



Affiliated To Bowls England

BOWLS OXFORDSHIRE

Safeguarding for Children in bowls
Draft Policy Paper No: 3

Safeguarding for Children in bowls

Introduction

Bowls Oxfordshire are committed to ensuring that everyone who participates in bowls can do so in a safe, positive, and enjoyable environment and supports the initiatives of the Bowls Development Alliance (BDA) and the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) of bowls in this respect.

Children are the future of our sport. Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in our sport is central to this commitment. All children are entitled to feel safe and protected from any form of abuse and neglect. Their voice is important in the process of keeping them safe and helping them to enjoy bowls.

Everyone in the bowls family has a part to play in safeguarding children who play our sport. For the purposes of this policy and related procedures, the bowls family comprises: the Bowls Development Alliance, the National Governing Body (Bowls England), players, coaches, umpires/officials, and supporters.

Children may be harmed in any environment and those having regular contact with children have a key role in supporting the statutory agencies to keep them safe. In each local authority area in England, the three safeguarding partners (local authorities, chief officers of police, and clinical commissioning groups) are responsible for making arrangements for working together with relevant agencies to safeguard and protect the welfare of children in the area.

Working Together to Safeguard Children emphasises that **Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility**. For services to be effective each profession and organisation should play their full part. Paragraph 63 of this statutory guidance provides specific information regarding the role of sports clubs and organisations. The BDA, the NGBs of bowls, affiliated County Associations and bowls clubs are all covered by this guidance.

Contents

	Page
Legislation & Government Guidance	3
Definitions	3
Key Principles	3
What is Abuse? and Types of Abuse	3
Signs of Abuse	5
Safeguarding Responsibilities in Bowls	6
Roles of County Associations and Clubs	6
Good Coaching Practice	7
Safer Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers	8
Safe and Fair Membership	8
Implementation of Safeguarding in Bowls	8
Dealing with Concerns, Disclosures or Allegations	9

Legislation and Government Guidance

- **The Children Acts 1989 and 2004** – provide the legislative framework for safeguarding children. A child is defined in this legislation as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.
- **Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018 (updated in 2020))** – is the main Statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. It makes specific reference to the responsibilities of sports clubs and organisations.
- **Information sharing advice for practitioners providing safeguarding services to children, young people, parents and carers** – is the key information sharing guidance for safeguarding cases amended to reflect the Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)?
- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (updated annually)** – is the key statutory safeguarding guidance for all those working in education. It contains useful links to the growing number of safeguarding issues faced by children.
- **The Prevent Duty** – is specific guidance for those involved in education and childcare but it provides key information about the safeguarding concerns of radicalisation and exploitation of children by extremist organisations.
- **The Sexual Offences Act 2003** - sets clear limits and boundaries about behaviour with children.

Definitions

- In England, a child is defined in **The Children Act 1989** as anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday.
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children is defined within statutory guidance **Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018** as ‘protecting children from maltreatment; preventing impairment of children’s health or development; ensuring that children grow up in circumstances consistent with the provision of safe and effective care; and taking action to enable all children to have the best outcomes’.

Key Principles

- The safety and welfare of children is paramount.
- Safeguarding is everyone’s responsibility.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race (including ethnic origin, nationality and colour), religion or belief, sex (gender) and sexual orientation have the right to enjoy their sport free from abuse and poor practice.
- It is recognised that some children have additional vulnerability, which may be due to disability, language, sexual orientation, culture, the impact of previous experiences or the fact that they perform in an elite environment.

All concerns and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.

- The views of children will be listened to, valued and respected.

What is Abuse?

It is important to be aware of what constitutes abuse. The following definitions are adapted from Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018.

Abuse is a form of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Harm can include ill treatment that is not physical as well as the impact of witnessing ill treatment of others. This can be particularly relevant, for example, in relation to the impact on children of all forms of domestic abuse. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting by those known to them, or, more rarely, by others. Abuse can take place wholly online, or technology

may be used to facilitate offline abuse. Children may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children. Those in positions of trust such as relatives, community leaders, teachers or coaches can be perpetrators of abuse.

Traditionally four main types of abuse were identified:

1. Physical Abuse - may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. This definition also applies where a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of or deliberately induces illness in a child.

2. Emotional Abuse - the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

3. Sexual Abuse - involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual physical contact including assault by penetration (e.g., rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts (e.g., masturbation, kissing and touching outside of clothing). It may also include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at or in production of sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including online). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

4. Neglect - the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development (such as food, clothing, medical care/treatment, or shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)). Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.

