

Practitioner Research

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

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1. INTRODUCTION

Sport has a lot to offer children, provided it takes place in an environment which is safe, promotes enjoyment and respects the physical and emotional health and well-being of each individual athlete. (*McInulty, K. 2006*)

Providing a safe environment within which children can enjoy their sport is not only a legal obligation for sports organisations, but a moral one too. Those who organise and/or deliver sports activities for children have a responsibility to put in place measures to ensure they are protected from harm.

Protecting children in sport has become a more prominent issue in recent years. The introduction of new legislation and the Scottish Executive's child protection reform programme have had a direct impact on sport, and sports organisations have been forced to become more accountable in the ways they manage and govern their affairs in relation to child protection. Child protection is, of course, only one aspect of a huge number of issues which sport has to consider, including ethics and equity, equal opportunities and health and safety, all of which require increasing time, commitment and effort by the volunteer¹.

The implementation of legislation, which provided for disclosure checking, and the need for the voluntary sector to comply, has fundamentally affected people's perceptions of child protection, often now viewed as being a bureaucratic minefield for the volunteer. Despite being met with some negativity, the process has nevertheless brought the issue into the forefront of sport.

There has been a recent shift from the narrow focus of 'child protection' - that is the protection of those who have been, or are at risk of being, abused - towards the wider, more proactive concept of *all* groups and activities protecting and safeguarding *all* children. This is evident from the Scottish Executive's Framework for Standards and Children's Charter, the subsequent 2006 Accord for the Protection of Children in Scottish Sport, and the update of the national child protection awareness workshop Safeguarding and Protecting Children and its

¹ There is estimated to be approximately 145, 000 sports volunteers in Scotland. (*sportscotland, 2007*) The club representatives involved in this study were all volunteers.

accompanying resource, *Safeguarding and Protecting Children: A Guide for Sportspeople (NCF and NSPCC 2006)*.

Since 2002, CHILDREN 1ST has been working in partnership with **sportscotland** to support sporting organisations in keeping children safe in and through sport. A core strand of this work has involved a number of Scottish governing bodies of sport (SGBs) working to develop child protection programmes in an effort to ensure that children have a safe and enjoyable experience in their sport. Many now have child protection policies and procedures in place, which member clubs are required to adopt (*Martin, D 2006*). It is unclear, however, whether the procedures are being used in practice and, where they are being implemented, whether they are effective in keeping children safe. Focusing exclusively on the management of child protection concerns, this study aims to determine if SGB child protection procedures are being implemented in the field.

The study focuses on a single sport. Although the qualitative approach means that results are not directly generalizable to other sports, they provide some indication of the issues which may apply to other sports.

2. RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Study Aim

The aim of the 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 SGB.

2.2 Study Objectives

The objectives of the study were:

1. to describe how child protection concerns are being managed at club level and to assess the extent to which SGB procedures are being followed

2. to examine views and attitudes towards the child protection policy and procedures at SGB and club level and to consider how these may have influenced their implementation and case outcomes
3. to describe structures for the management of concerns within one sport, at Scottish governing body of sport (SGB) and club level, and consider how these may have influenced implementation of the procedures and case outcome

3. METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE

3.1 Recruitment of Participants & Sample Size

Scottish Governing Body

Initially the criteria for selecting the SGB to take part in the research were the following:

- A National Child Protection Lead Officer (SGB CPLO) is in place
- Member clubs are required to adopt the SGB child protection policy and procedures
- Member clubs are required to have a child protection officer (Club CPO)
- At least ten cases have been referred to the SGB between March 2005 and April 2006 (this was subsequently changed to 01 April 2004 to 31 March 2006)
- Willingness to take part in the research

A quasi-random sample was then to be conducted by selecting one SGB using the above criteria and picking a name from a hat. This sampling method proved unnecessary, however, as only one sport indicated an interest in taking part. The Child Protection Lead Officer of the governing body of sport was asked to take part in the interviews.

Clubs

Ten clubs which had referred child protection concerns to the SGB were to be recruited by simple randomised selections from one geographical cluster. This was to be achieved by picking names from a hat. Again, this was unnecessary

because there had only been five cases which had been documented in the sport within the new timescale. All five clubs were approached and asked to take part in the research. Four clubs agreed to participate - the fifth club did not take part despite a number of attempts to involve the Club CPO.

It was discovered at interview stage that the concern at one club had occurred prior to the SGB procedures being disseminated. The findings from this club have, therefore, not been incorporated into this report. Thus, this study presents the findings from three clubs only. The interviewees were two Club CPOs and one Club Chairperson. (The Club Chairperson of this club was approached because there was no Club CPO at the club at the time of interview).

3.2 Methodology

The initial intention was to gather information on concerns over one year - from 01 April 2005 to 31 March 2006. However, as only three child protection issues had arisen within this period, the timeline was extended to two years – from 01 April 2004 to 31 March 2006. The SGB reported a total of five child protection concerns from five separate clubs within this timeframe. As discussed, the findings from three of these clubs are reported.

The following three qualitative techniques were used to explore how child protection concerns and allegations were being managed within the sport:

1. A *documentary review* of all case information was undertaken for each of the child protection referrals. This was to ascertain whether or not child protection procedures, specifically relating to the reporting, recording and storage of information, were being adhered to at club level. The processes and outcomes of decisions were compared with the relevant child protection policy and procedures. The SGB and all clubs were asked to provide a copy of their child protection policy and procedures to aid this process.
2. *Semi-structured telephone interviews* were used to gather information about the SGB and club management structures and the procedures used by the clubs to deal with concerns. This supplemented information from the

documentary reviews to determine the actual process followed when dealing with the child protection concerns.

3. *Semi-structured interviews* were conducted with those responsible for 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. The interview schedule consisted of questions aimed at providing an insight into the following areas:

- awareness of the principles and processes involved in protecting children in sport and safeguarding their welfare
- circumstances where practice may diverge from the child protection policy requirements
- the perceived worth of the child protection policy and procedures
- the adequacy of the child protection policy and procedures.

