



SPORT INTEGRITY  
AUSTRALIA

Safeguarding  
in Sport

# A guide for managing high-risk activities

## Child safeguarding practices in sport



## CONTENT WARNING

This guide refers to high-risk situations involving children and young people that may be distressing for some readers.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

In the spirit of reconciliation, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea, rivers and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and future and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We recognise the outstanding contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make to sport in Australia and celebrate the power of sport to promote reconciliation and reduce inequality.



Artwork by Chern'ee Sutton

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## CONTACT US

Enquiries about the licence and any use of this document can be sent to:

Safeguarding  
Sport Integrity Australia  
PO Box 1744 FYSHWICK, ACT 2609 AUSTRALIA

Phone 1300 027 232

Email [safeguarding@sporintegrity.gov.au](mailto:safeguarding@sporintegrity.gov.au)

This publication is available at

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# Who is this guide for?

Ultimately, this guide is for the benefit of the millions of children and young people who engage in Australian sport. Every single one of them has the right to feel safe in sport, and it's everyone's responsibility in sport to keep them safe.

During the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Royal Commission) 408 survivors of child sexual abuse in sport and recreation shared their stories. These stories revealed high-risk environments and factors every sporting organisation must guard against, which are outlined in this booklet.

Sporting organisations must implement practices to protect children and young people from all types of harm and abuse, as well as promote their happiness and wellbeing. This is referred to as **child safeguarding**.

So, this guide is really directed at you, a **Person in a Position of Authority** in sport. This definition includes anyone in sport who has perceived or actual power, influence or decision-making responsibility over a child or young person. This could be board or committee members, CEOs and administrators, coaches, instructors, medical staff, officials, volunteers, teachers, parents, spectators, and so on. It does not need to be an adult, either. A 17-year-old coaching an under-13s squad is a Person in a Position of Authority because they are viewed by the squad as the responsible person they depend on.

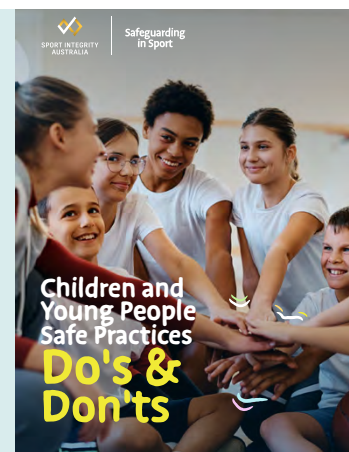
Each section in this guide provides a snapshot of an identified high risk in sport, and includes:

- An explanation about why it's considered a high risk
- Key actions your sporting organisation can take to limit the risks
- A case study to work through scenarios and help understanding
- Questions your sporting organisation can reflect on, with links to supporting resources.

Importantly, each section also considers the voices of children and young people. It lists the kind of things we need to hear from them in sport, to know they feel safe and protected.

Child safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and all Australian sporting organisations must address it. So, keep this guide as your ongoing reference. Use it as a whole or use each section independently as part of your progressive child safeguarding journey.

This guide is aimed at sporting organisations. It can be used in conjunction with the [Children and Young People Safe Practices Do's and Don'ts](#) booklet, which helps guide appropriate individual behaviour in sport.



# What are high-risk areas?

Understanding these high-risk factors is important so your sporting organisation is better positioned to implement strategies to prevent harm and abuse occurring.

## HIGH-RISK ENVIRONMENTS



Camps, overnight stays and excursions



Billeting and hosting environments



Travelling alone in a car with adults



Changerooms and concealed/obscured environments



Online, including internet, social media, associated technologies

## HIGH-RISK FACTORS

### ■ People in Positions of Authority exploiting power

For example, a coach may have significant influence and authority over a young person's sporting success. They could exploit the young person's ambition by offering unsupervised tuition or private transport.

### ■ Increased vulnerabilities

The unique needs of children and young people can potentially increase risks of harm. Vulnerabilities may include: limited interaction by parents/carers in their child's sport; gender diversity; First Nations background; cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds; children and young people with disability.

### ■ People in Positions of Authority crossing professional boundaries

An example may be a coach not seeking the child or young person's consent for legitimate physical touch when correcting an athlete's technique. This may be with the intention to de-sensitise a child to physical touch and further inappropriate contact.

### ■ The supply of adult material and alcohol

Survivors of child sexual abuse told the Royal Commission offenders commonly used alcohol and other enticements to groom them.

### ■ Valuing performance over child safety

The Royal Commission heard some sporting organisations took a win-at-all-costs approach, prioritising success over the welfare of children and young people. For example, children and young people in high performance pathways may be more vulnerable because they have a perceived over-reliance on their coaching team for success.

### ■ Normalised aggression or violence

Aggressive sporting cultures where violence is normalised can mask inappropriate behaviours by adults. Under the guise of 'it's how we do things around here', children and young people may be intimidated to speak up when they feel unsafe because they risk looking weak.

# National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

This guide is informed by the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (**the Principles**), which were developed from child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission.

The Principles provide sporting organisations with a framework to create child safe cultures and practices. The Principles are also referred to throughout this document as the **National Child Safe Principles**.



*National Principles, Child Safe Organisations  
(humanrights.gov.au)*

# Fundamentals to keep children and young people safe in sport

- Safeguarding in sport is everybody's responsibility.
- A child or young person is never responsible for the actions of the adult.
- All adults, including parents/carers, must be made aware of appropriate behaviours for working with children and young people.
- The organisation should provide all staff, volunteers, children and young people, parents/carers with information about what is appropriate behaviour from People in a Position of Authority and how to report any concerns.
- Children and young people should be provided with the ability to voice their concerns and the organisation should have age-appropriate reporting mechanisms in place.
- Children and young people should be supported and encouraged to participate in sport regardless of their gender identity, race, cultural or socio-economic background or religious beliefs.
- Children and young people with a disability should be supported and encouraged to participate in sport to the best of their ability.
- Children and young people should be encouraged to participate in decisions that affect them.
- The organisation must be aware of, and take steps to comply with, safeguarding requirements under state or territory law.
- A Person in a Position of Authority must always act within the scope of their role when working with children and young people.
- A Person in a Position of Authority must establish and maintain professional boundaries when working with children and young people, including in physical and online environments.
- The [United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) must be upheld.

# Understanding types of offenders

Developing and embedding effective safeguarding policies and practices is the best way to protect children and young people in your sport from all types of harm and abuse. This section will focus on common characteristics of child sex offenders, helping to inform your sport's overall child safeguarding efforts.

Research over the past 40 years provides insights into adults who sexually offend against children and young people in an organisational setting.

- Most offenders said they did not work with children with the intention of abusing them. These are known as **situational** and **opportunistic offenders**.
- A minority of offenders said they joined organisations with poor safeguarding practices with the intent of gaining access to children and young people. These are known as **determined offenders**.

The most important message here is that effective child safeguarding in your sport can be a powerful deterrent against all these types of offenders.

By implementing the National Child Safe Principles and taking recommended actions outlined throughout this booklet, you will be building a more robust child safeguarding culture where everyone within your sport can help play a role in protecting children and young people (see the table opposite).

**Effective safeguarding empowers people to speak up against inappropriate behaviour. It also creates an environment where children feel able to speak up, to be listened to and to be believed.**

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO DISPLAY HARMFUL SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS

Children and young people can also be sexually abused or harassed by other children. There are fundamental differences between adult-perpetrated child sexual abuse and the harmful sexual behaviours exhibited by children and young people. However, this does not diminish the significant harm that victims and survivors may endure as a result of these harmful behaviours.



# OFFENDER PROFILES

## SITUATIONAL

Would not consider themselves to have a sexual interest in children or young people.

