

Section 3 – Policies and procedures

3.1.1 - Guidelines for child protection

Safeguarding and protecting children: a shared duty

Sport plays a vital role in the growth and development of children and young people. Tennis clubs provide opportunities for children to take part in exciting, challenging and healthy activities. All organisations that work with children have a shared duty to ensure that those children benefit from a safe, enjoyable environment, and are protected from abuse. This means having systems in place to promote and maintain the highest standards possible, and to respond quickly to any problems or concerns.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2006) is a detailed government guidance document, applicable to all organisations that work with children. It stresses that organisations have a responsibility to work together, within a common framework, to ensure that those who come into contact with children are skilled and safe, and to ensure that concerns are properly acted upon.

If this is the first time that you have thought about safeguarding and protecting children in your club, you should appoint a Child Protection Officer or 'lead adult' with responsibility for putting the correct measures into place. All clubs are required to have a Child Protection Officer.

Resources

The LTA's Child Protection Department provides a wide range of resources and support to tennis organisations, to help them meet their responsibilities. The resources included in this pack are also designed with these responsibilities in mind, as child protection is a central component of Tennis Clubmark accreditation.

This document, *Safeguarding and protecting children: a shared duty*, provides some useful background information. You should maintain a copy of this document and formally recognise the responsibilities that it describes. Below is a brief overview of the other child protection related Tennis Clubmark resources, as contained in this folder:

Code of conduct for people working with children (3.1.2) – this code provides clear guidance on the types of attitude and forms of conduct that help to make tennis clubs safe, positive and friendly places for children. You should adopt this code, and ask your staff and volunteers to read and follow it.

Child protection policy (3.1.3) – it is vital that every club has a clear statement of its commitment to the safety and welfare of junior members. Use this template to create your own child protection policy. Remember to display the completed document in your club, in a place where children and adults can see it. Some clubs have also included a photograph of their Child Protection Officer, alongside the policy.

Guide to safer recruitment (3.1.4) – finding the right people to work with junior members is one of your club's major responsibilities. This resource offers some hints and tips on developing a recruitment policy that will help to stop problems before they arise. It should be adopted and consulted whenever you are taking on volunteers, employees or contractors.

Self-declaration form for coaches and volunteers (3.1.5) – this form is very important when recruiting volunteers, staff and contractors, and you should retain a copy on file.

Policy on the use of images of children and young people (3.1.6) – this guidance document covers the safe and appropriate use of films and photographs of children under 18. It includes a sample consent form, which should be completed (wherever possible) before any filming or photography takes place. Remember to contact LTA Child Protection if you need advice on adopting these guidelines or require help putting together a consent form for a specific event.

Guidelines for travelling and staying away (3.1.8) – taking players on trips is a complex issue that requires careful planning. This guidance document outlines all the major considerations, including transport, supervision, medical emergencies, nutrition and codes of conduct. It also covers what to do if child safety concerns arise, and includes a comprehensive checklist for away fixtures and overnight stays.

Junior club membership form (3.1.9) – this template will make sure you gather the basic information that you need in order to look after your junior members properly. You can also use this form to collect information that will be useful in developing your facilities and services, as well as your marketing activities. Remember to tailor the template to the specific needs of your club, by including questions that have direct relevance to your projects, activities and goals.

Trip and activity consent form (3.1.10) – to be completed by parent(s)/guardian(s) whenever children and young adults are taken on trips or to special events.

Incident report form (3.1.11) – your Child Protection Officer and senior club officials should have easy access to this form. Use it to report any concerns or incidents in which a child's safety or welfare was placed at risk. Remember to get expert advice immediately (by telephone) from your county LTA or national LTA Child Protection, if you feel it is necessary. This form is not a requirement for referrals, but you may be asked to complete one to support the Child Protection Department in its work.

Safeguarding and protecting: what's the difference?

'Safeguarding' is the word that applies to all the work a club does to provide a safe, positive and friendly environment for children. The code of conduct provided in this pack encourages attitudes and approaches that help to safeguard children. By adopting an open, accountable and responsible approach, clubs can help to prevent problems before they occur. Measures such as safe recruitment, clear standards of conduct, and careful planning for photography, events and travel, also contribute to a safe, high quality environment for junior members. In summary, safeguarding is the 'behind the scenes' work that well-organised clubs do to prevent problems from arising.