The SGB and the clubs were asked to anonymise all information for the study. The clubs were given numbers 1, 2 and 3 to protect identity. These will be used throughout the report. In order to protect confidentiality, the SGB and the sport are not named in this report.

All participants completed a consent form agreeing to take part in the research and to having interviews recorded and access granted to anonymised child protection case files.

On several occasions, the club and SGB participants were telephoned to clarify particular issues.

There was a difficulty encountered in gleaning all the necessary information from the individuals interviewed because in every case other individuals had been involved and may have held crucial information. In one case the Club CPO was interviewed but it had not been that person who had been involved in the situation. Furthermore, there was insufficient information recorded at the time and full details about the incident could not be remembered by any of the participants. This meant that a full analysis of the process and outcome was limited.

One person from each club was interviewed. However, it may have been more meaningful to conduct a focus group of all those who had been involved in each case to get a more comprehensive picture of the issues in fully implementing the child protection procedures.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 *Management of Child Protection Concerns*

This section describes the extent to which the clubs followed the SGB child protection procedures in the management of child protection concerns.

Figure 1 outlines the SGB procedure which clubs are required to adopt for managing child protection concerns. It indicates how clubs should deal with a concern about child abuse within the sport.

The SGB sent the child protection policy and procedures to all affiliated clubs in 2004. Clubs were asked to formally adopt the procedures, but adoption was not stipulated as a requirement of affiliation at this time (adoption has recently become a requirement of affiliation). Moreover, the SGB did not have a monitoring mechanism in place to regulate adoption or adherence to the procedures.

Figure 1: SGB Child Protection Procedures

Allegation of, or concern about, child abuse or other criminal act against someone within the sport



Child's immediate safety ensured



Referral should be made to Club CPO at nearest point



Club CPO should refer immediately to social services and/or police and notify the SGB CPLO.
(where Club CPO is unavailable, the referral should be made directly)

An incident form should be completed and a detailed record kept at every stage of involvement. All documentation to be sent to SGB CPLO

The police were involved in all three cases studied. Possible physical abuse of a child was the cause of concern in two, possible sexual abuse was the concern in the third.

Adoption of the SGB procedures varied in all three clubs at the time the concern was raised. Club 1 had adopted the local council's template child protection policy for groups in the community (herein after referred to as the council's procedures) instead of the SGB child protection policy and procedures. The reasons given for this was to make it easier for the club to let council premises:

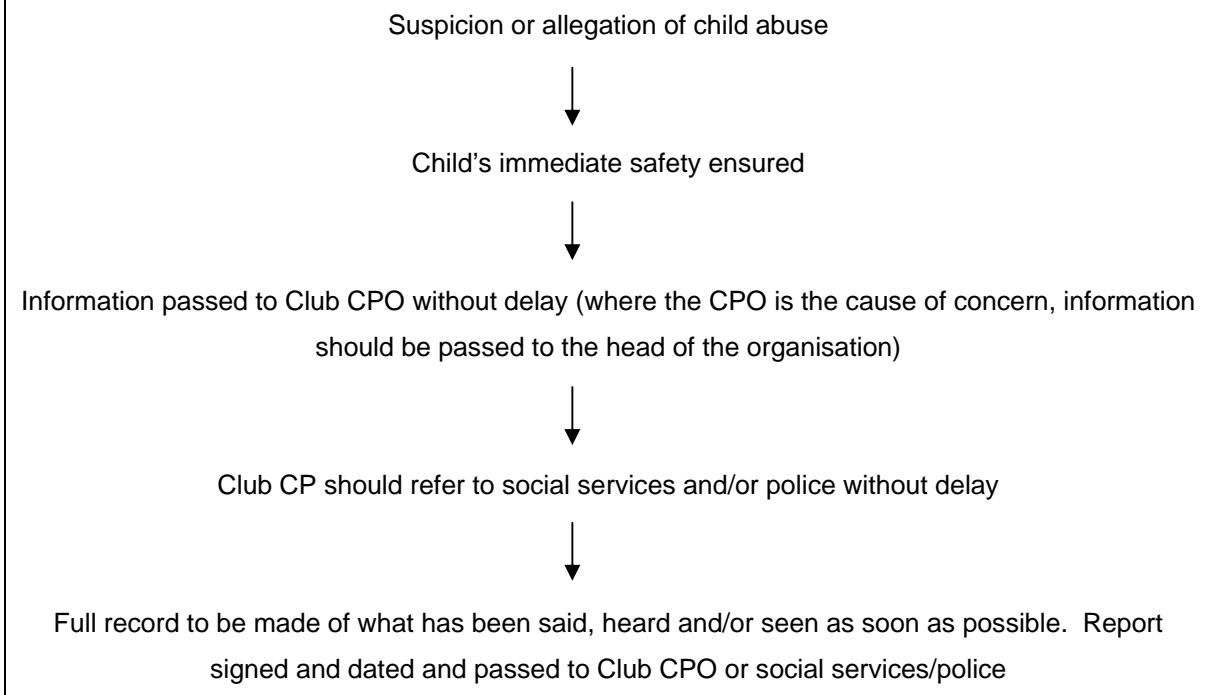
"..it makes it easier for us because we have to use and hire the council facilities so it makes it easier if we adopt that one (the council's policy) and I mean it is a fairly comprehensive one" (Club 1)

This is an ongoing issue for clubs who are being asked to provide evidence from different organisations to demonstrate they are a 'safe club'. Different organisations require differing degrees of information relating to child protection. Organisations requiring information may include the local sports council or the SGB when granting affiliation or the local authority when letting facilities. The SGB and the local authorities need to work in partnership for the benefit of the clubs. If SGB policy and procedures were recognised at a local level, this may prevent clubs needing to adopt different child protection procedures. Local authorities letting the facilities and SGBs should work in partnership to achieve this.

Club 2 did not adopt the SGB procedures and had no other procedures in place. Club 3 had the original unrevised SGB procedures in place.

