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**international**  
safeguarding  
children in sport  
**working group**

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# **International Safeguards for Children in Sport**

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There are also some risks to children and young people which are unique to sport such as the increased risks of all forms of abuse to elite young athletes. Many sport for development programmes are provided to extremely vulnerable children who may be affected by violence and abuse in their daily lives and for whom sport should be a safe haven. We should all seek to ensure that sports provision to these young people takes place in safe environments.

A draft set of Standards (now called Safeguards) were developed by a partnership of organisations working together for the Beyond Sport Summit in London, 2012. These were further developed through an extensive piloting phase over the next 2 years. The finalised version of the Safeguards was launched at Beyond Sport in October 2014. They lay the foundations for a holistic approach to ensuring children's safety and protection in all sports contexts internationally.

## Definitions

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- Safeguarding refers to the actions we take to ensure **ALL** children are safe from harm when involved in our clubs and activities
- Child protection is a set of activities that are required for **SPECIFIC** children who are at risk of/or are suffering harm
- Abuse refers to the acts of commission or omission that lead to a child experiencing harm
- Harm refers to the negative impact or consequences upon the child of those actions
- Violence refers to “all forms of physical or mental violence, injury and abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse”  
(Article 19 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)

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## International Safeguards

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These Safeguards aim to outline the things that should be put in place by any organisation providing sports activities to children and young people. The Safeguards should be viewed as guides, which facilitate an organisation's journey towards safeguarding children rather than an end in themselves.

They reflect international declarations, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, relevant legislation, government guidance, existing child protection/safeguarding standards and good practice. They have been informed by research conducted by Brunel University with a diverse range of perspectives from different countries and stakeholder groups during an extensive piloting phase.

These Safeguards represent collective good practice at a point in time and will be subject to periodic review to ensure they reflect developments within safeguarding practice.



# Safeguards

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## 8 Safeguards

- 01 – Developing your policy
- 02 – Procedures for responding to safeguarding concerns
- 03 – Advice and support
- 04 – Minimising risks to children
- 05 – Guidelines for behaviour
- 06 – Recruiting, training and communicating
- 07 – Working with partners
- 08 – Monitoring and evaluating

## The Safeguards aim to:

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- Help create a safe sporting environment for children wherever they participate and at whatever level
  - Provide a benchmark to assist sports providers and funders to make informed decisions
  - Promote good practice and challenge practice that is harmful to children
  - Provide clarity on safeguarding children to all involved in sport

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## The Safeguards are based on the following principles

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- All children have the right to participate, enjoy and develop through sport, in a safe and inclusive environment, free from all forms of abuse, violence, neglect and exploitation
- Children have the right to have their voices heard and listened to. They need to know who they can turn to when they have a concern about their participation in sport
- Everyone, organizations and individuals, service providers and funders, has a responsibility to support the care and protection of young people
- Organisations providing sports activities to children and young people have a duty of care to them
- There are certain factors that leave some children more vulnerable to abuse, and steps need to be taken to address this
- Children have a right to be involved in shaping safeguarding policy and practice
- Organisations should always act in the best interests of the child
- Everyone has the right to be treated with dignity and respect and not be discriminated against based on gender, race, age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, beliefs, religious or political affiliation
- The processes and activities for the creation, development and implementation of safeguarding measures should be inclusive

Please note that whilst these Safeguards have been developed in relation to children (aged under 18 years old) they can also provide a valuable framework for good practice in relation to other groups such as vulnerable adults.

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## Piloting the Safeguards

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A number of the organisations represented at the joint initiative at the Beyond Sport Summit 2012 agreed to pilot these Safeguards along with a number of additional organisations committed to strengthening their approach to making sport safer for children. Throughout the piloting, the safeguarding lead from these organisations participated in Virtual Learning Sets (VLS). The VLS were led by a member of the Founders Group with expertise in safeguarding children. Organisations were allocated into small groups of 6-8 based on mission, location and size. These VLS met online every 2 months to discuss their experiences of working towards the Safeguards.

