

Safeguarding Bulletin

Safeguarding adults and young people at risk

ann craft trust
acting against abuse

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Bringing you the latest research and news on safeguarding adults and young people at risk.

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Ann Craft Trust Safeguarding Bulletin

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Editor's Note—Deborah Kitson, CEO

Welcome to Edition 114 of the ACT Bulletin.

I am not sure that any of us could have predicted nearly a year ago that many of us would still be working from home, that the main news headlines would still be the numbers of people daily affected by Covid-19 and that training, meetings and events would still be online.

Before any discussion about this bulletin I want to acknowledge the huge contribution by so many people to both keep us safe and to support us in our everyday lives – there are so many people who are going out each day to ensure that life, however strange in these times, is sustained. This includes those in health, social care and other statutory services as well as those working in supermarkets, on public transport and so many more. I know that the whole ACT team shares this message of thanks.

And here at ACT we have seen over the months the many safeguarding challenges that have arisen or been exacerbated by these difficult times. We have tried to offer resources and information about these issues to keep you up to date and to support you in the work you are doing. Any contributions you would like to offer would be really

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”

appreciated as well as ideas about further resources, blogs and podcasts that you would like us to develop.

In this bulletin we start with some good news – Safeguarding Adults Week 2020 was more successful than we thought possible. So many people contributed to this, and our thanks go to all of them.

Ineke's seminar on safeguarding and racism that took place at our AGM focused on raising awareness and understanding of the terminology used when talking about racism. We had great attendance and the feedback was very positive, with a number of people hoping that Ineke would be able to take these messages into their organisations.

In November 2020 a report from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) was published showing that there has been a rise in

safeguarding adult referrals. Laura Thorpe, our Safeguarding Adults Manager, takes us through the report and highlights the facts and figures from it.

I am also particularly pleased to include in this bulletin two articles written by students at the University of Nottingham.

Law Student, Hafsa Khan, shares her experiences of creating inclusive spaces through her work as co-founder of R.E.D Lawyers. This is a society representing racially ethnically and diverse law students at the University of Nottingham. Also, Anna-Maria Poku, our Safeguarding Adults Week Marketing Intern, talks about the issues surrounding safeguarding women and girls in Ghana.

We have had many calls in the last year about grooming, often from family members who are concerned about their relatives being groomed online. We also put on a seminar on Predatory Marriage, a topic that ACT and the university are currently working.

Because of the increased interest in this area of safeguarding we have decided to hold this year's conference on grooming. It's planned for 18th November, and we are hoping that it will be an opportunity to meet again face to face. Further information about this will be in the next bulletin. But for now, Save the Date!

In August 2020, Sport England Club Matters surveyed volunteers and participants in clubs and groups across England to understand how people feel about returning to activity post lockdown. You can find out more about this and the findings using the link in the article.

And Kimberley Walsh, our Safeguarding in Sport Manager, looks at how policies, procedures and codes of conduct set out the best practice framework for your organisation to respond to safeguarding concerns. They also set behaviour expectations of everyone involved in your organisation. She discusses how to ensure that they are actionable and impactful and are more than just a tick box exercise.

We are also pleased to be holding a number of training events in coming months – more information about these and how to book onto them can be found on the ACT website. As well as these courses we also launched our new eLearning platform during Safeguarding Week and will be developing a number of courses in addition to those already available this year.

So stay tuned to our website and keep in touch!

Safeguarding Adults Week 2020 Reaches Over 12 Million People



Safeguarding Adults Week 2020 took place 16 – 22 November.

Each day of the week we aimed to raise awareness about some key safeguarding issues:

- Safeguarding and Wellbeing.
- Adult Grooming and Exploitation.
- Safeguarding Legislation.
- Creating Safer Places.
- Organisational Abuse.
- Safeguarding Adults in Sport & Activity.
- Safeguarding in Your Community.

We created [a suite of resources](#) to help people start vital conversations about these issues. And we encouraged people

to use our hashtag when sharing these resources on social media: **#SafeguardingAdultsWeek**.

The Week in Numbers

We tracked the performance of our **#SafeguardingAdultsWeek** hashtag, as well as a few variations: **#SafeguardingAdultsWeek**; **#SafeguardingWeek**; **#NationalSafeguardingAdultsWeek** and **#NationalSafeguardingWeek**.

Here's how they performed across the week:

- **12,709,612** people reached by the hashtags.
- **8,223** updates by **3,127 users** which

included the hashtags.

- The hashtags were seen **36,940,085** times. And that's just on Twitter!

In 2019, [we reached just over 5.5 million people with our Safeguarding Adults Week materials](#). So in 2020, we reached more than twice as many as we did last year.

We'd like to say a huge thank you to everyone who helped us reach such a huge audience. Safeguarding Adults Week is all about raising awareness. If the hashtags were collectively seen **nearly 40 million times**, it's fair to say we raised some awareness of these key safeguarding issues.

Who Took Part in Safeguarding Adults Week 2020?

More than 400 individuals and organisations signed up to receive our Safeguarding Adults Week resource emails. But ultimately, more than 3,000 individuals and organisations talked about the week on Twitter alone.

Here's a small selection of the organisations who took part:

- **Regional Police Forces.** Including: Greater Manchester Police, West Midlands Police, West Yorkshire Police, Kent Police, GMP Manchester City Centre, Cheshire Police, South Yorkshire Police, Merseyside Police.
- **Local Councils.** Including: Birmingham City Council, Liverpool City Council,

STATISTICS FOR THE WEEK 2020



PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH HASHTAGS



INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS INTERACTED WITH



TWEETS MADE USING HASHTAGS ON 23 NOV. ALONE



GROWTH



National Adults Safeguarding Week progress since it began in 2018

Hampshire County Council, Kent County Council, Essex County Council, Coventry City Council – to name a few.

- **Charities.** Including: Age UK, Choice Support, MacIntyre, Charity Commission, Prostate Cancer UK, Respect Yourself, and Victim Support.
- **Social Care.** Including: Care Quality Commission, Nursing Times, SCIE, Skills for Health.
- **Sport Organisations.** Including: Sport England, UK Sport, Progress Wrestling, UK Coaching, Badminton England, British Rowing, Royal Yachting Association, Sport Wales, and British Judo.
- **Government.** Including: Disability Unit, and the Disclosure & Barring Service.

A Week of Activity

Throughout the week, we hosted:

- A seminar on Adult Grooming & Exploitation with [Justice For Joan's Daphne Franks](#).
- A podcast on Safeguarding in Premier League football. [Listen here](#).
- A podcast on Safeguarding in British Wrestling. [Listen here](#).
- A seminar on Understanding the Impact of Racism in Practice with Ineke Houtenbos, Senior Training & Development Consultant, NSPCC.

We also launched our new [safeguarding eLearning platform](#).



We Cannot Thank You Enough!

We were once again overwhelmed by the response we received.

So no matter what you did to support Safeguarding Adults Week – whether you put on an event or simply retweeted someone else – we'd like to say a massive thank you.

[Safeguarding Adults Week launched in 2018](#). To go from zero to nearly 37 million views in just two years is fantastic. And we could not have done it without you. So once more, thank you.

Together we can make Safeguarding Adults Week 2021 even better! We'd love to hear your thoughts. So let us know what sort of themes you'd like us to cover, and what sort of resources you'd like us to produce. [So get in touch!](#)

ACT Launch Safeguarding eLearning Courses



Two new eLearning courses – Safeguarding Adults and Safeguarding Adults in Sport.

Our new online safeguarding training platform is now live for you to access.

[Access our online safeguarding training courses here.](#)

There are two courses available:

An Introduction to Safeguarding Adults

This course consists of two modules. It's ideal for people who are new to safeguarding or working with adults at risk. It's also ideal if you're looking to assess your safeguarding knowledge.

The course covers what abuse is, how to recognise the signs and how to report a concern. It is interactive and includes video, quizzes, downloads and scenarios to help you understand and learn about keeping people safe.

This course costs £25 per person.

Safeguarding Adults in Sport – Setting Club Standards

This course consists of one in depth module. It's suitable for welfare officers and safeguarding leads, but it's also ideal for volunteers with safeguarding responsibilities in sport, leisure and activity clubs.

This course covers the essential criteria for

setting out policy, practice and procedures in a club environment in England. The content includes legislative information in England, and it also offers further links to information pertaining to legislation and governance for all four nations.

The module includes video, podcasts and assessments to test you throughout. On completion you will receive a certificate.

This course costs £10 per person.

What To Do Next

Simply click the link and register as a user.

Visit the catalogue page on the right-hand main navigation of your page. Select the course you require and purchase online.

You will receive a welcome email for verification. Once you've completed payment, you will have access to your course.

For Multiple Users and Organisations:

You can purchase on behalf of additional users and set up your own group within our platform. So if you would like support please get in touch with us ann-craft-trust@nottingham.ac.uk

Ready to Start Your Online Safeguarding Training?

[Access our online safeguarding training courses here.](#)

Racism and Safeguarding with Ineke Houtenbos, Senior Training & Development Consultant, NSPCC



As part of Safeguarding Adults Week 2020, we were joined by Ineke Houtenbos who delivered an insightful seminar on racism and safeguarding.

Ineke's presentation focused on raising awareness and understanding of the terminology used when talking about racism, unconscious bias, and responses of BAME people to racist structures and language.

White privilege, unconscious bias, intersectionality and structural racism are just a few of the important terms used when discussing racism within organisations and services. Understanding what these terms mean provides a strong foundation for discussing racism in everyday life.

Explore the resources below to learn more about important terminology:

- [Read UNICEF's](#) Anti-Racism resource pack. This includes information on what it means to discuss structural racism, unconscious bias, and white supremacy.
- [The Government](#) have produced guidance about how they write about ethnicity.

It is important to discuss race, and to consider how race might interact with other social identities e.g. gender and class which could present specific challenges that need to be recognised and addressed. This is often referred to as intersectionality. [Listen to Kimberle Crenshaw](#) discuss how overlapping or

intersecting social identities—and particularly minority identities—relate to systems and structures of discrimination.

What is the role of organisations and services?