Figure 2 depicts the council procedures, adopted by Club 1, which are similar to that of the SGB's:

Figure 2: Council Child Protection Procedures (as adopted by Club 1)



4.1.1 Club Management Structure for Dealing with a Child Protection Concern

The club management structures for dealing with a child protection concern is to be differentiated from the club management structure in general. In terms of the club management structure, it is the club committee who runs the club and is involved in all decisions relating to the club's general affairs. However, the club management structure for dealing with a child protection concern will consist of fewer individuals in order to preserve confidentiality.

Two clubs had similar internal management structures for dealing with child protection concerns which involved the Club CPO and Club Chair only; the third club had a management structure which involved the Club CPO, Club Chair and the Committee. Given that there were similar issues relating to the implementation of the child protection procedures across all the clubs, it is difficult to comment with any conviction if the management structure affected implementation.

4.1.2 Internal Reporting and Decision Making

The SGB and council procedures state that referral to the Club CPO should be 'immediate' or should occur 'without delay' respectively. Although neither explicitly defines timescales, internal reporting in all three clubs appeared to take much longer than reasonably expected. As depicted in Figures 1 and 2, the SGB and council child protection procedures state that internal referral of child protection concerns should be to the Club CPO only. Club participants' accounts of how a child protection concern is dealt with internally are described below (a summary is provided in Table 1).

Club 1

The Club Chairperson reported that any concern would normally be passed onto the Club CPO who would in turn inform him/herself. Both individuals would be involved in the decision-making process and agreeing what action should be taken. However, this was not written into the club's procedures (adopted from the council procedures).

The concern examined within this study related to the Club CPO, thus the standard reporting procedure was not used and the referral was instead made to the Club Chairperson in accordance with the council procedures. (This is different to the SGB procedures which state that the SGB CPLO should be informed under these circumstances).

The incident occurred at a committee meeting, however, although all committee members were present at the time of the incident, none observed what happened in full. An allegation against the Club CPO was made to the Member Secretary who then informed the Club Chairperson. Six committee members subsequently met to decide what action should be taken.

Club 2

At the time of interview, this club did not have child protection procedures in place. The Club CPO reported that any concern should be passed onto him/herself and that he/she would in turn inform the Club Chairperson. Both individuals would be involved in the decision-making process and agreeing what action should be taken. This decision would then be taken to the full committee. No decision would be made without first speaking to the committee. This club did not have child

protection procedures at the time of the incident, thus the process for managing child protection concerns was not documented.

The involvement of the committee in the decision-making process could compromise confidentiality and lead to a delay in response. Discussion at committee-level increases the number of individuals party to information about the incident and therefore increases the risk of confidentiality being compromised. Also, an immediate response is less likely if a number of individuals must first be consulted.

The Club CPO was not involved at any stage in reporting of the concern. (Instead, two coaches approached the parents and the police directly).

Club 3

The Club CPO reported that any concern should be referred to him/herself and that he/she would in turn inform the Club Chairperson. Both individuals would be involved in the decision-making process and agree what action should be taken. This course of action was not written into the Club's procedures. The Club CPO expressed their need for support as the reason for internal information sharing.

"I...would also speak to the chair – I would hope everybody would agree. I don't think many members of our committee would have a problem with it...I don't think its helpful for one person – me – to be solely in cahoots or whatever, I would need support" (Club 3)

In relation to the incident which occurred, the Club CPO was informed of the concern as per the SGB procedure. The decisions taken about the concern were made collectively by the Club CPO, the two club coaches and the Club Chair.

To summarise, two clubs had similar internal reporting procedures for dealing with child protection concerns. These involved the Club CPO and Club Chair only. Internal reporting procedures in the third club involved the Club CPO, Club Chair and the Committee. However, club procedures were not followed in any of the incidents which occurred. Furthermore, the internal reporting procedures described did not correspond with SGB or council procedures and were not documented.

All participants discussed the concern with at least one other club member thereby demonstrating that Club CPOs do not feel able to exclusively shoulder the burden of internally raised child protection concerns. Support is provided at a national level but Club CPOs clearly need additional support at local level. Neither SGB nor council child protection procedures specify a mechanism for provision of support to club CPOs during the internal decision-making process. SGB and club procedures must acknowledge the need for clear internal support structures.

Table 1. Procedures for dealing with a child protection concern as reported by 3 participating clubs

<p>CLUBS 1 & 3</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CHILD PROTECTION CONCERN REPORTED TO CLUB CPO</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CLUB CPO INFORMS CLUB CHAIR</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CLUB CPO AND CHAIR REACH DECISION ABOUT THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">REFERRAL TO SOCIAL WORK SERVICES AND/OR POLICE AND SGB INFORMED</p>
<p>CLUB 2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CHILD PROTECTION CONCERN REPORTED TO CLUB CPO</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CLUB CPO INFORMS CLUB CHAIR</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CLUB CPO AND CHAIR DISCUSS THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">CLUB CPO AND CHAIR INFORM COMMITTEE AND COLLECTIVE DECISION MADE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p style="text-align: center;">REFERRAL TO SOCIAL WORK SERVICES AND/OR POLICE AND SGB INFORMED</p>

4.1.3 External Reporting

Within both the SGB and council procedures, a child protection concern at the club should be reported by the Club CPO to the social services and/or the police. The SGB procedures state that the SGB CPLO should also be informed (the SGB CPLO is described as a source of support for any individual should this be required).

All the clubs reported that the SGB CPLO and police or social work services would be informed if a child protection incident took place. This is in line with the SGB and council procedures. This procedure was documented for two clubs only – those which had procedures in place - at the time of the incident.

Club 1

The referral to the SGB CPLO was made by a member of the committee and not by the Club Chairperson. The Club Chairperson reported the concern to the police. The Club CPO was not involved because the concern related to them. The appropriate procedure was observed - information was passed to the head of the organisation and they in turn reported the concern externally.

