

SYSTEM PARTNER COLLECTIVE EVALUATION AND LEARNING

Case study

Ann Craft Trust

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Case study overview

Overview

The Ann Craft Trust is a national charity with the aim of minimising the risk of abuse of adults. It is funded by Sport England to offer support, resources, consultancy and training to develop best practice in safeguarding adults.

This case study focuses on the ways in which the Ann Craft Trust collaborates with diverse stakeholders across the sport and physical activity sector on the topic of Adult Safeguarding. This example of collaboration is among partners who have worked through the structured safeguarding framework and engaged with the wider support offered by Ann Craft Trust. The key findings from the case study are listed below:

- **Why collaborate?** Collaboration is driven by the shared goal of ensuring safe sporting environments for all, by the Ann Craft Trust's expertise and resources, and the mandated requirement attached to investment from Sport England that partners need to adhere to.
- **How do they collaborate?** The Ann Craft Trust supports partners by providing a structured safeguarding framework assessment tool, sharing resources, and fostering peer networks to enhance coordination and consistency in safeguarding practices across the sector.
- **What is the impact?** The partnership has led to increased capability and alignment in adult safeguarding practices, improvements in policy development, and elevated board engagement, although completion of the Safeguarding Adults in Sport Framework remains uneven among partners.
- **What is Sport England's influence?** Sport England's funding mandates have created a necessary focus on adult safeguarding, aligning partner priorities with compliance requirements that have prompted cultural shifts and increased accountability.
- **Key learnings?** Effective safeguarding requires tailored support for local volunteer-led organisations, leadership buy-in, and storytelling to promote cultural change beyond compliance, with further network support from the Ann Craft Trust and Sport England.

About the partners

- **The Ann Craft Trust** is a national charity that exists to minimise the risk of abuse of adults. Through training, practice reviews and contributing to research, they support organisations to safeguard adults and minimise the risk of harm.
- A range of partners attended a workshop to explore collaboration with Ann Craft Trust. This was largely other System Partners, including those who have been through the Adult Safeguarding Framework with Ann Craft Trust and others who hadn't, but who had engaged with other types of support from the Ann Craft Trust. These include:
 - **UK Coaching** – Is the national body for coaching in the UK, supporting and developing coaches across sports with training, qualifications, safeguarding and resources.
 - **Active Gloucestershire** – An independent charity with the aim of increasing physical activity levels across Gloucestershire.
 - **UK Sports Institute** – Is the high-performance support body for Olympic and Paralympic sport in the UK, delivering sport science, medicine, performance analysis to athletes and NGBs.
 - **Badminton England** – Is the NGB for the sport in England, promoting and developing badminton from grassroots to elite level.
 - **Boxing England** – Is the NGB body for amateur boxing in England, responsible for supporting clubs, running competition and managing talent pathways.
 - **North Yorkshire Sport** – The AP for North Yorkshire and York, working with schools, clubs, community partners to get more people active and tackle inequalities.
 - **Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)** – The NGB for tennis, growing the sport from grassroots to elite level by supporting clubs, coaches, competitions, investing in facilities.
 - **British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS)** – Is the NGB for higher education sport in the UK, running leagues and cups across over 50 sports and supporting student athlete performance.
 - **Wiltshire and Swindon Sport** – The AP for Wiltshire and Swindon, working in partnership with national and local organisations to provide opportunities for communities to get involved in sport and physical activity.
 - **Active Partnership Network** – A nationwide movement, physical activity and sport network of 42 organisations, taking a place-based approach to breaking down barriers that prevent people from being active.
 - **EMD UK** – The NGB for group exercise, supporting instructors and organisations with training, qualifications, insurance, resources and advocacy to grow participation in group exercise.
 - **Boccia England** – The NGB for the Paralympic sport of Boccia, responsible for the management, preparation and performance of British boccia players at major events.
 - **Safeguarding Code for Martial Arts** – An initiative that recognises clubs or providers in England who have demonstrated they have reached and maintained good safeguarding standards.

Why collaborate?

Collaboration is driven by a shared goal of creating safe sports environments for everyone, the Ann Craft Trust's expert resources and meeting Sport England's funding mandates.