Alongside developing increased understanding of terminology, Ineke discussed the importance of organisations committing to actions that result in greater inclusivity. As part of this, it is crucial that BAME staff and service users are listened to and granted safe spaces to explore their feelings and needs.

Too often underrepresented groups are presented as not engaging in services. If this is the case, it is important to ask why. Is it that services and structures are not working for them? And if so, what can be changed to increase inclusivity for all?

What is the role of individuals?

Finally, Ineke shared the [NSPCC and UNICEF's anti-racism resource pack](#) which includes top tips for how, as individuals, we can actively discuss and combat racism and discrimination in our everyday life:

- **Use your privilege.** It's not enough to recognise it. Use it to uplift and amplify the voices of the oppressed.
- **Speak to your children, family and friends about race;** be prepared to call it out everywhere you go.
- **Choose to read, purchase and share stories** and content that feature diverse voices and identities as main characters or protagonists.
- **Review your own working systems** and processes and make changes where they are needed to create a more equal playing field.
- **Make the conscious effort to listen to people** with different experiences. Recognise the power of speaking openly and listening closely to diverse voices.



Online Safeguarding Adults Training for Managers and Designated Safeguarding Leads

Wednesday 21—Wednesday 28 April, 2021

This online course will explore the roles and responsibilities of managers in terms of safeguarding adults at risk.

We'll look at the key changes within safeguarding as part of the Care Act. You'll be encouraged to identify where the challenges are, and to seek solutions towards implementation in practice.

We'll cover best practice, the expectations of regulators, and the lessons we learned from our safeguarding adults reviews.

The course takes place across three two-hour sessions, from 21 April to 28 April, 2021. The fee for attending all three sessions is £125, and you must be able to commit to attending all three to fully benefit from this training.

For more information, and to book your place: [Register Here >>](#)

Why Has There Been a Rise in Safeguarding Adult Referrals?

Laura Thorpe, Safeguarding Adults Lead, ACT



A November 2020 report from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) shows that there has been a rise in safeguarding adult referrals.

475,560 concerns of abuse were raised during 2019–20, an increase of 14.6% on the previous year. The number of Section 42 enquiries during the year increased by 12.9% to 161,910 and involved 129,525 individuals. But what does the data mean in practice?

The data and rise in safeguarding adult reports may reflect the cuts faced by local authorities when arranging the provision

of services. This lack of resources has an impact on the safety and wellbeing of adults who may be at risk.

The figures highlight a 31.8% rise in the reporting of neglect, with it occurring in a person's own home 43.8% of the time. This shows that vulnerable people may not be receiving the care and support they need.

The Lockdown Effect

Although these figures do not include much of the period affected by Covid-19, we should expect to see a large rise in reports of abuse due to the isolation and withdrawal of services from some of our

most vulnerable members in society.

However, some local authorities did provide additional statements on their data return for the ONS report about Covid-19 and how it was affecting their ability to respond to safeguarding adults, for example: "Due to Covid-19 pressures, the council was unable to allocate the required resources to resolve exceptions" (Kingston upon Hull) and "Enfield council informed that the total number of Section 42 Safeguarding Enquiries is lower than expected due to a midyear change in system, lockdown due to Covid-19 and a change in guidance around the definitions of Section 42 which has impacted service processes."

This suggests that perhaps safeguarding referrals have taken a backseat during these difficult times and so there may be less referrals than was expected. If reports have declined due to the issues around Covid-19 we can expect that once the situation has become more stable the rate of referrals may increase further.

An Encouraging Sign?

To take away something positive from the figures in the report it does show that more concerns were being raised around adult safeguarding in the 2019-2020 period in general. This is an encouraging sign. Society is increasingly understanding that adults may at times need to be protected from abuse, that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, and that we can all contribute to keeping people safe. It may also highlight that those who are

on the receiving end of abuse understand their rights better and now feel able to come forward should they feel they are being abused or are at risk. The rise in referrals shows that information around abuse and how to report it must be being communicated to the people who need it most.

Another encouraging point is that although the submission of Making Safeguarding Personal information is voluntary, this year has seen a rise in the number of enquiries for which details about MSP data was provided, from just over 91,000 in 2018-19 to almost 114,000 in 2019-20, a 24.7% increase. This shows how the cultural shift of ensuring a person is involved in all things that relate to them, including safeguarding, has started to become fully ingrained in services. The person is increasingly at the centre of all we do.

Let us hope that despite the challenges we have faced in services during this pandemic we can get back to the good work seen in safeguarding adults in 2019-20 and ensure that keeping people safe remains in our priorities.



Invitation to take part in the

Seldom Heard project

Share your expertise as a communication partner

Everyone has a right for their views and preferences to be considered, even when they might struggle to communicate these.

We ALL need to be more creative to make sure we 'listen' properly to everyone, especially about decisions that make a difference to their lives.

During the Covid-19 pandemic this is even more important than ever, as people's lives are changing in difficult ways and their views, wishes and feelings may not be considered.

The Challenging Behaviour Foundation and the Tizard Centre have been working on new and creative ways to improve how we listen. NHS England has now asked them to use these methods to try and find out information about views and preferences from at least seven children and seven adults about how to deliver better support to people with learning disabilities and autism.

The Role of the Communication Partner in the Project

You don't need any formal skills or qualifications to take part – you just need to know the individual well and to want to find out more about their views and wishes.

We can be flexible depending on how much time you have and what particular issues it would be helpful to address.

This work is starting now and will finish at the end of March 2021.

Children and Adults Who Take Part Will Benefit By:

- Having their views heard by NHS England via a report.
- Getting a personalised tool with ideas about how best to gain their views and support better communication, choice and control, which can be used by families and caregivers to

make sure their views and preferences are taken into account in the future.

- Helping to show how everyone's views and preferences can be heard.
- Helping influence how the NHS delivers support to people with learning disabilities and autistic people.

Descriptions used by the CBF/Tizard Seldom Heard Voices project

The following descriptions outline possible characteristics of children and adults who will be included within the CBF/Tizard Seldom Heard Voices project.

All participants will have significant support and communication needs.

1. Children or adults with profound and multiple learning disabilities

Participants included within this sub-sample will reflect some or all of the following description:

“have profound intellectual and multiple disabilities, very severe communication problems, often extreme physical and/or sensory disabilities, and complex health needs.” ([More information](#))

2. Children or adults with severe learning disabilities

Participants within this sub-sample will reflect some or all of the following description:

- have little or no speech
- find it very difficult to learn new skills
- need support with daily activities such as dressing, washing, eating and keeping safe
- have difficulties with social skills
- need life-long support ([The CBF](#))

3. Autistic Children or adults*

Autistic people will have [persistent difficulties with social communication and social interaction](#) and [restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviours, activities or interests](#) since early childhood, that impact on people's ability to live their life.

Participants within this sub-sample will reflect some or all of the following description:

Whilst all autistic people will experience difficulties communicating, including misunderstanding others and being misunderstood, in this sub-sample, we are referring to people who:

- have little or no formal way of communicating (people who are unable to use speech or written communication) in any contexts
- are likely to also have severe learning disabilities

*We have selected to use 'autistic' as this seems to be the term preferred by autistic adults but we recognise that different terms are used.

Take part in the Seldom Heard Project

Do you support someone with severe learning disabilities, or profound and multiple learning disabilities, and want to get involved? If so, we would like to invite you to take part in the Seldom Heard Project by sharing your expertise and exploring your role as a communication partner.

Email: Siobhan@theCBF.org.uk



UNIVERSITY OF
BATH

Request for Participants

An Exploration of friends, family and partners responses to disclosures of sexual violence – Jade Bloomfield-Utting

Two-thirds of disclosures of sexual violence are made to friends, family and partners compared to only 9% disclosing to formal support services.

Despite this, the vast majority of research pertaining to sexual violence is conducted within the context of formal disclosures, for instance reporting to the police. In contrast, this survivor-led research is an exploration of the experiences of victim-survivors of sexual abuse, sexual assault and rape, focusing on the ways in which they were responded to by their informal support network and the impact of the aforementioned responses.

Request for Participants

This is a victim-survivor led study into the experiences of sexual violence victim-survivors in terms of disclosures to friends, family and partners. Participation requires an interview, either online or face-to-face.

You will not be required to discuss the abuse/assault as the focus is the responses to disclosures. All interviews will be confidential and you will remain anonymous.

Criteria for inclusion

All victim-survivors of sexual violence (including sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape, child sexual abuse or sexual abuse within a relationship) who have told at least one person (friend, family or partner) are welcome to participate.

Contact information

Please email me if you would like to participate and you will be provided with a detailed information sheet. Please also email if you have any questions about the research.

jlbu20@bath.ac.uk

R.E.D Lawyers on 'Making Safeguarding Personal – Nothing About Me Without Me'.



University of Nottingham Law Student, Hafsa Khan, shares her experiences of creating inclusive spaces through her work as co-founder of R.E.D Lawyers. R.E.D Lawyers is a society representing racially ethnically and diverse law students at the University of Nottingham.

Safeguarding can be understood as measures designed to protect the health, wellbeing and human rights of individuals. 'Appropriate measures' are key, as sometimes when we think we are supporting people we may actually be doing more harm than good.

This is especially true if we don't focus on what the individual or people involved want and make assumptions. This links to 'nothing about me without me', that to

truly be inclusive when making safeguarding decisions we need to ask the people we're involving and supporting about what they would like, to achieve their desired outcome.

As society has developed safeguarding values have also changed. For example, before we would collect details about what happened and whom did what, however now the aims and outcomes are defined by the central person of the safeguarding process.

This is an example of working towards 'appropriate measures'. This is a positive development as now a larger emphasis is placed on achieving a satisfactory result whilst taking individual choices and requirements into consideration – something R.E.D lawyers has also done

whilst setting up our society.

R.E.D Lawyers

R.E.D Lawyers is a new society at the University of Nottingham. It was started up this year by students who felt that our main Law Society wasn't representative enough of us. Examples include visiting diversity events and then not meeting anyone representing us in the legal sector.

This was clearly an issue and we decided to take the initiative and form a new society, so all minorities would feel represented and heard.

Originally, we used the name BAME Lawyers, however it came to the attention of our members that this wasn't a suitable and representative name. It excludes minorities who don't fit within the typical BAME categories, the exact opposite of what we wanted to achieve.