The interviewee reported that the incident had occurred on the first Monday in November, eight days prior to documented referral to the SGB CPLO. Neither the SGB nor club held any record of the date when the police were informed of the incident, but SGB records of a telephone call to the club made some twenty seven days later indicate that the police had not yet been contacted. Such a substantial delay between the date of the incident and notification of the relevant statutory agencies does not comply with the child protection procedures which state that a referral should be made 'without delay'.

Club 2

It was not the Club CPO who made the initial referrals externally as per the SGB procedures. Two coaches referred the case to the police and one coach made the referral to the SGB CPLO. There was no information recorded by the club and the Club CPO who was interviewed, had not been involved in the incident. Thus it was

not possible to determine the time taken to report the concerns or establish reasons to explain why the Club CPO had not been involved.

Club 3

It was not the Club CPO who made the referral to the police as per the SGB procedures but one of the coaches. It was not possible to determine if the timescales between the concern being raised and the relevant agencies being informed were in line with the SGB policy and therefore appropriate because there was insufficient chronological information recorded.

There was also insufficient information recorded about the exact nature of the original concern raised about a member of the club. It was deemed appropriate by the coaches and Club CPO to 'keep an eye' on the individual rather than go straight to the police and the SGB for advice. Consequently it is not possible to report on the appropriateness of the action take here.

The Club CPO referred the incident to the SGB CPLO as per the SGB procedures. However, it is not possible to determine if the timescales were immediate as it was not recorded when this occurred.

In all three clubs, the SGB procedures were followed in part: the appropriate external agencies were notified but not always by the correct person – the Club CPO. Inadequate recording of dates means it is not possible to measure the times between the concern being raised and external reporting. However, available information suggests that they were substantially longer than procedures dictate.

4.1.4 Recording of Concerns

The SGB procedures clearly state that an incident report form should be completed and a 'detailed record' kept at every stage of an individual's involvement in a case. The council procedures state that a 'full record' should be made of what has been 'said, heard and/or seen as soon as possible'. There is not a form for completion within these procedures.

In all cases studied, the level of information recorded did not fulfil these requirements as highlighted below.

Club 1

The only information recorded about the incident was a short section in the committee meeting minutes. The interviewee stated that several emails had been sent between the Club Chairperson and the individual against whom the allegation had been made. However these had been stored on computer and had been destroyed (due to a computer fault).

Club 2

There was no information recorded about the incident.

Club 3

No information was recorded following the initial concern being raised. Following communication of a second separate concern regarding the same individual a number of weeks later, the SGB CPLO was contacted by telephone for advice. A factual account of the events discussed on that date was recorded and sent by email 26 days later. This was the first recording of any of the concerns which had been initially raised (approximately three months prior). An incident report form was not completed. Although some crucial details were omitted with regards to the actual concern and the dates when these were raised, there was a reasonable attempt to record some information by this club. The substantial delay between the initial concern being raised and the recording of information does not, however, comply with the SGB procedures.

SGB

The information recorded by the SGB regarding three of the club incidents was brief and lacked detail in relation to the actual incidents and the process followed by the clubs. For this reason, it was difficult to determine a fuller picture from the SGB paperwork. Nevertheless, dates of all telephone calls and/or letters written were clearly documented, including details of the individuals concerned.

To summarise, two of the three clubs recorded information about the incident. Those clubs which recorded information did not fully comply with the SGB and

council procedures in that details were incomplete and were not documented on the prescribed form.

The majority of the participants said that in fact the reporting and recording procedures were 'always followed'. This indicates that there may be a misunderstanding about what the exact protocols are for reporting and recording. It may also be that the participants answered the interview question with current practice only in mind as opposed to what had happened at the time of the incident (thus reporting ideal as opposed to actual).

This comment goes some way to supporting this theory:

"You know I think issues that have happened to us as a club yes we've changed our own but I don't think we've changed it in written you know" (Club 3)

It is essential that all aspects of the procedure are followed in full. There are clear reasons for this. For example, the rationale for reporting a concern initially to the Club CPO includes consistency of approach; the individual having knowledge on what to do and being able to follow procedure; preservation of confidentiality among volunteers within the club. If this does not happen, there is a risk that the child does not receive the help when he or she needs it and that the incident becomes local 'gossip'.

4.1.5 Storage of Information

All recorded information by the SGB and the clubs was stored on the computer of the person who had dealt with the issue. Both the SGB and the council procedures state that no information should be stored or saved on a PC. However, this presents an issue for clubs regarding where to store paper copies. Many clubs do not operate from a club house and therefore rely on those tasked with child protection to store sensitive information at home in line with data protection legislation.

4.2 Views and attitudes of those responsible for co-ordinating child protection at SGB and Club level

This section explores the views and attitudes of those interviewed and considers if these had an effect on implementation of the procedures.

4.2.1 Awareness of the Child Protection Policy and Procedures

There must be an awareness and understanding of all of the elements of the child protection procedures before they can be effectively implemented. The SGB and club participants appeared to have a broad understanding of what the child protection policy and procedures ought to achieve as illustrated by these comments:

“We are hoping for an environment where a child can go and take part in sport and feel and be safe from any type of abuse, mistrust or whatever. They’ve got a safe environment that they can be there enjoying their sport”
(Club 1)

“... a standard for behaviour and procedures that are in place in order to ensure the safety of our children whether they are at home or away...”
(Club 2)

“It let’s the club know what it’s responsibilities are, it lets the individual know what their responsibilities are ... and other organisations” (SGB CPLO)

However, responses to more specific questioning about awareness of the elements within the child protection policy and procedures were relatively limited and generally focused on the reporting of a concern:

“we have to report anything to the SGB, obviously if it can be dealt with by the club then the club deals with it” (Club 1)

“if they (the coaches) think there’s a problem...then they would bring it to me...and then I have to draw attention to the SGB CPLO...if the SGB CPLO thinks it’s something then we go to the police” (Club 3)

Reporting of concerns is, of course, crucial in protecting the child. The child protection policy and procedures issued by the SGB, however, are wider than this alone. In their broadest sense, the procedures are there to ensure children are able to have an enjoyable sporting experience through the implementation of good practice, while ensuring that action is taken which will initiate a process of getting the child help when it is required. Other elements of the procedures include a broad ‘code of conduct’ which sets out good practice which, if adhered to, will safeguard the welfare of the child. The recruitment and selection procedures are a series of steps which go beyond a disclosure check alone. If followed, this element of the procedures will be a major factor in ensuring those delivering sport to children are suitable to do so.