Main drivers of collaboration

A shared goal

Collaboration is driven by a common goal to make sporting environments safe for all. Adult safeguarding in sport is still a relatively new concept for organisations working in sport and physical activity, compared to children's safeguarding, and partners described the goal of shifting mindsets in the sector from safeguarding for children to safeguarding for all. The partners consulted on the case study were aligned with this goal, however there was acknowledgement that other System Partners may not be as actively engaged with adult safeguarding work.

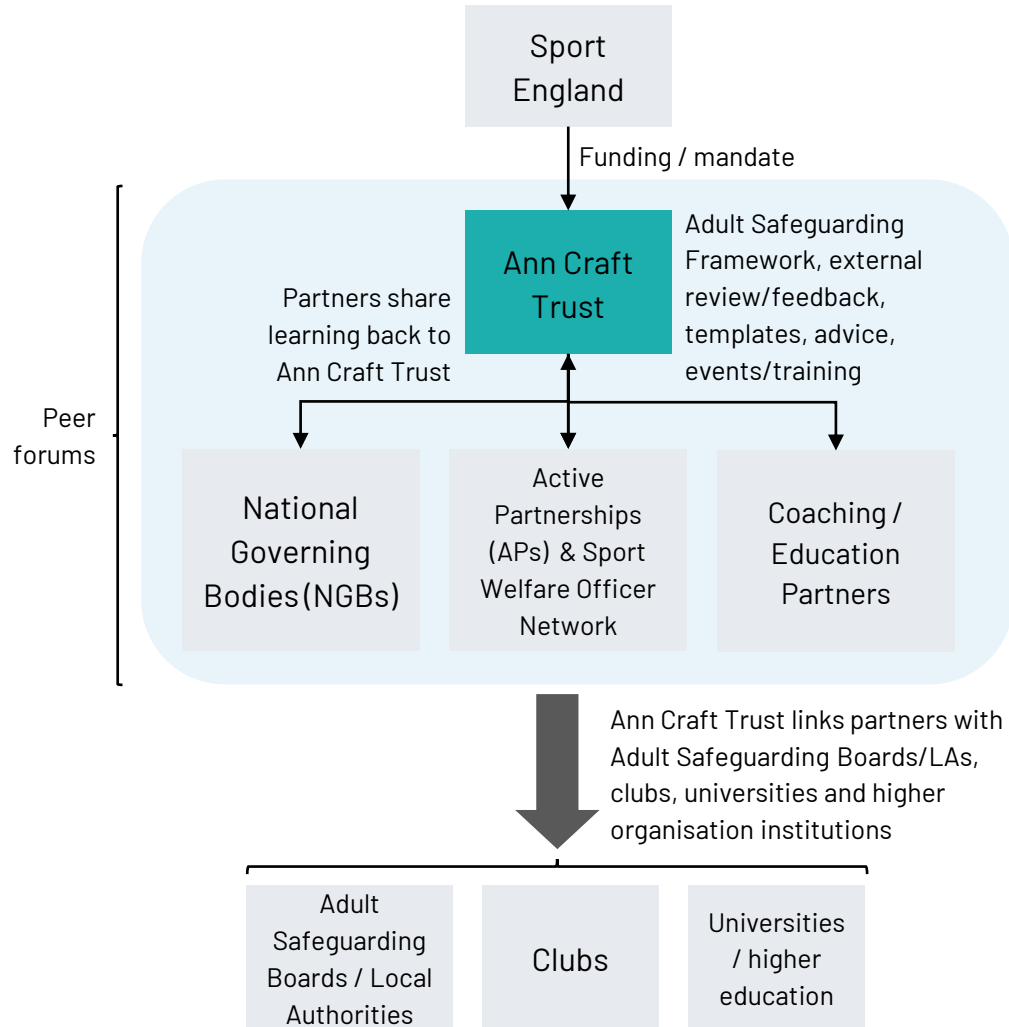
Access to specialist adult-safeguarding expertise and resources

Collaboration enables partner organisations to draw on knowledge they do not hold in-house, to sense-check decisions and access resources. The Ann Craft Trust provides partners with e-learning, workshops, webinars, case studies and facilitated forums and networks. By offering resources and training that partners can tailor to different workforces, this collaboration avoids 'reinventing the wheel' and enables organisations to free up capacity to focus on delivery.

Sport England requirements

Sport England requires System Partners to improve their adult safeguarding practices and collaborating with the Ann Craft Trust through undertaking the Adult Safeguarding Framework which is a funding mandate. While this was the initial impetus for collaboration, partners expressed that they found completing the framework a useful process, through which the Ann Craft Trust helped them identify strengths and gaps in their adult safeguarding practice and acted as a 'critical friend'.

