

# Draft International Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport

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## Introduction

Millions of children and young people take part in sporting activities every day across the world. 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.

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.

Over the past 15 years or so victims of all forms of violence in sport have started to be able to have their voices heard and responded to. Previously there has been little questioning of the perception that sport is only a force for good for young people. Until the late 1990s/early 2000s very few sports organisations had put in place systems and structures to respond to complaints about the behaviour of adults or other young people.

We now know enough from research and evidence to be clear that sport does not always take place with a focus on children's rights at its centre, or sometimes fails to fully consider the risks to children, leading to organisational cultures that don't allow for the discussion of harm and abuse. There are also some risks to children and young people which are unique to sport such as the increased risks of all forms of abuse to elite young athletes and the risks of hazing. Many sport for development programmes are provided to extremely vulnerable children who may be affected by violence and abuse in their daily lives and for whom sport should be a safe haven. We should all seek to ensure that sports provision to these young people takes place in safe environments.

Development and implementation of these (draft) Standards will be the first tangible output by the partnership of organisations working together for the Beyond Sport Summit and lay the foundations for a holistic approach to ensuring children's safety and protection in all sports contexts internationally.

### Definitions

- Safeguarding refers to the actions we take to ensure **all** children are safe from harm when involved in our clubs and activities.
- Child protection is a set of activities that are required for **specific** children who are at risk of/or are suffering significant harm.
- Abuse refers to the acts of commission or omission that lead to a child experiencing harm.
- Harm refers to the negative impact or consequences upon the child of those actions.

## International Standards

These draft standards are a first attempt to outline the things that should be put in place by any organisation providing sports activities to children and young people. The Standards should be used as a minimum benchmark of good practice rather than an end to work towards

They reflect international declarations, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, relevant legislation, government guidance, existing child protection/safeguarding standards and good practice, and will be further informed through an action research process, by a diverse range of perspectives from different countries and stakeholder groups.

These Standards represent collective good practice at a point in time and will be subject to periodic review to ensure they reflect developments within safeguarding practice.

### The Standards are:

1. Policy
2. Procedures, personnel and systems
3. Minimising risks to children
4. Guidelines on behaviour
5. Equity
6. Communication
7. Education and training
8. Engagement with advice and support
9. Working with partners
10. Involving children
11. Monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

### Purpose of standards

- To help create a safe sporting environment for children wherever they participate and at whatever level
- To provide a benchmark to assist sports providers and funders to make informed decisions
- To promote good practice and challenge practice that is harmful to children
- To provide clarity on safeguarding children to all involved in sport

## Principles

- All children have the right to participate, enjoy and develop through sport, in a safe and inclusive environment, free from all forms of abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation.
- Everyone, both organisations and individuals, service providers and funders, has a responsibility to support the care and protection of young people
- Organisations providing sports activities to children and young people have a duty of care to them
- There are certain factors that leave some children more vulnerable to abuse, and steps need to be taken to address this
- Children have a right to be involved in shaping safeguarding policy and practice
- Organisations should always act in the best interests of the child
- Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect and not be discriminated against based on gender, race, age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, beliefs, religious or political affiliation.
- The processes and activities for the creation, development and implementation of safeguarding measures should be inclusive

Please note that whilst these standards have been developed in relation to children (aged under 18) they can also provide a valuable framework for good practice in relation to other stakeholder groups such as young or vulnerable adults.

## Piloting the Standards

A number of the organisations represented at the joint initiative at the Beyond Sport Summit 2012 have agreed to pilot these Standards along with a number of additional organisations committed to strengthening their approach to making sport safer..

This is being undertaken with **support** built in for the organisations which trial them and with appropriate **monitoring and evaluation** – which includes the **voices of young people**. Review points have been built into the trial period to collect data on the pilot and review progress made. The learning from this will contribute to the further development of the Standards.

At present there are approximately 50 organisations piloting these Standards representing diverse geographic locations and organisational levels. This pilot is being led by a small group of 11 organisations and is being overseen by researchers at Brunel University. The Standards will be reviewed and finalised at the conclusion of the piloting process in 2014.

## Standard 1: A written policy on keeping children safe

### What

Any organisation providing or with responsibility for sports activities for children and young people under the age of 18 should have safeguarding policy. This is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children involved in sport from harm, and provides the operational framework within which procedures are developed.

### Why

A safeguarding policy makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children and young people. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to show that the organisation is taking its duty of care seriously. It also takes account of specific factors that may leave some children more vulnerable to abuse.