Unlikely to have a criminal history.

.....

May have strong opinions against people who harm or abuse children.

May rationalise the abuse of the child or young person as being 'in a relationship' with them.

Behaviour may be triggered by a traumatic life event such as a marital breakdown or loss of job.

## OPPORTUNISTIC

Would likely not consider themselves to have a sexual interest in children and young people.

Likely to take advantage of a situation if an opportunity presents.

.....

Likely to have a history of low-level criminality.

May be considered a valued team member.

Will consider risks versus reward before acting.  
May engage in harmful behaviours if there is a low chance of being caught.

Less likely to have invested considerable time in grooming the victim or their protective adults.

## DETERMINED

Have a sexual interest in children and young people.

Likely to have chosen to work within sport to access children.

Likely to be highly skilled at manipulating those around them to gain unsupervised access to children.

.....

Likely to appear as a 'pillar of the community'.

Likely to manipulate colleagues and other adults so their actions go unreported.

May encourage others to break the rules to minimise their behaviour.

Likely to spend considerable time grooming children, young people and protective adults to seek one-on-one opportunities.

## EFFECTIVE CHILD SAFEGUARDING

By developing, embedding, promoting and consistently enforcing child safeguarding policies and practices in your sport, it creates a culture where:

- There is a clear understanding of appropriate interaction with children and young people.
- Inappropriate behaviour is recognised early and reported appropriately.
  - Opportunities for harm and abuse are reduced.
- Potential offenders are deterred or held to account for their behaviours.

# Maintaining professional boundaries

In general, it's accepted there is a power imbalance between an adult and a child or young person. Children and young people are often physically smaller, potentially dependent on the adult for their sport and there is a common expectation they will trust, respect and comply with adult instructions.

So, when a Person in a Position of Authority crosses a professional boundary, the relationship with children and young people can become blurred and increase the risk of harm and abuse.

Some inappropriate behaviours that cross professional boundaries may seem insignificant to begin with. They may even be unintentional. But, if left unchecked by your sporting organisation, these behaviours can increase in consequence. Therefore, it's important sporting organisations strictly and consistently enforce professional boundaries.

If inappropriate behaviours go unreported or unchallenged, it sends the wrong message to children and young people, but also to potential offenders of abuse.

If inappropriate behaviours are not addressed, from a child or young person's perspective:

- They may start to view these inappropriate behaviours as 'normal' and feel compelled to comply with demands from the Person in a Position of Authority.
- They may believe they are responsible for the actions of the perpetrator.
- They may also feel they have a 'special relationship' with the perpetrator or feel their sporting success is dependent on them. This may influence them to protect their abuser.

If inappropriate behaviours are not addressed, from a potential offender's perspective:

- They may be testing (grooming) the child or young person by trying to normalise their inappropriate behaviour and see if it goes unreported.
- They may be testing the organisation's response to their behaviour, with the intention of escalating behaviour if it goes unchallenged.
- They may be testing to see if a colleague or a supervisor responds to enforce policies and practices.
- They may be testing the organisation to see if other policies, codes, or practices are enforced consistently, which could lead to crossing other behavioural boundaries unrelated to safeguarding (e.g. use of banned drugs or encouraging others to cross similar boundaries).

It is important to note, a Person in a Position of Authority could be a child or young person under 18 (e.g. a coach for a younger aged team) and they may require some additional support to understand and maintain professional boundaries.

## KEY ACTIONS TO REDUCE THIS RISK

- ✔ Create an organisational culture where children and young people are valued and respected. Achieve this by having clear safeguarding policies, practices and codes of conduct that are enforced and embedded into day-to-day practices.
- ✔ Provide guidance on acceptable and unacceptable behaviours for People in Positions of Authority in your safeguarding policies and practices. Include this information and training during induction processes for staff and volunteers. Ensure it remains easily visible and accessible at all times e.g. on your website.
- ✔ Ensure all People in Positions of Authority are thoroughly educated on professional boundaries and expectations. Ensure this training is regularly updated with contemporary safeguarding methods. Sport Integrity Australia offers free online safeguarding education courses.
- ✔ Educate children and young people on what appropriate and inappropriate behaviours from a Person in a Position of Authority look like. This may make them more confident to speak up if they experience or witness behaviours that make them uncomfortable.
- ✔ Ensure the reporting process for children and young people is age-appropriate and minimises any further trauma. Promote Sport Integrity Australia's educational resources produced specifically for children or create your own. Use posters and hold face-to-face meetings to inform children and young people about who they can report to if they feel unsafe.
- ✔ Educate members of your organisation on transparent reporting mechanisms related to safeguarding. Make it clear what needs to be reported, when, where, to whom and how this should happen. Promote the Sport Integrity Australia reporting flowchart, listed in resources at the end of this section.
- ✔ Provide parents, carers and your sport community members with information on what appropriate and inappropriate behaviours look like. Consider sharing information in your membership newsletters, on your website and on social media. Engage them in decisions around your safeguarding policies and practices through forums or feedback opportunities.
- ✔ Make sure you conduct formal recruitment processes with a focus on child safeguarding, including reference checks, relevant background screening and working with children checks.



## CASE STUDY

Jody is a high performance athlete. Her coach, Graham, begins telling her about the difficulties he's having in his marriage. He tells Jody she understands him better than his wife. He also asks Jody if she has a boyfriend and what kind of boys she likes.

Graham is an excellent coach and Jody believes his coaching is crucial to her making the representative squad. But she knows the conversations Graham is having with her are not focused on her sporting performances.

She decides to raise her concerns with her Member Protection Information Officer (MPIO).

### Addressing this conduct breach effectively

The club speaks to Graham and reminds him of acceptable behaviours and what constitutes inappropriate behaviour when working with children and young people.

The club asks Graham to complete refresher training in child safeguarding and member protection.

The club works with Jody and her family to understand what she needs to feel safe when at training.

The club reviews its policies and practices to ensure all children and young people are educated in an age-appropriate way on how to raise concerns.

### Failing to respond effectively

The MPIO thinks Jody is making excuses and unfairly blaming her experienced coach for not training well lately. The MPIO doesn't follow up the complaint with the sport's administration, Jody or her family.

Graham's behaviour escalates and he begins messaging Jody privately on social media and commenting on her photographs, particularly if she is in pictures with boys. Graham's comments focus on Jody's physical appearance and how he enjoys spending time with her during training.

Jody doesn't know how to stop Graham from messaging her and finally decides to drop-out of the sport.

### How the organisation could have reduced risks of this happening

The club could have strong awareness and education programs in place for coaches and participants, ensuring everyone understands professional boundaries when working with children and young people.

These education and awareness programs should include specific examples of unprofessional behaviours. In this case, the unprofessional behaviour is a Person in a Position of Authority sharing inappropriate details about personal relationships and asking personal questions of a young person under their duty of care.

As Jody brought the concern to the attention of the MPIO early, the club can review the availability and accessibility of its reporting process and consider if other athletes feel comfortable raising concerns.

# CHILD'S VOICE

## WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE SAYING IN OUR SPORT

I know when an adult is acting the way they should.

My coaches and managers are professional, dedicated and help me get better at my sport.

I know who to speak to if anyone makes me feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

### REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SPORTING ORGANISATION

- Are our staff and volunteers educated and aware of their professional boundaries? How do we know this? How do we measure this?
- Who in our organisation is responsible for ensuring all staff and volunteers are aware of their professional responsibilities?
- How have we informed our community of ways we uphold professional boundaries and prioritise child safety?
- Have we sought feedback from children and young people and their families and communities? Have we advocated for what matters to them?
- Do we have effective, efficient, and child-focused processes and procedures for dealing with unprofessional and illegal behaviour? How do we measure effectiveness? How are our child safe policies communicated to the public?

