In Section 4, we considered the implementation of your athlete-safeguarding policy, as well as factors which are important to its successful implementation, including:

— Communication of your policy;
— The right message; and
— The importance of education programmes.

As well as being important to raise awareness and understanding, these can also be considered as preventative measures.

In this section, we will consider other preventative measures, as well as the importance and preventative role of:

— The monitoring and evaluation of your policies;
— Effective case management; and
— Research.
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Chapter 1
Prevention overview

As we have seen, academic research and documented cases demonstrate that harassment and abuse occurs in sport.

When studying why harassment and abuse occur in a sporting context, researchers have identified a number of risk factors, which include the hierarchical status system in sport, a win-at-all-costs culture and a lack of preventative measures. Furthermore, according to experts, harassment and abuse occur in a sports culture where three factors align:

— There is a perpetrator with high inclination or motivation to harass/abuse;
— The sports culture has few or no athlete protection mechanisms in place (for example, no prevention policies or procedures); and
— Athlete vulnerability is high.

Studies have shown that, at present, sports organisations are often not sufficiently equipped to manage reports of harassment and abuse occurring within a sporting context, or disclosures from athletes regarding harassment and abuse occurring outside a sporting context. Completing this toolkit with a view to implementing effective athlete-safeguarding policies and procedures which reach athletes and have a true and lasting positive impact on their welfare is to be congratulated.

In order to prevent harassment and abuse from occurring in sport, it is important to understand what factors have affected the implementation of such safeguarding policies and procedures.
Chapter 2
Factors affecting implementation of policies and procedures

A study by Parent and Demers (2011) identified a number of factors that affect the implementation of measures and management of sexual abuse in sports organisations. These included:

— A negative view of prevention;
— Lack of leadership, competence and resources; and
— Actual sexual abuse cases.

**Negative view of prevention**

The study by Parent and Demers (2011), as well as other studies in this area, highlighted a concern amongst sports administrators, coaches and other entourage members that the implementation of prevention of harassment and abuse policies and procedures may cause fear within sports organisations, as it may be perceived as indicating that harassment and abuse are rife in that organisation/sport.

It is therefore very important, as seen in Section 4, that the communication related to athlete-safeguarding policies is positive; athlete welfare should be central to the psyche of all those involved in sport, and the presence of policies and procedures to safeguard athletes from harassment and abuse demonstrates commitment to this.

Furthermore, in the study by Parent and Demers (2011), participants noted that there was a fear that the presence of reporting procedures and mechanisms may lead to unfounded allegations. The authors, however, cited studies which demonstrate that fear of such allegations is very rare, and fear of false allegations against coaches and authority figures unfounded (Brackenridge et al. 2005).

**Take-away point:**

As mentioned back in Section 1, in order for athlete-safeguarding policies and procedures to be effective, there needs to be ‘buy-in’ throughout your sports organisation, and especially by the sports leadership; everyone should be united in supporting their implementation. Negative perceptions related to preventative measures should therefore be addressed, with the assistance of available research, in order to ensure that such views do not impede their implementation.

**Lack of competence and resources**

Another factor identified in the study by Parent and Demers (2011) as affecting the implementation of safeguarding policies and procedures was that organisations often did not have sufficient financial resources, time or staff to devote their efforts to athlete safeguarding.

Furthermore, a lack of resources and training which emphasises the importance of athlete-safeguarding policies and the role that each member of the athletes’ entourage plays was noted.

**Take-away point:**

This toolkit is intended to provide solutions to ensure that all sporting organisations can implement athlete-safeguarding policies and procedures, taking into account potential restrictions.

Further information and advice can be found in the resources section.
Section 5: Preventative measures

Actual cases of abuse
Finally, the study noted that one factor which has instigated the implementation of athlete-safeguarding measures has been reports of actual sexual abuse cases within sports organisations. Such measures were mainly noted as being case management measures, including complaint procedures, rather than preventative measures.

Take-away point:
The implementation of comprehensive and effective policies and procedures should include both case management and preventative measures. Furthermore, for organisations which do not currently have policies and procedures in place, it is recommended that a proactive approach be taken.

Important point:
Studies have demonstrated that one factor which negatively impacts the effectiveness of athlete-safeguarding policies is the void between policy and procedures at federation/national organisation level, and local club level (Brackenridge and Williams 2004). Effectively, this means that as NOCs and IFs do not always directly interact with athletes, if policies and procedures are not implemented at the National Federation/club/grass roots level, the actual impact on athlete welfare may be limited.

It is therefore strongly recommended that you consider what information and guidance related to athlete-safeguarding policies and procedures you offer to stakeholders in direct contact with the athletes and entourage members affiliated to your organisation.