### Criteria

- The organisation has a safeguarding policy, signed off by the appropriate people within the organisation.
- 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.
- All staff, volunteers or other representatives are required to comply with the policy – there are no exceptions.
- There are systems in place to monitor compliance with the policy
- 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.
- 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 revised based on changes in needs, legislation, guidance, practice experience changes within the organisation, and so on.
- Children are consulted as part of the initial development (where a policy is not in place) and ongoing review of safeguarding policies and practices.

**NB: see standard 7 for details on training and for staff to support policy implementation**

## Standard 2: Procedures, personnel and systems

### What

Procedures describe the operational processes required to implement organisational policy and provide clear step-by-step guidance on what to do in different circumstances. They clarify roles and responsibilities, and lines of communication. Systems for recording information and for responding to complaints are also needed, to ensure procedures are implemented and complied with. Any new safeguarding systems should be built on existing organisational good practice.

### Why

For safeguarding to be effective, procedures have to be credible for children. Procedures help to ensure a prompt response to concerns about a child's safety or well-being. They also help an organisation to comply with and implement legislation and guidance.

### Criteria

- 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.
- There is an identified member of staff within the organisation who will be tasked with the responsibility for leading on safeguarding.
- There are agreed ways of recruiting staff, volunteers, consultants and assessing their suitability to work with children. These should include:
  - Clear role/job descriptions
  - Interviews
  - An induction process that includes clear messages about the organisations commitment to safeguarding, and expectations of staff/volunteer behaviour
  - Character and previous employment references including zero tolerance related to previous convictions relating to children
  - A probationary period.
- 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 employees are obtained.
- 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.
- The organisation provides children and young people with information about their rights and about who they can turn to if they are worried, in a process which empowers them.

## Standard 3: Minimising risks to children

### What

Measures to **assess and minimise** the possibility of abuse, through risk assessments and other activities, to actively mitigate against the possibility of children and young people being abused.

### Why

Some people, who work or seek to work in sport in a paid or voluntary capacity, pose a risk to children and young people. Children are also at risk when placed in unsafe places or asked to participate in unsafe activities, including age-inappropriate activities, over-training and through unrealistic expectations placed on them by staff. Finally, specific factors may leave some children more vulnerable to abuse. It is possible to minimise the risks and to prevent abuse by putting safeguards in place.

### Criteria

- 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 are disabled.
- Children are adequately supervised and protected at all times during activities and programmes. Adults are never alone with children in an enclosed space.
- There are minimum operating standards in place for activities, transport, accommodation and spaces.
- 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. These should include:
  - Interviews
  - Frequent meetings (without the carers present) with the child to seek their views
  - Checks about previous criminal convictions and other formal checks where possible
  - Clear expectations or appropriate behaviour that carers sign up to
- Guidelines exist for appropriate use of information technology (such as email, digital cameras, websites, internet) to make sure that children are not put in danger and exposed to abuse and exploitation.
- 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.

## Standard 4: Written guidelines on behaviour towards children

### What

Codes of practice describe what an acceptable standard of behaviour is and promote good practice.

### Why

Children's sport should be carried out in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. Standards of behaviour for all set a clear benchmark of what is acceptable. They can help minimise opportunities for abuse and help to prevent unfounded allegations.

### Criteria

- There are written guidelines for behaviour.
- 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 are disabled.
- There is guidance on expected and acceptable behaviour of children towards other's and particularly other children.
- 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.
- There are clear consequences for breaking the guidelines on behaviour that are clearly linked to organizational disciplinary procedures



## Standard 5: Equity

### What

Measures to ensure the needs of all children and young people to be protected from all forms of abuse are addressed. These measures should be written in accessible and easy to understand language.

### Why

Abuse happens to male and female children of all ages, ethnicity and social backgrounds, abilities, sexual orientation, religious belief and political persuasion. Some children, such as those from poor backgrounds and children who are disabled, are particularly vulnerable. Prejudice and discrimination can prevent some children getting the help they need. Organisations should take steps to combat discrimination and actively include all children and young people in their safeguarding measures.

### Criteria

- The safeguarding policy makes it clear that all children have equal rights to protection.
- 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 or disability, sexual orientation, social background and culture.
- Codes of conduct/behaviour include statements about the responsibility of adults and children to treat one another with dignity, respect, sensitivity and fairness.
- Codes of conduct/behaviour make it clear that discriminatory, offensive and violent behaviour are unacceptable and that complaints will be acted upon.
- Processes for dealing with complaints are fair and open to challenge through an appeals process.