### FIND OUT MORE

Check out these resources on the [Sport Integrity Australia](#) website:

- Recruitment/screening of staff & volunteers in child-related positions booklet
- Recruitment/screening checklist
- Induction of new volunteers & staff checklist
- Reporting and responding to a breach of safeguarding children and young people policy flowchart
- How your sport looks after kids (for ages 7–12)
- How your sport looks after participants (for ages 13–17)

# Environmental hazards and risks

Managing your sport's facilities and environments is extremely important to keep children and young people safe. A clear line of visibility for active supervision is critical, helping to prevent inappropriate one-on-one interactions between an adult and a child/young person.

When you consider risks in your sporting environments, physical environments might be the first areas that come to mind, like training or competition venues. It's also important to consider digital environments, like online, which we'll focus on later in this guide.

Those looking to abuse children and young people often seek unsupervised opportunities. A determined offender may try to move a child or young person to an isolated area away from protective adults. This means areas that are isolated, quiet, dimly lit, or obstructed from view pose a higher risk.

Environmental factors can play a significant role in situational abuse. For example, children and young people may be in a more vulnerable position in a changeroom if not appropriately supervised. A coach conducting training in a closed environment without additional adult supervision may be more willing to physically or emotionally harm children or young people.

Children and young people with disability may face specific environmental risks, especially where they rely on a Person in a Position of Authority for assistance to access areas.

Areas of environmental risks include anywhere:

- An adult is able to be alone with a child or young person (including direct private contact online).
- Children and young people may already be more vulnerable (e.g. changerooms or toilets).
- With an obstructed line of sight from other people (e.g. a closed-off area not visible to passersby).
- Parents or additional supervisors are prohibited from entering or viewing.
- With a low number of people moving through them.
- Naturally dark or dimly lit (e.g. equipment sheds).



## KEY ACTIONS TO REDUCE THIS RISK

- ✓ Update your child safe risk management plan, identifying supervision requirements and areas of risk.
- ✓ Embed policies and practices around supervision, ensuring all children and young people are supervised by an adequate ratio of adults to children e.g. supervision in changerooms is always done by a minimum of two adults of the same gender as the young people.
- ✓ Restrict coaches from conducting one-on-one or closed training sessions with children and young people. Parents and carers should have the option to observe.
- ✓ Minimise environmental risk factors within your control e.g. enforcing out-of-bounds areas and increasing lighting in darker areas.
- ✓ Ensure adequate supervision and clear natural lines of sight.
- ✓ Inform everyone in your organisation, including staff, parents/carers, spectators and volunteers, that keeping children and young people safe is everybody's responsibility e.g. place posters or other resources around facilities promoting: 'if you see something, say something'.
- ✓ Provide children and young people with access to personal protective behaviours programs and educate them to recognise when they feel unsafe and what to do.
- ✓ Prepare separate child safe risk management plans for one-off events or competitions.
- ✓ Ensure people in the organisation receive regular training in contemporary child safeguarding methods, such as online safety.
- ✓ Ensure that all officials are aware of their roles and responsibilities, expectations and codes of conduct.



## CASE STUDY

Mike coaches high performance athletes and is preparing for state championships. He's frustrated by parents hanging around, shouting, criticising their child, and overruling his instructions from the sideline.

He decides to remove all spectators from training and closes his session. Once the spectators have been removed Mike decides he's going to ramp-up training. Without the natural supervision of the parents, Mike begins to raise his voice and verbally demean and swear at children.

A volunteer who works as groundskeeper at the venue witnesses Mike's behaviour and decides to raise it with the organisation.

### Addressing this conduct breach effectively

The organisation asks Mike to attend a meeting to discuss the incident.

The organisation highlights that attendance of parents/carers at training is a safeguarding practice for both participants and officials, and that not permitting them to watch their children is a breach.

The organisation tells Mike that if he has concerns with parent/carer conduct at training, it needs to be raised for the organisation to manage.

The organisation reminds Mike of the expected behaviour required of officials and the code of conduct he has signed and agreed to.

Mike is required to undertake refresher training in safeguarding and member protection.

The organisation sends an internal email to all officials reaffirming its safeguarding practice that all parents/carers are able to watch their child train and play. It reminds officials that any concerns relating to the behaviour of parents/carers should be raised with the organisation.

### Failing to respond effectively

As the report did not come from the parents/carers, the organisation deems the incident is not serious enough to investigate. No action is taken.

Mike continues to conduct closed training sessions and his behaviour becomes increasingly volatile and aggressive.

After one session, a child participant tells their parent that Mike verbally abused and pushed him. The parent reports the incident to the police, who launch an investigation.

An anonymous report is also made to the media, who publish an article about poor coaching practices at the organisation, causing damage to its reputation.

Disturbed by the lack of action, parents relocate their children to other clubs.

### How the organisation could have reduced risks of this happening

The organisation could have reduced risks by having a policy that requires a minimum level of parental supervision for all training sessions, and making parents, coaches, and participants aware of this policy.

Ideally, this policy contains emergency planning to protect children and young people. For example, a coach may need to close a training session in extreme circumstances due to parents or spectators becoming hostile or violent and there is immediate risk of harm to children and young people. If a session is closed under these circumstances, the policy should have a requirement for a minimum number of supervising adults to remain present.

The policy should provide for a decision-making authority. This would require decisions to be made by management, after addressing the child safe risk management plan.

The organisation could schedule training so at least two teams are attending sessions at the same time, enabling a second coach to be within the same environment at the same time.

The organisation could have offered education, training or information to parents and members of the club on acceptable sideline behaviour and how to best support children in sport settings. The organisation could also have provided education and support for the coach on how to handle poor sideline behaviour in a professional way.



# CHILD'S VOICE

## WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE SAYING IN OUR SPORT

I feel safe when I'm here.

The organisation supports me in staying safe by providing me with access to information and help.

The people here are always concerned about our safety and wellbeing.

### REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SPORTING ORGANISATION

- How would our sport organisation handle the case study in this section? What could've been done differently and what else could be done?
- What supervision policy and practices does our organisation have in place?
- What areas of our physical environment present risks to keeping children safe?
- How do we ensure children know how to recognise unsafe environments?
- How do we invite parents and volunteers to engage in our spaces and events?

### FIND OUT MORE

Check out these resources on the [Sport Integrity Australia](#) website:

- Safeguarding considerations for events held in public areas booklet
- Events held in public areas checklist
- Organising day trips involving children & young people in sport booklet
- Day trips & competitions checklist
- Events involving overnight stays booklet
- Overnight/extended stays travel checklist
- Keeping change room facilities safe for children and young people

# Use of electronic devices and social media

Online environments are one of the fastest growing risks in sport. Just like physical environments, online environments require supervision to ensure children and young people are safe.

The online environment can provide an adult with instant access to communicate with children and young people in a private setting. This raises a spectrum of risks, from exposing them to inappropriate adult content through to deliberate online grooming and abuse.

Online risks to children and young people in sport can include:

- Bullying and harassment on social media or other online environments.
- Adults seeking a connection that is unprofessional and beyond the scope of their role in sport.
- Exposing them to inappropriate adult content, ideologies and conversations, including content of a sexual nature.
- One-on-one communication with children and young people with the deliberate intention of grooming them by testing their response to inappropriate conversation or content.
- Soliciting child sexual abuse material from them.

A sporting organisation's social media and membership apps can also unintentionally provide identity information about children and young people that puts them at risk. They may be escaping a domestic violence situation, or are being targeted by sophisticated online child abuse offenders who can use the personal information to threaten, stalk and target a victim.



