

SWO August 2025 Newsletter

Hi Everyone,

Welcome to August's edition of the Safeguarding Newsletter, I hope it finds you well and active with lots of summer sports, events and activities. We have been incredibly busy at SOGB HQ in all areas, with safeguarding being no exception. There have been extensive developments that will bring you new training opportunities, clarity on roles, qualification requirements, safer recruitment info and much more. We have also been involved in safeguarding cases, welfare queries and in supporting local events. We have a lot to catch up on, so let's dive in.

As we continue to bring improvements to our safeguarding practice, please do keep in mind that I love hearing what you think, your feedback, your ideas for new initiatives and any successes your end, so please do not hesitate to shoot me an email, or pick up the phone anytime Mon-Fri 9-5.

07383 389 663//adam.leathwood@sogb.org.uk

From the Inbox

In the "From the Inbox" section we explore some of your questions and queries we've had over the last two months. If you're asking, it's very likely someone else is wondering and will also want to know the answers to the questions, so we thought it best to share them and the learnings and developments that come from them with you here.

Risk Assessments

Event/Session Risk Assessments

Over the past few weeks we have had several conversations with SWO's and other volunteers about the need and function of risk assessments, both for sessions/events, but also for individual Athletes, here's what has been discussed...

Activity risk assessments are vital in ensuring any session and/or event that is delivered under the SOGB banner is done so safely. They cover any and all known risks, how to prevent them occurring and also what to do if they unfortunately do occur.

Risk assessments are designed to outline basic and common risks such as slips, trips, illness, accidents and site safety but also extend to more contextual risks such as athlete anxiety, athletes getting lost, managing challenging interactions and managing safeguarding incidents.

They are designed to give all those working at your session or event the information they need to keep athletes and themselves safe, and inform people how to respond appropriately to any risk that does present itself. In addition, they look at things like support ratios, medical and first aid requirements, external service support or environment specific information such as emergency escape routes. In the coming weeks we will be uploading some complete examples of event risk assessments so you can get a real feel for what to include in yours. These will be hosted on our [Health and Safety Resources](#) page along with the existing template document.

Individual Athlete Risk Assessments/One Page Profiles

Individual Athlete Risk Assessments/One Page Profiles are designed to provide Coaches, Leaders and those in supporting roles with a duty of care for athletes with all the relevant information required to work with that athlete in a person-centred and safe way.

The **One Page profile** element provides information about the athlete in areas such as preferred communication methods, allergies/dietary preferences, any anxieties, fears, likes and dislikes and also looks at the athlete's ambitions and what they are hoping to get from engaging in SOGB activity. It's a basic grab sheet designed to enable tailored support to an athlete.

The **Risk Assessment** element delves a little deeper into the above themes but also looks at things like complex medical needs, communication needs, travel and road safety awareness, vulnerabilities,

any challenging behaviours and any other pertinent information needed to keep an athlete safe. It then identifies strategies that are designed to prevent known risks occurring, for example if an athlete has little to no awareness of road safety, there should be support in place when out and about to ensure their safety. The risk assessments template then also covers responses to risk, and/or harm occurring .e.g. how to respond safely, appropriately and in line with the needs of the athlete. For example if an athlete has a seizure, the risk assessment should identify what the steps are to protect the athlete from harm, who to contact and how to provide effective support. We recommend that **all athletes** under the SOGB banner have an Individual Risk Assessment/One Page Profile in place, if they do those working with them are able to provide consistent and contextual support which creates a happy and safe experience for the athletes. The template for these are [HERE](#).

Risk Assessments are a key component in protecting athletes from all types of harm, and form a major part of the first principal of safeguarding which is **Prevention**. For sessions, events and competitions, risk assessments are mandatory, and form part of the overall requirements for SOGB's insurance cover. Without these risk assessments in place, SOGB's insurance could be void, for example in the event of an incident resulting in injury or harm during a session that did not have a comprehensive and up-to-date risk assessment in place. The job of a risk assessment is to identify all known risks to athletes and volunteers and to mitigate them. They are an easy way for anyone involved in a session or in a of duty of care role to quickly understand how best to work in that environment or with that specific athlete in the safest ways possible. We would much rather prevent harm and mitigate risk than have to respond to it, risk assessments ensure we are able to do both.

Support Ratios

We have had some enquiries about support ratios over the past few weeks, by this we mean the ratio of volunteers per athlete. The main question being, what are the recommended ratios of support?

The recommended Volunteer to Athlete support ratio of 1:4, has been assessed as being a safe support ratio for sporting activity with athletes. This is outlined in our [Health and Safety Policy](#) with the following

statement, “Staff ratios will be maintained that are appropriate to the situation and services as determined by an event and/or activity based risk assessment, but will never be less than 1:4 (one staff to four athletes).”

SOGB have adopted this guidance from Special Olympics International (SOI) guidance on the matter. The [SOI Sports Rules Document](#) sec. 7.2 states *“For competition activities, a maximum ratio of four athletes-to-one Coach/Chaperone (4:1 athlete-to-coach ratio) is required.”*

As mentioned above in the risk assessment section, these ratios should be identified and communicated within session/event/competition risk assessments.