Emerging abusive issues identified in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 include:

- **Domestic/Relationship Abuse** – controlling or coercive behaviour within the family home or in a child's relationship. Children may be adversely affected by witnessing/hearing an abusive relationship in their household.
- **Sexual Exploitation** - child sexual exploitation (CSE) is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.
- **Criminal Exploitation** – often referred to as **County Lines**, a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

- Radicalisation - extremist groups make use of the internet to radicalise and recruit and to promote extremist materials. Extremism goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable – including the young – by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith, or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society.
- **Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** - a form of child abuse and violence against women. FGM comprises all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia for non-medical reasons. This is illegal in England and Wales under the FGM Act 2003.
- Forced Marriage - a forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not (or, in the case of some adults with learning or physical disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and duress is involved. Duress can include physical, psychological, financial, sexual, and emotional pressure. It is different to an arranged marriage where the families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage but the choice whether or not to accept the arrangement remains with the prospective spouses. Forced marriage is illegal in the UK.
- Honour based abuse – this is a broad umbrella term used to describe a combination of practices used principally to control and punish the behaviour of a member of a family or social group, in order to protect perceived cultural and religious beliefs in the name of ‘honour’.
- Hazing - any activity expected of someone in joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate.

Signs of Abuse

There are a number of signs that may indicate that children are being abused:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries, such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries,
- an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent,
- unexplained changes in behaviour (e.g., becoming very quiet, withdrawn, or displaying sudden outbursts of temper),
- age-inappropriate sexual awareness,
- engaging in sexually explicit behaviour,
- distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected,
- difficulty in making friends,
- being prevented from socializing with other children,
- displaying variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite,
- loss of weight for no apparent reason,
- the child becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt.

This list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. Some changes in behaviour can be caused by changes at home, for example, bereavement or hormonal changes. Parents/carers should be encouraged to inform the Club Coach or Club Safeguarding Officer of any changes in home circumstances.

Safeguarding Responsibilities in Bowls

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. To fulfil their commitment to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, all organisations that provide services for, or work with, children must have:

- ✓ a senior board level member to take leadership responsibility for the organisation's safeguarding arrangements,
- ✓ at least one identified lead safeguarding practitioner who can advise and support others when a safeguarding concern arises,
- ✓ a culture of listening to children and taking account of their wishes and feelings, both in individual decisions and the development of services,
- ✓ safe recruitment practices for individuals whom the organisation will permit to work regularly with children and adults at risk, including policies on when to obtain a criminal record (DBS) check,
- ✓ codes of conduct for all relevant participants which clearly support the paramount aim of safeguarding children,
- ✓ clear whistle-blowing procedures which are suitably referenced in staff training and codes of conduct, and a culture that enables issues about safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children to be addressed,
- ✓ clear policies in line with those from the Local Safeguarding Partnership (LSP) for dealing with allegations against people who work with children,
- ✓ clear information sharing arrangements which set out the processes for sharing.
- ✓ information, with relevant professionals and with the LSP,
- ✓ appropriate supervision and support for staff, including undertaking safeguarding training.

Roles of County Associations and Clubs

Within the sport of bowls, some people and organisations have specific responsibilities this document. The roles of Bowls England, the BDA and the NGB's can be found on the Bowls England website and those relating to County Associations and clubs are detailed below:

County Associations

County Associations have direct responsibility for the welfare of children involved in bowls activities organised by the County with support from their National Governing Body. They should:

- ✓ nominate a County Safeguarding Officer who is suitably trained,
- ✓ adopt safe practice in the recruitment, training and supervision of staff, coaches, and volunteers,
- ✓ promote safeguarding education and training across the county,
- ✓ promote the use of the the BDA safeguarding policies and linked guidelines to develop best practice and communicate key basic procedures to all clubs in their county,
- ✓ report all concerns, allegations, or complaints in the County to the NGB Safeguarding Officer.

Affiliated Clubs

All clubs must ensure they have safeguarding procedures in place.

Clubs should:

- adopt The BDA & County safeguarding policies and procedures,
- adopt safe practice in the recruitment, training and supervision of staff, coaches, and volunteers,
- nominate and advertise to members the existence of a Club Safeguarding Officer,
- promote safeguarding training opportunities to the Club Safeguarding Officer and other club members,
- have a safe and fair membership policy.

Club/County Safeguarding Officers

Club/County Safeguarding Officers should be:

- given access to information and training appropriate to this role,
- clearly identified to all members with their contact details and preferably a photograph, via handbooks, web sites, noticeboards or similar,
- the first port of call for any member of the bowls club or county association to report a safeguarding concern,
- promoting safeguarding information to their county association or club members,
- reporting all safeguarding concerns to the NGB Safeguarding Officer

A Club Safeguarding Officer is not required to make a judgement regarding an incident but to report it to the County Safeguarding Officer. Similarly, a County Safeguarding Officer should report any concerns to their NGB Safeguarding Officer. Channelling all safeguarding concerns through NGB Safeguarding Officers should provide for a consistent approach across the sport of bowls and also allow for analysis of patterns and any training gaps.