## KEY ACTIONS TO REDUCE THIS RISK

- ✓ Have a robust recruitment policy that includes your state or territory's Working with Children Checks (or equivalent).
- ✓ Develop a policy around appropriate communication practices, social media usage, giving more than one person administrator rights to the platform.
- ✓ Ensure that access to a child's registration details and their personal game day information are not publicly available on your sport's membership apps.
- ✓ Ensure all staff and volunteers complete safeguarding education that provides information about the organisation's policies, including social media policies, codes of conduct and values. This should include information on relevant reporting methods.
- ✓ Educate children and young people on what appropriate and inappropriate communication looks like at your organisation. Provide information and access to personal protective behaviours and online safety programs.
- ✓ Inform parents about how your organisation will communicate with them and their children.
- ✓ Send all communications from an official organisation account, including emails from an organisation specific email address, and social media from official accounts.



## CASE STUDY

Oliver participates with his local under-12 football team. His coach is always making jokes, which the whole team thinks are funny.

The coach knows Oliver wants to play football professionally and offers to provide him individual training. Oliver and his parents are excited and thankful. Prior to each coaching session, the coach shakes Oliver's hand. After each session, the coach congratulates Oliver by giving him a hug.

After a few weeks, the coach asks Oliver if he has his own mobile phone, as it would be easier to arrange sessions and provide feedback to him. Oliver gives the coach his phone number.

Over the next few months, the coach continues providing individual sessions. He also begins attending Oliver's other sporting activities, suggesting he can provide feedback to help his football.

Late one night, Oliver appears upset and his mum asks if he's okay. Initially Oliver says he is fine, but eventually he shows his parents his phone. The coach has been sending text messages that have become increasingly personal and inappropriate.

### Addressing this conduct breach effectively

The parents notify the club and provide copies of the text messages. The club reports it to the police and encourages the parents to do the same.

The club meets with the coach, where they inform him that he will be suspended until an investigation has been completed.

The club also informs their association. The association implements a suspension pending the outcome of the police investigation.

The coach is arrested and the matter is referred to court. The coach is found not guilty based on insufficient evidence.

With the court case finalised, the club and association can pursue their own disciplinary processes. The association refers the coach to a disciplinary hearing as per the rules of their sport. The coach is suspended from working with children in the sport indefinitely. This information is passed on to the national body.

### Failing to respond effectively

The club is alerted to the coach's behaviour but does not take any action or report the matter.

The parent reports the matter to the police. The coach is arrested and the matter is referred to court. The coach is found not guilty based on insufficient evidence.

Media reports surface about the club's handling of the matter. Government departments and the association investigate the club for not implementing safeguarding requirements.

Oliver is not protected by the club and other children are put at risk by the lack of action taken.

The club's reputation is damaged, and a number of parents move their children to other clubs over safety concerns causing the club's previously renowned pathways program to be significantly weakened.

### How the organisation could have reduced risks of this happening

The organisation should ensure all coaches undergo the appropriate screening when being engaged, including reference checks and having a valid Working with Children Check (or equivalent). The organisation could have a more robust approach to supervising the conduct of coaches, with clear lines of intervention when risk factors arise.

Safeguarding policies and practices around professional boundaries, private coaching, and online communication – and including these in any onboarding – could have deterred the coach from joining the club or his subsequent actions.

Providing education to parents, carers, children and young people about one-on-one electronic communication would have increased chances of the coach's behaviour being identified earlier.

# CHILD'S VOICE

## WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE SAYING IN OUR SPORT

I know I shouldn't connect on social media with adults from my sport.

My sporting organisation keeps my parents up to date with important information about my involvement in my sport.

I know how to find information about how to stay safe online.

### REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SPORTING ORGANISATION

- Are our staff and volunteers educated and aware of their professional boundaries online? Do we have a mechanism to measure this?
- What mechanisms/platforms do we use to communicate with parents and athletes? Are these safe and are they working well?
- How do we inform our community of ways we uphold professional boundaries in all our communications, including online?
- Have we sought feedback from children and young people about their interactions online and how they would like to be engaged?
- Do children and young people in our sport understand what is and isn't okay online. Do they know who to go to if rules are broken? What evidence do we have of their understanding?
- Do we have professional email addresses for staff who will need to communicate with parents in an official capacity?

### FIND OUT MORE

Check out these resources on the [Sport Integrity Australia](#) website and elsewhere:

- Communicating online/electronically with children & young people booklet
- eSafety Commissioner's sport hub for online safety [esafety.gov.au/communities/sport](https://esafety.gov.au/communities/sport)

# Photography, images and videos

Used responsibly, photos and video of children and young people playing sport can be treasured memories for participants, families and friends. Used irresponsibly, these images can cause distress, ongoing harm and even be unlawful.

Consent is critical. This involves permission from the child or young person and their parents/carers, preferably in advance of the images being taken.

Once images are captured, particularly on an electronic device, the person in the image may have no control. This can be particularly problematic if images are taken by a spectator or someone who isn't sanctioned by your sporting organisation. If these images are shared online, there is little control over who sees them, or how they are used. If this goes against the wishes of a child or young person, or puts them in danger of abuse, it can cause serious psychological harm.

Risks of taking unauthorised photographs or videos of children and young people include:

- Images being shared further without their consent
- Exposing them to bullying or online trolling
- Exposing their identity or details about their whereabouts
- Images being used to create child-abuse material.

Sporting images can make children and young people easily identifiable by their uniforms and the location of the sporting organisation. This may have implications for some children and young people if they are a part of family court proceedings or fleeing domestic violence. In some cases, they may legally be under parental responsibility of the Minister and the images require Ministerial consent. Some offenders may use the identifiable information in images to locate and groom children or even generate false social media identities to groom other children and young people.

Uniforms can sometimes be tight-fitting or minimal to aid sporting movement. If inappropriate images of children and young people in compromising positions are used, it can subject them to online bullying or trolling, or even be re-purposed for the creation of child-abuse material.

## KEY ACTIONS TO REDUCE THIS RISK

- ✓ Have a robust policy on the appropriate taking, recording, sharing, storage and deletion of photographs and videos.
- ✓ Ensure you receive appropriate consent for taking and using images and video content.
- ✓ Review all images of children and young people carefully prior to use on a website, social media channel, or other publications. Choose images that positively showcase the participant, event and sport.
- ✓ Ensure images are stored securely and destroyed or deleted as soon as they are no longer required.
- ✓ For sporting events held in a public area, inform parents, carers and participants that it is lawful for photographs and videos to be taken without consent.
- ✓ If consent is not provided by the parent/carer and child/young person, images should not be taken. Have a process for identifying participants who do not consent e.g. wearing an identifying wrist band.
- ✓ Remind spectators not to post images of children and young people in club uniform on their social media, without the consent of the child, young person, and their parent.
- ✓ Educate officials, participants and parents on safe practices relating to taking and using images. This should include when and how teammates take and use images.
- ✓ Do not use a participant's full name or other identifying details when associated with photographs of them online.



## CASE STUDY

Aya represents the state in artistic gymnastics. Her uniform is very bright and tight-fitting. She competes at a national event, where the club has arranged for a photographer to take photos. Neither Aya, nor her parents, were notified or asked for their consent about photos being taken of her.

Aya wins the competition and images appear on the club's social media page to celebrate. One of the photos is of her competing, with her uniform riding up. People on social media comment on Aya's uniform and personal appearance, mocking her and making memes using the image.

Aya also receives direct messages on social media mocking her appearance.

Aya asks the club to remove the post.

### Addressing this conduct breach effectively

The club immediately removes the post and replaces it with an apology to Aya.