The dearth of information provided by participants indicated that those interviewed may not have a full awareness of all of the elements contained within the procedures.

One reason for this is that the procedures provided by the SGB may be being used as a reference document only, as this participant indicates:

“if there were an incident that occurred within the club I would obviously refer to that set procedure or set rules in order to know how to deal with it...”
(Club 2)

This is realistic in relation to the fine detail. However, it is essential that there is a basic understanding of the procedures and their importance on the part of everyone at the club. It is accepted that some elements will require more in-depth knowledge by certain individuals than others. For example, everyone should be expected to know the code of conduct but it may only be the Club CPO and other individuals involved in the recruitment of volunteers who will have a comprehensive understanding of the recruitment and selection procedures.

A lack of awareness and/or understanding of the procedures have implications for implementation and may have been a key issue in the fact that they were not fully implemented by the two clubs which had procedures in place at the time of the incident. This may, of course, have influenced the fact that the third club had not yet put procedures in place.

In actual fact, none of the club participants had ever received specific training to orientate them on the child protection policy and procedures by the SGB. Moreover, the SGB CPLO had not received such training on coming into post. When asked if this would have been helpful, all agreed that it would. The provision of such training is an essential element in supporting clubs to implement procedures.

Of course, the lack of implementation of the procedures may not be linked to awareness or understanding at all but to a much more fundamental issue - they may simply not have been read. This is implied by the SGB CPLO:

"...I think if anything documents are fine to a point but you're assuming that everyone's reading them" (SGB CPLO)

The SGB currently rely on volunteers in affiliated clubs reading, adopting and then implementing the child protection policy and procedures document sent to clubs. The document is large in size, however, and may be off-putting for some people reading it. This is recognised by the SGB CPLO, as this statement suggests:

...to get the level of information that you need to get in a policy you're talking about 50 plus pages so practically in terms of getting that info out to people abridged versions and shortened bullet points are probably more effective - people are more likely to pay attention to that than anything else...I think the procedures we've had have not been particularly volunteer friendly " (SGB CPLO)

It may be helpful for clubs to be provided with a shorter version of the child protection procedures as suggested here. 'Quick guidelines' that consist of bullet-points of some of the essential elements of the procedures are already in use within some sports. These should be distributed more widely to all sports,

ensuring that clubs receive copies for all members. As already discussed, however, there are some individuals, such as the Club CPO, who would require the full set of procedures because a more in-depth knowledge is required.

There is also a need for continual updating for clubs by the SGB and other national or perhaps local agencies to ensure that the issue is always a 'standing item' in people's minds and that memories are continually refreshed and understanding of the subject and the policies and procedures remain current. This is recognised by one participant:

... what you probably need is updates, a regular updates (Club 3)

Had there been further prompts regarding the procedures following their dissemination, in addition to an orientation of them, more clubs may have been encouraged to adopt them sooner and also implement them.

4.2.2 Circumstances where practice may diverge from the child protection procedures

Certainly, a reason for one club not implementing the procedures is that there were none in place. A reason for this being the case in one example may be due to the attitude of those running a club in a rural community:

"...I will be brutally honest in saying we don't need procedures to tell us how to look after our kids, I view the procedures are simply there to give us something to fall back on if somebody was to step over the mark"
(Club 2)

Additionally, when referring to the recruitment and selection process, it was pointed out that the procedures were not fully implemented because of a perceived confidence in the fact that the people from that area are known to each other:

"Quite literally nobody doesn't know anybody... everybody knows each others kids so we would be introducing a level of bureaucracy that would be completely unnecessary and almost offputting to a volunteer" (Club 2)

This has been identified as an issue in other research (*Brackenridge, 2002*) where the majority of appointments in sports clubs were found to be made on an informal basis. An emphasis placed on existing relationships and knowledge of people in an area is misguided. Child protection procedures are based, amongst other things, on knowledge gained from the shortcomings in a number of child protection inquiries. A recurrence in many child protection cases, for example, is that assumptions were made about particular circumstances which led to an unquestioning acceptance of situations (*Cullen, Lord (1996), Laming, Lord (2003)*).

However, there was acknowledgement that procedures were a necessity, as this individual states:

“I think everybody should have policies and procedures in place because at the end of the day you cannot account for the one off that has happened or will happen in the future but at the same time I think it would be very inappropriate not to have these” (Club 2)

This presents a further training need for individuals working with these child protection policy and procedures. People not only require an orientation on what the child protection policy and procedures are, but also the reasons behind the need for them and hence the importance of putting them in place. It may also be beneficial for supplementary information to be produced, which details the importance of and rationale behind each procedure.