The support ratios must be made up of registered SOGB volunteers, this is to ensure that the appropriate due diligence checks in training, qualifications, criminal background checks etc. are in place. This means that family members who are not registered with SOGB cannot make up the ratio numbers, this is the same for any “ad-hoc” support or volunteers who are not registered.

Internal Updates and Info

We need you!!!!

Safeguarding Strategy Consultation

Draft 1 of the SOGB Safeguarding Strategy has been finalised, this has been through a process of SOGB Staff and Board review and feedback and it is now time for member feedback. We will be liaising with the Athlete Leadership Team for their input and also want to get your take on the document. It is important that the strategy amplifies the voice of our membership, and that the goals and ambitions within are achievable, realistic and promote the best interests of SOGB Athletes and Volunteers.

If you want to be involved in the consultation of this document which will shape the next few years of safeguarding, safety, welfare and wellbeing at SOGB, please email me at adam.leathwood@sogb.org.uk and I will add you to the distribution list.

Safeguarding Refresher Training

We are in the final development stages for the Safeguarding Refresher e-learning and need volunteers who are not camera shy to record some clips with us. The training utilises case studies and examples that follow the 6 key principals of safeguarding, and we would like Volunteers and Athletes to be involved in creating some videos for this. The scripts are already written, all we would need is for volunteers and athletes to read the script to camera. All the case examples are real, but have been anonymized. Alternatively, if you have a case that you think could showcase good practice in one of the 6 key principles of safeguarding, and you want to share this, I'd love to hear about it and possibly include it in the course.

The six key principals of safeguarding are: Empowerment, Prevention, Proportionality, Protection, Partnership and Accountability.

If you want to be involved, drop me a email using the above address.

Safer Recruitment DBS/PVG

We are in the process of updating our DBS/PVG guidance to ensure it is all in line with the latest guidance from DBS and Disclosure Scotland and that any gaps that have been identified have been covered. I recently discussed with a SWO the processes after a volunteer has received their certificate (*bringing it in to show the SWO/Club Chair*) which is omitted from the guidance, this is just one area we are updating. We will announce when these updates are made, all documents relating to DBS and PVG can be found [HERE](#) in the DBS/PVG section.

SWO Support Pack and Handover

A reminder for those of you who have been here a while, and an intro for those of you who have recently taken on the role of SWO at your club, we have two support documents to help you in your role as SWO.

They are the [SWO Support Pack](#), and the [SWO Handover Guidance](#)

The Support Pack contains key info such as a role descriptor, training requirements, links to resources, reporting and referral pathways and more. The Handover Guidance informs you of what information needs to be handed over to any incoming SWO's to ensure a continuation of safe and happy environments can happen. It covers the communication of ongoing cases, suspensions, safer recruitment, and the all important risk assessments. It

is advised to keep a secure log of all this important information so that it can be handed over easily when required.

Policy and Procedure Update

It has been three years since our last safeguarding policy and procedure review, so we thought it best to get these updated. Taking guidance from the Child Protection in Sport Unit and the Ann Craft Trust we have made the decision to split the one safeguarding procedures document into two that outline safeguarding procedures for both adults and children. This aligns with our existing policy statements which are already split into child and adult documents and also aligns with current sector standards in ensuring that key information for children and adults safeguarding is clear and easy to find. There are distinct differences in types of abuse, referral pathways and support networks for both adult and children and by splitting the two into separate documents, they are easier to navigate when required. See these new documents on our [Safeguarding Resources Page](#).

Under 18's Volunteer Guidance

Recruiting young volunteers is a great way to grow volunteer numbers, bring different perspectives and ideas into a club and to provide vital volunteering opportunities to people in need of them. We have seen the number of volunteers who are under the age of 18 increasing over the past few months and we have had questions flying in about this.

As a result the team have put together some guidance for anyone bringing in young volunteers. There are a few key things to note when considering this as an option, these are:

- Parental/Carer Consent, **consent is required from the parent/carers** for the young person to volunteer. They must be fully informed of the expectations and responsibilities of the role as well as how the young volunteer will be kept safe.
- Supervision, Volunteers under the age of 18 **must be supervised at all times** by an appropriately vetted adult volunteer.
- Duty of Care, the young volunteer must **NOT** hold a position of trust or have duty of care over athletes

To read the full document and to learn more about the recruitment of volunteers under the age of 18, check out the guidance [HERE](#)

SOGB

Safeguarding

Number

Just a reminder that the SOGB Safeguarding support line has been updated, the new number is: **07383 389663** and is operational Mon-Fri 9-5. SOGB does not have an out of hours Safeguarding line. In the event of an incident that occurs out of hours, please ensure you follow steps to ensure the safety of all in the immediate, take action to refer to local authority or police where necessary and then pass this information onto the SOGB Safeguarding Team via our reporting form found [HERE](#)

External Updates

CPSU

Rethinking Safeguarding and Youth Engagement in Sport

The CPSU Safeguarding in Sport Podcast is a great resource to hear up to date information on all things children's safeguarding in a sporting context. Each episode explores a different theme and talks to various people from across the sector who give their insights, experience and advice on the subject. The latest

episode speaks to a Sports Welfare Officer, a Safeguarding lead, and a Sporting Community Strategic Director to explore the theme Safeguarding and Youth Engagement.

