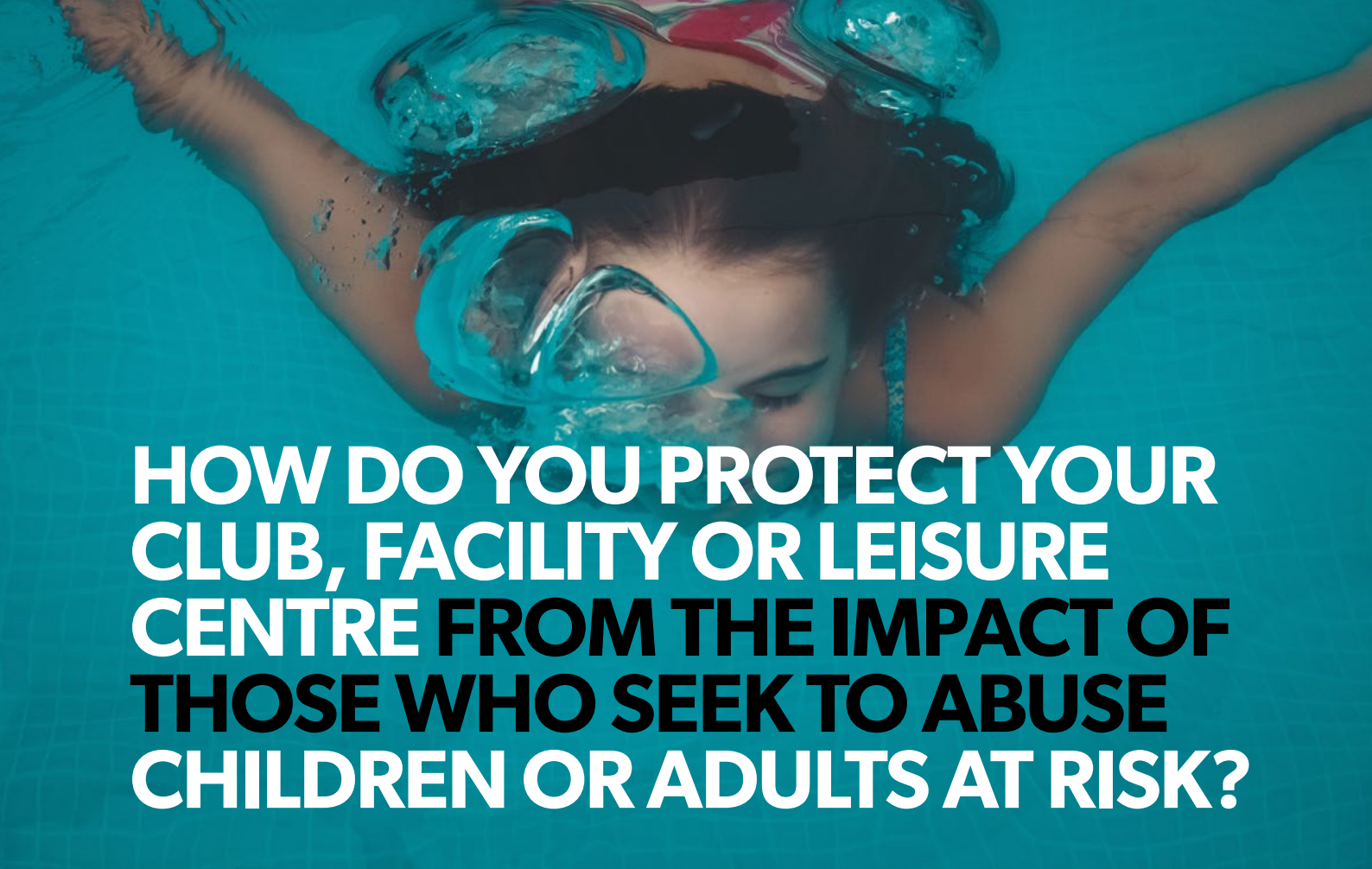




# SAFER PLACES TO PLAY

**PROTECTING YOUR FACILITY AND  
THOSE WHO USE IT FROM THOSE WHO  
SEEK TO ABUSE CHILDREN AND ADULTS.**



# HOW DO YOU PROTECT YOUR CLUB, FACILITY OR LEISURE CENTRE FROM THE IMPACT OF THOSE WHO SEEK TO ABUSE CHILDREN OR ADULTS AT RISK?

