:

- There is a lack of effectively functioning structures, policies and systems at the organisational, national and international levels. This includes a lack of organisations which prevent violence against children, as well as functioning referral systems for sporting organisations where such organisations do exist
- There is an absence of empirical data on violence against children in sport, including the experience of young people in Africa, Asia and South America; the experience of boys; and longitudinal studies.

- Good practice in sport for development initiatives reflects and embeds children's right to play safely, and can provide a vehicle to promote the broader safeguarding and protection of children.

The research also specifically recommended that standards and codes of conduct should be developed, and personnel involved in sport should be trained on safeguarding so that they have the knowledge and understanding needed to make the environment safe.

4.2 The Safeguarding Children in Sport Working Group

In response to the research, and in light of growing interest within the sports sector to tackle these issues – including the endorsement by the sixth Commonwealth Sports Ministers Meeting (6CSMM) to strengthen mechanisms that work to safeguard and protect children and vulnerable adults participating in sport – a number of organisations working in sport and development came together to look at how sports provision could be kept safe under the banner of the Safeguarding Children in Sport Working Group.

The group identified international standards as one key way to support the sports sector to work towards strengthening safeguarding, and has produced a draft set of child safeguarding standards with input from more than 30 organisations. The standards set out the actions that all organisations working in sport should have in place to ensure that children are safe from harm.

These draft standards aim to assist sport and development stakeholders to create a safe sporting environment for children, wherever they participate and at whatever level, and to provide a benchmark for sports providers and funders to make informed decisions. They promote good practice and challenge practice that is harmful to children, and provide clarity on safeguarding children to all involved in sport.

Eleven draft standards have been proposed for organisations working with children in sport:

1. To have a written policy on keeping children safe
2. To have procedures, personnel and systems to support safeguarding
3. To assess and minimise risks to children

4. To have written guidelines on behaviour towards children
5. To work with equity – ensuring *all* children are safeguarded
6. To communicate the ‘keep children safe’ message
7. To provide education and training for keeping children safe
8. To engage with advice and support from the wider child protection sector
9. To work with partners to meet the standards
10. To involve children in development, review and implementation of safeguarding
11. To monitor and evaluate compliance and effectiveness of safeguarding measures

Beneath each standard is a set of criteria, which describe the elements that organisations should work towards in order to fulfil the standard (see Annex 4.1). Ultimately, the goal of this work is to help make the world of sport a safer place for children and young people everywhere.

4.3 Safeguarding standards research

During 2013–2016 a diverse range of more than 40 sporting organisations, representing different countries and stakeholder groups, are going to pilot the standards, identifying what works, what doesn’t and what is needed to support implementation. Independent expert researchers will oversee the trial process.

Some of the organisations involved in the trial already have sophisticated practices in place, while others are just starting the journey. By including a wide range of organisations, we hope to share good practice, learn how organisations have overcome challenges and ultimately understand what kind of support governments, federations and organisations need to make a tangible difference to the children and young people they are responsible for.

The working group will revise the standards to reflect organisations’ experiences, and will develop implementation guidelines to help new organisations work towards the standards.

International federations, national governing bodies, and organisations with oversight functions such as SportAccord and

UNOSDP, as well as local clubs like Manchester United, are all involved in this research process.

4.4 Building the capacity for safeguarding in sport

Alongside the work to strengthen the content of the standards, the working group is also engaged in lobbying work. The group is targeting key international bodies with oversight for sport, or those which fund organisations that deliver sporting activities, to garner their support for the standards, encouraging them to make additional support and guidance available to their members to work towards safeguarding measures.

The working group is also engaged in targeted research within the sector, as well as exploring long-term options for supporting safeguarding within sport internationally.

4.5 Conclusions

The working group has identified national governments as critical drivers of change, with their significant potential to create a policy framework that supports their constituents to develop safeguards to protect sport participants. To this end, to support the development of policies and practice that protect children in sport, government agencies responsible for sport are encouraged to work closely with efforts to strengthen safeguarding in sport, involve themselves in research into this issue and work with partner ministries (especially those responsible for child protection) to build links and share expertise, strengthening the links between sport and wider child protection networks.

Reference

UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (2010), *Protecting Children from Violence in Sport. A Review with a Focus on Industrialized Countries*, UNICEF, Italy.

Annex 4.1 Overview of the standards

Criteria	A written policy on keeping children safe
1	The organisation has a safeguarding policy, signed off by the appropriate people within the organisation.
2	All staff, volunteers or other representatives are informed about this policy and have – after a formal introduction and discussion about the policy – signed the agreement.
3	All staff, volunteers or other representatives are required to comply with the policy – there are no exceptions.
4	There are systems in place to monitor compliance with the policy.
5	The policy covers the organisation's commitment to safeguard children in the different types of work undertaken, and clearly describes the agency's understanding and definitions of abuse.
6	Policies and practices are reviewed at regular intervals, ideally at least every three years or more frequently, in response to specific changes in circumstances, and are revised based on changes in needs, legislation, guidance, practice, experience, changes within the organisation, and so on.
7	Children are consulted as part of the initial development (where a policy is not in place) and ongoing review of safeguarding policies and practices.
	Procedures, personnel and systems
1	There are clear procedures in place that provide step-by-step guidance on what action to take if there are concerns about a child's safety or well-being, both within and external to the organisation.
2	There is an identified member of staff within the organisation who will be tasked with the responsibility for leading on safeguarding.
3	There are agreed ways of recruiting staff, volunteers and consultants and for assessing their suitability to work with children.
4	All those who have the opportunity for regular contact with children, or who are in positions of trust, complete a form declaring any previous criminal convictions relating to children, and are required to have other police checks made on them where possible. At the very least, references from two previous employers are obtained.

