



**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY SAFE SPORT COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SUMMARY AND RESOURCE PACK

Institute for Health and Sport (IHES)

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Workshop Context:

The purpose of the workshops, delivered in Partnership with Vicsport was to provide evidence and deliver activities to unpack experiences of and responses to physical, psychological and sexual abuse/violence¹ against children playing community sport. The workshop aimed to improve the capability of sport stakeholders to recognise and respond to the diverse types of abuse against children in sport.

17 community sport stakeholders participated in activities and discussions. Of the 13 people that completed the pre and post evaluation survey, the majority were Australian born (69%) and women (85%), most (69%) were employed in sport and the majority also volunteered within sport (54%). Almost two thirds of attendees had previously undertaken formal training on safeguarding in sport (69%).

Previous cohorts who have completed this workshop were mostly unpaid volunteers (72%), two thirds of whom had not undergone any safeguarding training in sport.

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 of children in sport.

All participants strongly agreed that recognising and responding to all forms of abuse against children in sport was important to them and their organisation/club. However, they were **less confident 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. Around 23% did not agree (or were not aware) that their organisation/club had clear procedures (guidelines or policies) about responding to abuse in sport and just over 20% were worried about the burden placed on them if they had to support someone through a disclosure. **One in five believed they could face repercussions** from people within their organisation/club if they were to raise an issue of child abuse in sport.

Previous cohorts who have completed this workshop reported a similar lack of confidence in responding to abuse but had higher rates of concern with regards to worrying about the burden of receiving a disclosure and fearing repercussions.

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

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.

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

- Perceived impact of the scenario on the victim
- Age of the victim (increased severity if the child was younger)
- The potential impact of the abuse on those witnessing it
- Ease of management of the scenario from an organisational perspective

In discussing the activity, points were raised around how to recognise or respond to perceived abuse when the abuse was verbal and in another language. There was significant discussion around how to promote inclusion (speaking a preferred language) whilst ensuring safety simultaneously.

Recommendations:

- Clubs and volunteers need to be encouraged and supported to promote awareness of 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.
- Evidence-based education and policies need to speak to the intersections of inclusion and safety
- Policies and codes of conduct at all levels of sports (NSO, SSA, Clubs) should make explicit mention of diverse types of abuse.
- Continued funding is required to support the delivery of education and implementation of safe sport practices, particularly given the large volunteer workforce.

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 three key challenges identified aligned with the pre-workshop survey findings:

Fear of repercussions

Lack of knowledge/confidence of policies/procedures

Questioning what is enough evidence

Adults' challenges in taking action/ reporting seemed to mirror the barriers they perceived children also faced: fear of not being believed, fear of repercussions, and not knowing how to report. Many participants feared that they would not be able to help the children through the process.

The idea of what safety means in the context of cultural differences or family dynamics was also discussed. Questions were raised again as to how to manage safety in light of differences in parental styles (more controlling), or cultural norms of communication in the instance of parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Recommendations:

- NSOs, SSAs and respective member clubs should have explicit policies around managing informal disclosures and formal reports of diverse types of abuse, in a trauma-informed and age-appropriate fashion. Clear policies and guidance for local (or 'in house') responses for club level management of disclosures should be established as a priority, particularly for those instances where the experiences of abuse do not fall within time frames or sports eligible to be investigated by Sport Integrity Australia.
- Safeguarding trainings must include elements of how to respond when a child or witness disclose an experience of abuse.
- Volunteers and paid staff should be confident in their ability to manage not just the formal reporting elements, but also the interpersonal communication elements in a trauma-informed and age-appropriate manner
- Local expert organisations such as (In Good Faith Foundation, The Commission for Children and Young People, the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse and national helplines) should be considered as support mechanisms for organisations club volunteers.

Post-Workshop capability assessment Survey

This workshop cohort was comprised of a majority of stakeholders in paid child safeguarding roles, and thus there were much higher scores for understanding types of abuse and knowledge of policies/procedures related to responding to abuse than in previous cohorts. However, there were significant improvements in the participant's knowledge and confidence in providing a trauma informed response to a child disclosing abuse in sport. Participants requested more information on the research and evidence in this space, resources that focused on providing trauma-informed responses and connections to local expert organisations and resources within and outside of sport for responding to abuse. **The pilot data from this workshop suggests a positive change in participants' confidence to respond to abuse against children in sport, and also highlights the gaps that need to be addressed to ensure that policies, procedures and responses align with the Child Safe Standards.**

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.
- Ongoing funding is needed to support the sport community in ensuring all sport environments are safe.

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, Vicsport 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.
4. Vicsport has developed [an online education course](#) for sport stakeholders that is specific to the 11 Victoria Child Safe Standards.

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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><u>National Support Services List</u></p> <p><u>Mind Australia</u>- Free and immediate support for mental illness</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>Commission for Children and Young People (child rights)</u></p>	<p>Headspace- Youth-friendly and provide free mental health services, counselling, and support for young people aged 12-25</p> <p>Elsternwick-#9076 7500;</p> <p>Abbotsford-#9417 0150</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><u>Cultural Safety/Inclusion</u></p> <p><u>Templates & Guides</u>- Vicsport</p>	<p><u>Lifeline</u>- mental health support 13 11 14 and (some) free trainings for greater awareness</p> <p><u>AFL/Headspace</u>- Free interactive workshops for all youth AFL community clubs (Players 12-18 years)</p> <p><u>eSafety Sports Hub</u>- Resources for individuals and organisations around online safety in sport.</p>