**A question that must be asked throughout your whole organisation from the very top strategic directors to those operational staff who are engaging with the public on “the shop floor”.**

The media has reported numerous accounts of children being abused by their sports coaches, dance and drama tutors, music teachers who have delivered sessions at sports and leisure centres, the list goes on in other walks of life, Teachers, Police Officers, Judges, Doctors (et al) who have also been found guilty of heinous crimes against children and yet this list is not exhaustive.

These perpetrators carry out sexual, emotional, and physical abuse of children as well as neglecting the basic needs of every child they abuse. They are the problem, not the sport, not the activity but the perpetrators and just as importantly those who enable abuse to occur

yet know that it is inherently wrong but still fails to protect the child.

There is much focus within safeguarding on spotting the signs and symptoms of abuse, having the right policies and procedures in place and an overreliance on children having to “disclose” that they have been abused or mistreated. However, those of us who have worked in children’s services and particularly in the field of child exploitation know that children do not always disclose their abuse, some children do not recognize they are being abused and in just about every single case children are terrified to report their abuse due to the power of the abuser.

**CHILDREN OFTEN DON’T SPEAK UP WHEN THEY ARE ABUSED, THEY SUFFER IN SILENCE**

**CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY FROM JAMIE DANTZCHER (P56 GUIORA)**

Whilst we acknowledge the importance of having sound and robust policies and procedures in place you should also check the safeguarding requirements of your centre/club's insurance policy, are you meeting the requirements of this policy and what would be the legal implications and potential costs if your safeguarding processes were deemed to be inadequate or at fault. However, we must look at the culture of the workplace and how those in both strategic and operational functions of the facilities take their responsibilities towards protecting children and adults.

To understand how abuse can occur in any sports or leisure centre or any facility where children attend, we must learn from the past mistakes and we need to think about crimes committed against children that were committed on the premises and the grooming that took place, often in plain sight, that led abuse to occur external of the sports facility. Sadly, the examples are numerous and can be found on a truly global basis. To develop Safer Places to Play we must have a focus on those who perpetrated the abuse by their acts of commission and those who "enabled" abuse to occur by their acts of omission.

In a recent book published by Professor Amos Guiora<sup>(1)</sup> the role of enablers has been explored for his research into abuse in several US based sports as well as the Catholic Church in Boston. One quote from his book that has stuck in my mind was'

**"THE IMPUNITY WITH WHICH THE PERPETRATOR ACTED REQUIRED THE COMPLICITY OF OTHERS" (P75)**

Complicity can run deep in some organisations without ever being noticed, the levels of cognitive dissonance that can occur when mistakes are made and are too threatening to admit to are often reframed or ignored leading to abuse occurring and continuing.

The greatest difficulty that many people face is in admitting to their personal failures, and thus learning from them. We have looked at cognitive dissonance, which becomes so severe that we often reframe, spin and sometimes edit out our mistakes. Sayed (p148)

**"REPUTATIONAL RISK FIRST MEANS CHILDREN ALWAYS COME SECOND"**



Conversely some organisations cover up failures in order to prioritise their reputations over their legal responsibilities towards children.

# THINKING ABOUT YOUR ORGANISATIONAL SAFEGUARDING CULTURE.

Embedding a culture? So how do you embed a culture of safeguarding within an organisation. After all, you can have a full suite of policies and procedures but how do you make them effective in your organisation,

The recent reviews into abuse in sport at several major sports organisations in the UK has seen that most organisations had a full suite of policies and procedures covering safeguarding and yet child abuse continued. How and why was this allowed to happen?

A good safeguarding culture starts at the very top of any organisation, can you evidence this? is safeguarding a standing agenda item at

**“IT IS PEOPLE AND NOT POLICIES THAT SAFEGUARD THE VULNERABLE”**



every board or management meeting, a paper trail highlighting the approval of policies and procedures is not enough, an employee signing a form stating that they have received and read a suite of policies and procedures is also not enough, what kind of training do staff access and is it compulsory. How do your staff report and record low level concerns, or should the question be “do you or your staff know what low-level concerns (2) are”?

Our safeguarding colleagues at the Ann Craft Trust have developed a helpful resource for the sports and leisure sector to develop and improve their safeguarding culture, please click on the link below to access this resource and join their campaign #SaferCultureSaferSport.

<https://www.anncrafttrust.org/saferculture>

Everybody in the organisation must know and understand that safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility and that this is non-negotiable, are you able to evidence that this happens in your organisation?

A question to ask your organisation is “how many of your staff have been trained in Bystander Interventions”, with so many members of the public accessing your facilities it’s important that all of your staff become active bystanders as they can have the ability to intervene at the earliest opportunity in negating any abusive behaviour or poor practice.