How do partners collaborate?



- The Ann Craft Trust provides partner organisations with the Adult Safeguarding Framework to help them implement best practice in safeguarding adults. All System Partners are mandated to complete the framework as part of their funding requirements from Sport England.
- The Ann Craft Trust also engages partners through distributing templates, guidance and training that they can adapt to their context or specific sector.
- Partner organisations collaborate with the Ann Craft Trust to get answers to queries on adult safeguarding. Ann Craft Trust also links partners with Adult Safeguarding Boards, local councils, care providers and universities so that they can coordinate their responses to issues.
- Collaboration is reinforced through facilitated peer forums and lead-officer networks which share case studies, reduce duplication, and include co-delivered sessions. These activities spread consistent messages across the system and bring organisations together to share learning and solutions.
- In turn, some partner organisations, such as Active Partnerships, share learning gained from collaboration with the Ann Craft Trust with other organisations and clubs in their local area.

What has worked well in terms of collaboration?

Ann Craft Trust convenes and equips partners to co-develop, align and translate adult safeguarding into effective local practice.

- **Specialist expertise and responsive support:** Ann Craft Trust are experts in adult safeguarding and are responsive to the needs of other partners, while able to be a 'critical friend' where required. Access to policy templates, practical advice and the opportunity to review policies with ACT are all valued by partners with trust in this relationship and expertise.
- **Convenor and connector:** Through formal structures (the Adult Safeguarding Framework, forums/ training sessions, network events) and informal touchpoints (ad-hoc advice, check-ins), ACT connects partners facing similar challenges and brokers introductions so "what good looks like" in safeguarding and learning spreads via peer review, mentoring, and shared policies and action plans.
- **Opportunities to co-develop resources:** Partners have been able to work together to co-develop training and resources, adapting existing training offers to fit their context rather than starting from the beginning on their own.
- **Cross-sector alignment:** Collaborative ways of working and the dissemination of good practice around adult safeguarding among partners has improved the use of shared language and processes that different partners both in and out of the sport and physical activity sector understand.
- **Operating at different levels:** Ann Craft Trust, supported by Sport England, provide the national tools and play a convening role, whilst System Partners adopt and adapt the tools – working locally with other partners (e.g. clubs and community groups) – this creates consistent pathways from policy to on-the-ground delivery.

What has worked less well in terms of collaboration?

Progress on adult safeguarding remains uneven across the sector, and challenges external to the collaboration between partners and Ann Craft Trust affect adoption of good practice.

- **Risk of duplication and siloed working:** There remains some confusion in the sport and physical activity sector and among different partners about “who to go to for what” when it comes to safeguarding, for example whether to reach out to Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) or ACT. Within these there are also sometimes multiple forums and networks which are useful for connectivity but also risk duplication and partners expressed that sometimes there needs to be simpler, clearer routes for advice and support.
- **Capacity challenges:** Many clubs and local organisations delivering sport and physical activity are small, volunteer led groups. Partners reflect that there are challenges supporting these through adult safeguarding as implementing policies involves repeated hands-on support and iterations of policy documents.
- **Uneven capability across Safeguarding Lead roles:** Capability and expertise across the sport and physical activity sector ranges from lone or part-time volunteers to full-time roles working specifically in safeguarding. Gaps at grassroots and local levels persist with some slow uptake and examples of resistance to collaboration on this topic.
- **Culture still trails policy:** Safeguarding is still too often equated with children only, and adult safeguarding is not always universally embedded as part of business as usual for organisations. While the framework has improved compliance broadly, there continues to be resistance in some places - acceptance and day-to-day prioritisation of adult safeguarding remains uneven, particularly across some NGBs.

What has changed, as a result of collaboration?

Collaboration is improving capability, aligning partners, engaging leaders and shifting culture around adult safeguarding in the sport and physical activity sector.

