

Practitioner Research Summary

Child Protection in Scottish sport - is it working in practice?

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The aim of this study was to explore how child protection concerns and allegations were being managed in one sport, and when, how and why these processes conformed to or diverged from child protection procedures issued by the Scottish Governing Bodies of sport (SGB).

Research Design and Methods

Three qualitative techniques were used to explore child protection concerns to one SGB from three clubs between April 2004 and March 2006: a *documentary review* of all case information for each of the child protection referrals to ascertain whether or not child protection procedures were being adhered to at club level; *semi-structured telephone interviews* to gather information about the SGB and club management structures and the procedures used by the clubs to deal with concerns; and *semi-structured interviews* with those responsible for the co-ordination of child protection at club and SGB level to explore their views and attitudes towards child protection in sport and how these may have influenced implementation of the SGB procedures and case outcome.

Overall findings

- In all cases, the child protection procedures which were disseminated to clubs by the SGB were not being fully implemented.
- In two of these cases, the SGB child protection procedures had not been adopted. There is an issue where some clubs may consider it necessary to adopt the local council's child protection procedures because this will be recognised when letting council facilities. It would be helpful if SGBs and local authorities were to work in partnership in order to facilitate the letting process for clubs.
- All the clubs followed a different internal reporting structure to that stated in the SGB and the council procedures. There is external support available for club CPOs at SGB level; however this study highlights the need for internal support as well.
- None of the participants had received training or an orientation on child protection policy and procedures. When asked if this would have been helpful, all agreed it would. The process of implementation was also viewed as being too formal and bureaucratic and one that would be 'off-putting' for volunteers.
- One of the reasons that clubs are not fully implementing the procedures may be a fundamental one – they are not being read. The size of the document and the perception that it is not particularly 'volunteer friendly' could be a factor in this. As it cannot be assumed by the SGB that clubs are reading their child protection policy and procedures, it also cannot be assumed that they are being implemented.

- None of the clubs carried out a review of their procedures. This is a vital aspect of implementation and ensures that protocols are up to date and actually work in practice.
- The SGB often plays a regulatory role in delivery of its sport in Scotland. It also has a key role in supporting clubs to implement child protection procedures. SGB personnel may benefit from training in providing specific advice and support to clubs in this area.

Recommendations

On the basis of this report, the following recommendations are made:

- A regular 'maintenance' programme is established by SGBs to ensure that clubs are kept up to date and that child protection remains a 'standing item' for volunteers.
- Quick guidelines – an abbreviated version of the child protection policy and procedures – are produced for all volunteers in all clubs. This would help get the basic information out to those involved with children in sport in order that they understand their role.
- Information is produced which sets out which sections of the child protection procedures should be distributed to the various stakeholders in sport in order to facilitate understanding.
- A full explanation of and rationale for the need to implement every element within the child protection policy and procedures is produced alongside or within all documents for clubs.
- Internal reporting structures and decision making processes are incorporated into child protection procedures in order to support the club child protection officer.
- A suggested structure for the review of procedures is provided for clubs.
- SGBs and the local authority sport and leisure department work in partnership to orientate clubs to their sport's child protection policy and procedures.
- A workshop to train SGB personnel in supporting clubs to implement their child protection policy and procedures is developed.
- A public campaign is put in place to 'sell' the importance of protecting children in sport to volunteers to counteract the negativity that surrounds the subject.
- SGBs and local authorities work in partnership to ensure that SGB child protection procedures are recognised by the local authority within which the club operates and leases facilities

This research was carried out by Fiona Campion, project worker with the Child Protection in Sport Service, as part of a series of CHILDREN 1ST practitioner research studies. For a copy of the full report, please email info@children1st.org.uk

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