I also had to take time to research the issues with the term BAME before realising this, showing that safeguarding is a process involving independent study and open mindedness.

We still wanted a representative name that was distinct and could also be used in marketing. Therefore, we came up with R.E.D lawyers, it stands for racially, ethnically and diverse lawyers. A name representing people without excluding anyone, memorable, and a bold colour for marketing too!

In our constitution we have outlined three important aims:

- To strive for and promote ethnic and cultural innovation within the legal sector.
- To increase representation of ethnic minorities within the legal sector.
- To provide minority groups with training and opportunities which will adequately prepare them for a job within the legal sector.

How will we achieve our aims?

We are working to achieve our aims by inviting guest speakers and organising Q&A panels with those in the legal sector who truly represent diversity, so we can learn and appreciate from their experiences. We decided upon this by reflecting our own experiences and talking to fellow students.

This links into safeguarding as you want to engage with the people you are involving and supporting, to make sure you are achieving what they want in the correct way.

Furthermore, we have also begun raising awareness of important information. For example, we created an Instagram series on black history month through a legal lens, considering historic legal landmarks and current issues such as the retention of black lawyers.

Considering these issues will allow current students to think of the solutions they want firms to take to increase retention and to tackle discriminatory issues. It also

allows them to question firms and ask them what safeguarding measures they are using, and if these are incorporated in a safeguarding policy.

Finally, as online work and university have become the norm, we have taken steps to safeguard the wellbeing of our committee and society members too by regularly updating any group chats and by having two designated welfare officers who are always available for providing support where needed.

The Important Role of ‘The Soaps’ in Safeguarding Adults and Young People

Charlotte Brooks—Marketing Officer, ACT



Millions of people each week tune into soap operas such as Coronation Street and EastEnders on TV, and radio soap opera The Archers.

Soap operas play a key role in raising awareness about important safeguarding issues within their storylines. For instance, this year EastEnders have highlighted the rise in domestic abuse cases and The Archers have discussed the disproportionate risk of modern slavery for people with learning disabilities.

Broadcasters have tremendous power to influence public perceptions and it is positive to see producers working with third sector organisations to raise awareness of safeguarding through their storylines.

EastEnders and Domestic Abuse

[EastEnders](#) has been working with [Women's Aid](#) and [Refuge](#) to highlight the rise in domestic abuse cases during lockdown.

In the series, a young woman has been preparing to leave her abusive husband, and the abuse escalates while she is trapped with him during lockdown. She is tragically killed by her husband in a recent episode.

Charities Women's Aid and Refuge hope that the story line will support people [to recognise the signs of an abusive relationship](#) and encourage more people to seek professional help.

The Archers and the 'Hidden' Connection Between Disability and Modern Slavery

[In a recent episode of The Archers](#), it was revealed that three men, kept as slaves, have a learning disability or mental health needs. This connection between modern slavery and disability is rarely discussed.

Ann Craft Trust's Lisa Curtis discusses how The Archers' storyline can raise awareness about how members of the public can [spot the signs of modern slavery](#).

For instance, by looking out for groups of people accommodated at unusual locations and being picked up and dropped off at odd hours. And, when having building work done, households can look out for labourers who appear neglected and malnourished and who are either uncommunicative or not allowed to speak for themselves.

Coronation Street and Child Grooming

[In 2017, Coronation Street](#) producers worked with the NSPCC and survivors of sexual abuse as part of a storyline featuring a relationship between 35-year-old Nathan and 17-year-old Bethany.

The storyline showed Nathan buying Bethany alcohol and gifts. In later episodes Nathan was seen taking Bethany to a party at his flat where he introduced her to his male friends who went on to sexually abuse her.

The soaps producers, and charities such as the NSPCC and Barnardo's, hoped the storyline would raise awareness of

the [signs of grooming](#) and encourage more victims to come forward and seek help.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

Soaps play an important part in raising awareness about abuse in everyday life.

Working with survivors of abuse and third sector organisations allows soap operas to present realistic storylines about abuse and signpost viewers to appropriate professional support which can help to save lives.

- [Learn more](#) about how you can spot the signs of abuse and report your concerns.
- [Access support](#) using our directory of organisations.
- [Explore](#) how Women's Aid contributes to domestic abuse storylines in soap operas.

#ACTSafeguardingHour

Every Wednesday

12.00—1.00 pm

@AnnCraftTrust

ann craft trust
acting against abuse

Do you have any questions or concerns about Safeguarding?

Join us for **#ACTSafeguardingHour**—every Wednesday on Twitter, 12.00—1.00.

This is an opportunity to discuss safeguarding matters with an online community of practitioners.

For more information, find us on Twitter:

[@AnnCraftTrust](https://twitter.com/AnnCraftTrust)

Creating Safer Spaces For Women and Girls in Ghana



Anna-Maria Poku, our Safeguarding Adults Week Marketing Intern, talks about the issues surrounding safeguarding women and girls in Ghana.

The term “safeguarding” refers to measures designed to protect the health, wellbeing and human rights of individuals. These measures allow children, young people and adults at risk to live free from abuse, harm and neglect. Safeguarding girls and women means being committed to providing a safe space full of opportunities for them to thrive in a world that is otherwise not focused on such.

In many African nations, women and girls are at the bottom of the food chain when it comes to caring for them and being committed to their protection. Ghana is no different. Although reading about the measures and laws in place to safeguard

girls and women might tell you otherwise.

The Situation in Ghana: Theory vs. Reality

Generally, Ghana is considered as one of the countries in Africa with functioning laws in relation to the protection of girls and women.

Ghana is a signatory to The international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). It also has the Ministry of Women and Children’s Affairs (MOWAC) which was established in 2001 and is committed to coordinating, initiating and monitoring gender responsive issues in an effort to ensure equal rights for women.

In addition to this, the government has initiated an Affirmative Action Programme and has developed a National Gender and

Children's Policy Framework. There are various other legal and social reforms in place to address issues associated with gender inequality and the dangers women and girls face. Ghana even has a Girl's Education Unit within the Ghana Education Service that was established in 1997.

On paper, Ghana looks good. It looks like a progressive country committed to the betterment and safeguarding of women and girls in the country. While there has been progress in safeguarding women and girls and creating safer places for them, the reality is that the situation for women and girls in Ghana is as bad as it has ever been.

Particularly in rural areas, girls have [restricted access to essential educational](#) opportunities. And when they do get the opportunity to get an education, sexual violence and teen pregnancy rates are high. This can result in them dropping out of school with little to no prospects of ever returning. It's a vicious cycle.

According to a 2013 study in the Journal of Applied Research on Children: Informing Policy for Children, 53.3% of sexual violence against girls happens at school. Girls are also increasingly at risk of trafficking and exploitation, especially with regards to child marriage and working as '[kayaye](#)' in urban areas.

Many women in Ghana, especially in rural areas, are victims of stereotyping and

profiling as [witches](#), leading them to be ostracised from society and banished to areas with very poor living conditions.

A Deeper Look at Reality

I lived in Accra, Ghana for the first 17 years of my life. While I spend most of the year away, I go back as often as possible. It is my home.

It is not uncommon in Ghana to see young girls, sometimes pregnant or carrying children, walking the streets of Accra, hawking goods for very little money. These are all girls who should be in school. According to Chance of Childhood, there are over [35,000 girls](#) on the streets of Accra. Most of these girls come from the rural regions of Ghana in search of a 'better' life and access to education. But instead they end up trafficked into prostitution or child labour.

Child marriage in Ghana, while it has improved since the 1990s, is still prevalent. The figures are very bleak. According to Girls Not Brides Ghana, more than one in every five girls in Ghana is married before the age of 18. 5% are married before their 15th birthday, with women in the northern region marrying at the youngest age.

Witch Camps

The existence of [witch camps in Ghana](#) date back almost a century, and they are as prevalent as ever. In these camps you'll only find women and the few children, mostly girls, who accompany them. These women are

mostly older, more vulnerable women who do not fit the stereotype of the 'typical' Ghanaian woman that age. They are usually unmarried, single mothers or widows. They are sent away and accused of being witches if they show signs of dementia or mental illness, or if they are accused of being responsible for unfortunate, often natural, incidents within the community.

The practice of banishing women for accusations of witchcraft is rooted in misogyny and mental health stigma. While the government has attempted to shut down some of these camps, efforts often prove futile. The women are often scared of attempting to reintegrate back into the communities that sent them away.

Adamu Mahama is one of such women. When [interviewed](#) this is what she said;

"My life is not good now. I sit and worry. People are like this, creating stories. Most of the accusers are men because if you accuse your fellow woman then tomorrow it will be you."

Adamu is one of the many women in these villages all over Ghana who is living this reality. The few children who accompany their mothers to these villages have insufficient access to the most basic amenities, with no chance of formal education. But they would rather accompany their mothers than watch them suffer alone.

Culture as a Hindrance and the Way Forward; Why Creating Safer Places Matters

Unfortunately, the many laws and social reforms enacted do not actually positively impact the lives of the people they are made for. This is because most of these issues are rooted in aspects of Ghanaian culture that date back many years. Ghanaian culture is inherently patriarchal. Most, if not all, of these issues can be traced back to the idea that women and girls are lesser beings existing only for the benefit of men and society, rather than whole beings deserving of equal, functioning rights.

In a paper in the SAGE journals titled ['Women's Survival in Ghana: What Has Law Got to Do With It?'](#), it was put succinctly that 'the efforts of these organizations [i.e. the government] are needed beyond the passage of law because law is not enough to substantiate a change in gender inequality'.

The situation in Ghana shows that the enactment of laws per se does not address the substantive issues that systematically undermine and constrain the ability of excluded groups to participate equally and effectively in social, political and economic life. In Ghana, even though formal laws and policies promise equal treatment for all citizens, deep-seated inequities embedded and institutionalized in family and gender systems, informal norms and

practices, religious beliefs and political systems influence the way these laws and policies are implemented. This often results in unequal outcomes for certain groups.

Creating Safer Places in Ghana

Clearly, the many laws in place aimed at safeguarding women and children are not doing nearly enough. But all hope is not lost. There are various charities and organisations committed to the protection and safeguarding of girls and women at risk in Ghana.

