

# **Development of a Case Management Tool for Child Protection Referrals within Sports Organisations**

Gill Joyce, United Kingdom, [gjoyce@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:gjoyce@nspcc.org.uk)

---

Keywords: sport, case, management, analysis, child, protection

## **Abstract**

The Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) was established in 2001, jointly funded by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and Sport England, to develop standards in partnership with sporting bodies and organisations that help to safeguard and protect children and young people in sport.

With support from the CPSU all of the sports in receipt of UK government funding are currently working to achieve the nine Standards Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Young People in Sport as a condition of continued funding.

UK legislative changes, government strategies and policies have all increased the focus upon the capacity for sport to enhance the life experiences of young people and promote their welfare.

In 2006 the Strategy for Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport was launched jointly by the CPSU and Sport England and called upon all partner government departments, agencies and organisations in England and across the United Kingdom to contribute to ensuring that the sport sector could "lead the way in keeping children safe from harm". There has been a high level of commitment demonstrated by the sports national governing bodies (NGBs), many of whom have had to manage significant concerns about both abuse and poor practice and the impact of this upon victims, staff and volunteers and their organisations.

The current evidence base regarding the incidence, context and nature of child abuse in major sports in the UK is however very limited. Evidence relating to the growing body of child protection cases and the management of concerns relating to welfare of participants by sporting organisations is urgently needed to inform education, training and future policy development in relation to child protection in sport.

Research evidence from analysis of data from cases managed by sports NGBs would undoubtedly promote even greater acceptance that child abuse is a "real" issue across sport in the UK that necessitates the development and implementation of common standards and guidelines. Without this ownership of the problem there will be a continued risk of perpetrators of abuse moving between sporting disciplines and organisations.

This paper describes the development of a case management and analysis tool using key indicators highlighted within an extensive literature review relating to child protection in sport and evidence made available to the researcher from NGBs and other key stakeholders in sport. From this body of evidence it is clear that guidance and policy within the UK remains heavily dependent upon evidence from research

undertaken abroad or from outside of the sporting arena about the abuse of children and young people and its impact.

Internationally a number of research studies have been published that have provided insight into poor practice, harassment and the abuse of children within sport. The case analysis tool has been developed to test out the existing evidence through generation of quantitative data which may support or refute the existing hypotheses. The tool also reflects the importance of qualitative approaches to social research and a more flexible methodology through collection of additional qualitative data. Through this data collection and analysis it is hoped that additional generic or sport-specific risk factors or recurrent themes may become apparent.

This tool was successfully piloted in July 2005 with a major sports NGB as the first stage of a research project. The initial findings indicate that concerns related to sexual abuse predominate but that this is only one extreme in a spectrum of abuses that include over-training, victimisation, bullying and undermining of young people's self-esteem.

Only by collating and analysing the data from many case files across different sports will it become possible to build a more accurate picture of the incidence and nature of abuse within sport

In the continuing research project throughout 2007/8 the tool has been employed to collate data from over 300 of another major sport NGB's child protection case files which is currently being analysed and aims to address, in part, a gap in the current UK evidence base regarding the incidence, context and nature of child abuse in major sports and the effectiveness of child protection policies and procedures that have been adopted and implemented by sports since the late 1990s.

## **References**

- Sport England/NSPCC (2002). Standards for Safeguarding & Protecting Children in Sport. NSPCC, Child Protection in Sport Unit: Leicester
- Children Act (2004). London: HMSO
- Department for Education and Skills (2004). Every Child Matters: Change for Children. [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/publications](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/publications)
- NSPCC/Sport England (2006). Strategy for Safeguarding and Protecting Children and Young People in Sport. NSPCC, Child Protection in Sport Unit: Leicester
- Joyce GA (2005). Child Protection in Sport. The Development & Piloting of a Case Analysis Tool for Child Protection Referrals for Sports Organisations. University of Huddersfield, MA Child Welfare and Protection