The club also posts a message reminding their social media followers that any inappropriate comments or private messages will result in further action. The message includes a link to their social media policy.

The club investigates the comments made by people on the social media page and identifies that some of the comments were made by participants of the club. This results in disciplinary action against these participants.

The club also contacts their governing body to seek advice on best practices around photography and filming for the purpose of updating their policies and procedures.

Following this incident, the club ensures that all participants are provided with a photography consent form in preparation for the next event, where a photographer will again be present. The club also identifies approval steps to be taken if consent is not provided in advance.

### Failing to respond effectively

The club dismisses Aya's concerns and suggests she stands up to the bullies. The club suggests to Aya that the trolling is out of jealousy because she came first in the competition and not to worry about it.

The club paid for the photographer and owns the images, and so they tell Aya it's best not to remove the photos because her achievement will attract other gymnasts to the club.

Aya's parents are not satisfied with the club's response. They had not provided consent for the photos and so they submit a report to the National Sporting Organisation (NSO).

The NSO determines the club breached the Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and submits a report to Sport Integrity Australia.

The club is now required to remove the photographs and undertake education.

Disappointed by the experience, Aya decides to move clubs.

### How the organisation could have reduced risks of this happening

The club should have informed athletes and parents ahead of the event that a photographer would be present. They should have supplied consent forms to participants and their parents/carers for photos to be taken and used on official club accounts.

The club could have selected more appropriate images, deleting photos that showed competitors in unflattering or compromising positions.

Once the photos were posted on social media, the club could have limited the trolling and bullying related to Aya's photo by monitoring the post and removing/hiding any negative engagements as soon as they arose.

If negative comments continued, they could have proactively taken down the image down before even receiving the request from Aya and her family. The club could, as part of their social media policy, reserve the right to remove any social media post that may cause harm to the club or its members.

The club could limit this negative trolling behaviour by enforcing robust safeguarding policies and practices, including a social media policy, Code of Conduct and values.



# CHILD'S VOICE

## WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE SAYING IN OUR SPORT

I'm always asked before the club takes any photos of me. I fill in a form signed by my parent/carer.

I know not to post pictures or videos of my teammates without asking them first.

When the club asked me if they could post photos of me, I agreed because it gives my family a chance to see me playing and enjoying sport.

### REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SPORTING ORGANISATION

- What do we take and use photographs for? How do we make sure this is done in a lawful and respectful way?
- What consent forms do we have in place for images being taken and used?
- When do we seek consent?
- How do we engage children and their parents to approve the use of any photographs or videos they feature in?
- How do we ensure that photographers, parents and spectators at our events are aware of consent regulations?
- Who has access to our social media pages and how are they informed on appropriate content for children and young people?

### FIND OUT MORE

Check out these resources on the [Sport Integrity Australia](#) website and elsewhere:

- Photography/filming of children & young people in sport booklet
- Sporting organisation photography/filming consent form
- Photo and video dos poster
- Recruitment/screening of staff & volunteers in child-related positions booklet
- Recruitment/screening checklist
- Induction of new volunteers & staff checklist
- eSafety Commissioner's sport hub for online safety [esafety.gov.au/communities/sport](https://esafety.gov.au/communities/sport)

# Physical contact

Physical contact with children and young people may sometimes be necessary to correct technique, posture and stance, to re-position equipment, or to administer first aid and medical treatment. However, care should always be taken. Before any physical contact with a child or young person, consider:

- Is it actually required? Is there a non-physical option?
- Is it within the context of the sport activity and your role within the sport?
- Have you asked the child or young person for consent?
- Are you respecting the personal space of the child or young person?
- If medical or remedial care is required, is this being performed by the appropriately qualified person?

Physical touch of children and young people carries risks. A coach, for example, may be too rough in re-positioning a child or young person and cause injury or harm. A person may administer first aid or remedial treatment without proper training and cause additional damage to someone who has sustained an injury.

Touch can be used as a way to groom children for further abuse. It may seemingly begin innocently, testing the child or young person's reluctance. If the child or young person does not have an adverse response, touching may escalate to being more inappropriate, or even sexual in nature.

A child or young person may be, or may have been, abused by a person outside of your organisation and touching them could trigger further trauma.

## KEY ACTIONS TO REDUCE THIS RISK

- ✔ Set clear guidelines around physical contact, including appropriate and inappropriate touch. Develop age-appropriate resources about what this looks like to all participants.
- ✔ Ensure staff and volunteers receive training and education in child safeguarding practices including appropriate physical conduct with children and young people.
- ✔ Place posters and information around your facilities that explain to children and young people who they should talk to if they feel unsafe.
- ✔ Encourage coaches to provide instruction or direction without the need for physical touch.
- ✔ Provide children and young people with education and training on protective behaviours in sport.
- ✔ Provide children and young people with information about what safe physical touch looks like, including in their interactions with teammates and other young people.



## CASE STUDY

Isha is a high performing athlete in combat sports. Her coach is known among the young athletes to be overly 'touchy' at training, particularly with female athletes.

Isha tries to distance herself from her coach at training, attempting to avoid being used for demonstrations, as she isn't comfortable with being touched. Increasingly, the coach asks Isha to help demonstrate moves and will then touch her to show other athletes her correct posture. Isha asks him repeatedly to not touch her. Her coach apologises but continues to do it.

At Nationals, Isha finishes her event. As she comes off the mat, her coach grabs the waistline of her pants and pulls her into a hug. Isha decides to raise it with the club's Member Protection Information Officer (MPIO).

### Addressing this conduct breach effectively

The MPIO advises Isha and her parents to submit her complaint to the club.

On receipt of the complaint, the club meets with Isha and her parents to get more information and find out what she requires to feel comfortable to continue participating.

The club meets with the coach and reinforces that physical contact with an athlete should only occur when required to demonstrate a technique or move related to the sport. The club reiterates that touching is only permissible with consent from the athlete.

The club also reinforces that any celebratory actions should not be physically intrusive on the athletes. The club recommends using words, high-fives or pats on the back to express their excitement.

Following the meeting, the coach agrees to apologise to Isha, only use athletes that consent to being involved in demonstrations, and to undertake additional education in safeguarding.

The club appoints a board member to supervise the coach for a period of time to ensure he follows through on these requirements.

### Failing to respond effectively

The MPIO suggests Isha raise the issue with her coach.

Isha does so and her coach apologises. He explains he was just so happy for her and he let his emotions get the better of him. He also apologises to her parents who agree Isha can be a little over sensitive.

At training the coach begins to use Isha more frequently for demonstrations, sometimes making fun of how sensitive she is. His touching during these demonstrations becomes increasingly inappropriate.

One day as Isha is leaving training, her coach asks her if she's over her touching issues.

Isha makes the decision to leave the club, telling her parents her coach makes her feel very uncomfortable.

### How the organisation could have reduced risks of this happening

The organisation should ensure all participants and People in a Position of Authority have a strong understanding of personal and professional boundaries when it comes to touch for the purpose of sport.

The coach was known by other athletes to be overly touchy. This may have been raised as an issue earlier in a club with strong reporting mechanisms as well as a better understanding of acceptable physical contact.

# CHILD'S VOICE

## WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE SAYING IN OUR SPORT

It's my body,  
I decide.

I know who to  
speak to if I feel  
uncomfortable  
with someone  
touching me.

Nobody would  
touch me without  
my permission.

### REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SPORTING ORGANISATION

- How do we ensure the people training children and young people are doing so for the right reasons?
- Do coaches understand why consent around touch is important?
- What education do we have in place for People in Positions of Authority to make sure they know how to demonstrate or correct technique appropriately?
- How do we ensure our children and young people know what appropriate touch feels like?
- Do we promote appropriate touch in any way, such as social media posts, posters etc?
- Do our members know who to speak to if someone is making them feel uncomfortable?

