

## Protecting Children in Sporting & Leisure Activity

In NEL, we want all children to be safe whilst having opportunities to take part in healthy activities they enjoy. Recent media reports on sexual abuse in football clubs however have shown that children can sometimes be more vulnerable when involved with sports and leisure. These reports serve to remind organisations about their safeguarding responsibilities and send out a message to children and families about staying safe whilst participating in sporting and leisure activity.



### Staff and Volunteers and People in Positions of Trust

All organisations providing activities for children under 18 years old are responsible for vetting and checking staff and volunteers. Their own policies and procedures should be compliant with [the NEL Safeguarding Children Partnership procedures](#). All staff, students and volunteers should be familiar with their organisation's safeguarding procedures, particularly 'whistle-blowing' policies; i.e. Processes for reporting concerns about other adults working or volunteering with children.

To avoid misunderstandings and false allegations, staff and volunteers should avoid one-to-one situations unless absolutely necessary and should never arrange private or personal contacts with children outside of the sports group involved. It is a criminal offence for People in Positions of Trust to develop or have sexual relationships with children under 18. If anyone suspects this, the [Safer NEL website](#) has guidance on the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and advice on reporting concerns about people in positions of trust and how these concerns will be acted upon.

### Helping Children Keep Safe

Sports and leisure training often involves close physical contact or one-to-one activity that can make children more vulnerable. Whether we are teachers, parents, or carers, we must remember that even when involved in adult sports, a 'child' is anyone under 18 years of age, and no child should be abused or harmed by adults who are there to support, help, train or protect them.

Children can be helped to keep themselves safe by being made aware that sexual activity with adults in positions of trust is *never acceptable* and, regardless of what they are told, - it is never their fault. Children should also be told **who they can tell** and **how** they can report any behaviour or contact that they are unhappy or worried about. Where children do disclose abuse or raise concerns about an adult in a position of trust, they should be listened to and their concerns taken seriously.

We all have a duty to safeguard children and any safeguarding concerns we have should be referred through to the MASH on 326292. If needed, and once the child has been made safe, the concerns will be passed on to the LADO.

**Children can also phone the NSPCC direct helpline on: 0808 800 5000 or 0800 11 11**

The [referral procedures](#) can be found here. *NB. Allegations by adults about historical sexual abuse should in the first instance be reported to the police on 101 and where alleged perpetrators are currently involved with sports or leisure, the police will work with the LADO to investigate.*