'Protecting' refers to the procedures that come into force when there is a particular concern or incident. Good safeguarding helps to reduce the need for protection, but it is vital to have rigorous and clear procedures in place in case a problem arises. If a child suggests that they are being abused, or if an adult reports abuse or bad practice that could put a child's welfare at risk, these procedures must be understood and followed by everyone involved. By appointing a Child Protection Officer who can liaise with county LTA or national LTA Child Protection, you establish an important safety net. The HITLIST gives some important advice for CPOs.

Of course, safeguarding and protecting often overlap. By using the resources in this folder and others provided by the LTA, and by accessing the training required as part of Tennis Clubmark accreditation, you will be adding to your knowledge and understanding in both areas. The better you are at developing a safe and positive club for junior members, the easier you will find it to identify when things are going wrong and to deal with them appropriately.

Remember, LTA Child Protection is able to offer you a wide range of advice and support.

Recognising signs of abuse

Most of your work as a club should focus on tennis. The safeguarding measures suggested here (and in other LTA guidance documents) are mainly intended to help you deliver tennis in a safe environment. This will help young people to feel supported, and ensure that most problems are tackled before they become serious.

Even so, it is extremely important that you are aware of the different forms of child abuse, and of the possible signs that abuse is occurring. Although this should not be the main focus of your safeguarding and protection measures, you could prevent a child from coming to harm if you have some basic knowledge in this area.

The best way to gain basic skills in recognising signs of abuse is to attend the LTA/UKCC child protection workshop. Tennis Clubmark requires your club to send two people on this course, including your club coach. However, as an introduction, please be aware of the following descriptions of different types of abuse, taken from Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2006):

What is abuse and neglect? – abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children.

Physical abuse – physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Emotional abuse – emotional abuse is 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 children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious 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.

Sexual abuse – sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect – neglect is 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. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing, shelter including exclusion from home or abandonment, failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate care-takers, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Bullying – bullying may be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group). The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm). All settings in which children are provided with services or are living away from home should have in place rigorously enforced anti-bullying strategies.

Responding to a concern

It can be very difficult to identify that abuse or neglect is occurring, or that someone's poor conduct is having a serious impact on a child. It's not always a question of identifying the visible signs of abuse; often, a child or adult speaking out raises concerns. Children may not be able to give a clear explanation of what has happened, but will indicate that something is wrong.

It is not your responsibility to investigate or intervene, but it is your responsibility to listen and to make sure that the child receives all the necessary help and support.

Here are five simple steps that you should take if someone reports a concern to you:

1. Stay calm and assure the child.
2. It takes a lot of courage for a child to disclose a problem, and he/she usually wants you to help. Therefore, you should not make promises of confidentiality, but be clear that you may have to contact other people who will be able to help.
3. Listen carefully to what the child says and do not suggest ideas. Keep questioning to a minimum, use open questions, and record the conversation as soon as you can. Record precise words and phrases (as closely as possible) and be clear to make a distinction between fact and opinion.
4. Report the concern to the Child Protection Officer in your club, or go directly to the county/national LTA. Do not hesitate to call national LTA Child Protection if you need urgent advice. LTA Child Protection contact details are given below. If you fear that a child is at immediate risk, and you cannot get advice from a Child Protection Officer, you should contact your local police or social services.
5. Do not discuss the concerns with others until you have reported them, as above.

A club or county officer might contact LTA Child Protection, if they feel the problem is serious, and it is possible that the police and/or social services may then become involved. It is not your responsibility to make these decisions; the correct course of action is for you to report the concern, as quickly and accurately as you can.

Good practice and support – the Tennis Clubmark folder offers a variety of resources to help you ensure that tennis is a safe sport for children and young people. If you have any comments or questions about the issues raised in these guidelines, or if you need further and more detailed advice, you should contact LTA Child Protection. Remember to regularly check the website for new resources and updated materials.

LTA Child Protection

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