[ActionAid](#) is one such organization that fights for and protects women's rights and strives to provide safe spaces for them. They focus mainly on work with the accused witches; teaching them their rights and helping them find ways to support themselves.

[Chance for Childhood](#) is another organisation committed to this important work. They aim to provide help to girls on the streets out of education through their House of Refuge. This is a centre for young girls to get off the streets and have a chance at life by learning a trade.

Grassroots Safeguarding in Ghana

In 2017, I was a founding member of the Tema International School's initiative, Girls United Club. Our mission was to help create safer spaces for young girls who had been victims of all types of abuse, including sexual violence, parental neglect and teenage pregnancy.

[Girls United's first project](#) was focused on helping young pregnant girls in the Tema Metropolis of Ghana gain access to essential items they needed through pregnancy, and for their life after pregnancy. This is just one example of the work ordinary people can do to help protect girls and women. There are numerous other small organisations and groups doing vital work, such as [Hats Community Empowerment Programme \(HACEP-Ghana\)](#) focused on protecting girls from child marriage. There's also [Self-Help International](#) focused on helping girls stay in school and empowering women to be self-sufficient.

The Ghanaian government has a way to go in regards to enacting laws that actually attack these problems at the root of the issue while championing general social reform. So it is heartwarming to see that there are people and organisations committed to protecting and safeguarding girls and women however they can.

We all have a part to play in making sure that in our homes, communities and organisations we are creating safer places not only for girls and women, but for everybody.

Anna-Maria also recorded a podcast with us, in which she discussed how UK lockdowns may breach the Human Rights Act. [Listen to it here.](#)

Transforming Care—Why is Progress So Slow?



Nearly 10 years after Winterbourne, we're still working to transform care. Why is progress so slow?

The situation at Winterbourne View revealed that what goes on behind closed doors often does not reflect the practice we aspire to in policy.

[You can read ACT CEO Deborah Kitson's reflections on Winterbourne here.](#)

We also have a video concerning the Transforming Care project featuring former MP Norman Lamb, [which you can watch here.](#)

A new Home Group paper brings together a range of ADASS partners, including care providers, commissioners and local authorities. All are calling for action to speed up the transforming care process.

The paper outlines a series of recommendations for change:

- Transferring funding from government to CCGs and local authorities, to strengthen community-based support.
- Reviewing housing rights for people in care to strengthen the right to live at home.
- Funding specific housing support programmes.
- Ensuring housing and care providers are directly involved in discussions on hospital discharges.
- Making the process of securing NHS England capital funding more accessible and efficient.
- Increasing the funding available to local areas to address the workforce challenge across the system.

[**You can read the paper in full here.**](#)

An Introduction to Digital Safeguarding



What is digital safeguarding?

A good definition of safeguarding is taking proactive steps to prevent harm and abuse from occurring. At the same time, good safeguarding practice means you'll know what to do if harm or abuse ever takes place: who to contact, what to tell them, and how to help the person who's experienced abuse.

So what's digital safeguarding? It's the same idea, but in a digital space. Digital safeguarding simply means taking steps to stay safe online.

Why is Digital Safeguarding Important?

In 2020, as a result of enforced government lockdowns, many people in the UK may have spent more time online than ever before. From work meetings to school lessons and exercise classes, many things that we used to do offline we now do online.

Hopefully things will soon return to normal. But even without enforced lockdowns, people in the UK still spend a lot of time online.

According to the [Office of National Statistics](#), in 2019:

- 99% of UK adults aged 16 to 44 were recent internet users, compared to 47% of adults aged 75 or over.
- Only 7.5% of UK adults didn't use the internet at all.
- 78% of adults with disabilities were recent internet users. For the first time ever, the annual figure exceeded 10 million.
- If so many of us are spending so much time online, obviously we need to know how to keep ourselves safe online.

When it comes to safeguarding, prevention is always better than a cure. It's always better to prevent abuse from

happening in the first place than it is to respond to an incident of abuse. Digital safeguarding is no different. We should know how to use the internet safely and sensibly, and we should all be aware of the risks we face online.

Digital Safeguarding Resources

Over the years, we've created and collected a number of digital safeguarding resources:

What is Cyber Bullying? When people use digital services to abuse or harass others, we call it cyber bullying. This post will help you spot the signs of cyber bullying, while also offering tips on how to protect yourself from online bullies. [Read more.](#)

How to Stay Safe Online. A collection of general tips, including advice on online conduct and behaviour, and essential cyber security tips (such as setting a good password!) [Read more.](#)

Safeguarding and Online Youth Work. This helpful guide includes information on using technology to deliver youth work provision and responding to safeguarding risks when working with young people online. [Read more.](#)

Guidance for Adults and Young People with Learning Disabilities. A selection of easy-read guides to staying safe online, with helpful images and clear and simple language. [Read more.](#)

Supporting People Who Have Been Abused Online. It's vital that we take steps

to prevent abuse from happening in the first place. But it's just as important that we know how to respond to instances of abuse. This is a collection of resources to help parents, guardians, and others in positions of care support young people who have been abused online. [Read more.](#)

Creating Safer Online Spaces. A guide to setting and maintaining safeguarding standards when delivering certain services online, such as teaching or exercise classes. [Read more.](#)

Beware of Online Scams. Though this resource refers explicitly to the scams that appeared in the early days of lockdown, it's still a good introduction to the sort of techniques online criminals use to exploit others. This will give you an idea of the sort of red flags you should look out for to determine whether something is authentic, or a scam. [Read more.](#)

Photography Guidance. Is it illegal to take a picture of a child or young person under 18? Not necessarily. But there are still precautions you should take when taking and sharing photos of yourself and others. [Read more.](#)

More Digital Safeguarding Resources

What sort of digital safeguarding resources would you like to see?

If you need further guidance for staying safe online, [please get in touch to let us know.](#)

The Hidden Consequences of Lockdown: The Rise in 'Sex for Rent' Landlords

Charlotte Brooks, Marketing Officer, ACT



What is 'Sex for Rent'?

Shelter describes 'sex for rent' as an arrangement where someone is being asked for payment for the housing costs in the form of sexual favours. Alongside clear exploitation, these arrangements present risks around whether the tenants have sufficient housing rights.

Prior to the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, there was already a lack of affordable housing. This has been exacerbated by the rise in unemployment

because of the pandemic. Consequently, Shelter has found that since the pandemic began in March over 30,000 women have been propositioned by 'sex for rent' landlords, as a means to pay for rent arrears or as a means of getting free or reduced-price accommodation.

Although this issue has been found to disproportionately impact women, it is important to note that anyone at risk of homelessness could face such exploitation.

‘Sex for Rent’ and Safeguarding

Everyone should have the right to live safely, free from the risk of abuse. ‘Sex for rent’ arrangements create a situation where individuals are at risk of multiple forms of abuse as a result of the power landlords have over people who are dependent on them for housing.

Firstly, sex for rent arrangements are a form of [sexual abuse](#) as individuals are pressured into engaging in sexual acts against their will to avoid becoming homeless.

Secondly, individuals in such arrangements are being asked to enter a space that is entirely controlled by the landlord. This creates a catalyst for [physical](#) and [emotional](#) abuse.

Finally, such arrangements could lead to individuals becoming at risk of [self-neglect](#). This covers a wide range of behaviour, but it can be broadly defined as neglecting to care for one’s personal hygiene or health and can become a coping mechanism for sexual trauma.

‘Sex for Rent’ arrangements and the Law

It is illegal for a property owner to demand sexual favours in return for rent or accommodation. However, Labour MP Peter Kyle has found that no one has been arrested or convicted for it in the UK. Peter is campaigning to change this and wants to make ‘sex for rent’ adverts illegal as well as ‘sex for rent’ arrangements.

What needs to change?

Peter Kyle is proposing three changes in response to the surge in ‘sex for rent’ adverts.

- Prosecution should be made based on placing ‘sex for rent’ adverts. Hundreds are live on sites such as Craigslist, but no-one has ever been brought to justice in the UK.
- Currently the law used is ‘incitement to prostitution’ which means victims of ‘sex for rent’ are legally defined as prostitutes. This is a huge disincentive to victims coming forward to report their experiences.
- Peter Kyle is campaigning to criminalise the landlords advertising and benefiting from ‘sex for rent’ arrangements, rather than criminalising the individuals who are being exploited through these arrangements.
- Sites such as Craigslist, that advertise such arrangements, should be held to account and be brought to justice.

Where can I find out more?

- [The Daily Mail](#) has worked with Peter Kyle to investigate the rise of ‘sex for rent’ arrangements during the pandemic.
- In 2018 the [BBC and journalist Ellie Flynn](#) produced a documentary of their investigation into landlords offering accommodation in exchange for sexual favours.

- [Shelter Scotland](#) have produced a briefing discussing 'sex for rent' in Scotland.
- [Listen](#) to Peter Kyle speak to the BBC about his campaign.

Who can I contact for support?

[Shelter](#) can offer advice if you're homeless or about to lose your home, including help from your local council and finding a place to stay if you're on the streets.

[The Survivors Trust](#) provide support to survivors of sexual abuse.

[Mind](#) has developed a list of useful contacts for people who can help if you are experiencing abuse, or if you've experienced abuse in the past.