Chapter 3
Other preventative measures

At this point over Sections 4 and 5, we have:

— Discussed the effective communication of your policy and what to communicate; and
— Considered factors which have been demonstrated to affect the implementation of policies and procedures, and how these can be addressed.

Now we will consider other preventative measures; specifically, the importance of criminal record checks and codes of conduct.

Criminal record check

Pre-employment screening commonly forms an important part of recruitment plans, especially in certain industries. Methods of pre-employment screening may include interviews and reference checks, for example. The purpose of pre-employment screening is to help employers verify certain information related to prospective employees.

Another element of pre-employment screening may be requiring criminal record checks to be conducted.

Criminal record checks, which may also be referred to using other terms such as background checks, consider whether the prospective employee/person being screened has a relevant criminal history which should be taken into consideration in the recruitment process. As such, criminal record checks may potentially reduce risk and liability to employers, and form an effective part of any pre-screening process when considering people who wish to work with athletes.

In some places, criminal record checks are mandatory in certain contexts, for example, for those working with children and for healthcare professionals in the United Kingdom and Canada.
Considerations

There are some key things to consider when looking at introducing criminal record checks into your hiring processes. These include:

— Researching whether there are provisions within the applicable national legislation allowing your organisation to request to know the criminal background of people that you are considering inviting to work within your organisation;

— Identifying who these checks would apply to, considering any applicable law. For example, if criminal record checks are also required for volunteers (recommended);

— Researching any existing methods of harmonisation or exchange of information across borders, for those who may have lived or worked in another country previously, in line with applicable law.

— Considering other penal systems that apply within your sport and how these may interact within the national courts and processes related to criminal record checks, if applicable.

If looking to implement criminal record checks as part of your organisation’s recruitment procedure, it is recommended that you seek expert advice.

Summary – criminal record checks

Research indicates that completing criminal record checks is a key recommendation regarding the prevention of harassment and abuse in sport, if this is possible. However, it is important to remember that such checks, whilst beneficial, should not be the only method of risk assessment which are in place within your organisation, but should be aligned with other preventative measures, such as, for example, codes of conduct, which we shall consider in the next chapter.

Example Application:

For more examples of criminal record checks, click here.

Other mechanisms related to pre-employment screening

As previously mentioned, Criminal Records Checks may form a part of your pre-employment screening. Other recommended checks which may be included in your pre-employment screening to facilitate safe recruitment procedures may include requesting references from previous employers and validating any gaps in the candidate’s recruitment history. For more information, click here.
Chapter 3 Contd
Other preventative measures

Codes of conduct

Codes of conduct can form an important part of your safeguarding strategy. Their main purpose is to outline what standards of conduct are expected from those affiliated to your organisation, violations of which may then lead to disciplinary action depending on the specific provisions included.

When developing codes of conduct, it is important that you determine exactly what the code of conduct refers to, who it applies to. It is recommended that all stakeholders affiliated to your organisation are required to abide by your code of conduct. This may include staff and volunteers as well as athletes – there is a large evidence base relating to the prevalence of athlete peer-to-peer harassment and abuse in sport.

If your organisation does not have direct jurisdiction over developing codes of conduct applicable to athlete entourage members and athletes, it is recommended that your athlete-safeguarding strategy includes a recommendation to your stakeholders who do work directly with athletes and entourage members that codes of conduct should be integrated into their safeguarding policies and procedures.

Key Tips

When developing your code of conduct you should:

- Clearly identify who it applies to (staff, athletes, entourage members, volunteers, local member organisations, etc.);
- Ensure that it is clear what your code of conduct refers to;
- Consider how to monitor your code of conduct procedure, to ensure it is being adhered to;
- Look to clearly define the minimum requirements which are expected;
- Ensure that the code of conduct is relevant and applicable to the relevant persons;
- Ensure that it is linked to your athlete-safeguarding policies and procedures, including a clear disciplinary path in the case of a code violation;
- Ensure that all relevant persons formally state that they will abide by the code of conduct, for example, through signing the code of conduct or including the requirement to abide by the code of conduct within another legal document, (e.g. the employment contract).

“Codes of conduct play a vital role in protecting athletes. As well as enabling organisations to set best practice expectations within their jurisdiction (even where there are differences in criminal law across countries); formal codes provide clear direction on the standards of behaviour expected by all signatories, and provide grounds from which any reported breach in behavioural standards should be thoroughly investigated. It is recommended that all sports organisations develop codes of conduct for their key stakeholder groups, including but not limited to athletes, entourage members, volunteers and administration staff.”

Anne Tiivas
Safe Sport International
Situation-specific preventative mechanisms

Research has demonstrated that there are some identifiable “high-risk” situations within a sporting context related to harassment and abuse. This means that there are certain situations where the risk of occurrence of harassment and abuse in sport has been found to be higher.