The Podcast is a great listen, and with the increase in young volunteers at SOGB, might be one for you. Check out the article and link to the podcast [HERE](#)

Keeping Your Child Safe in Sport

Last year the NSPCC Helpline saw a 47% rise in calls from adults concerned about a child's welfare in sports settings. As an organisation, we have a duty to respond to that, and ensure that we are doing everything we can to create safe and positive environments for our athletes. This is why we are always looking to update and improve our safeguarding practices, resources and guidance.

The CPSU run a year round campaign called Keeping Your Child Safe in Sport that raises awareness of children's safeguarding in sports settings. It covers things like positive coaching techniques, positive behaviour, and professional boundaries. To read about the statistics of what is reported to the NSPCC, and what resources the CPSU have available to clubs click [HERE](#)

Unconscious Bias in Sport

In July one of NSPCC's Senior trainers led a webinar which explored understanding unconscious bias in sport, it covered what it is, where it comes from, what its potential impact is and what to do about it if you see it. The webinar talks about how unconscious bias can affect marginalized communities and how to actively challenge discrimination. If you want to watch the webinar, click [HERE](#)

Ann Craft Trust

Adults Safeguarding Week

On November 17th 2025 we will see the annual Adults Safeguarding Week commence, the week is jam packed with webinars, podcasts, news articles and free resources. Places on the webinars are booking up quickly, so if you want to get involved, check it out [HERE](#)

Change the Conversation

The Ann Craft Trust have released a great article about changing the narrative of adult safeguarding. They talk about how safeguarding is often approached in a reactive way, and while this is sometimes necessary, the drive to shift to a protective way of working should be being prioritized. As I talked about earlier, protection is one of the key principals of safeguarding and we need to ask ourselves, "what can I do today to prevent abuse and harm occurring tomorrow". The article explores this theme [HERE](#) and will be building on this in Adult Safeguarding Week.

Policy/Procedure Snippet

With the introduction of the reviewed Safeguarding Procedures, I thought it best to pull out a section that is mirrored in both the Children and Adult Procedures to explore.

Responding to a Disclosure

Responding to a disclosure appropriately is vital in ensuring that the athlete is respected, reassured, made safe and listened to. It also means that key information can be obtained and passed on effectively. Here are some examples and explanations from the procedure document:

- "ensure the immediate safety of the Athlete and any others",

By doing so we are making the situation safe, removing the athlete/s from risk. This also extends to risk an athlete may be returning to. For example, if they disclose that abuse is taking place while they travel from their Club to Home, steps should be taken to prevent them returning this way.

- "react calmly so as not to frighten the individual"

This step is really important, by remaining calm you are presenting as someone who is listening, and someone who is not put off by what they are telling you. This will hopefully mean they won't close off, and will share important and relevant information with you that could prevent further harm and reduce risk.

- “consider what requirements an individual may need to communicate effectively”

An absolutely vital step in ensuring that a disclosure is effectively managed and that the athlete feels supported appropriately in the moment. Think about what communication aids an athlete may need, who might be best placed to support them, and ensure that you allow time for pauses, processing and reflection, do not rush the athlete with the disclosure.

These are just a few of the steps outlined in the procedure, to learn about the rest see **sec. 5.2 Responding to a Disclosure/Concern** in both procedure documents which can be found [HERE](#)

Resources

As mentioned above we have released our Under 18 Volunteer Guidance, which can be found on the [Volunteer Resources page](#), there is also a standalone parental/carers consent form for volunteers under the age of 18.

And again, the two new Safeguarding procedures can be found using the link above.

We are in the process of updating the DBS/PVG guidance docs, so keep an eye on [this page](#) for those coming very soon.

We have also released an Event Volunteer Safeguarding Briefing, which can be found [HERE](#). The brief is designed as a pre event awareness presentation for event volunteers to go through. It covers the basics of safeguarding at an event, such as what to look for, how to report concerns, and has space for you to input key event contact details such as the event Safeguarding and Welfare Officer. Ideally this presentation should be delivered in person, however the information can be distributed via email pre-event.

Time to Listen Course

Time to Listen Course

If you are a new SWO, or if you have not yet completed the 'Time to Listen' training course, SOGB may be able to help you access the course.

Having this level of training or equivalent is vital in ensuring you are sufficiently trained and skilled to perform the role of SWO at Special Olympics.

There are plenty of online classrooms delivering the Time to Listen course, you can check these out [HERE](#)

If this training is something you're interested in completing and would like to discuss this further, please email me at adam.leathwood@sogb.org.uk