Are staff aware of perpetrator behaviours and dynamics! there is so much focus on looking at the signs and symptoms of an abused child but we should start focussing on the behaviours of those who seek to abuse children in your settings, has this been discussed in your facilities during training or at board/management meetings, who are the perpetrators that walk amongst us and use your facilities, it’s important to be reminded that abuse doesn’t happen by accident, it occurs due to conditions that allow abuse to happen.

Abuse also occurs due to the silencing of victim’s voices and the use of victim blaming language. Young people are further at risk of not disclosing their experience out of fear of being blamed or being seen as at fault (McAlinden cited in Making Words Matter p6) What is the culture in your organisation about hearing the voices of the child or adult.



# IF SPORT IS NOT TALKING ABOUT IT **THE MESSAGE TO VICTIMS IS THAT IT DOESN'T HAPPEN, IT HASN'T HAPPENED AND IT INVALIDATES THE CHILD AND LEADS TO SILENCE.**

With this in mind organisations need to move away from a tick box culture to more formal organisational compliance and conformity culture, because it's the right thing to do!

It's a smart investment to review your current safeguarding practice and to help reduce sexualized violence and abusive behaviour against children and a good investment for your centre's employees and users.

This briefing document and associated safeguarding in sports resources freely available on our website ([www.nwgnetwork.org](http://www.nwgnetwork.org) and [www.stop-cse.org/tackling-cse-in-sports](http://www.stop-cse.org/tackling-cse-in-sports)) has been produced in conjunction with the launch of the Safe to Play campaign across the sports and physical activities communities, it is focused at sports and leisure centre's, schools and colleges who hire out their facilities, parents and proprietors of other physical activities such as dance, drama and outdoor pursuits. The NWG Network also offer

training in Bystander Interventions as part of our commitment to ending all forms of child exploitation and the training also supports the current Violence Against Women and Girls national strategy.

The Safe to Play campaign has been designed utilising augmented reality technology to help share key information with parents, children and sport coaches about how abuse can occur through sport and other physical activities that take place outside of the school curriculum. It is an interactive resource that uses mobile phones or tablets to help share the key safeguarding messages in a manner that is accessible in today's busy lifestyle.

**Kevin Murphy**  
Safeguarding in Sport Lead



The NWG Exploitation Response Unit is a network of practitioners working with children and young people across the UK and aims to promote safe spaces for children allowing them to participate in a wide range of activities in a safer environment, we aim to prevent and disrupt the exploitation of children and to offer guidance to practitioners when they need support with any issues relating to the exploitation of our children and young people into today's society.

Our network covers voluntary and statutory services, private companies and those in the retail, sport and leisure industry.

The NWG were part of a European research project that spanned 7 countries across the EU. The research spoke to those affected by interpersonal sexualised violence through sport, a final report was published along with a suite of authentic videos developed by those affected to help the sector understand the complex area of child abuse in sport, these resources can help enhance the safeguarding training that you deliver to your staff. The full report and access to the resources can be found on the following link; <http://voicesfortruthanddignity.eu>

Our team comprises of expertise from the fields of Police and Justice, Child and Adult safeguarding, safeguarding in sport, leisure and physical activities. Education including Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and post 16 provision, families, and communities as well as policy development.

We organise regular forums, shared learning events and surgeries which offer the opportunity to discuss with the experienced team any concerns and how to deal with them in a confidential safe space, access support to take the right steps in managing cases of concerns, developing strategies, operational delivery

plans or procedures and currently host a large selection of relevant and useful resources and campaigns available on our website.

The access to the website and knowledge hub is supported by Sport England and will allow free access to any grassroots sports practitioner who wishes to join us in fighting the exploitation of children and young people.

## HOW TO ACCESS INSTRUCTIONS:

Go to [Join Our Network - NWG](#).

Select **REGISTER HERE** from the **PUBLIC RESOURCES** (at the bottom of the Join Our Network page) and complete the application form. Please ensure you complete the company/organisation name, description sections that will confirm you are a grassroots sports practitioner and select your job title or role.

Once the application is received at NWG we will activate a full membership account. If you have any questions regarding the sign-up process, please do not hesitate to contact [network@nwgnetwork.org](mailto:network@nwgnetwork.org) for assistance.

Please view our website [www.nwgnetwork.org](http://www.nwgnetwork.org) for further information and if you have any further questions feel free to contact [sport@nwgnetwork.org](mailto:sport@nwgnetwork.org)

The NWG Team



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