This includes, but is not limited to:

— Away travel
— Locker/changing rooms

In order to protect athletes and athletes’ entourage members, you may wish to consider developing specific information and training related to these “high-risk” situations. An example of this may be the training programmes developed by Respect Group, which can be found here.

You may further wish to consider developing additional situation-specific codes of conduct, or introducing situation-specific information within your current code of conduct.

More information related to situation-specific risk management can be found here.
The purpose of this toolkit is to facilitate the development of athlete-safeguarding policies and procedures throughout the Olympic Movement. Such policies and procedures should be developed in line with current academic research, in order to ensure that the policies and procedures have a real and positive impact on athlete welfare at all levels.

One key element of athlete safeguarding is how to manage reports of harassment and abuse received by the specified safeguarding officer/ombudsman, etc. This may be referred to as case management.

All reports related to incidents of potential harassment and abuse in sport require a response. Cases can also clearly range in severity. Determining how to manage each case which comes through requires specific training, as does providing support to the people affected.

Training related to case management goes beyond the scope of this toolkit. However, it is highly recommended for your Safeguarding Officer/Ombudsman/other named person in your athlete-safeguarding policy to be trained in case management of harassment and abuse cases.

Examples of training courses and further information related to case management can be found [here](#).
Chapter 5
Monitoring and evaluation

Arguably, the most important aspect of athlete-safeguarding policies and procedures, as frequently reiterated throughout this toolkit, is that they are implemented with a view to being truly effective, to support and protect all members of the sporting community; the simple presence of an athlete-safeguarding policy is not enough.

In order for this to happen, methods of monitoring and evaluating the implementation and effectiveness of your safeguarding policy should be developed.

Depending on the focus of your safeguarding strategy in general, monitoring and evaluation could be conducted in a number of ways, for example:

— If, as part of your safeguarding policy, you have set out the minimum requirements which your stakeholders should adhere to related to safeguarding athletes from harassment and abuse in sport, there should be a way to monitor whether these minimum standards have been adhered to, and a way to address the situation if they have not.

  • Such a monitoring programme should always consider fair and applicable minimum requirements, time frames and assistance material, so as not to be considered unobtainable.

  • Such verification may come under the duty to monitor the compliance of member organisations with the rules, principles and values of the Olympic Movement.

— You may consider a research project which studies how effective the implementation of your own safeguarding policy has been. This may highlight areas which require improvement or an altered approach, and may help you to ensure that you are taking an evidence-based and effective approach in line with the specifications of your sporting context and athlete needs.

Monitoring and evaluation of safeguarding policies is not always necessarily done solely by sports organisations. In some countries, for example Canada, National Federations are obliged by Sport Canada to produce a policy on harassment and abuse in order to receive government funding. Further information may be found [here](#).
Section 5: Preventative measures

Chapter 6
Research

Research related to harassment and abuse is extremely important, as it assists in the development of evidence-based policies and procedures. It is recommended that you always consult academic research when developing policies and information related to harassment and abuse.

Despite the growing base of studies which conclusively demonstrate that many athletes have suffered from harassment and abuse in sport, there is a lack of research from an international perspective, including the prevalence and impacts of all forms of harassment and abuse in sport (physical abuse, psychological abuse, sexual harassment, sexual abuse and neglect). From a preventive perspective, it is also important to learn more about the perpetrators of harassment and abuse in sport.

Further research into this field should be supported. The IOC Consensus Statement (2016) notes the following two recommendations concerning research related to the prevention of harassment and abuse in sport:

**Extract from IOC Consensus Statement (2016):**

“Much more research is needed to protect athletes of all ages and impairments. Such research should include prevalence of all forms of non-accidental violence in countries for which there are currently no data; the gendered nature of violence; mechanisms of disclosures and responses to violence; violence prevention methods; safe sport advocacy and effectiveness (what works, from team selection to postgame review); and athlete consultation methods. However, action to ensure safe sport need not wait for these studies. Everyone involved in sport, not least the athletes themselves, will benefit from ‘safe sport’. It is incumbent on all stakeholders in sport to adopt general principles for safe sport as well as to implement the following recommendations without delay in a culturally respectful and sensitive manner.

[Recommendations for]
Sport science researchers:

- Grow the scientific evidence base about the prevalence, incidence and prevention of non-accidental violence to athletes.
- Engage in and promote knowledge transfer to apply scientific findings to ‘real-life’ sport settings.”
In order to prevent harassment and abuse in sport, we must also understand the impacts of harassment and abuse both for sports organisations and for athletes. Furthermore, more research which considers the effectiveness of preventative mechanisms such as criminal records and codes of conduct would be beneficial to ensure that athlete safeguarding is evidence-based, and policies and procedures effective.

Professor Kari Fasting,
Norwegian School of Sport Sciences
You have now reached the end of this toolkit.