Good Coaching Practice

Coaches have a very important part to play in protecting children from potential harm and are often the first to recognise and raise concerns.

It is very important that all coaches read this Policy and any related procedures and are aware of the process to follow, to deal with any concerns. All coaches have an outline to safeguarding included within their Level 1 or 2 coaching course and are recommended to attend a Coach Bowls Safeguarding Course.

The Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) outlines best practice guidelines for coaches coaching young people's activities. It stresses the need for ratios for coaches to participants which are linked to the age of children involved. This will minimise any risks to participants and enhance the benefits they draw from the activity.

Coaches should never be left alone with an individual or group and it is recommended that at least one adult present is the same gender as the bowler or group of bowlers.

Physical contact should always be intended to meet the child's needs not the adults. It is obvious that adults should never touch a child inappropriately. A responsible adult should only use physical contact if it's aim is to: develop sports skills or techniques, treat an injury, prevent an injury or accident from occurring or meet the requirements of the sport. The adult should explain the reason for the physical contact to the child, reinforcing the teaching or coaching skill. Unless the situation is an emergency, the adult should ask the child for permission.

A coach should not have a sexual relationship with anyone that they are coaching who is below the age of 18 years.

The Coach should hold an appropriate qualification, comply with minimum age requirements, have relevant insurance cover, have completed a criminal records disclosure that is acceptable to the NGB (if they are coaching children unsupervised on a regular basis) and have read and understood this Safeguarding Children Policy, the Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy plus the following policies of their NGB:

- ✓ Code of conduct for coaches
- ✓ Equality Policy
- ✓ Health and Safety Policy

Safer Recruitment of Staff and Volunteers

Safer recruitment is a set of practices to help make sure staff and volunteers are suitable to work with children. It's a vital part of creating a safe and positive environment and making a commitment to keep children safe from harm. Safer recruitment should be a continuing process of improvement for every club or organisation whose work or services involve contact with children. The CPSU provides clear guidance.

Ensuring that staff and volunteers recruited are safe to work with children involves several practices including the application process, interview, criminal records checks (if appropriate), references and induction process.

A DBS check is only appropriate in bowls where an individual is recruited to work with children 'frequently or with intensity' (more than 3 days in a 30-day period or overnight) and will be unsupervised. This is known as regulated activity. Criminal records checks should be requested by the NGB through the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Safe and Fair Membership

Bowls clubs and County Associations should promote a safe culture through their membership policy. This policy should adhere to the guidance for National Governing Bodies in Sport jointly produced by the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO) and the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) of the NSPCC.

Safeguarding concerns may relate to the membership or proposed membership of people with criminal records, unspent convictions, or court cases, particularly in relation to sexual or violent offences. In this type of situation, membership may be still appropriate, but a risk assessment should be conducted. Membership may be suspended while such a risk assessment is conducted. The guidance booklet contains a flow chart to support membership decisions in these circumstances and a risk assessment template to use. Clubs and County Associations should seek support from their NGB and they in turn can ask for support from the BDA.

Implementation of Safeguarding in Bowls

- The BDA will update and share this Safeguarding Children in Bowls Policy and other related policies and guidelines.
- National Governing Bodies should send these Safeguarding in Bowls Policies and related guidance to all County Associations or directly to clubs.

- County Associations should support clubs in developing and communicating this information.
- Clubs should complete the “Club Checklist” (BDA Template 3) to help them identify areas of development within the club, with the support of the County and/or National Governing Body.
- Clubs should communicate relevant information about the Safeguarding Children in Bowls Policy and procedures to all their members. This might be a summary document which identifies how the full policy and procedures can be accessed.
- Clubs should appoint a Club Safeguarding Officer to lead on the development of safeguards within the club and respond to any concerns. They should ensure that their contact details and preferably a photo are available to all members.

Dealing with Concerns, Disclosures or Allegations

Abuse can and does occur in a variety of situations, which may include sport or other social activities. Most children are abused by someone known to them. This may be within or outside of the bowls context. Concerns may arise from a child or adult expressing concerns or by something observed that raises issues. These may be about a child, a perceived risk to children or the behaviour of a member of a bowls club or organization towards a child. It is important that those involved in bowls are vigilant about concerns, and that appropriate action is taken. The relevant Safeguarding Officer should be informed about any concerns or allegations (club or county level initially).

Working Together to Safeguard Children emphasizes the responsibility to inform appropriate agencies of possible abuse so that they can then make enquiries and take any action necessary to protect the child. This applies both to suspicions of abuse occurring within the context of bowling activities or in another context affecting a child within the bowls family. It is not the responsibility of those working in bowls to make judgements as to whether or not abuse is occurring. It is however part of their duty of care to act on any concerns about a child’s welfare related to their own observations or things they have been told.