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## Piloting the Safeguards

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Research was conducted by Brunel University with 32 of these organisations. Data were collected from a range of sources:

- Interviews with the safeguarding leads of each organisation
- Periodic feedback from the leaders of the VLS
- Feedback collected from pilot organisations at Beyond Sport 2013 in Philadelphia
- An online survey of participants regarding a revised set of Safeguards

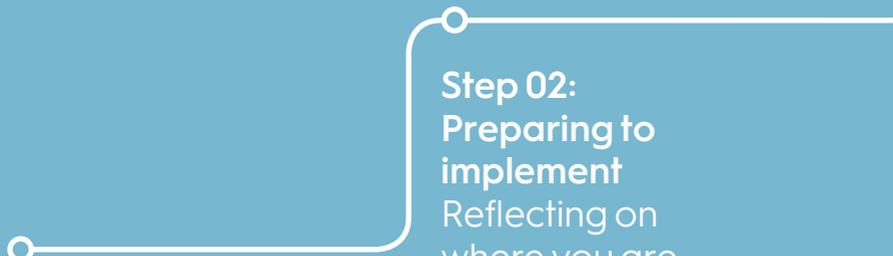
Based on this data, the researchers made recommendations to the Founders Group. The final version of the Safeguards was then developed and launched at Beyond Sport 2014. More details about each of the Safeguards are provided over.

## Key steps on the safeguarding journey

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The following steps will guide your journey through each of the Safeguards. They should facilitate an organisation to reflect on their current system and inform their efforts towards ensuring the safety of children.

The guide has 5 steps:



**Step 01:**  
**Preparing for the  
journey**  
Raising awareness  
of the need to  
safeguard children

**Step 02:**  
**Preparing to  
implement**  
Reflecting on  
where you are  
now and prioritising  
your next steps

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**Step 03:**  
Developing your safeguard

**Step 04:**  
Implementing your safeguard

**Step 05:**  
Embedding your safeguard

# The Safeguards

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## Safeguard 01

### Developing your policy

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**What** – Any organisation providing or with responsibility for sports activities for children and young people under the age of 18 should have a safeguarding policy. This is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard children involved in sport from harm, and provides the framework within which procedures are developed.

**Why** – A safeguarding policy makes clear to all what is required in relation to the protection of children and young people. It helps to create a safe and positive environment for children and to show that the organisation is taking its duty of care seriously. It also takes account of specific factors that may leave some children more vulnerable.

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## Criteria for Success

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- You have a safeguarding policy which is clearly written and easy to understand
- The policy clearly describes your understanding and definitions of all forms of harm
- The policy covers your organisation's commitment to safeguard children in all aspects of your work
- The policy is clear that all children have equal rights to protection
- This policy is officially endorsed by staff at the highest level of your organisation
- Staff at the highest level of the organisation have the responsibility to oversee the implementation of the policy
- All staff, volunteers, carers or other representatives have signed up to the policy
- Your organisation has consulted with children, parents/ carers and staff as part of the initial development and/or on-going review of your policy

## Safeguard 02

### Developing a system to respond to safeguarding concerns

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**What** – Procedures describe the operational processes required to implement organisational policy and provide clear step-by-step guidance on what to do in different circumstances. They clarify roles and responsibilities, and lines of communication. Effective systems are required which help to process any complaints or concerns and support any victims of violence. You should build on existing systems and understand your role with regards to relevant national systems and legislation.

**Why** – For safeguarding to be effective, procedures have to be credible for children. Procedures help to ensure a prompt response to concerns about a child's safety or well-being. They also help you to comply with and implement legislation and guidance. Violence against children is distressing and can be difficult to deal with. Organisations have a duty to ensure that advice and support is in place to help people to play their part in safeguarding children.