We hope that this has been a useful tool to assist you in defining your athlete-safeguarding policy and procedures, including all the preventive measures which can be implemented to reduce the prevalence of harassment and abuse in sport.

This toolkit has been a collaborative effort by many both inside and outside the Olympic Movement. Similarly, your safeguarding strategy will require collaboration between multiple parties, as previously mentioned.

It is the position of the International Olympic Committee that all sports organisations should have in place strategies and procedures to:

- Reduce the occurrence of harassment and abuse in sport, including through the identification and reduction of potential risks;
- Be able to manage effectively, and with athlete welfare at the centre, any reports of harassment and abuse;
- Adhere to the IOC Code of Ethics in which the Olympic values are enshrined, which rejects all forms of harassment and abuse in sport;
- Raise awareness and educate stakeholders vis-à-vis this important topic; and
- Ensure that athlete welfare and the protection of athlete integrity is at the core of the psyche of sports organisations.

As emphasised in Olympic Agenda 2020, athletes are at the heart of the Olympic Movement.

We thank you for completing this toolkit, demonstrating your commitment to safeguarding athletes from harassment and abuse in sport.

Should you have any queries related to this toolkit, you can contact us [here](#).
Supporting information
IOC Consensus Statement Recommendations

The following are the recommendations for sport stakeholder groups related to the prevention of harassment and abuse in sport, as written in the IOC Consensus Statement (2016).

**Sports organisations**
1. Implement and monitor policies and procedures for safe sport that:
   - State that all athletes have a right to be treated with respect, protected from non-accidental violence;
   - State that the welfare of athletes is paramount;
   - Identify who has responsibility for implementation;
   - Specify what constitutes a violation and specify the range of consequences;
   - Detail a response system for handling athlete/whistle-blower concerns and complaints, with reporting and referral mechanisms and a neutral resolution mechanism;
   - Provide details of where to seek advice and support for all parties involved in a referral or complaint.
2. Deliver an education programme for all main stakeholders about how to engage in the practicalities of preventing non-accidental violence to athletes.
3. Appoint or work with qualified, designated personnel responsible for safe sport programming and athlete welfare.
4. Listen to the voices of athletes in decision-making about their own protection.
5. Foster strong partnerships with athletes’ parents/caregivers to promote safe sport.
6. Partner with expert groups and stakeholders to follow a systematic multidisciplinary, multiagency approach. This may include law enforcement, media, medical, child protection, counselling and support or other groups.

**Athletes**
7. Know your rights and responsibilities with regard to the prevention and reporting of non-accidental violence.
8. Identify your support systems among and beyond entourage members.
9. Support your peers and encourage them to speak out if they witness or experience non-accidental violence.
10. Negotiate for a voice in decision-making about your own protection.

**Sports medicine and allied health practitioners**
11. Ensure that you are adequately trained to:
   i. Recognise the signs and indicators of non-accidental violence;
   ii. Effectively and appropriately respond to disclosures of non-accidental violence.
12. Ensure that you have access to a multidisciplinary professional support team prior to initiating any treatment plan for athletes who are survivors of non-accidental violence.
13. Know where and how to refer disclosures or suspicions.

**Sport science researchers**
14. Grow the scientific evidence base about the prevalence, incidence and prevention of non-accidental violence to athletes.
15. Engage in and promote knowledge transfer to apply scientific findings to “real-life” sport settings.
Section 5: Preventative measures

Safeguarding strategy

Flow chart overview

Statutes
- Ensure that your organisation formally rejects harassment and abuse in sport
  
  Badminton World Federation Constitution (2015), Article 4.3
  World Curling Federation Code of Ethics (2016), Article 1.4

Develop organisational policy
- Develop an organisational policy which includes mechanisms and procedures to safeguard athletes from harassment and abuse in sport
  

Develop competition policy
- Develop an athlete-safeguarding policy which applies during any sports competitions sanctioned by your organisation
  
  IOC Games-Time Framework

Preventative mechanisms
- Ensure that preventative mechanisms are included within your overall safeguarding strategy, including, for example, criminal record checks and codes of conduct

Education
- Ensure that educational materials related to the prevention of harassment and abuse in sport are available for the stakeholders of your organisation, including administrative staff, athletes, athletes’ entourage members
  
  IOC Athlete Safeguarding Course

Monitoring, evaluation and research
- Implement strategies to monitor and evaluate your athlete-safeguarding policies and procedures athletes
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The IOC recognises the contributors who have made it possible to publish the IOC Toolkit for IFs and NOCs related to creating and implementing policies and procedures to safeguard athletes from harassment and abuse in sport.

The development of this important resource would not have been possible without the knowledge base, support and contributions of the global Virtual Task Force of experts and organisations, both inside and outside the Olympic Movement.

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