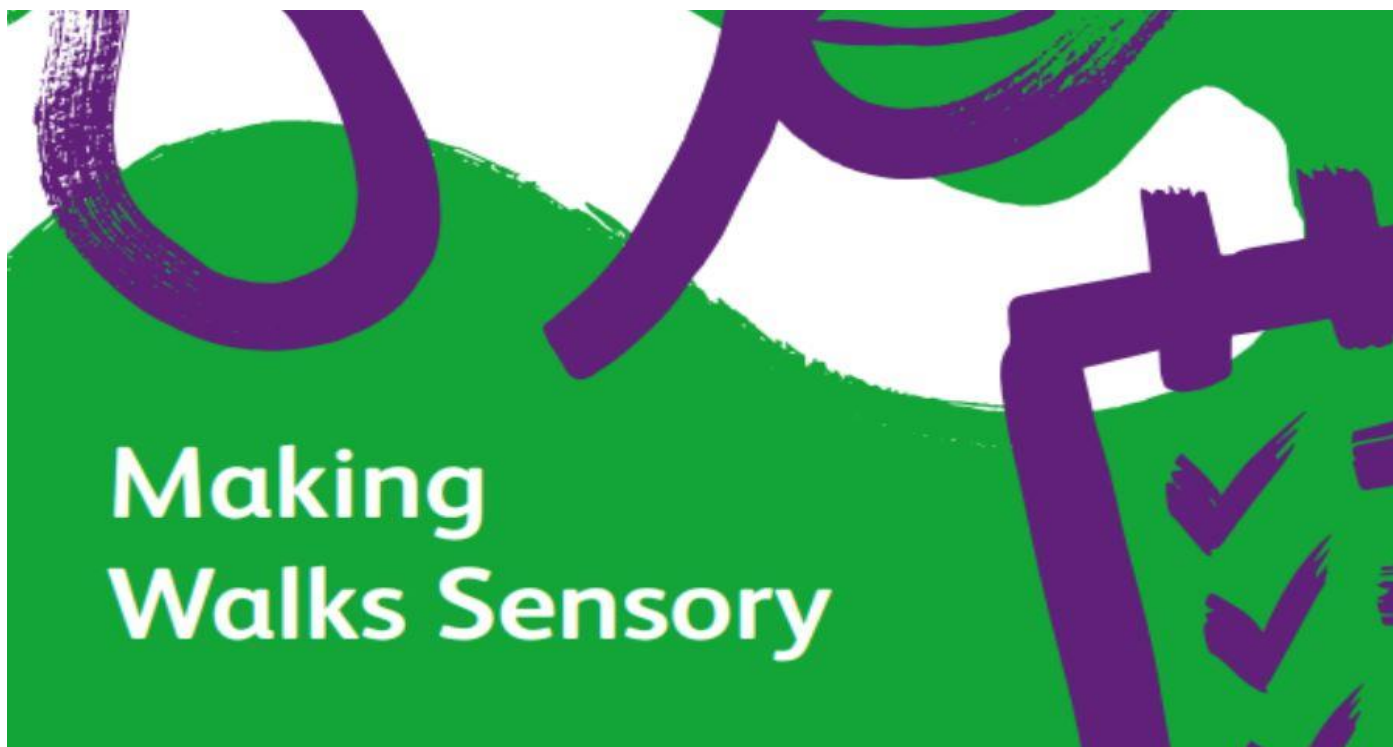
How can you make a difference?

Support the [Sexual Exploitation Bill](#) proposed by Dame Diana Johnson MP. If passed, this would establish a [Nordic Model](#) approach to prostitution law and policy in England and Wales. One major change, because of the bill, would be to criminalise those buying sex, rather than those selling sex.

[Support](#) Union's Housing Manifesto which is campaigning for affordable and safe housing for all.

New Resources from Sense are Making Activities More Inclusive

Charlotte Brooks, Marketing Officer, ACT



Sense are currently developing a range of different resources to help make activities more inclusive.

The resources are free and are primarily designed for all people who support disabled people, whether they are parents, siblings, carers, support staff, volunteers or walk leaders. All activities have been created with people with complex impairments in mind and are applicable for all ages.

- **Making Walks Sensory.** This resource includes advice on planning walks, tips on encouraging mindfulness and suggested sensory activities.
- **Making Sense of Mini-Games.** This resource is designed to help disabled people to be more active, with a booklet of suitable games and activities that can be enjoyed with little or no equipment or in any sized space.
- **Making Sense of Yoga.** This resource is suitable for practicing yoga teachers who wish to make their classes more inclusive for participants with sensory impairments and complex disabilities.

[Download the resources and toolkits from Sense.](#)

The 2020 Safeguarding Adults in Sport & Activity Seminar—Summary

Online Safeguarding in Sport & Activity Seminar 6th October 2020



On Tuesday October 6 2020, we held our first online Safeguarding Adults in Sport & Activity Seminar.

The online seminar was a collaboration between ACT and [The CPSU](#). Other organisations took part, including [Sport England](#), [Sport Wales](#), [UK Sport](#), [Lime Culture](#), [The NSPCC](#) and the [National Working Group](#).

The seminar included six presentations and six workshops. Below are short summaries of the day's presentations and workshops.

Safeguarding Adults in Sport – Deborah Kitson, ACT

Deborah Kitson, CEO of the Ann Craft Trust, gave a short history of safeguarding

adults in sport, from 2008 until now.

She listed some of the challenges for sports organisations. These include understanding how raising and reporting concerns about adults and children vary and how sport needs to be able to deal with concerns from both inside and outside the sport setting.

Finally, she offered some practical steps that everyone can take to champion safeguarding adults in sport. For example, you could follow ACT on [Twitter](#), or get involved in [Safeguarding Adults Week](#).

The Child Protection in Sport Unit – Michelle North, Service Head

The CPSU is a partnership between the NSPCC, Sport England, UK Sport, Sport

Northern Ireland and Sport Wales. Their mission: *To build the capacity of sports to safeguard children and young people in and through sport and to enable sports organisations to lead the way in keeping children safe from harm.*

Michelle introduced the wider CPSU team and described some of the services they offer. Next, she looked at what the future might hold for the CPSU. Their goal is to continue supporting organisations with their safeguarding responsibilities particularly in light of Covid-19 and financial restraints.

Safeguarding in Sport and Physical Activity – an update from Sport England – Alex Moore

Sport England's mission statement is that *everyone in England regardless of their age, background or level of ability should feel able to take part in sport and physical activity.*

Alex began by explaining Sport England's safeguarding strategy, their partners, their priorities, and the progress they've made. She stressed the importance of collaboration, and provided multiple examples of how good collaboration can lead to positive change.

Next, Alex described their case management pilot project. This includes nine NGBs who are collaborating in numerous ways to effectively manage safeguarding cases. After this, Alex described their training methods pilot project. This is a collaboration with [UK Athletics](#) to test and evaluate the most

effective method of delivering safeguarding training.

Finally, Alex looked at some of their ongoing and future projects. These include the Safeguarding Code in Martial Arts, official recognition that clubs or providers have demonstrated a commitment to maintaining excellent safeguarding standards so everyone participating and engaging in Martial Arts can have a safe and enjoyable experience.

Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation in Sport – Sheila Taylor, National Working Group (one of Sheila's colleagues stood in for her on the day).

They began by defining child sexual exploitation, and describing the many forms it might take, from targeting to grooming to coercion. But sexual exploitation is just one type of exploitation. So next, they explored the various forms of exploitation that exist:

They then described the structure of the National Working Group, and the work it carries out, with special focus on their Response Unit. Finally, she anticipated some of the challenges the future might hold, and how we might overcome them. The key is collaboration. Together we can make a difference!

Racism and Safeguarding in Sport – Ineke Houtenbos, Senior Training & Development Consultant, NSPCC

Ineke's presentation covered key terminology, the current state of racism in

sports, its impact, and the implication this might have on safeguarding. She explored ways in which organisations might commit to becoming more diverse, and ways in which the sport and activity community might encourage increased BAME participation.

Finally, Ineke suggested some actions that people might take on an individual level to combat racism in sport. The key here is to listen: To accept the discomfort and explore feelings and to explore needs.

You'll find a more detailed summary of this presentation on page 13 of this bulletin.

Lime Culture – Annabel Timmins

Lime Culture specialise in sexual violence and safeguarding training. They work with sports organisations to support their safeguarding response.

Next, Annabel invited us to consider the difference between thinking about sport and thinking about safeguarding. This creates a barrier. So what can we do to break it down? Finally, Annabel shared details of Lime Culture's Lead Safeguarding Officer Development Programme, which will launch in January 2021.

Online Safeguarding in Sport Workshops

There were also six safeguarding in sport workshops:

Safer Cultures in Sport – Key elements in creating and sustaining sports and activities where everyone is safe – Cerri Dando (CPSU) and Ruth Ingram (ACT)

What needs to change and how can we change it?

Cerri and Ruth explored Serious Case Reviews (adults) concerning abuse in care settings. Do they identify any common features? Yes. Among other things, there are invariably low staffing levels, a lack of training, poor management, and a lack of good governance.

Cerri and Ruth invited participants to consider how this sort of culture could also exist in a sport setting. They explored duty of care in sport. Next, they examined how we might adopt a high-risk industry's "total safety culture". This includes creating an environment where anyone can raise any concern over any issue, no matter how small.

After this, Cerri and Ruth looked at elite athletes. They referenced to ACT's [Elite Athlete Vulnerability Guidance](#), and [our podcast with the athlete Charlotte Gilmartin](#).

Finally, Cerri and Ruth invited participants to think about their organisations. They asked: What do you already do to help create a safe environment? What one

thing do you pledge to do to create a safer culture in your club or organisation?

Position of Trust – Across children and adults – Laura Whapham (CPSU) and Lisa Curtis (ACT)

With great power comes great responsibility. Laura and Lisa looked at the fine line between influence and control. They listed ways in which a coach's influence on an athlete might be positive, and ways in which it might be negative. For example, setting goals is positive. But pressuring an athlete to take performance-enhancing drugs is negative.

Lisa and Laura next explored "the position of trust" and examined how it might be abused. Most coaches understand their duties and professional responsibilities. But coaches who overtly and persistently breach professional boundaries present clear risks to safety.

Finally, Lisa and Laura asked participants to consider three important points:

1. What does a person in a position of trust mean for children and how does this compare with adults?
2. What does a good culture in a club/organisation look like? How can this be achieved?

What role/responsibility do you have to set the culture in your organisation – what can you directly influence? What is out of your control?

Are Parents/Carers a Benefit to Athletes Participation in Sport? Paul Stephenson (CPSU) and Camilla Knight (Swansea University)

Paul and Camilla invited participants to consider the various ways in which parents and carers might influence the way one experiences sport. Of course, they can do a lot of good, in enabling participation and enhancing motivation. But they can also do a lot of damage, whether that's through exerting too much pressure to perform, or through setting unrealistic expectations.