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## Criteria for Success

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- There are clear procedures in place that provide step-by-step guidance on what action to take if there are concerns about a child's safety or well-being, both within and external to the organisation
- Your organisation has arrangements in place to provide support to children, volunteers and staff during and following an incident, allegation or complaint
- There is an identified member of staff in your organisation responsible for leading on safeguarding
- Your organisation provides children and young people with information about their rights and about who they can turn to if they are worried, in a process which empowers them
- Your organisation has made information available to children and their parents/carers, about what is likely to happen following a disclosure, in a format and language that can be easily understood by everyone
- Your organisation has a process for dealing with complaints in a fair and transparent way, that includes an appeals process
- All incidents, allegations and complaints are recorded, monitored and stored securely
- Your organisation has consulted with children, parents/carers and staff as part of the initial development and/or ongoing review of your response system

## Safeguard 03

### Advice and support

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**What** – Arrangements made to provide essential information and support to those responsible for safeguarding children. Children and young people are advised on where to access help and support.

**Why** – You have a duty to ensure advice and support is in place to help people to play their part in safeguarding children such that they know who they can turn to for help.

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## Criteria for Success

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- Contacts are established at a national and/or local level with relevant child protection agencies, NGOs and community groups providing support on child protection
- Your organisation ensures that staff members with special responsibilities for keeping children safe have engagement with specialist advice, support and information
- Children are provided with advice and support on keeping themselves and one another safe
- Your system acknowledges that children with additional vulnerabilities (for example, a disability) may face extra barriers to getting help
- Parents/carers in the wider community are provided with information, advice and support on safeguarding children

## Safeguard 04

### Minimising risks to children

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**What** – Measures to assess and minimise the risks to children.

**Why** – Some people, who work or seek to work in sport in a paid or voluntary capacity, pose a risk to children. Children are also at risk when placed in unsuitable places or asked to participate in unsuitable activities, including age-inappropriate activities, over-training and through unrealistic expectations being placed on them. It is possible to minimise these risks by putting safeguards in place.

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## Criteria for Success

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- Risk assessments are available and conducted for activities, transport, accommodation and spaces
- Steps are taken to minimise any risks identified through a risk assessment
- If the risks are assessed to be too significant then the activity does not go ahead
- Training is available to help staff and volunteers recognise the additional risks some children are exposed to, because of their race, gender, age, religion, disability, sexual orientation, social background or culture

## Safeguard 05

### Guidelines on behaviour

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**What** – Codes of conduct to describe what an acceptable standard of behaviour is and promote current best practice.

**Why** – Children’s sport should be carried out in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. Standards of behaviour set a benchmark of what is acceptable for all.

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## Criteria for Success

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- Your organisation has written guidelines for behaviour (codes of conduct) which contain statements about treating people with dignity, respect, sensitivity and fairness
  - Your organisation has guidance and expectations around activities that include time spent away from home, including placing children in the care of others and overnight stays
  - Where organisations are involved in placing children in the care of others, frequent meetings are held with the child to discuss their experiences
  - Your organisation has guidance around working with children who have a disability
  - Your organisation has guidance around the appropriate use of information technology and social media to make sure that children are not put in danger and made vulnerable to exploitation
  - Your organisation has guidance on positive ways of managing the behaviour of children that do not involve physical punishment or any other form of degrading or humiliating treatment, and are age and gender appropriate
  - Your organisation has guidance on expected and acceptable behaviour of children towards others, particularly other children (for example, a learning agreement)
  - There are clear consequences for not following the guidelines on behaviour that are linked to organizational disciplinary procedures
  - The highest level of the organisation has the responsibility to ensure that the guidelines are followed
  - Your organisation has consulted children, parents/carers and staff as part of the initial development and/or on-going review of your organisation's guidelines on behaviour
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## Safeguard 06

### Recruiting, training and communicating

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**What** – Recruiting appropriate members of staff, creating opportunities to develop and maintain the necessary skills and communicating regarding safeguarding.

**Why** – Everyone in contact with children has a role to play in their protection. They can only do so confidently and effectively if they are aware, have the necessary understanding of, and the opportunity to develop, practice and implement key skills. Organisations providing sporting activities for children have a responsibility to provide training and development opportunities for staff and volunteers.

