



BRIEFING PAPER FOR  
**GRASSROOTS SPORTS  
SECTOR AND OTHER  
EXTRA-CURRICULAR  
ACTIVITIES**



**IN PREPARATION FOR THE RETURN  
TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES FOLLOWING  
COVID 19 RESTRICTIONS.**

## WHO WE ARE

### NWG NETWORK

Our principal aim is to offer support and advice to those working with children and young people under eighteen who are affected by abuse through exploitation. The Charity's object is to tackle child exploitation, in particular, but not exclusively, by promoting, enabling, supporting and developing the protection of children and young people who are affected by exploitation. We work closely with other organisations including the CPSU to raise the profile of abuse of exploitation in sport. Our role is to provide awareness and support to grassroots sports and activities whilst CPSU ensure that safeguarding concerns are addressed.

### THE CPSU

The unit plays a strategic role in the landscape of sport in the UK. They work directly with UK Sport Councils, National Governing Bodies (NGBs), Active Partnerships (APs – previously known as County Sports Partnerships) and other organisations. They support organisations to implement and maintain safeguarding practices, to minimise the risk of abuse and ensure that sport stays safe and enjoyable for all those involved.

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**THE PAST YEAR HAS BEEN UNPRECEDENTED, NONE OF US COULD HAVE PREDICTED THE GLOBAL CHALLENGES WE WOULD ALL FACE AND MOREOVER, HOW LONG IT WOULD HAVE LASTED.**

Children and young people have been particularly affected, with some feeling

isolated and unable to participate in social activities, including sport, dance, drama and other physical activities. Our government has announced a roadmap out of lockdown and so this briefing paper has been developed to assist professionals in grassroots sports and those other activities that children attend, to consider how young people may be feeling as a result of the pandemic and provide practical tips in preparing for the safe return to their chosen sport or other physical activity, to ensure it is as positive an experience as possible for them.



Return to fitness is key, but we need to be aware that fitness levels may be greatly reduced, due to reduced activity during lockdown and some children's mental health has also deteriorated. Therefore, it is important to have a focus on children coming together, having fun and rebuilding and strengthening relationships and then focussing on fitness levels at a pace suitable for the child without pressure. It is important to remember that attachments, connectivity and coming together are key in providing a positive experience for children and young people.

The information provided in this briefing paper should be read in conjunction with your own NGB's 'Return to Sport' guidance, where applicable. It should also be read in conjunction with the Government's latest Covid-19 guidance, the Government's framework for a return to recreational team sport, the Government out of school setting document, Sport England's Return to Play guidance and any other relevant local guidance and legislation.

## SECTION 1

# WHY YOUNG PEOPLE MAY FEEL ANXIOUS ABOUT RETURNING TO SPORT AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

- May be new to the sessions/activity and does not know anyone
- May have special educational needs (mental health, learning or physical disabilities) or specific care needs
- May be anxious about returning to the sport/activity because they have been away for so long
- May be worried about returning to the same skill level or fear that they may have fallen behind other teammates
- May have developed image/body issues which may affect their confidence/self esteem
- May feel anxious about changes in fitness levels
- May feel anxious about socialising in larger groups again



- Close friends/peers may not have returned to the sport/activity
- May be anxious as to whether an activity is safe in terms of possible risk of infection.
- May be very young and not used to being away from parents/carers
- May not fully understand social distancing rules
- May be fearful of grooming that has taken place online possibly by a coach or peer
- May have lost a loved one due to Covid or other health related issues
- May have experienced abuse at home or within other environments



## SECTION 2

# ACTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION TO PROMOTE A POSITIVE EXPERIENCE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE RETURNING TO SPORT AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

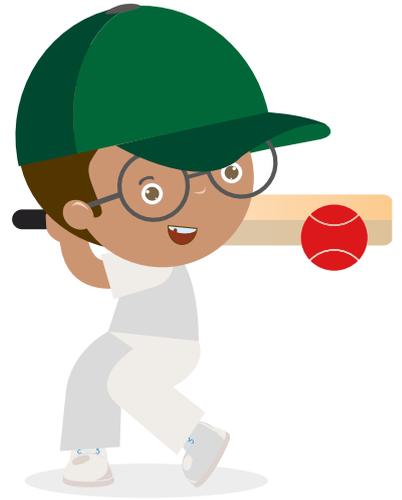
- Communicate with parents/carers and young people prior to them returning to sport or their chosen activity, about what measures are in place in terms of Covid compliance, including information about who will be supervising and delivering the sporting activity, as familiar coaches may not have returned to their club.
- Be clear about whether parents/carers can attend to observe their children (following previous lockdowns many parents raised concerns that clubs actively prohibited parents from observing, citing Covid restrictions)