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5	There is a confidential process for dealing with all complaints, concerns or allegations, and for recording incidents and reports and storing these securely. This process recognises how the complaint or concern is raised and by whom, and there is a clear timescale for resolving it.
6	The organisation provides children and young people with information about their rights and to whom they can turn to if they are worried, in a process which empowers them.
Minimising risks to children	
1	There is guidance on assessing possible risks of harm to children – especially where there are increased vulnerabilities, such as activities that involve time spent away from home or in working with children who have a disability.
2	Children are adequately supervised and protected at all times during activities and programmes. Adults are never alone with children in an enclosed space.
3	There are minimum operating standards in place for activities, transport, accommodation and spaces.
4	Where agencies are involved in placing children in the care of others, initial and ongoing regular checks should be made that the carers are suitable.
5	Guidelines exist for appropriate use of information technology (such as email, digital cameras, websites, the internet) to make sure that children are not put in danger and exposed to abuse and exploitation.
6	Children and young people are provided with information about the risks they may face in engaging in or seeking work in sports, and who to turn to for help.
Written guidelines on behaviour towards children	
1	There are written guidelines for behaviour.
2	The organisation provides guidance on appropriate/ expected standards of behaviour of adults towards children, especially for those adults who are responsible for children in residential care and caring for children who have a disability.
3	There is guidance on expected and acceptable behaviour of children towards others, and particularly other children.
4	There is guidance on positive ways of managing the behaviour of children that do not involve physical punishment or any other form of degrading or humiliating treatment, and are age and gender appropriate.

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5	There are clear consequences for breaking the guidelines on behaviour, which are clearly linked to organisational disciplinary procedures.
Equity	
1	The safeguarding policy makes it clear that all children have equal rights to protection.
2	The child safeguarding procedures, guidance and training help staff and volunteers to recognise the additional vulnerability experienced by some children and the extra barriers they face to getting help, because of their race, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background or culture.
3	Codes of conduct/behaviour include statements about the responsibility of adults and children to treat one another with dignity, respect, sensitivity and fairness.
4	Codes of conduct/behaviour make it clear that discriminatory, offensive and/or violent behaviours are unacceptable and that complaints will be acted upon.
5	Processes for dealing with complaints are fair and open to challenge through an appeals process.
Communicating the 'keep children safe' message	
1	Information about the agency's commitment to keeping children safe is made available to all relevant parties in an appropriate manner. For example, schools, community leaders, mentors, parents, children, coaches etc.
2	Children are made aware of their right to be safe from abuse, and steps are taken to seek the views of children on policies and procedures and how they are working at regular intervals.
3	Information for children, parents/carers is made available about where to go for help in relation to child abuse, and what is likely to happen following a disclosure. This should be provided in a format and language that can be easily understood by everyone, including children.
Education and training for keeping children safe	
1	All members of staff, volunteers and other associates, including relevant partners, have training on safeguarding and child protection when they join the agency. This includes an introduction to the organisation's child safeguarding policy and procedures, and guidance on how to recognise, respond to and report concerns about child abuse.

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2	Staff members and volunteers with special responsibilities for keeping children safe have relevant training and regular opportunities to update their skills and knowledge.
3	Training is provided to those responsible for dealing with complaints and disciplinary procedures in relation to child abuse and inappropriate behaviour towards children, and additional practical support is made available to them.
4	Children are provided with standardised advice and support on keeping themselves and one another safe.
5	Parents and the wider community are provided with standardised information, advice and support on safeguarding children.
6	Annual training on safeguarding and the organisation's policies is conducted, and are kept up to date in light of policy and procedure developments.
Engagement with advice and support	
1	Children are provided with information on where to go to for help and advice in relation to abuse, exploitation, harassment and bullying.
2	The organisation ensures that staff members with special responsibilities for keeping children safe have engagement with specialist advice, support and information on child protection.
3	Key stakeholders can demonstrate awareness of current advice and support relative to their level of engagement with children.
4	Contacts are established at the national and/or local level with relevant child protection agencies, non-governmental organisations and community groups providing support on child protection, and these can provide information, support and assistance to children and staff.
5	Arrangements are in place to provide support to individuals – both the children the agency works with and staff members – during and following an incident or allegation of abuse or a complaint.
Working with partners to meet the standards	
1	There is a process of engagement with partners on child safeguarding issues to ensure a shared understanding of safeguarding expectations, mutual learning and development of good practice.
2	A written agreement provides minimum standards for an agency's work with and through partners, and encourages further development beyond the minimum standards.

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3	The existence or development of a child safeguarding policy and procedures form an essential part of partnership agreements.
Involving children	
1	Managers and senior staff ensure that children are listened to and consulted, and that their rights are met.
2	Steps are taken to regularly ask children and parents/carers their views on policies and practices aimed at keeping children safe and the effectiveness of these.
3	Children and parents/carers are consulted as part of a review of safeguarding policies and practices.
4	Consultation with children is inclusive, age appropriate, child-friendly and respects children as the experts on their situation.
Monitoring and evaluation	
1	Arrangements are in place to monitor compliance with child safeguarding measures put in place by the organisation.
2	The organisation uses the experience of operating safeguarding and child protection systems to influence policy and practice development.
3	All incidents, allegations of abuse and complaints are recorded and monitored.