Next, Paul and Camilla shared a few example scenarios. They asked participants to consider, in each case, whether the parent's actions would help or hinder the athlete. After this, they explored how coaches might experience "difficult" parents, and how they might deal with potential issues. Finally, they listed ways in which sport or activity organisations might optimise parental involvement. The key is to foster and maintain healthy relationships, and to adapt attitudes and approaches based on the athlete's needs.

Safeguarding Challenges during the pandemic and returning to Sport and Physical Activity – Denise Richards (CPSU), Nicola Dean (ACT) and Kevin Murphy (NWG)

Denise, Nicola and Kevin began by reflecting on just how challenging 2020 has been for absolutely everyone. They explored some of the effects of lockdown

on adults and children. Negative effects include stress, mental health, loneliness and a rise in cases of domestic violence, exploitation, and other forms of abuse.

They shared some shocking statistics: In April, May and June there were more than 22,000 contacts to the NSPCC helpline from adults with concerns for the wellbeing of a child. There were 8,287 contacts in May, the highest number made to the NSPCC helpline in a single month on record.

Throughout lockdown, many official bodies have stressed that “we’re all in this together”. Nicola, Denise and Kevin explored ways in which the lockdown might have affected different groups in different ways.

Next, they looked at how sport and activity organisations might encourage people to stay active through lockdown and beyond. Many organisations have attempted to host virtual online fitness sessions. Denise, Nicola and Kevin invited participants to consider the safeguarding considerations we might have to make in an online fitness setting.

Finally, as we gradually move out of lockdown, many will return to sports and activity. The three facilitators asked participants to think about the safeguarding and child protection issues that might arise during this transition. For example, would you be able to recognise if an athlete experienced harm or abuse during lockdown?

Catching safeguarding concerns early – Liza Ware (CPSU) and Joanne Pell (ACT)

This workshop explored the various ways in which a culture of abuse might take hold in a sport or activity organisation. And once this culture takes hold, it can result in a cycle of abuse that can last for years.

Joanne and Liza invited participants to consider the various factors that might make an athlete at risk from abuse. These might include the “win-at-all-costs” attitude, over-training, away trips, body image issues, and a culture of hazing and initiation rituals.

Next, Joanne and Liza invited participants to think of examples of poor practice, and to consider how these might lead to abuse. They asked: Can we prevent abuse? What measures might make abuse less likely? Examples might include an athlete-first approach, a defined code of conduct, safer recruitment practices and clear reporting procedures. Finally, they listed some do’s and don’ts to consider when responding to a concern.

Preparing for Tokyo – Back into elite sport – Carole Billington Wood (CPSU) and Kimberley Walsh (ACT)

Carole and Kimberley shared best practice and learning regarding welfare planning for the upcoming Olympics in Tokyo. They also aimed to raise awareness of the additional safeguarding and welfare considerations that might arise as a result of Covid-19.

Clare Cunningham, Lead Safeguarding Officer at the [British Paralympic Association](#), shared her organisation's welfare plan for both the BPA multisport prep camp and during Games-time. She outlined their safeguarding procedures, their code of conduct, and their reporting process. She also listed the specific responsibilities that her organisation's safeguarding officers will undertake.

Covid-19 presents additional safeguarding and welfare considerations. So Carole and Kimberley asked participants to consider several issues:

- How do we assure team members they are safe in the Village given the number of people that will be there?
- Impact on mental health if team members cannot leave the Village except to competition and training venues.
- What if friends & family are not allowed to travel?
- What if friends and family can travel, but they're not allowed to see their athletes?

Finally, Carole and Kimberley explored the effect all of this will have on athletes' mental health and wellbeing.

Want More Safeguarding in Sport Insights?

Our first online Safeguarding in Sport & Activity seminar was a huge success. So we wish to say a massive thank you to everyone who helped make it happen.

If you want more safeguarding in sport advice, take a look at our [events page](#) to see what we have coming up, or [get in touch to ask about training for your club or organisation](#). You can also sign up for our monthly Safeguarding Adults in Sport email updates. [Just head here to register](#).

Sport England Return to Play Survey— Key Findings



In August 2020, Sport England Club Matters surveyed volunteers and participants in clubs and groups across England to understand how people feel about returning to activity post lockdown.

You can now view the results of these surveys on [the Sport England website](#).

Here are some key findings:

Volunteers

- During the initial lockdown period, 71% continued to volunteer in some capacity.
- 14% of volunteers had significant anxiety about returning.

Coaches and instructors were more likely to have stopped during lockdown and were less likely to return.

Participants

- 8% of people were unsure if they would return and reported high levels of anxiety.
- Participants' key concerns includes social distancing, hygiene and sticking to the rules.

- Individual indoor sports were hit the hardest through this time.

The full report contains much more information about how sport and activity groups have managed during lockdown, not just in thinking about return to play, but also in helping participants look after their mental health and wellbeing throughout lockdown.

Read the reports in full on [the Sport England website](#), where you'll also find a suite of resources to help sport and activity clubs manage through lockdown.

Safeguarding Adults in Sport and Activity Policy & Procedures Templates—Update

**Ruth Ingram, Safeguarding Adults in Sport Manager for Wales,
ACT**



Do sports organisations know how to support people who have experienced abuse? Do they know how to take action to stop people who have caused harm?

What extra help is available to adults with care and support needs if they experience abuse?

Do sports organisations ever work with social services and the police?

Luckily most people taking part in sport don't need to think about whether their sports organisation has a policy or procedure that would guide actions if

there were concerns about abuse or neglect.

However, abuse can and does take place in all walks of life. We are becoming increasingly aware that sport is no exception. So it's vitally important that sports organisations have Safeguarding Adults policies and procedures in place. It's also important that these procedures are consistent with the law.

Did you know that each of the four nations of the UK has different legislation and guidance when it comes to Safeguarding Adults at Risk? They each

say more or less the same thing, just in different words. However, there are some important differences. Most strikingly, in Wales and Northern Ireland there is a DUTY to report ALL situations where there is a 'reasonable belief' that an adult with care and support needs is experiencing abuse or neglect to the Local Authority.

Safeguarding Adults in Sport Policy and Procedure Templates

[Access them here, in English and Welsh.](#)

We hope they are useful to you. Not to copy and paste, but to work through, to think about whether they would work for you and to chop and change as is best for your organisation.

We're always very happy to receive feedback so if you have any comments or questions please do let us know.

Adult Grooming—If It Feels Wrong, It Is Wrong

Joanne Pell, Safeguarding Adults in Sport Manager, ACT



Grooming in sport involves slowly gaining trust before systematically breaking down interpersonal barriers.

Athletes can become trapped into compliance because they trust and like, or even love, their abusers. This process may take weeks, months or years with the abuser usually moving steadily so that they are able to maintain secrecy and avoid exposure. Grooming is important because it brings about the appearance of co-operation from the athlete, making the act of abuse seem consensual.

As American therapist [Michael Samsel](#) puts it: “Grooming works by mixing positive behaviours with elements of abuse. In the beginning, all behaviours are positive. Slowly, abusive elements are added in amounts that surprise the

survivor to an extent, but do not push alarm to a high level. Overtime, the inappropriate comes to feel normal.”

Grooming and abuse can occur **at any level in any sport**, whether that’s with amateur players or elite athletes. Although most people think of children as being groomed, **anyone at any age can be a victim of grooming.**

Athletes can become trapped into compliance because they trust and like, or even love, their abusers. This process may take weeks, months or years with the abuser usually moving steadily so that they are able to maintain secrecy and avoid exposure. Grooming is important because it brings about the appearance of co-operation from the athlete, making

the act of abuse seem consensual.

An Abusive Relationship

In sport, grooming is facilitated when an authority figure such as a coach, physio, physician or support staff/volunteer gradually builds the athlete's trust. Although this blog refers to the coach/athlete situation, the abuser could be anyone in a position of trust and authority in the sport who uses the imbalance of power to abuse.

They're able to build trust through offering the athlete the opportunity of achieving tangible outcomes, such as winning competitions, honours and medals and team selection, funding and sponsorship. The grooming process also involves intangible rewards such as feelings of being special, high self-esteem, confidence, superiority and security. Often, the abuser is held in high esteem by other professionals and so people defend their behaviour, even when people are reporting that it is abusive. The 'celebrity status' of some abusers can be used to insert their power and provide a 'cover' for their behaviours.

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The abuser nurtures and protects the athlete in a parent-like relationship. They provide a mixture of discipline and affection upon which the athlete gradually becomes reliant. The athlete can ultimately become totally trapped, as the abuser can use threats, such as being cut from the team. They can also give or withhold of rewards and privileges to secure co-operation, manipulating the athlete to maintain secrecy.

Unaware Until it's Too Late

For the abuser, grooming is a conscious strategy. The athlete, on the other hand, is often unaware for too long that their relationship with their abuser is getting gradually unhealthier. For example, a coach can be in such a position of power that their authority offers an effective alibi or camouflage for grooming and abuse. The athlete might not notice incremental shifts in boundaries until they feel completely entrapped and unable to resist.

The physicality of sport can require close proximity of bodies in states of undress and/or exertion. It can also require intimate actions that might feel invasive in non-sport contexts. In this way, sport fosters a degree of interpersonal closeness between athletes and coaches that might otherwise only exist within family or care settings. Many of these apparent invasions of privacy – whether involving touch or other forms of interaction – are thus legitimised in sports coaching.

Abusers can groom families as well as the athlete. For example, families can become 'part of' the unquestioned trust network. There's the idea that 'coach knows best'. Athletes don't want to disappoint their families who have often invested a huge amount of time, money and expectation. They may also have made sacrifices, such as moving house or to a different area or country to support their talented child.

The Grooming Process

There is no "checklist" that can be used to identify an offender. However, there are red flags that can help clubs and coaches recognise predatory behaviours that may lead to abuse.

The following four steps outline the process of how an abuser would groom an athlete. Each step identifies behaviour to look out for. These are the things that you'd have to address to prevent grooming or abuse from occurring.

Step One – Targeting a Potential Victim

The first thing an abuser will likely do is identify an athlete they consider to be vulnerable. They might observe them during training, checking their behaviour to see whether it seems they would be susceptible to typical grooming tactics.