### FIND OUT MORE

Check out these resources on the [Sport Integrity Australia](#) website:

- Recruitment/screening of staff & volunteers in child-related positions booklet
- Recruitment/screening checklist
- Induction of new volunteers & staff checklist
- How your sport looks after kids (for ages 7–12)
- How your sport looks after young people (for ages 13–17)

# Overnight stays and travel

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse highlighted overnight stays and one-on-one transportation involving an adult and child/young person as situations that can create high-risk environments.

These situations carry greater risk because children and young people:

- Are reliant on the adults they are travelling with
- May not receive the same level of supervision they would get from their parents/carers
- May feel uneasy and more vulnerable in unfamiliar locations, away from home
- May have less access to contact their family, carers or other trusted adults
- May be exposed to adult situations, including drugs, alcohol or explicit content
- May not have their nutritional needs appropriately met.

Well-planned travel and overnight stays are critical for protecting children and young people in sport. Alternatively, poor planning can provide situations and opportunities for all types of adult offenders – opportunistic, situational and determined offenders – to harm and abuse.

Left alone with a child, unsupervised, an offender can exploit a child or young person's reliance on them, or attempt to groom them and reduce their inhibitions to being abused. This could be through offers of gifts or things like alcohol. Let's explore planning and supervision in detail.



## KEY ACTIONS TO REDUCE THIS RISK

- ✓ Embed policies and practices around supervision, travel, transport and sleeping arrangements. This starts with organisational planning and implementing safeguarding best practice as a non-negotiable during the planning of any travel or overnight stays.
- ✓ When organising an overnight stay, undertake a detailed risk assessment on all aspects including: accommodation; travel; supervision requirements; and possible hazards.
- ✓ Obtain informed written consent from parents/carers of children and young people.
- ✓ Provide parents/carers with a detailed itinerary covering all aspects of the trip. Include notes of any details that may be subject to change, all areas of potential risk and what will happen in the case of an emergency. Communicate any changes to parents and carers as soon as changes are known.
- ✓ Prior to the trip, hold a meeting with parents, carers and participants to outline details of the trip, including expectations and responsibilities. Invite feedback.
- ✓ When booking accommodation, ensure each child and young person has their own bed. If sharing rooms, participants should be of the same age and gender.
- ✓ Appoint the adequate number of supervisors for the trip, ensuring there is appropriate gender representation and they have valid working with children checks (or equivalent) for the destination area. If the appropriate number of supervisors cannot be appointed, the trip should not go ahead.
- ✓ Brief these supervisors on their roles and responsibilities in advance of the trip.
- ✓ Once a trip or overnight stay is underway, supervisors should prioritise safety, privacy, and comfort by providing:
  - Appropriate supervision
  - Access to contact parents, carers, or other trusted adults
  - Access to appropriate and safe accommodation and rooming conditions
  - Rules and restrictions to be followed by everyone on the trip
  - Safeguarding contact information, which should be available in each room.



## CASE STUDY

A group of children travel interstate with their club for a competition. The club keeps costs down by staying at a local camp site. The club undertakes some due diligence by: providing parents and carers with the itinerary and getting them to sign consent forms; collecting medical information and emergency contacts; ensuring sufficient ratios of adult supervisors to children.

The club verifies working with children checks of all supervisors.

The camp site has dormitory accommodation with bunks. Each child has their own bed, but the shower facilities are in a separate block.

Adult officials and children shower in the same facilities at the same time.

One evening, some adults at the camp site encourage children to attend the facility's sauna.

Some adults are naked.

When they return home, some children tell their parents they did not feel comfortable showering with adults or being in the sauna. Concerned parents contact the club.

### Addressing this conduct breach effectively

The club consults further with children and their parents to ask if they want to raise any more concerns about their safety and wellbeing while at camp.

The club determines it's not appropriate for children to shower alongside adults and updates its child safe risk management template for travelling and overnight stays. If separate shower facilities are not available, a roster system must be implemented so adults and children do not shower at the same time. The update also states appropriate supervision must be provided, taking into account the gender, privacy and safety needs of the children.

The club investigates the sauna complaints, resulting in a review of the club's child safe policy and practices. The club makes it clear that children and young people must not be subjected to adult nudity. The club implements compulsory information sessions for all athletes and officials prior to overnight stays, reinforcing its child safe education and practices.

### Failing to respond effectively

The club reviews the complaints and tells parents they've done their role by providing consent forms. The parents should have made themselves aware any potential risks of the shared accommodation.

The club says the naked adults in the sauna were other visitors at the camp site, not part of their club. Given no child made a report during the trip, or had been harmed, the club says these complaints are now beyond their control.

The club suggests parents apologise to the adult supervisors for the embarrassment their complaints have caused.

Outraged with the club's response and the lack of consideration shown for the safety of their children, some parents contact local media about the club's conduct.

The club faces significant media scrutiny over the issue and several parents withdraw their children from the club.

### How the organisation could have reduced risks of this happening

The club should have completed a thorough risk assessment before staying at the accommodation, identifying the shared shower block and sauna facilities as potential risk areas. By sharing this information with parents and carers, it would have helped everyone make an informed decision about whether to ban or restrict access to the sauna.

The club should have made this decision clear to children on arrival at the accommodation. The club also should have provided the children with information about who to speak to if they felt unsafe or upset during the trip.

The club should have provided a thorough briefing to adult officials and supervisors before travelling. This briefing should have covered how to create and maintain a child-safe environment.



# CHILD'S VOICE

## WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE SAYING IN OUR SPORT

I feel safe when I travel away with my team.

On a trip, I know who I can speak to if I am feeling unsure, uncomfortable or concerned.

I can always speak to my parent or carer when I am away.

Our team officials always keep us updated with what is happening each day when I'm away.

### REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SPORTING ORGANISATION

- Who is responsible for organising overnight stays? Are they informed about our safeguarding protocols?
- How are supervisors nominated and selected for overnight stays?
- How are parents and carers informed of itineraries, accommodation and transport plans, and any changes that happen?
- What information do we provide to parents or carers when seeking consent for the overnight stay?
- Who is responsible for managing our Child Safe Risk Management Template? How are risk mitigation activities defined and agreed upon?
- How do we provide children with the ability to speak with their families while they are away?

### FIND OUT MORE

Check out these resources on the [Sport Integrity Australia](#) website:

- Overnight/extended stays travel checklist
- Events involving overnight stays booklet
- Day trips & competitions checklist
- Transporting children & young people in sport factsheet
- Recruitment/screening of staff & volunteers in child-related positions booklet
- Recruitment/screening checklist
- Induction of new volunteers & staff checklist

# Favouritism and gift giving

Favouritism and gift giving can begin as seemingly small acts of kindness and caring from an adult to a child or young person, but these behaviours can build up over time. They can even be the start of child grooming.

By allowing small acts of favouritism and gift giving to start, it can be difficult to identify when these behaviours become more inappropriate. This is why it is a high-risk behaviour for children and young people in sport.

Grooming involves building a trusting relationship with a child or young person, and even their family, for the purpose of abuse. These grooming behaviours can progressively test a child's tolerance to abuse. This may take place over weeks, months or even years and involves a level of manipulation. But then things can change quickly, from something that appears to be positive for a child or young person, to being very frightening and isolating.