Other circumstances which may lead to the procedures or certain aspects of the procedures not being implemented may relate to their formality. The concept of child protection is often viewed as being bureaucratic by those in sport and off-putting to the volunteer. This is indicated earlier by Club 2 and highlighted here by other participants:

“I don’t think anybody’s got a problem with child protection I don’t think I’ve come across anybody yet whose got an issue with it and I think people largely agree with the concepts and the kind of good practice – they all agree with that but I think everybody, including myself, have been really frustrated by

some of the bureaucracy involved and I think that's come from government as well..." (SGB CPLO)

"No, there's no official interview - maybe myself or the Vice Club Chairperson or somebody will have a chat with them to see what they are interested in... we don't want to frighten them because they are very hard to get hold of in the first place" (Club 1)

"We're so grateful that someone wants to give up their time so no we don't (interview and ask for references) and again it makes it much more official... It's awful isn't it if you're seen to be so formal then is it going to put people off..." (Club 3)

There are clear reasons for having these procedures in place and it is essential that volunteers recognise this. Education is one way to do this, to provide clarity on the issue and help allay fears. A public campaign, however, which challenges the negativity around the subject may also be helpful. As pointed out by one participant it is not as difficult and time consuming as it first appears:

"they feel that they're being laden down by paperwork unnecessarily. I don't agree necessarily with that - you have to make children safe. I don't think its that bad - I think it's people who are not up very well with all the rules and regulations to do with child protection that seem to think there's far too much of it but I mean when you actually get down to doing it, it's not so onerous as it sounds. People walking out in the street at night - they have a perceived idea that its dangerous walking about at night on your own. It's all perceived. I think it's the same with the child protection policies – those who do not fully understand it it's a great imposition on them, but it's not once you get down to it." (Club 1)

4.2.3 Views on worth of the child protection policy and procedures

Although the procedures were not being fully implemented, all the clubs could see merit in having the child protection policies and procedures in place.

*“it is a fairly comprehensive one (the child protection procedures document)”
(Club 1)*

“I am confident that what is in place would be sufficient to deal with virtually any incidents that did occur” (Club 2)

“I think it has to be a good thing to protect ourselves and the kids and the governing body” (Club 3)

To ensure that the worth of the procedures, available on the ground, is maintained or improved, they should be continually reviewed. Regular reviews followed by appropriate dissemination of the information are essential actions in the implementation of child protection procedures. In order to ensure their relevance and appropriateness, it is recommended that sports organisations review procedures regularly - at least yearly or when legislation changes or following an incident. (McInulty, K. 2006)

Of the two clubs which had procedures in place, neither reviewed them following the incident. It was suggested by Club 3 that it may be brought up at the AGM this year. However, it was highlighted by this participant that, in terms of reviewing the procedures, *“because there’s not that support then it’s difficult to know what to do”*

It is essential that clubs are encouraged and given support to regularly review their procedures. It may be helpful for clubs to be provided with a suggested protocol for doing this. Indeed, as highlighted by Brackenridge (2002) , *“Child protection is an issue that requires a mindset of constant vigilance and self-critical good practice”*.

If each person follows a different procedure, this will create issues in consistency and could ultimately affect the outcome for the child. When a new volunteer starts at the club, these different ‘ways’ are picked up depending on who an individual learns from. Consistency is essential.

4.2.4 Views on adequacy of the child protection policy and procedures

It was recognised by the SGB CPLO that the procedures are currently in need of being updated (work which is planned in the short term).

*“... there are certain parts that are straight forward but certainly the guidelines could be a lot clearer and I think probably need just that wee bit more updated”
(SGB CPLO)*

There may be a gap between provision by the SGB and need of the club, for example the dissemination of child protection policy and procedures to clubs. There is telephone support available if required and there is some information which is sent out to clubs on a regular basis, for example child protection in sport newsletters. However, clubs need a more proactive, perhaps even hands on approach in terms of support, if they are to implement procedures to a satisfactory degree. Understandably, however, there are limitations as to what the SGB alone can do, particularly as support provided is only one person, the SGB CPLO. In general, support from the SGB in the management of child protection concerns had been a positive experience as this quote suggests:

“...if we phoned them up for any information we would get it - their fairly good at helping you if you ask, they're quite good at that” (Club 1)

Indeed, all the clubs spoke with the SGB CPLO following the situation which had arisen and this should be viewed as a very positive action.

The lack of implementation of the procedures was the issue in each of the cases studied. The participants, however, were of the opinion that the child protection policy and procedures, themselves are adequate in helping to protect children from harm at the club:

“I think they are very good at helping to keep children safe. I'm not saying that anything would happen if they were not in place but they avoid these types of things happening” (Club 1)

"I think it's more than ample from our point of view" (Club 2)

"Well as I say I think they do... and you know for the issue that we had it did seem to be very helpful, you know it backed up what we as a club wanted to do." (Club 3)

6. CONCLUSION

As there was not enough detail recorded in any of the cases, it has not been possible to comment on the outcome for the child, thus the focus of the discussion has been on the implementation of the procedures in the management of the child protection concerns only. However, on the basis of the information reviewed, it is not believed that the safety or welfare of any child is at risk.

In all cases, the child protection procedures which were disseminated to clubs by the SGB were not being fully implemented.

In two of those cases, the SGB child protection procedures had not been adopted. (One club had no procedures in place and one club had adopted the local council child protection procedures for community groups). 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 by the council when letting facilities. It would be helpful if SGBs and local authorities were to work in partnership in order to facilitate the letting process for the club.

All the clubs followed a different internal reporting structure to that stated within the SGB and the council procedures. There is external support available for Club CPOs at SGB level. However this study has highlighted the need for internal support as well. This would prevent the Club CPO from feeling isolated and would support them in early decision making processes. This should be reflected in the child protection procedures.

None of the participants had received training or an orientation on the child protection policy and procedures. When asked if this would have been helpful, all

agreed that it would. This is an essential aspect in supporting clubs to implement procedures. However, the process of implementation was viewed as being too formal and bureaucratic and one that would be 'off-putting' for volunteers. It is important that, in order to facilitate understanding, each element of the child protection procedures is clarified - not only what each is, but also the reasons behind putting it in place and what this ultimately means for the child, Supplementary information to the procedures providing this information may be helpful. There is potential for organisations, such as SGBs and local authorities, to work together locally in order to provide support and an orientation around the child protection procedures. A public campaign may also be helpful in counteracting the negativity around the subject.

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. There is a need to make the procedures more accessible to volunteers. One way to do this would be to encourage 'Quick Guidelines' – bullet points of some of the key elements of the procedures - which are already in use within some sports, to be more widely used. In addition, information should be produced which recommends which audiences within a sports club would benefit from receiving specific sections of the child protection procedures. This may prevent volunteers being deterred because of a belief that they must read and understand the full child protection document.

