



Keeping children safe in sport:

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR

What parents should look for when choosing a good sports club or activity for their child.

Here are the key points you should check out when choosing a sports club or activity for your child.



QUICK CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS

Has the club or organisation achieved a sports body or local council accreditation (eg Clubmark) that is up to date? If so, then this can be viewed as evidence that the club/organisation has attained a certain level of safe practices as assessed by the awarding body.

EVEN IF THE CLUB IS ACCREDITED, YOU SHOULD CHECK THAT THE ORGANISATION HAS:

- * a named and contactable welfare officer responsible for the implementation of their safeguarding policy and issues regarding the protection of children or young people
- * procedures for dealing with complaints or concerns regarding poor practice, abuse or neglect
- * written standards of good practice (ie a code of conduct/behaviour)
- * a parental consent/emergency details form that you must return to the club
- * safe recruitment procedures for those working with young people that include: a clear job description, appropriate references, criminal records checks (eg AccessNI) for relevant posts and technical qualifications
- * access to appropriate safeguarding (child protection) training for its staff/volunteers

Remember, a well-run club will welcome your questions about their activities and policies. They'll know they have a responsibility to have the right arrangements in place, and to give this kind of information to anyone who leaves a child in their care.

Policies and procedures

DOES THE ORGANISATION HAVE A SAFEGUARDING POLICY TO HELP PROTECT YOUR CHILD?

Sports clubs and organisations should have a safeguarding policy, with a clear procedure for dealing with poor practice concerns or risks of abuse. You should be advised how you can access the policy.

IF YOU OR YOUR CHILD HAS ANY WORRIES, WHO CAN YOU TALK TO?

Every organisation should have a named welfare officer and promote their contact details. Well-run clubs should be prepared to listen and advise you what to do if you have any concerns. They should have information about local or national services that can also offer advice and support.

DOES THE ORGANISATION HAVE A WRITTEN CODE OF BEHAVIOUR OR CODE OF CONDUCT?

There should be a written code of behaviour (or conduct) showing what is required of staff, volunteers and participants (including children). Avoid organisations that do not have a commitment to address bullying, shouting, racism, sexism or any other kind of oppressive behaviour. Any unacceptable behaviour should be challenged and dealt with in a professional manner by the sports organisation.

WHAT BOUNDARIES EXIST CONCERNING CLUB RELATIONSHIPS?

The club should have clear guidelines about appropriate relationships and social activities between staff, volunteers, participating young people, and parents. Find out who in the club you can speak to if you have concerns about boundaries not being observed.

WHAT IS THE RECOMMENDED RATIO OF SUPERVISING ADULTS TO CHILDREN?

Find out what the recommended supervision ratios are for your child's chosen activity. You can do this by contacting the organisation responsible for the sport or activity. It is important to identify that the organisation ensures that no staff/volunteer members are left alone and isolated when in charge of the young people.

DOES THE CLUB ASK FOR SIGNED PARENT'S CONSENT AND EMERGENCY DETAILS?

As part of your child's registration, are you asked to complete a consent form? This should ask for emergency contacts, key medical information (allergies, asthma, etc.) and whether there are any other issues the club needs to know about in order to help your child get the most out of their participation.

WHAT ABOUT ARRANGEMENTS FOR AWAY FIXTURES AND OTHER EVENTS?

The sports club or organisation should inform you about the event arrangements and planning, including transport to and from the venue. You should also be given information about the venue itself. If it's a long way from home, you should be given a contact number for use in emergencies.

Recruitment of staff and volunteers

HAVE ALL STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS BEEN SELECTED THROUGH A PROPER RECRUITMENT PROCESS?

This should include interviews, references and AccessNI checks – often known as police checks – for eligible staff/volunteers working with children.

WHAT SAFEGUARDING TRAINING HAS BEEN PROVIDED FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS?

All staff and volunteers should have up-to-date recognised safeguarding training.

IS THE COACH QUALIFIED?

Your child's coach should have a recognised qualification to clarify they are qualified and have the technical competence in the sport/activity at the right level.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Make sure that the organisation has guidance on first aid (and ideally a qualified first aider), and that the following are available within the club:

- * first aid box and procedure for reporting and responding to injuries or accidents that occur within club time
- * arrangements for providing participants with drinks and dissemination of medications (parental consent will be required for dissemination of medication)
- * that the premises satisfy fire and other relevant regulations

If your child needs help with using the toilet, changing, feeding or their medication, discuss and agree how these personal care needs will be addressed.

For further advice, visit the NSPCC's Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) website **thecpsu.org.uk/parents** or email **cpsu@nspcc.org.uk**

If you have any concerns or worries, you can call the NSPCC helpline on **0808 800 5000** or email **help@nspcc.org.uk** for further advice.

Find out how Lidl Community Works Sport for Good is tackling youth mental wellbeing in Northern Ireland through sport.
www.lidl-ni.co.uk/communityworks