## Standard 6: Communicating the 'keep children safe' message

### What

Ways of informing, consulting and listening to all relevant parties about how children involved in the sport are to be safeguarded.

### Why

Policies and procedures are only effective if people are aware of them, have some ownership of them, are involved in developing them (where possible) and have the opportunity to express their views on how they are working.

### Criteria

- 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.
- Children are made aware of their right to be safe from abuse and steps are taken to find out the views of children on policies and procedures and how they are working at regular intervals.
- 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, and should be provided in a format and language that can be easily understood by everyone, including children.

## Standard 7: Education and training for keeping children safe

### What

Opportunities to develop and maintain the necessary skills and understanding to safeguard children, based on the organisation's experiences and recognised good practice.

### Why

Everyone in contact with children has a role to play in their protection. They can only do so confidently and effectively if they are aware, have the necessary understanding and skills and the opportunity to practice and implement them. Organisations providing sporting activities for children have a responsibility to provide training and development opportunities for staff and volunteers, and, where relevant, their partner organisations.

### Criteria

- All members of staff, volunteers and other associates, including relevant partners, have training on safeguarding and child protection when they join the agency which 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.
- Staff members and volunteers with special responsibilities for keeping children safe have relevant training and regular opportunities to update their skills and knowledge.
- 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.
- Children are provided with standardised advice and support on keeping themselves and one another safe.
- Parents and the wider community are provided with standardised information, advice and support on safeguarding children.
- Annual training on safeguarding and the organisation's policies is conducted, and kept up to date in light of policy and procedure development

## Standard 8: Engagement with advice and support

### What

Arrangements made to provide essential information and support to those responsible for safeguarding children. Children and young people who are being abused are assisted to get help.

### Why

Child abuse is distressing and can be difficult to deal with. Organisations have a duty to ensure advice and support is in place to help people to play their part in protecting children. Children need someone to turn to when they are being abused. Often they do not know where to turn for help.

### Criteria

- Children are provided with information on where to go to for help and advice in relation to abuse, exploitation, harassment and bullying.
- The organisation ensures that staff members with special responsibilities for keeping children safe have engagement with specialist advice, support and information on child protection.
- Key stakeholders can demonstrate awareness of current advice and support relative to their level of engagement with children
- Contacts are established at a national and/or local level with relevant child protection agencies, Non-Governmental Organisations and community groups providing support on child protection that can provide information, support and assistance to children and staff.
- 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.

## Standard 9: Working with partners to meet the standards

### What

Action taken by the organisation to influence, encourage, and promote the adoption and implementation of measures to safeguard children by partner organisations.

### Why

A number of sports organisations have both a strategic and a service/activity delivery role in relation to children and young people. Where partnership, funding or commissioning relationships exist or develop with other organisations, the organisation should use its influence to promote the implementation of safeguarding measures. Partnership, funding and commissioning criteria should include a requirement for child protection policies and procedures. The organisation should provide or signpost support and resources in relation to implementing adequate safeguarding measures. The organisation should actively promote the adoption of the *International Standards for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport*.

### Criteria

- 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.
- A written agreement provides minimum standards for an agency's work with and through partners, and encourages further development beyond the minimum standards.
- The existence or development of a child safeguarding policy and procedures form an essential part of partnership agreements.

## Standard 10: Involving children

### What

The meaningful involvement of children in the development, implementation and monitoring of the organisation's safeguarding policies, practice, communications and training.

### Why

Safeguarding will only be effective if it is informed by the experiences of children. Children have a right to be heard and for their views to be considered in how safeguarding is managed in the organisation. The process of involving children will also help to empower them in relation to safeguarding.

### Criteria

- Managers and senior staff ensure that children are listened to and consulted and that their rights are met.
- 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.
- Children and parents/carers are consulted as part of a review of safeguarding policies and practices.
- Consultation with children is inclusive, age appropriate, child-friendly and respects children as the experts about their situation

## Standard 11: Monitoring and Evaluation

### What

The ongoing monitoring of compliance and effectiveness, involving all relevant stakeholders.

### Why

Without good monitoring it is not possible to know whether safeguarding is effective and where improvements and adaptations are needed, or recognise patterns of risk.

### Criteria

- Arrangements are in place to monitor compliance with child safeguarding measures put in place by the organisation.
- The organisation uses the experience of operating safeguarding and child protection systems to influence policy and practice development.
- All incidents, allegations of abuse and complaints are recorded and monitored.