Of course, it cannot be assumed by the SGB that clubs are reading the child protection policy and procedures sent out. Therefore it cannot be assumed that they are being implemented. There is a need for continual updates for clubs to ensure that the issue remains fresh in people's minds and understanding of the subject and the policies and procedures remain current.

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. A recommended structure for reviewing procedures may be helpful for clubs in supporting them to do this.

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.

These findings are unique to this sport. In addition, much of the information within this report has been compiled from the opinions of those interviewed and are representative of these individuals only. However, they may also be an indication of the situation across Scotland - further research would be required to verify this. This study, however, has underlined the need for an emphasis to be placed on implementation of the child protection procedures by SGBs. It is hoped that the findings of this study will be used as a learning experience for this SGB and others.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

:

1. A regular 'maintenance' programme is established by SGBs to ensure that clubs are kept up to date and child protection remains a 'standing item' for volunteers
2. Quick guidelines – an abbreviated version of the child protection policy and procedures - are produced for all volunteers in all clubs. This would contribute to getting the basic information out to those involved with children in sport in order that they understand their role
3. 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
4. A full explanation of and rationale for the need to implement every element within the child protection policy and procedures are produced alongside or within all documents for clubs

5. Internal reporting structures and decision making processes are incorporated into child protection procedures in order to support the Club CPO
6. A suggested structure for the review of procedures is provided for clubs
7. SGB's and the local authority sport and leisure department work in partnership to orientate clubs to their sport's child protection policy and procedures
8. A workshop to train SGB personnel in supporting clubs to implement their child protection policy and procedures is developed
9. A public campaign is put in place to 'sell' the importance of protecting children in sport to volunteers. This would be in an effort to counteract the negativity that surrounds the subject
10. SGBs and local authorities work in partnership in order that SGB child protection procedures may be recognised by the local authority within which the club operates and leases facilities

9. REFERENCES

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Club Profiling Questionnaire

<p>Date _____ Club Name _____ (i.e. A, B, C, etc.)</p> <p>Remit of person providing this information</p> <p>_____</p>

1. As part of the affiliation to the SGB, are you given the SGB procedures to adopt (as opposed to putting in place your own)?
2. Please describe the management structure within your club and how decisions are made at this level, without SGB involvement, e.g. a poor practice issue that can be dealt with at club level because it is not serious enough to merit a referral to the SGB.
3. Please describe what happens when there is a more serious concern about a child in your club – please indicate the process from the initial concern being raised through to the involvement of your SGB and the potential outcomes. Please include all individual remits that are involved at each stage that you know of (no names please!), the procedures that are implemented at each stage, e.g. referral procedures/disciplinary procedures, etc., forms used and any specific structures in place including membership and role, e.g. an athlete protection panel
4. Please provide a copy of each of the procedures referred to in Q1.
5. How many child protection concerns have you referred to the SGB in the last two years? (all concerns should be noted even if some did not turn out to be a real child protection issue)

SGB Profiling Questionnaire

Date _____ Remit of person interviewed _____
--

1. To what extent is the sport's child protection policy and procedures based on the national child protection guidelines produced by CHILDREN 1ST?
2. Please describe the structure that is in place to deal with child protection concerns in the sport – please indicate the process from the initial concern being raised within a member club through to the response and the potential outcomes at SGB level. Please include all individual remits that are involved at each stage (no names please!), the procedures that are implemented at each stage, e.g. referral procedures/disciplinary procedures, etc. and any specific structures in place, e.g. an athlete protection panel, including membership and role.
3. Does the SGB link with a UK Governing Body?
If yes go to Q3, if no go to Q4
4. Please indicate the role of the UKGB in the process highlighted in Q3
5. How many clubs have referred child protection concerns to the SGB between 01 April 05 to 30 Nov 06? (all concerns should be noted even if some did not turn out to be a real child protection issue).
6. Please describe the management structure within each of these clubs - if it is not known please indicate this. Please allocate each of these clubs with a different letter for identification purposes e.g. Club A, Club B etc.
7. Please provide ALL paperwork completed for each case highlighted in Q4. All names, addresses, reference numbers etc should be omitted or changed to ensure anonymity of the club and the individuals involved (e.g. remits only should be used, the club's name should be changed to a letter as highlighted above, etc.)
8. Please provide a copy of each of the procedures referred to in Q1.

Club Semi Structured Interview Questions

These questions are designed to provide answers to the following:

The perceptions of those at club and SGB level will be investigated, by conducting semi-structured interviews with key individuals involved. Perceptions explored will be related to the following issues:

- *the worth or merit of the child protection policy and procedures*
- *the adequacy of the child protection policy and procedures*
- *circumstances where practice may diverge from the child protection policy requirements*
- *the principles and processes involved in protecting children in sport and safeguarding their welfare*

Principles

What is your understanding of child protection in the sports context?

What do you think are the main risks to children when attending sports clubs (including travelling to and from the club, taking part in competitions, attending away fixtures, etc.)

If we focus in on those risks that particularly relate to emotional abuse, sexual abuse, physical abuse and neglect, what is your view on how children might be protected from these in sport?

What role do sports clubs have in protecting children from any harm?

What role do sports club have in protecting children from cruel or sexually exploitative harm?

What role do SGB's have in protecting children?

What do you think child protection policies and procedures in relation to sport ought to achieve?

In addition to policies and procedures, what are the other elements that you think should be considered in keeping children safe at the club?

Awareness

Please tell me what your understanding is of the policies and procedures recommended by the SGB?

Which elements contained within the club's policy and procedures are you aware of?

Of those elements mentioned, which do you see as being most important?

Why is that?

To what extent do you think others in the club would agree with your view?

If there were a concern about a child in the club would you know what to do?

What would you do?

To what extent do you think this is the case for others in the club?

Merit/Worth

Overall what is your opinion about the child protection policy and procedures that are in place at your club?

In terms of their worth, do you see the child protection policy and procedures as being:

1. Very good 2. Good 3. OK 4. Poor 5. Very poor

To what extent do you think others in the club would agree with your view?