Not all concerns about a child relate to abuse – many relate to lower-level concerns or poor practice and can be dealt with internally, using disciplinary structures, with the support of the NGB if appropriate. Listening to and logging lower-level concerns is important, as it may be inadvertent or thoughtless, but could be ultimately intended to enable abuse.

All information received and discussed about a child must be treated in confidence and only shared with those individuals within the organisation with a designated safeguarding role. They may then need to seek advice or inform the statutory agencies e.g. Children’s Social Care or the Police. This may be through the **Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)** in the local authority where the child lives. Calls to the police should use 101 unless it is an emergency situation requiring a 999 call. The NSPCC CPSU Helpline (0800 800 5000 email help@nspcc.org.uk) can be contacted to talk through any concerns that arise. This can be done anonymously. Children themselves can be directed to Childline (0800 1111).

Responding to a Concern

If you have any concerns about a child's welfare you should inform the club's or organisation's Safeguarding Officer. Do not investigate your concerns or keep them to yourself. It is NOT your responsibility to decide if a situation is poor practice, abuse or bullying, but it IS your responsibility to report your concerns.

Examples of concerns that might arise are:

- a parent who pushes too hard
- a coach who adopts a win-at-all costs philosophy
- an older player who intimidates (inappropriately)
- an official who places unfair pressure on a person
- changes in a child's behaviour / observation of inappropriate behaviour
- sudden unexplained absence from bowls

Disclosures by a child

If a child talks about a concern or abuse to a club or organisation member, the member should be advised to:

- stay calm and keep an open mind,
- listen very carefully to what is being said and take the child seriously,
- as soon as possible record in writing what was said using the child's own words,
- do not make promises that cannot be kept, such as promising not to tell anyone else and explain who needs to know (Safeguarding Officer),
- ask only open questions eg. 'Is there anything else you want to tell me?' or 'What did you mean by the word xxxxx?'
- do not ask leading questions that may compromise any future actions eg. 'Did they hit you?'
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing telling you,
- give careful consideration as to whether the parents/carers of the child involved should be informed of the concern at that stage, if they are responsible for the abuse or are unable to respond to the situation appropriately then this could put the child at greater risk,
- report the disclosure to your club Safeguarding Officer,
- If the disclosure happens while a club or organisation member is working in a school, college or on a local authority programme (eg providing bowls coaching or introductory sessions), they should additionally inform the designated safeguarding lead or similar who will follow their procedures.

Allegations about an individual

To retain the integrity of the sport of bowls, given that individuals can and do play, coach or officiate within more than one code, it is important that all organisations apply the same procedures regarding allegations.

If there is an allegation about an individual that relates to their behaviour towards, suitability to work/ volunteer with or participate alongside children, (including observed behaviour), information about a police investigation, court case or conviction) the club or association should ensure this is reported to the Safeguarding Officer at the club or county association. They should then inform the Safeguarding Officer at their NGB, who will:

- ascertain the source of the information; eg. self disclosure, word of mouth, online, newspaper, police or offender management services (youth offending team, probation service, mental health team),
- speak to the individual concerned about the allegation,
- ask the individual to stop working/volunteering/participating with children immediately whilst a full investigation is carried out. This is a neutral action, not intended to assign guilt and is to protect all parties involved,
- work with the BDA Lead Safeguarding Officer to conduct an investigation to gain the fullest available information; this may involve interviewing the individual concerned, witnesses of any observed behaviour or obtaining information from official sources,
- conduct a risk assessment using the template from the BDA website which will consider the risks posed and any safeguards that are or could be put into place
- consider temporary suspension of membership if it is not possible to ensure that the individual would not have access to children within the club(s) concerned while investigations take place.
- the NGB(s) Case Management Group or BDA Case Management Group (depending on the level of concern) will assess whether it is appropriate for the person to return to working/volunteering/participating with children and how this will be managed. They will assess on a case-by-case basis any support needed for the person about whom the allegations have been made. An independent person may be appointed to give this support.
- use the relevant disciplinary policy and procedures for the NGB(s) involved if necessary, where sanctions may be applied if the balance of evidence suggests a risk exists which cannot be managed within the sport.

The joint publication by the CPSU and NACRO on making safe and fair membership decisions in sports organisations provides excellent detailed guidance with key reference to the **Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974**.

If you require further information on this subject, this may be found on the Bowls England website and there are more details about some of the subject matter within this county policy paper which can be found as Appendices to the Bowls England Policy document. This includes contact details for other authorities, associations and other interested parties, although local information is best provided from the Local Authority Safeguarding Team.