- Provide information on what activities will be like including any changes resulting from Covid.
- Consider whether a child who is worried about returning would like to have a buddy to help reintegrate them into their club/activity
- Ensure a warm and friendly welcome to young people and their families
- Ask young people what they need/want from the club/activity to ensure a smooth return to the sport/activity
- Set some initial ground rules that young people contribute to, to encourage consideration amongst peers of individual anxieties
- Be flexible to accommodate changes in young people's circumstances including changes in ability
- Provide clear information to children and families regarding drop off and pick-up arrangements/locations.
- Ensure support is in place to manage any late collections/early drop offs.
- Have an appropriate person to meet and greet at the "front of house" when the young person arrives/leaves.
- Clubs/activities need to ensure that all staff members (paid and volunteers) have updated their safeguarding training and know-how and who to refer concerns to



- Ensure all staff (paid and volunteers) know who the DSO/ club welfare officer is, as this may have changed over the course of the last year, the same applies for other children's activities including dance, drama etc.
- The club/activity should anticipate a rise in referrals and proactively prepare for this by creating a safe space for conversations but do NOT force conversations or pressurise
- Support staff and peers to be trusted adults who young people feel confident in seeking support from
- Promote and support identification of children who are struggling, either with abuse or mental health issues and ensure support is in place
- Be familiar with contacts within your region to obtain safeguarding and mental health support and advice
- Demonstrate and model calm, children and young people are hypersensitive to parental and adult stress
- Recognise and reinforce the notion that anxiety is a perfectly normal response to the pandemic
- Carry out a risk assessment and record the procedures and checks put in place. It's essential everyone is clear about the restrictions



## SECTION 3 - RESOURCES

### CHECK OUT YOUR LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP OR LOCAL AUTHORITY FOR DETAILS OF HOW TO REPORT TO THE LADO AND REFER CHILDREN TO CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE IN YOUR LOCAL AREA.

Please see a link to the NWG sports specific safeguarding training for sports coaches, developed in collaboration with Dr Mike Hartill from Edge Hill university.

[www.nwgnetwork.org/training/combatting-child-sexual-exploitation-in-sport](http://www.nwgnetwork.org/training/combatting-child-sexual-exploitation-in-sport)

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Please see below a link to our website with a specific area for sport, the posters section can be freely downloaded so please do have a look and share within your networks, also you can see our Safe to Play campaign videos which we are hoping to fully launch when lockdown allows. The augmented reality cards which work via mobile phones is the big selling point for both parents and carers.

[www.stop-ce.org/tackling-cse-in-sports](http://www.stop-ce.org/tackling-cse-in-sports)

[www.nwgnetwork.org](http://www.nwgnetwork.org)

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Here is a link to a research project that was developed across Europe specifically looking at abuse through sport, if you click on the resources tab and scroll down you will be able to access a suite of free to download videos developed in partnership with survivors of abuse, the resources are translated into different languages that you may find useful and, in every video, the person narrating the video is the actual victim of the abuse being highlighted so this does give these resources a tremendous amount of integrity. Themes covered include peer on peer abuse, same sex abuse, non-contact abuse and group abuse by a single coach and the silencing techniques used to control. Every video comes with a manual to help the facilitator/trainer deliver the session which is also very helpful, and the victims of the abuses story is also in every manual which should be read before the delivery of that specific resource, these videos are not to replace safeguarding training but to enhance it, do download them and have a look but we do want to maintain the integrity of this free resource so we would ask that these are kept safely and not posted onto any social media webpage.

[voicesfortruthanddignity.eu](http://voicesfortruthanddignity.eu)

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The Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) is part of the NSPCC and is funded by Sport England, Sport Northern Ireland, Sport Wales and UK Sport.

(In Scotland, there's a similar partnership between Children 1st and sportscotland.)

The CPSU was founded in 2001 in response to a series of high-profile cases of abuse of young athletes. Our aim is to help improve safeguarding and child protection practises within sport organisations, to ensure all children and young people are safe while participating in sport.

[thecpsu.org.uk](http://thecpsu.org.uk)

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Protective measures for holiday and after-school clubs, and other out-of-school settings during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Updated 7 April 2021

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak/protective-measures-for-out-of-school-settings-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak)

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Sport England  
Return to Play guidance

[www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/coronavirus/return-play](http://www.sportengland.org/how-we-can-help/coronavirus/return-play)

