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MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

LET KIDS BE KIDS- SAFE SPORT COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SUMMARY AND RESOURCE PACK

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Workshop Context:

The purpose of the Let Kids be Kids workshops, sponsored by Clubs Tasmania and co-branded with Play by the Rules, was to provide evidence and activities to unpack the drivers of sport participation/dropout and the impact of physical, psychological and sexual abuse/violence¹ experienced by children playing community sport. The workshops aimed to improve the capability of community sport volunteers and staff to recognise and respond to the diverse types of abuse against children in sport.

Over 40 community sport stakeholders participated in activities and discussions across three workshops. Of the 32 people who completed the evaluation survey, the majority were Australian born (85%) and women (75%), most were in unpaid, voluntary roles (72%) and the majority had not undergone any formal training on safeguarding in sport (69%).

Pre-Workshop capability assessment Survey

Before the workshop, participants were invited to complete a survey to evaluate their current capability, opportunities and motivations for recognising and responding to abuse against children in sport.

The majority of participants strongly agreed that recognising and responding to all forms of abuse against children in sport was important to them and their club. However, they were less confident in **recognising** diverse types of abuse and in knowing what constitutes reportable conduct. The confidence in **responding** to diverse types of abuse was lower with less than half agreeing that they know how to respond in a trauma informed way and a third uncertain what the procedures for reporting are. Around 40% did not agree that (or were not aware) their club had clear procedures (guidelines or policies) about responding to abuse in sport and just over half were worried about the burden placed on them if they had to support someone through a disclosure. One in three believed they could face repercussions from people within their club if they were to raise an issue of child abuse in sport.

Evidence-based Intervention: Workshop Activities to build capacity

During the workshop, attendees participated in a series of activities designed to generate discussions around recognition of and response to abuse against children in sport.

Recognising Abuse in Sport

Participants engaged in an activity to discuss recognising, managing and ranking the perceived severity of diverse types of abuse in sport. They were not provided a definition of severity, nor any further context ahead of the activity.

¹ While there are some differences between the term “abuse” and the “term” violence, we use them interchangeably in this report.

The definition of severity suggested by the groups was varied including:

- Perceived impact of the scenario on the victim
- Ease of management of the scenario from an organisational perspective
- Level of physical contact
- What actions were most “taboo” in a given sport

This activity highlighted challenges not only in the way individuals conceptualise the severity of diverse types of abuse, and assumed the context of the abuse, but also in how individuals and organisations respond to diverse types of abuse. Many participants reflected that, for the majority of scenarios, their club did not have policies in place for prevention (expected conducted) or response.

Recommendations:

- Clubs and volunteers need to promote awareness around all forms of abuse, recognising that any type of abuse can be potentially traumatic for the victim depending on the context or their individual history.
- Policies and codes of conduct should make explicit mention of diverse types of abuse.

Responding to Disclosures

One activity asked the attendees to reflect on challenges they or other adults might experience in responding or taking action to disclosures of child abuse in sport, and what support they needed to improve this. The two key challenges identified also aligned with the pre-workshop survey findings:

Fear of repercussions

Lack of knowledge/confidence
of policies/procedures

Participants feared they would not be believed if they reported abuse against a child, and that they would be putting themselves “in the firing line.” Many also feared they could unintentionally make it worse for the child

Many participants also shared that they were unsure if something could be classified as abuse/violence, where or who to go to for next steps following a disclosure, and that expectations for responses to diverse types of abuse in sport were unclear within their organisation. The majority of clubs/organisations were also not aware of local supports (e.g. mental health centres).

Recommendations:

- Sport volunteers/staff should undertake safeguarding training.
- Clubs/Sports Organisations should have explicit policies around managing informal disclosures and formal reports of diverse types of abuse. Local responses for club level management of disclosures should be considered in instances where the experiences of abuse do not fall within time frames or sports eligible to be investigated by Sport Integrity Australia.
- The importance and value of disclosures should be reinforced to all members and participants.
- Local organisations (and national helplines) should be considered as support mechanisms for club volunteers.

Post-Workshop capability assessment Survey

After the workshop, participants reported having an increased understanding of what constitutes child abuse in sport, what is meant by a trauma informed response and how to provide this. Participants requested more information on the research and evidence in this space, reporting process, connections to local resources within and outside of sport for responding to abuse, and resources to provide to clubs about research and policy development support. **The pilot data from this workshop suggests a positive change in participants' confidence to recognise and respond to abuse against children in sport.**

Recommendations:

Consider further implementation of this evidence-based workshop as it was successful in its key aims and could be readily delivered in other sport contexts.

Relevant Research Cited within the Workshop

1. [Frequencies of violence \(abuse\) against children in Australian community sport](#)
2. [Disclosures of violence \(abuse\) in Australian community sport](#)
3. [Data on young people's concerns about playing sport](#) (Page 14)
4. [Safe Sport Allies- Resources to support safe sport workshops and table on types of abuse in sport.](#)

Overarching Safeguarding Education Resource Suite

Sport Integrity Australia, Play by the Rules and the E-Safety Commissioner have expansive (and free) resource suites to support community sport players, volunteers and organisations in understanding how to ensure the sport environment is safe.

1. Scroll down to "Safeguarding" on the [Sport Integrity Australia Resource](#) page
2. [Play by the Rules](#) has templates, articles, and scenarios on safe sport that community sport stakeholders can access.
3. The [e-Safety Commissioner](#) has a sport specific online hub for anyone to access resources related to recognising, responding and reporting online abuse.

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Resources

In response to the requests from community sport stakeholders, we provide the following practical resources, guidelines, helplines and organisations. All of the below resources are free to access and implement.

	Recognising	Responding	Policies and Procedures	Mental Health Support
Adults	<p><u>Child Safeguarding in Sport Induction</u>- Play by the Rules/Sport Integrity Australia</p>	<p>Suspected child abuse- Call Sport Integrity Australia- #1300027232</p> <p><u>How to respond to a child's disclosure</u></p> <p><u>Blue Knot Resources</u></p>	<p><u>Checklist</u> from Sport Integrity Australia for selecting a safe sporting club</p>	<p>Helpline- mental health support, triage, and referral phone line delivered by the Department of Health, Tasmania in partnership with Lifeline Tasmania (#1800332388)</p>
Children/Youth	<p><u>Participant Conversation cards</u> to help kids/youth talk about safe sport and unsafe behaviours</p>	<p>X</p>	<p><u>How you should be treated in sport</u>- Sport Integrity Australia</p> <p><u>Your rights in sport</u>- Sport Integrity Australia</p>	<p><u>National Support Services List</u></p> <p>Headspace- Youth-friendly and provide free mental health services, counselling, and support for young people aged 12-25</p> <p>Hobart-#6231 2927; Launceston-#6335 3100</p> <p><u>National Support Services List</u></p>
Organisation	<p><u>Child Safe Dos and Don'ts</u>- Sport Integrity Australia</p>	<p><u>Reporting resource state by state</u></p> <p>Consider undertaking training in trauma informed responses:</p> <p><u>Trauma Informed Certificate</u></p> <p><u>Blue Knot Resources</u></p>	<p><u>Coach conversation</u> starter cards to help have conversations about safe sport.</p>	<p>Helpline- mental health support and referral phone line delivered by the Department of Health, Tasmania in partnership with Lifeline Tasmania #1800332388</p> <p><u>AFL/Headspace</u>- Free interactive workshops for all youth AFL community clubs (Players 12-18 years)</p>