- Recognising when an athlete is most susceptible to the coach paying special attention. They might notice when they are insecure about their skills or position on the team. They may single out an

athlete who seems more distant from the other athletes or their teammates. Or they might identify athletes who might be having problems with friends, family, drinking, drugs or similar circumstances. If the coach inquires about these personal situations, the athlete might naturally think that they simply care and want to help.

- Testing the athlete's receptivity to secrecy and reliability. For example, the team may have a rule prohibiting coaches from texting athletes except for official team business. But the coach might do it anyway, and ask the athlete not to tell anyone. They might say that they're only doing it because they're worried about the athlete's wellbeing. They'll then wait to see if the athlete reports the coaching misconduct.
- Striking up a friendship outside of the team. They might do this through phone calls, or through meetings in stores or places typically frequented by the athlete. These encounters might seem "accidental". But they'll actually be carefully planned.
- Simply being nice or being overtly positive to see if the athlete responds to this form of attention.

Step Two – Building Trust and Friendship

Once they've established their inroad and profiled their target as having exploitable aspects, the abuser will begin to build deeper bonds of trust and emotional connections. Consistency is key at this point. Abusers will want the athlete to

perceive them as a stable source of support and positivity. Through spending more time with the athlete and making them feel special, they'll create a stronger bond.

- Making the athlete feel special. Spending more time with the athlete and sharing personal stories or social gossip.
- Giving the athlete small gifts. Or nice and simple text messages like "hope you have a good day" or "you did well at practice today".
- Establishing basic conditions for each private meeting, such as specific times and places. They might also tell the athlete not to tell anyone else about their meetings, as it would only make others jealous of all the attention they're getting.
- Beginning to "bargain". They might say things like "you have to do this because I've done that," or "I told you what I did today. Now you need to tell me."
- This is where things start to get problematic. The abuser's formed an element of obligation in the relationship, which creates a power imbalance.

Step Three – Developing Isolation, Control and Loyalty

From this point, an abuser might start exercising how much control they have over the athlete. This could be through making the athlete do or say things to show committed they are to pleasing their abuser. They might also attempt to cut the athlete off from their support networks, whether that's friends, family, or

both. This creates a larger sense of isolation and makes their target more reliant on them for support and validation.

- Demeaning other people that the athlete may depend upon for support and private conversations. They might start to insist that friends, family, partners and others "*just don't understand you.*"
- Stopping or discouraging the athlete from approaching others for friendship or support.
- Encouraging doubt and fragility. They might build the athlete up one minute, making them feel hopeful and joyful, only to punish or shun them the next. This might make the athlete desperate for a return to warmth and attention.
- Continuing to check on the athlete's commitment to secrecy. They might repeat their instructions to never reveal the relationship to others. They might also continuously question the athlete's loyalty, forcing them to prove themselves.

Step Four – Initiating Abuse and Securing Secrecy

An abuser's aim is to isolate the athlete and create a general feeling of reliance on them. If they manage this, they will then begin to push into ambiguous territory regarding sexual boundaries. They might attempt to entrap the athlete through previous sexual incidents. Or they might try to create feelings of obligation around repayment for gifts, or for all the help they've given in getting further within

the sport. They might even try to invoke feelings of guilt for a poor performance. The previous tests around commitment and secrecy will likely come into play, as it's these elements which an abuser will use to ensure any deviant behaviour goes unreported.

- Gradual movement into physical boundaries. It might start with accidental and inadvertent *"excuse me"* touching. It could progress into hugs, or holding hands, and saying things like *"I like you"* or *"you're special."*
- Inappropriate touching and then withdrawal. They might say something like *"sorry, couldn't help it, I apologise"*. But then next time, they'll close the trap through saying *"you didn't mind last time."*
- Invoking cooperation for being nice or treating the athlete specially. *"You owe me...just a little touching."*
- Invoking guilt. *"Now look at what you've done"*. The idea is to make athlete think it is their fault.
- Offering protection. *"I won't tell – it's our little secret."*
- Discrediting the athlete as a mechanism to maintain secrecy. *"Others won't understand"* or *"Nobody will believe you."*
- Threatening the athlete. *"If you tell anyone, I'll hurt you/tell others what you have done/hurt someone you care about/drop you from the team."*

What Can We Do?

- Anyone delivering anti-harassment

and abuse prevention programmes in sport must identify and clarify protective factors in the coach-athlete relationship.

- If you want to establish guidance on coaching practice and athlete safety, it's vital that you understand the grooming process – how it happens and why it happens.
- Greater awareness of how certain interactions can be constructed by one party as legitimate and by the other as invasive or illegitimate is required in order to educate both coaches and athletes about these issues and to help them avoid compromising situations.
- Coaches are responsible for reporting concerns if they observe violations by other coaches. All coaches should receive annual education sessions reviewing prohibited conduct. They should also know how to recognise grooming behaviours.

We must also commit to training coaches and staff/volunteers to recognise grooming techniques and signs of abuse. Increased awareness can lead to action:

1. **Empower** coaches, volunteers and staff to speak-up and not to dismiss questionable interactions or behaviour.
2. Promptly and thoroughly **follow-up** on any issues raised.

What Can I Do?

- Learn about sexual abuse, grooming techniques, signs of abuse and reporting procedures.
- Review your policies and procedures

to determine whether they prohibit or discourage grooming opportunities. Follow-up on any report of suspicious behaviours.

Increase protective factors and create resilience in your setting.

For example:

- Elite athletes who are survivors of abuse could run education programmes for young athletes.
- Training for coaches about training methods that rely less on the misuse of power and control and more on cooperation and having fun to harness motivation.
- Establish clear boundaries, and ensure that everybody understands and adheres to them.
- Focus on increasing awareness on grooming. The goal will be to educate the sports community on what behaviours and signs to look for to help prevent grooming from happening to any athlete.

Establish and Promote Clear Codes of Conduct.

- Have robust safeguarding policy and procedures in place that everyone knows about.
- Have clear procedures in place at your venue, e.g. transport, communication, supervision (ratios), complaints, disciplinary, management of volunteers/ staff.
- Encourage athlete focused and open environments where concerns can be

raised.

- Have clear processes for reporting concerns and ensure all members are aware of this.
- Safeguarding training for all staff and volunteers.
- Follow safe recruitment processes.

Grooming is Never the Athlete's Fault

An athlete should never feel ashamed to tell others about their experience of grooming. People in a position of authority in sport have a responsibility not to use their power or status to take advantage of a participant or athlete.

The behaviours we described above happen when the abuser has cultivated the athlete as their victim. They'll progress through the steps when they think they've successfully trapped the athlete into compliance and silence.

It's never too late to ask for help. The affection and the caring are **not real**.

How to Make Your Safeguarding Policies & Procedures Accessible and Actionable

Kimberley Walsh, Safeguarding Elite Athletes Lead, ACT



Your organisation may have safeguarding policies and procedures in place. But does anyone else know about them?

All sport and activity clubs and providers should have robust safeguarding policies, procedures and codes of conduct in place.

Policies, procedures and codes of conduct set out the best practice framework for your organisation to respond to safeguarding concerns. They also set behaviour expectations of everyone involved in your organisation.

However, you mustn't assume that just because you have policies, procedures and codes of conduct in place, that everyone knows about them. Don't

assume that everyone has read them, or even knows where to find them!

Embedding Best Practice Across the Organisation

If you want to embed safeguarding best-practice and awareness throughout your organisation, everyone involved in your organisation must know and understand:

1. That there are systems in place to support, listen, and act on any safeguarding concerns.
2. What to do and who to speak to if they have any concerns.
3. What the procedure and potential outcome might be.
4. Any other support that's available, whether within the organisation or from a

third party.

It's easy to focus solely on making sure you have the relevant up to date policies and procedures in place. But it's equally important to make sure everyone involved in your organisation knows about these policies and procedures. Also, your policies and procedures must be easy to access and easy to understand. And this goes for everyone: From the participants who take part in your activity every month, to the volunteer who only helps out once a month.

If you haven't got Safeguarding Adults Policies or Procedures in place, or if you want to review your existing policy, our templates will help you get started. [Find them here.](#)

Don't assume there are no barriers because you have a system in place!

[I recently attended an online seminar with the Centre for Sport and Human Rights on the topic of athlete abuse.](#) The seminar featured speakers from a range of roles within safeguarding and sport from around the world.

One thing many of the speakers all had in common was their personal experiences of being involved with athlete abuse cases, to varying degrees and in a variety of different roles. They shared invaluable insights of 'real' examples of where systems and processes can, and often do, fall short.

One of the messages that really stuck with me was: *"Don't assume it is easy to come forward. Don't assume there are no barriers because you have a system in place."*

One speaker had first-hand experience of reporting a concern as a whistleblower. They shared the following insights:

- Reporting structures must be fit for purpose.
- Organisations and processes must be survivor focused.
- We must normalise dialogues about keeping safe.
- Aim to create open environments where it is OK to voice concerns. Let people know that you're listening, and that you'll take action if they have any concerns.
- It is crucially important to educate athletes as well as coaches or support staff. Everyone needs to know their rights. Everyone needs to know what to do if they feel their rights are being abused.
- Be proactive rather than reactive. Don't wait for a concern to arise before putting processes in place.
- Policies and procedures are only as good as the people who implement them. Policies and procedures will count for nothing if you are reporting to a corrupt system or to an organisation with an unhealthy culture.
- Offer information and support on the processes to both the person

whistleblowing and to the person harmed. organisations should consider:

“Someone always knew there was something going on that didn’t seem right.”

Another speaker at the seminar was a lawyer who has represented survivors of abuse within sport. They talked about how flawed systems can traumatised survivors all over again. They also mentioned how certain systems ask survivors to make certain unethical sacrifices, and how there are often no structures in place to manage concerns appropriately. In all the sport abuse cases this lawyer worked on, “someone always knew there was something going on that didn’t seem right”. Yet they were operating in a system where the culture didn’t make them feel like they could report.

This lawyer shared the concept of the [‘Swiss Cheese Model’](#) of risk management. Many large businesses adopt this model to help prevent catastrophic failures. The idea is to implement several layers of preventative measures. If a gap in your system allows a risk to get through one layer, another layer can help prevent the risk going any further. So the more layers you implement, the less likely it is that abuse might occur.