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## Criteria for Success

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- Job descriptions contain statements about treating people with dignity, respect, sensitivity and fairness.
- The recruitment process includes an interview, character/employment references and a background check in line with local legislation
- All staff, volunteers and other relevant people have been trained on safeguarding and child protection, including how to report concerns
- The highest level of the organisation has the responsibility to oversee the implementation of the training
- All staff, volunteers and relevant people with special responsibilities for safeguarding have access to regular additional training and specialist support
- Your organisation has consulted with children, parents/carers and staff as part of the initial development and/or on-going review of your organisation's recruitment, training and development

## Safeguard 07

### Working with partners

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**What** – Action taken by the organisation to influence and promote the adoption and implementation of measures to safeguard children by partner organisations.

**Why** – A number of sports organisations have both a strategic and a delivery role in relation to children and young people. Where organisational partnership, membership, funding or commissioning relationships exist or develop with other organisations, the organisation should use its influence to promote the implementation of safeguarding measures. The organisation should provide or signpost support and resources in relation to implementing adequate safeguarding measures. The organisation should actively promote the adoption of the *International Safeguards for Children in Sport*.

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## Criteria for Success

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- Your organisation has worked with partners/members to ensure that there are shared expectations around safeguarding
  - Your organisation has worked with partners/members to agree how to share learning about making sport safer for children
  - Your organisation has shared written guidance on current best practice in relation to working with children (for example sharing the International Safeguards for Children in Sport)
  - Your organisation's safeguarding policy represents an essential part of any partnership/membership agreements
  - Your organisation publicises information about your policy to your community, partners and members
  - Your organisation works to sensitise your communities to the importance of safeguarding children

## Safeguard 08

### Monitoring and evaluation

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**What** – The on-going monitoring of compliance and effectiveness, involving all relevant groups.

**Why** – Organisations need to know whether safeguarding is effective and where improvements and adaptations are needed, or recognise patterns of risk.

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## Criteria for Success

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- There are systems in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of your organisation's:
  - policy
  - system for responding to safeguarding concerns
  - advice and support
  - systems to minimise the risks to children
  - guidelines for behaviour
  - recruitment, training and communication
  - work with partners to safeguard children
  
- The highest level of the organisation has the responsibility to oversee the implementation of the monitoring and evaluation system
  
- Your organisation has consulted with children, parents/ carers and staff as part of the initial development and/or on-going review of your monitoring and evaluation system

## The Pioneer Organisations

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AbleChildAfrica	National Youth Sport Institute (Singapore)
ACER Brasil	Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports
Aquarius Sport	National Organisation for Women in Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation
Australian Sports Commission	Panathlon International
Blaze Sports America	Panathlon Sorocaba Club
British Council	Play and Train
Brown University	Right to Play Thailand
Brunei Commonwealth Games Association	Sadili Oval Sports Academy
ChildFund Australia	Scottish Football Association
ChildFund Laos	Seychelles Commonwealth Games Association
Child Helpline International	Skillshare International
Coaches Across Continents	Sport4Socialisation
Commonwealth Games Federation	Slum Soccer
Commonwealth Games Scotland Ltd	Special Olympics
Cyprus Commonwealth Games Council	Spirit of Soccer
Deafkids International	Soccer without Borders
EduSport Foundation Zambia	SportAccord
International Netball Federation	Sport Hampshire & IOW
Isiqalo	Tackle Africa
Lao Rugby Federation	UK Sport
Lawn Tennis Association	UNOSDP
Magic Bus	Urece Sports and Culture for the Blind
Malta Commonwealth Games Association	USA Swimming
Manchester City FC	US Olympic Committee
Manchester United FC	World Sailing
Mauritius Commonwealth Games Association	
MomsTEAM Institute   SmartTeams	
Moving the Goal Posts	

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Pass it Back, Vietnam  
Photographer:  
Phung Quang Binh

## Prepared by the Founder Members:

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Child Protection in Sport Unit  
Comic Relief  
Commonwealth Secretariat  
International Inspiration  
Keeping Children Safe  
Right to Play  
Swiss Academy for Development  
UNICEF UK  
UK Sport  
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For more information on developing safeguarding in your organisation please visit:

[http://www.sportanddev.org/en/toolkit/safeguarding\\_toolkit/](http://www.sportanddev.org/en/toolkit/safeguarding_toolkit/)



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