An adult attempting to groom a child or young person could try to gain their trust, and test their tolerance to abuse, by:

- Spending more time with them, establishing a 'special relationship' by engaging with them in personal stories and concerns.
- Offering to do things for them and their family, like transporting them to social events or looking after them when their parent or carer needs help.
- Giving them special attention by continually using them to demonstrate a skill or activity.
- Singling them out for praise.
- Buying them gifts or giving them money to help them out.

Adults grooming a child or young person may give gifts or favours as a way of later manipulating them. The abuser will then use this authority and control, trying to make the child or young person believe they have no choice but to comply. A child or young person can start to believe: they are not being abused, when they are; that the abuse is their fault; or that telling someone about the abuse would be worse.

Favouritism towards specific children and young people can also be a risk and occur in sport without any ill intention. A child or young person may unwittingly receive favouritism because of their ability and importance to the team's performance. Although unintended, this extra attention can make children and young people feel self-conscious, pressured, or burdened by expectation.

Other children and young people who are not receiving equal attention may feel marginalised and underappreciated. This may cause them to exclude the 'favoured' child, who then loses some of their support network and can be more susceptible to abuse.

## KEY ACTIONS TO REDUCE THIS RISK

- ✓ Have clear safeguarding policies, practices and codes of conduct that are enforced and embedded into day-to-day practices. Include policies to prohibit/restrict gift-giving and other forms of favouritism, such as engaging in social events with children and young people or providing personal services/favours.
- ✓ Ensure all children, young people and their parents and carers are informed about these restrictions and explain they are in place to reinforce child safety.
- ✓ Appoint a designated contact person for children, young people, and other members to go to when they have concerns (e.g. Child Safe Officer, Integrity Officer, Member Protection Information Officer).
- ✓ Implement child safe recruitment practices that include robust screening checks e.g. Working with Children Checks or equivalent in your state or territory.
- ✓ Develop and promote clear, transparent reporting mechanisms that are easily accessible to all members.
- ✓ Embrace a culture where feedback and complaints are encouraged and acted upon.
- ✓ Ensure all staff and volunteers receive induction training, and ongoing regular training, in contemporary safeguarding, coaching, and reporting. Ensure all staff and volunteers are provided with job descriptions for their role.
- ✓ Place posters or other resources around your facilities to demonstrate your organisation's commitment to creating a safe environment for all.
- ✓ Provide children and young people with information about what appropriate behaviour with adults looks like.



## CASE STUDY

Maria is a talented cricketer who plays for her under-13s association team. The team's new coach likes Maria, is constantly praising her and uses her to demonstrate drills at training.

Maria's teammates begin to make comments, calling her the coach's favourite. They begin excluding her. Maria begins to withdraw and starts missing training sessions. Her team manager notices and speaks to the club's Child Safe Officer.

### Addressing this conduct breach effectively

The club's Child Safe Officer speaks to the coach, going through the club's policies and practices. They highlight that it is important for the coach to involve and engage all participants.

The coach explains she uses Maria constantly because she feels confident Maria can demonstrate all the drills correctly.

The Child Safe Officer explains that using the same player could make the other participants feel they're not good enough. It could also make Maria feel self-conscious, placing unnecessary responsibility and pressure on her shoulders.

The coach says she had not considered the impact this could have on the team or Maria and says she will use different players for future demonstrations.

Without drawing attention to Maria, the Child Safe Officer speaks to the team and explains it is a club requirement that all participants are treated fairly and equally. The Child Safe Officer tells the children who they can contact if they feel they are being treated unfairly.

### Failing to respond effectively

The club's Child Safe Officer initially tells the team manager that it is the coach's decision who they use to demonstrate drills. However, they agree to speak to the coach together. They highlight the importance of the coach involving and engaging all participants.

The Child Safe Officer asks the coach why she has only been using Maria to demonstrate drills. The coach says it is her job to show players what good technique looks like when explaining the drills, and that Maria is the only player in the team with the capability to demonstrate properly.

The Child Safe Officer suggests using other players to demonstrate drills as well. The coach remains adamant she's doing the best thing to help improve her players. She won't compromise training just to avoid hurting anyone's feelings.

The coach continues to use Maria to display drills. The coach also tells her players that if they have a problem with that decision, they should focus on improving their own games.

Maria is uncomfortable with the coach's behaviour and embarrassed by the comments. It leads to further bullying by some of her teammates.

Maria leaves the team, as do some of her teammates who felt under-appreciated by the coach.

### How the organisation could have reduced risks of this happening

The club could have reduced risks by ensuring their coaches understood the impact of favouritism in a sporting environment. Ideally, the club would actively take steps to remind coaches of their need to treat all participants equally, regardless of ability or background. This could be done through communications and formal education.

Coaches should also set clear expectations with the participants, parents, and carers at the start of a season to define reasonable expectations and opportunities. This can prompt children and young people to speak to a parent or carer if they feel left-out in sport. It can also help parents understand who to speak to if they or their child believe this is happening

# CHILD'S VOICE

## WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE SAYING IN OUR SPORT

I know what appropriate behaviour with adults looks like in my sport.

I know I don't have to accept any gifts and I can tell my parents or another adult if I feel uncomfortable.

I feel valued and respected by my team, coaches and officials.

### REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SPORTING ORGANISATION

- How do we identify favouritism? Do we have a policy relating to gifts and benefits?
- How can we engage children in feedback about their experiences in training?
- Do we include safeguarding KPIs for coaches, such as how safe children feel being coached by them? How do we measure this?
- How do we formally celebrate individuals (e.g. awards or trophies)? How are decisions made about who receives these awards?

### FIND OUT MORE

Check out these resources on the [Sport Integrity Australia](#) website:

- Recruitment/screening of staff & volunteers in child-related positions booklet
- Recruitment/screening checklist
- Induction of new volunteers & staff checklist
- How to involve children & young people in your sporting organisation booklet
- How your sport looks after kids (for ages 7–12)
- How your sport looks after participants (for ages 13–17)

# Providing direction, instruction and feedback

Direction, instruction or feedback to children and young people should be delivered with a focus on their wellbeing. Delivering information that is overly critical, hostile, aggressive or highlights personal failure can negatively impact their mental health. This can also expose children and young people to bullying from their teammates or peers. In severe cases, it can lead to self-harming behaviours like disordered eating, eating disorders, substance abuse or physical self-harm.

Research shows when a child or young person's wellbeing is negatively affected, it can make them more vulnerable to other types of abuse and harm.

A Person in a Position of Authority should always:

- Communicate in a clear, calm and respectful manner.
- Focus on using language that is encouraging, supportive and constructive.
- Understand how words and actions impact the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.
- Seek the views and opinions of children and young people to gauge how they are feeling and what matters to them.
- Address negative words and actions used by others, including participants, parents, carers and other adults. This reinforces acceptable behaviours within your sport.
- Provide clear, age-appropriate direction, instruction or feedback that is consistent with contemporary child safe practices.
- Stay up to date with contemporary coaching and feedback processes.



## KEY ACTIONS TO REDUCE THIS RISK

- ✓ Embed a culture that prioritises the health and wellbeing of children and young people and recognises the emotional and psychological impact that verbal abuse, bullying and harassment can have on them. It is important that an organisation's or individual's desire to win never comes before the welfare of participants.
- ✓ Educate children, young people and adults about what acceptable and unacceptable direction, instruction and feedback looks like.
- ✓ Complement this education with policies and reporting mechanisms, ensuring people who break the rules are appropriately and consistently disciplined.
- ✓ Embed and enforce clear safeguarding policies and codes into day-to-day practices.
- ✓ Have a 'Child Safe Statement of Commitment' that creates a culture where diversity and inclusion are celebrated.
- ✓ Ensure people at the organisation receive regular training in contemporary child safeguarding, coaching and feedback.
- ✓ Provide children and young people and their families with age-appropriate and accessible information about what appropriate and inappropriate behaviour of adults looks like.
- ✓ Provide children and young people with age-appropriate and accessible information about what appropriate peer-to-peer behaviour looks like.
- ✓ Place posters and other resources prominently around your sporting facilities to show your organisation's commitment to a safe environment for all.
- ✓ Have clear and transparent reporting mechanisms in place that are easily accessible to all members.
- ✓ Embrace a culture where feedback and complaints are encouraged and acted upon.