- **Increased capability and confidence on adult safeguarding:** Safeguarding Leads and other individuals feel more assured to advise and act on adult safeguarding, including challenging non-compliant practice. There is a clearer grasp of “what good looks like” for safeguarding adults, with examples of new policies, reporting portals and case pathways. Partners also feel that they have more clarity on the roles and responsibility of different organisations at co-delivered events.
- **Organisational improvements:** As a result of the Framework and the broader support and expertise of Ann Craft Trust, partners have clearer policies, reporting portals and case management processes.
- **Wider adoption of ACT tools:** Tools and templates are being shared and iterated through improvements with wider partners, including volunteer-led NGB and non-NGB affiliated clubs via the Active Partnership and Sport Welfare Officer network – adult safeguarding is increasingly being viewed as a priority beyond this immediate collaboration to wider networks, though this is still uneven among different partners.
- **Cross-sector alignment:** There is shared language and expertise between the sport and physical activity sector and other sectors like social care – this boosts credibility of partners in these settings and aids with their influence in multi-agency work.
- **Stronger board and leadership engagement:** For partners who have been through the Framework process, this has enabled buy-in from their leadership teams. Changes required to ensure sport and physical activity is safe for all are now backed by leaders and the actions required to achieve this are being resourced as a result.
- **Culture shift:** There is a shift occurring in the sector with adult safeguarding moving from simply “compliance” to “the right thing to do” and partners feel that the gap with children’s safeguarding is narrowing, albeit unevenly across the sector. This culture shift represents an example of system change.

What has Sport England's influence been?

Overall, the System Partner investment has contributed to improvements in adult safeguarding across the sector, alongside other investments like the Sport Welfare Officer Network and other funders.

- **Adult Safeguarding Framework mandate has contributed to a shift in behaviours and cultures:** By mandating System Partners to work through the Adult Safeguarding Framework, Sport England has helped create the permission and urgency for NGBs and other partners to prioritise adult safeguarding alongside children's. The clear external requirement has helped unlock senior-buy in with clear routes for safeguarding leads to escalate issues to CEOs and boards and create time-bound action plans. This mandate has helped move some organisations from "hearts and minds only" to concrete implementation of adult safeguarding policies, which is helping to narrow the adult-child safeguarding gap. Partners described how the mandate tied to funding agreements provided a credible consequence (the "stick"), complementing the previous "carrot" (voluntary uptake).
- **System Partner investment funding contributes to ACT's capacity and convening role:** Ann Craft Trust are funded as a System Partner to provide the overarching support on Adult Safeguarding to other partners within the system. This enables them to provide specialist advice, templates, policy reviews, forums and targeted networks for the system. This makes procurement of services more efficient and accessible by making it clearer for partners who they should go to for support on this topic.
- **Investment in the Sport Welfare Officer network:** This investment extends local capacity, with a clear role in safeguarding, and helps reach into both NGB and non-NGB affiliated clubs working in voluntary settings at a local level to provide practical, hands-on support with adult safeguarding policies and processes. Through tapping into these networks, NGBs can align national messages locally and work to iterate policies with volunteers. These roles rely on soft power, relationships and practical help which helps bridge the gap between national policy and local implementation.

Key learning

- **Adjusting support based on capability and capacity:** Partners reflected that when working locally with volunteer-led small organisations, hands-on support with simple “starter kits” and iterative approaches to implementation of adult safeguarding policies and processes is key.
- **Local capacity matters:** Sport Welfare Officer and Active Partnership networks are pivotal to land practice in local settings, including connecting to NGB and non-NGB affiliated clubs working in voluntary settings.
- **Shifting culture with stories:** Getting buy-in from partners beyond a compliance perspective can be helped by presenting compelling case stories and examples from peers, to move commitments around adult safeguarding beyond a “tick-box” exercise to something embedded and embraced by organisations to ensure sport and physical activity are safe for all.
- **Buy-in from leadership:** Working to achieve buy-in from organisational leadership early and bringing them on the journey helps accelerate resourcing and ensuring follow-through with action plans.
- **Blending formal and informal:** Blending formal structures like the Framework, action plans and policies with informal touchpoints like networks and forums for ad-hoc advice and peer support, can increase the pace of progress. Utilising these informal networks and accessing more ad-hoc advice from Ann Craft Trust can also help build individual and organisational confidence, reducing feelings of isolation and helping drive action.
- **Suggestions for ACT and Sport England:** Partners encouraged ACT to continue convening their networks and suggested building a champions cohort to co-communicate the benefits of working through the Framework and share ready-to-use assets. A short guide on “who to contact for what” would be useful, making it clear how to escalate issues and where to go for advice for example between local SWOs, System Partners, ACT or CPSU.