Summary of Key Actions

At the end of the online seminar, the speakers shared their views of key actions

- Identify and act on early warning signs.
- Improve your first response process to concerns.
- Work on education and awareness raising.
- Offer support for anyone who reports concerns. Bear in mind that a case of abuse could affect more people than you might originally realise. So your support should include friends, family, and the wider community.
- Appoint a dedicated support person to support with informed discussions while navigating the system. Where possible, this person should be independent, and not directly involved with your case.
- Throughout the process, [listen to the voice of the individual involved](#).
- Offer long-term support to survivors, and make counselling or psychological support available from the start.
- You need a centralised system of recording cases to prevent people from moving across sport, countries and borders.
- All safeguards must be mandatory.

One of the speakers said that organisations should consider complaints to be gifts. *“It is telling you what you don’t know, so you can fix the problem or stop it occurring again”.*

Safeguarding News Watch:

Safeguarding Young People

Hundreds of Vulnerable “Invisible Children” Locked Away With No Legal Protection

27 November 2020 | [ChildrensCommissioner.gov.uk](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

Surge in Domestic Child Abuse During Lockdown

2 July 2020 | [BMJ.com](https://www.bmj.com)

575 Million Days of School Missed by Children in England

15 December 2020 | [ChildrensCommissioner.gov.uk](https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)

Action Plan for Welsh Language in Health, Social Services and Care

November 2020 | [CareInspectorate.Wales](https://www.careinspectorate.wales)

A Guide to Cyber Security for Children

5 June 2020 | ineqe.com

Vaccination Should Prioritise Staff Working with Vulnerable Children

6 January 2021 | [CYPNow.co.uk](https://www.cypnow.co.uk)

Key Challenges Met by Child Care Sector in 2020

17 December 2020 | [CYPNow.co.uk](https://www.cypnow.co.uk)

Safeguarding News Watch:

Safeguarding Adults at Risk

A Study of the Lives of People with Learning Disabilities Through Lockdown

November 2020 | [Warwick.ac.uk](https://www.warwick.ac.uk)

Call for Participants: Online Negative Comments and Comms for Adults with Intellectual Disabilities

7 January 2021 | [ChoiceForum.org](https://www.choiceforum.org)

The Techno DJ Fighting Abuse in Dance Music

12 January 2021 | [TheGuardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)

Special Needs Teachers: “We Feel Forgotten”

12 January 2021 | [TheGuardian.com](https://www.theguardian.com)

“Radical” Reforms to the Mental Health Act

14 January 2021 | [LearningDisabilityToday.co.uk](https://www.learningdisabilitytoday.co.uk)

“Why Do People Think I’m My Boyfriend’s Carer?” Disability & Dating

8 January 2021 | [BBC.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk)

Study Finds Care Act Knowledge Gap Among Social Workers

6 January 2021 | [CommunityCare.co.uk](https://www.communitycare.co.uk)

Safeguarding News Watch:

Safeguarding Adults in Sport and Activity

House of Lords Committee to Scrutinise Government's Record on Increasing Participation in Physical Activity

9 December 2020 | [SportParksLeisure.com](https://www.sportparksleisure.com)

England Hockey—Keeping Connected Through Lockdown

12 January 2021 | [EnglandHockey.co.uk](https://www.EnglandHockey.co.uk)

PODCAST: Safeguarding in Premier League Football

20 November 2020 | [AnnCraftTrust.org](https://www.AnnCraftTrust.org)

PODCAST: Safeguarding in British Wrestling

17 November 2020 | [AnnCraftTrust.org](https://www.AnnCraftTrust.org)

PODCAST: The Vulnerability of Elite Athletes

10 November 2020 | [AnnCraftTrust.org](https://www.AnnCraftTrust.org)

What Does a New Lockdown Mean for Sport & Physical Activity?

4 January 2021 | [SportEngland.org](https://www.SportEngland.org)

PODCAST: ACT, NWG and The CPSU Discuss Return to Play

12 November 2020 | [AnnCraftTrust.org](https://www.AnnCraftTrust.org)

Safeguarding Research and Resources

In Justice or In Justice

At every stage of a child's journey through the criminal justice system, opportunities are being missed to get to the root causes of offending and put children's best interests at the heart of the response. Ultimately, the system fails to see the child first and the 'offender' second, which reduces the opportunity for real change. We need a radical new approach to preventing children becoming involved in crime and turning children's lives around when they have spiralled out of control.

Read more: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/injustice-or-in-justice/>

Are We There Yet? Our Rights, Our Say

This report is based on engagement with children and young people by Participation staff in four UK Children's Commissioners offices. It aims to provide the Committee with children and young people's voices about their experiences on the delivery of their rights on a day to day basis.

Read more: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/are-we-there-yet-our-rights-our-say/>

Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child

Every five years, the Committee examines the whole UK on how well it is meeting its promises under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). The reports on this page are submitted to the Committee. They assess how the UK Government and devolved administrations have progressed towards giving every child the opportunities and protections enshrined in the UNCRC.

More information: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/report-to-the-united-nations-committee-on-the-rights-of-the-child/>

Safeguarding Research and Resources

It Was Hard to Escape—Safeguarding Children at Risk From Criminal Exploitation

Our children face a number of challenges to their safety and wellbeing today. No challenge is more complex and damaging than criminal exploitation. Being drawn into exploitative situations, where children can be both victims and perpetrators of serious harm, can have serious consequences for them, and for their families, friends and communities.

Read more: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/870035/Safeguarding_children_at_risk_from_criminal_exploitation_review.pdf

Out of Routine

A review of sudden unexpected death in infancy (SUDI) in families where the children are considered at risk of significant harm

Access here: <https://www.evidence.nhs.uk/document?id=2250987&returnUrl=search%3Fpa%3D7%26ps%3D50%26q%3Dmental%2Bhealth%26s%3DDate&q=mental+health>

Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel Annual Report

Since their first meeting in July 2018, the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel has received rapid reviews relating to notifications for over 500 serious child safeguarding incidents. This is a significant and troubling number of cases where children under 18 years have either died or been seriously harmed in the context of abuse and neglect.

Learn more: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/870033/Child_Safeguarding_Practice_Review_Panel_Annual_Report_2018_2019.pdf

Safeguarding Research and Resources

Briefing on the Full Government Response to Online Harms White Paper

Three years since the publication of a Green Paper, and over 18 months since a White Paper, the Government has announced its final plans for a new Online Safety Bill. The Children's Commissioner welcomes this groundbreaking legislation, which is a significant step forward in combatting online harms. There is now much work to be done to ensure that the new regulatory regime will be as effective as possible in upholding children's rights online.

Read more: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/briefing-on-the-full-government-response-to-the-online-harms-white-paper/>

Access Denied: How End-to-End Encryption Threatens Children's Safety Online

This briefing aims to understand which apps and sites children and teens are using to communicate, and to find out more about what they are sharing on these platforms.

Access here: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/access-denied-how-end-to-end-encryption-threatens-childrens-safety-online/>

Children's Experiences in Mental Health Wards

The primary focus of the work was about how children's experiences differed for those admitted to a mental health hospital 'informally' (that is where they or their parents consented to the admission) compared to those detained under the Mental Health Act. The study also spoke to all children more widely about how they felt about being in hospital, and the things that made their stay there easier or harder to manage.

Learn more: <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/childrens-experiences-in-mental-health-wards/>

From The Vault: Quality Checkers Help Make Safeguarding Personal

Kim Arnold, Choice Support

From Issue 78, January 2012

Quality Checkers are teams of people with learning disabilities who check services.

Quality Checkers use questionnaires, home visits, telephone conversations, meetings, and talks with close friends and relatives to find out if services are doing a good job. Then we write reports about what action should be taken, and we check later to make sure changes that are needed are happening.

When we are monitoring a service we use the [Reach standards in supported living](#).

The idea for Quality Checkers came from an organisation called [Skills for People](#), in Newcastle. In 2007 they trained 21 Choice Support service users to become Choice Support Quality Checkers. In 2009 Choice Support and Skills For People launched a national network of Quality Checkers.

Working as Quality Checkers

Stephen Merriman and Laura Minett are employed by Choice Support as [Quality Checkers](#).

Here they share how they feel about their jobs and their experiences, and give some examples of where their involvement has changed people's lives.

Stephen says:

"We work well as a team, we know what each other is good at. If one of us is not pulling their weight we find out why and help them. This makes a good and happy team.

"Cathy and Lorraine support us with transport, our planning, and report writing. They are both friendly and helpful and make sure we are well organised. Mind you, I am sometimes more organised because my memory is very good, particularly about important things about my job as a quality checker. I look on Cathy as my work colleague, not my supporter, when we are quality checking.

"What people tell us is very personal to them. We do pick up a lot from what we observe. Recently on a quality check we were visiting someone at their home and they were telling us about lack of privacy. At one stage a member of staff walked into the lounge where we were talking privately with the person and she just came and sat on the coffee table. We kindly asked her to leave."

“

The staff rota is now written around the needs and wishes of the people receiving the service.

”

Laura says:

"We like to think that when we carry out a quality check we come over as friendly and positive. This is so the people we are speaking to have a good experience and know that we are listening to them.

"We have made a pack of different signs, photos and pictures that we use to help people who don't communicate with words let us know their views."

As both Stephen and Laura mentioned, what people say and want changing is very personal. With this in mind, here are a few examples of where things have changed as a result of the quality

checkers being involved.

In one service, staff said all service users had to be in bed by eight thirty because the sleep-in staff came on duty and the afternoon staff went home. The staff rota is now written around the needs and wishes of the people receiving the service.

In another service tenants had to pay for two TV licences, one for the lounge and one for their bedroom. Now they don't.

One person said: "I'm not allowed to get my own prescription. The support staff do it for me." This person is now supported so that she can collect her own prescription and not be rushed.

In another service people didn't go in the kitchen because of worries about health and safety. Both people are now supported to go in their kitchen safely when they want, and are included in the preparing and cooking of their meals.

Stephen's final words on his job are: "We learn a lot ourselves in the job. The pay's not bad either. But seriously, though, it feels good to know that we are making a difference in making things better for people."

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Everyone has a right to be treated with respect and dignity.
Everyone deserves to be safe.