## CASE STUDY

Jacob plays in a state representative team. His coach believes Jacob has put on weight during the off-season and tells him in front of his teammates that he'll only play on the weekend if he weighs under 75kg at training on Friday.

Jacob begins a diet of less than 800 calories a day and decides to increase his training to include a 10km run every day.

On Friday, the coach brings in a set of scales and weighs Jacob in front of his teammates and other team officials. When his weight shows 78kg, the coach announces he won't be playing that week, or any other week, until he can bring his weight back to 75kg.

### Addressing this conduct breach effectively

Jacob contacts his Member Protection Information Officer (MPIO) and tells them about the situation. The MPIO helps Jacob to submit a report to the club.

The club meets with Jacob and his parents to discuss the incident. They ask what Jacob needs to ensure he feels comfortable and safe to continue with the team.

The club meets with the coach to discuss the incident. They reinforce the club's expectations and the code of conduct that all officials agree to follow.

The club clearly explains to the coach that his actions do not align with the club's culture and what they expect from their officials.

The club instructs the coach to address his inappropriate behaviour with the team and requires him to undertake training in child safeguarding and member protection. The club appoints a person to supervise the coach for a period of time.

The club informs the coach that all these requirements must be met if the coach wants to remain in his position.

### Failing to respond effectively

The club is alerted to the coach's behaviour, but accepts the actions of the coach as a necessary measure for Jacob to perform at that level.

Jacob's teammates begin criticising his weight at training and, with encouragement from their coach, nickname him 'fat boy'.

Teammates begin bullying Jacob on social media, commenting on his photographs, and sending him personal messages about what he should do to lose weight.

Jacob continues to reduce his food intake and increase his training efforts until he eventually collapses during training.

The club's culture suffers as more children and young people are exposed to bullying, harassment and unhealthy weight-control practices.

### How the organisation could have reduced risks of this happening

The organisation could have reduced risks by having a culture that prioritises children and young people's wellbeing and is supported by a clear policy.

The organisation could regularly raise awareness of its commitment to children and young people, including the principles of using encouraging and supportive language when providing constructive feedback to participants. This awareness messaging should be shared periodically with coaches, officials, participants and parents to minimise potential breaches.

Educating coaches and participants on acceptable behaviours, and the impacts of poor behaviours such as bullying, can promote a positive culture where these situations are less likely to occur.



# CHILD'S VOICE

## WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD BE SAYING IN OUR SPORT

I feel included and a part of the club.

My coaches and managers are professional and protect us from harmful behaviours.

Adults at my club respect me and help me to do my best.

### REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR SPORTING ORGANISATION

- How do we seek the views and opinions of children and young people to inform our coaching practices?
- What training and education do we have to ensure our staff and volunteers know how to appropriately involve children and young people?
- What are our organisation's values, do we have a Child Safe Statement of Commitment?
- Is our Code of Conduct easily available?
- How do we ensure all our staff and volunteers are aware of their responsibilities under the Code of Conduct?
- Do our communication and marketing plans ensure safeguarding behaviours are promoted and advertised?
- Is this promotion of safeguarding behaviours having the desired effect?
- What other community organisations do we collaborate with to support the cultural, psychological and physical wellbeing of children and young people?

### FIND OUT MORE

Check out these resources on the [Sport Integrity Australia](#) website:

- How to involve children & young people in your sporting organisation booklet
- How your sport looks after kids (for ages 7–12)
- How your sport looks after participants (for ages 13–17)

# Glossary

**Abuse:** Types of abuse can include, but are not limited to:

- **Emotional Abuse:** When a child or young person does not receive the love, affection, or attention they need for healthy emotional, psychological, and social development. When a child or young person is exposed to violence or abuse against other children, young people, or adults. Emotional abuse may involve, but is not limited to: repeated criticism, teasing, ignoring, threatening, yelling, scapegoating, ridicule, intentional exclusion, continual coldness, or rejection (either in-person or online); Bullying and Harassment (either in-person or online); threats of physical harm (either in-person or online); and harmful training methods or overtraining where there is the potential to result in damage to a child or young person's physical, intellectual, or emotional wellbeing and development.
- **Neglect:** The persistent failure or deliberate failure or denial to meet a child or young person's basic needs. Neglect includes, but is not limited to, the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, clean water, medical attention, or supervision to the extent that the child or young person's health and development is or is likely to be harmed. Types of neglect include physical, medical, emotional, educational neglect and abandonment.
- **Physical Abuse:** When a person subjects a child or young person to physical force which may cause injury, intentionally or inadvertently. This could be the result of physical punishment or aggressive treatment including, but not limited to: shoving, hitting, slapping, shaking, throwing, punching, biting, burning, kicking; and forced or harmful training methods or overtraining where there is the potential to result in damage to a Child/Young Person's physical development.
- **Sexual Abuse:** When an adult, or a person in authority involves a child or young person in any sexual activity. These behaviours can include, but are not limited to, making sexual comments, kissing, touching genitals or breasts, oral sex, or intercourse.

**Adult:** A person 18-years-old or older.

**Child or young person:** A person under the age of 18 years. Some older teenagers do not associate with being referred to as children.

**Child Safe Risk Management:** The identification and management of risks to the safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people.

**Grooming:** Behaviours (including a pattern of seemingly insignificant behaviours) that manipulate or control a child or young person, members of their family, their guardian, carer, other support networks, or organisations with the intention to create the conditions required to commit sexual abuse. These behaviours include, but are not limited to, gaining access to the child or young person, obtaining their compliance, maintaining their silence, and avoiding the discovery of sexual abuse.

**Harassment:** any behaviour towards a child or young person that they do not want and that is offensive, abusive, belittling or threatening and is reasonably likely to cause harm (in-person or online).

**Harmful Sexual Behaviours:** Harmful sexual behaviours are those which fall outside what may be considered developmentally expected or socially appropriate for children and young people. They can occur face to face or via technology, and cause harm to the individual or others. When these behaviours involve others, they may include a lack of consent, reciprocity, mutuality, and may involve the use of coercion, force or misuse of power.

**Person in a Position of Authority:** A person who, regardless of age, can exercise power, control, or influence over a child or young person through their position or involvement in sport.

**Perpetrator:** A person who carries out, or intends to carry out, a harmful or abusive act.

**Protective adult:** An adult in a child or young person's life who they would trust to keep them safe.

**Safeguarding:** The action taken to protect children from harm and respond to concerns.

**Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy:** A National Sporting Organisation's relevant National Integrity Framework policy or policy approved by Sport Integrity Australia to meet the requisite standard of protecting children and young people from harm and abuse in sport.

**Victim or survivor:** A child or young person who is or has been harmed or abused.





**Safeguarding  
in Sport**

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

To enquire, provide feedback or reproduce the contents of the document please contact:

#### **Sport Integrity Australia Safeguarding**

PO Box 1744

Fyshwick ACT 2609

E: [safeguarding@sportintegrity.gov.au](mailto:safeguarding@sportintegrity.gov.au)

Safe Sport Hotline: 1800 161 361

Enquiries: 1300 027 232

**[WWW.SPORTINTEGRITY.GOV.AU](http://WWW.SPORTINTEGRITY.GOV.AU)**