What are the positives that you see in having a child protection policy and procedures in place?

What are the negatives?

To what extent do you think that others in the club are generally supportive of the policy and procedures?

How would you like the policies and procedures to be improved

Process including divergence from /adherence to policy requirements

Do you think that the following elements of the procedures are always followed at the club?

- Volunteers adhering to the code of conduct

Are these:

1. always followed 2. sometimes followed 3. rarely followed 4. never followed

If not, why not?

If no, which elements are not followed?

What do you think are the reasons for this?

- Disciplinary procedures linked to breaches of the code of conduct
If no how does it differ?

Are these:

1. always followed 2. sometimes followed 3. rarely followed 4. never followed

What do you think are the reasons for this?

Do you feel able to challenge anyone who does not follow the code of conduct?

- Recruitment and selection

Are these:

1. always followed 2. sometimes followed 3. rarely followed 4. never followed

- Advertising of volunteer positions
- Application form
- References
- Self declaration form
- Interviewing
- Disclosure checks

If no how does it differ?

What do you think are the reasons for this?

- Recording and reporting of concerns about a child/adult
 - Internally
 - Externally

Are these:

1. always followed 2. sometimes followed 3. rarely followed 4. never followed

If no how does it differ?

What do you think are the reasons for this?

Have you ever received training/orientation on the policy and procedures?

Would you have found that helpful? / Did you find that helpful?

What support do you receive from the SGB in helping you to keep children safe at the club?

How do you find the support from the SGB in this area?

1. Very good 2. Good 3. OK 4. Poor 5. Very poor

Please expand on this

Adequacy

How well do you think the child protection policy and procedures help in protecting children from harm at the club?

To what extent do you think that others at the club would agree with your view?

In terms of how they work in practice, do you see the child protection policy and procedures as being:

1. Very good 2. Good 3. OK 4. Poor 5. Very poor

Do you think the procedures are easy to follow for club volunteers?

If not, why not?

Specific child protection concern that was referred to the SGB

Can you describe for me the process that was followed when the child protection incident, that was referred to the SGB, arose?

How helpful did you find the child protection procedures in dealing with the concern that arose?

Modifications

Finally, do you think there are any changes that could be made to the process as it stands at the moment that would a) benefit the volunteers at the club b) benefit the children at the club?

SGB Semi Structured Interview Questions

These attitudinal questions are designed to provide answers to the following:

The perceptions of those at club and SGB level will be investigated, by conducting semi-structured interviews with key individuals involved. Perceptions explored will be related to the following issues:

- *the worth or merit of the child protection policy and procedures*
- *the adequacy of the child protection policy and procedures*
- *circumstances where practice may diverge from the child protection policy requirements*
- *the principles and processes involved in protecting children in sport and safeguarding their welfare*

Awareness

Please tell me what your understanding is of the policies and procedures recommended by the SGB

Which elements contained within the policy and procedures are you aware of?

Any other elements within the procedures?

Of those elements mentioned, which do you see as being most important and why?

Do you think volunteers in clubs would agree with your view?

If there were a concern about a child in the club, do you think most volunteers would know what to do?

Principles

What is your understanding of child protection in the sports context?

What is your view on how children might be protected from harm in sport?

What role do sports club have in protecting children from any harm?

What role do SGB's have in protecting children?

So that support so that clubs don't feel they're making decisions themselves

What do you think child protection policies and procedures in relation to sport ought to achieve?

In addition to policies and procedures, what are the other elements that should be considered in keeping children safe at a club?

Merit/Worth

Overall what is your opinion about the child protection policy and procedures that are in place in your member clubs?

In terms of their worth, do you see the child protection policy and procedures as being:

1. Very good 2. Good 3. Poor 4. Very poor

Do you think volunteers in member clubs would agree with your view?

What are the positives to having a child protection policy and procedures in place?

What are the negatives?

Do you think that volunteers in member clubs are generally supportive of the policy and procedures?

Process including divergence from /adherence to policy requirements

In your experience, are the procedures always followed at club level when there is a concern about a child at a club?

If no, why do you think that is?

And at SGB level?

If no, why is that?

Do you think that the following elements of the procedures are always followed at club level?

- Volunteers adhering to the code of conduct

If no, which elements are not followed?

What do you think are the reasons for this?

- Disciplinary procedures linked to breaches of the code of conduct

If no how does it differ?

What do you think are the reasons for this?

Are the procedures:

1. always followed 2. sometimes followed 3. rarely followed 4. never followed

- Recruitment and selection

- Advertising of volunteer positions not in the herald but even word of mouth?

- Application form/vol registration form/taking a note of qualifications etc.

- References

- Self declaration form
- Interviewing
- Disclosure checks

If no how does it differ?

What do you think are the reasons for this?

Are the procedures:

1. always followed 2. sometimes followed 3. rarely followed 4. never followed

- Recording and reporting of concerns about a child/adult
 - Externally
 - Internally

If no how does it differ?

What do you think are the reasons for this?

Are the procedures:

1. always followed 2. sometimes followed 3. rarely followed 4. never followed

Have you ever received training/orientation on the policy and procedures?

Would you have found that helpful?

As the SGB CPLO, what support is provided in helping you to keep children safe at club level?

So overall do you think your support from the SGB has been:

1. Very good 2. Good 3. Poor 4. Very poor

Please expand on this

Adequacy

How well do you think the child protection policy and procedures help in protecting children from harm in member clubs?

Do you think that volunteers in member clubs would agree with your view?

How helpful did you find the child protection procedures in dealing with the concerns that arose?

In terms of how they work in practice, do you see the child protection policy and procedures as being:

1. Very good 2. Good 3. Poor 4. Very poor

Do you think the procedures are easy to follow for club volunteers?

If not, why not?

Modifications

Finally, do you think there are any changes that could be made to the process as it stands at the moment that would a) benefit volunteers at club level b) benefit children in clubs?