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Building a system to safeguard children in sport: The eight CHILDREN pillars

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Abstract

In October 2014, the International Safeguards for Children in Sport were launched. These Safeguards were developed, implemented and evaluated based on a pilot process which took place over the preceding 2 years. Throughout this piloting phase, a range of qualitative techniques were employed to capture the experiences of people within 32 of the organisations who were working towards the International Safeguards. The participant organisations varied based on their geographical focus (e.g., local, national and international) as well as their mission (e.g., participation, competition and sport for development). Based on a thematic analysis, 8 key pillars were identified on which systems which safeguard children can be built. These are known as the CHILDREN pillars: Cultural sensitivity, Holistic, Incentives, Leadership, Dynamic, Resources, Engagement and Networks. Illustrative examples are provided and the future directions of this project will be discussed.

Keywords: Abuse; Risk; Violence; Welfare; Well-being

Building a system to safeguard children in sport: The 8 CHILDREN pillars

Over recent years, influential international organizations such as UNICEF and Save the Children have moved towards a systems approach in efforts to safeguard children. UNICEF et al. (2013) have defined safeguarding systems as "certain formal and informal structures, functions and capacities that have been assembled to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children" (p. 3). Based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the systems approach moves away from a focus on single issues (e.g., sexual exploitation or child labor) in order to facilitate a holistic rather than a fragmented approach. It aims to safeguard children through promoting supportive mechanisms as well as preventing abuse, exploitation and violence. This paper considers the adoption of a systems approach within sports organizations who work with children.

Identifying the global prevalence of child abuse is challenging due to the ways in which abuse is defined, measured and reported. The World Health Organisation (2014) estimate that 1 in 4 of adults experienced physical abuse as a child with 1 in 5 women and 1 in 13 men having experienced sexual abuse. Stoltenborgh, et al. (2015) reviewed a series of meta analyses of child maltreatment across the globe which were comprised of 244 studies. The prevalence of the different forms of child abuse were summarised as follows: sexual abuse (127/1000), physical abuse (226/1000), emotional abuse (363/1000), physical neglect (163/1000) and emotional neglect (184/1000). Stoltenborgh et al. (2015) concluded that "Child maltreatment is a widespread, global phenomenon affecting the lives of millions of children all over the world, which is in sharp contrast with the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child." (p.37).

Though it is not always acknowledged as such, sport and exercise represents a context within which a child's rights may be violated. Sport takes place in a variety of settings and for a range of different goals (e.g., elite performance, fitness or developing life skills).

Research has highlighted that unhealthy practices can be normalized and tolerated within sport (Alexander, Stafford &Lewis, 2011: Papaefstathiou, Brackenridge & Rhind, 012: Stirling & Kerr, 2009). The nature of sport, and the inherent power dynamics between participants and their peers, parents and coaches, can leave children vulnerable to abuse (Brackenridge, 2001). Brackenridge, Bringer and Bishop (2005) argue that the physical demands of training, the demands for athletes to display emotional toughness and a culture of resilience in sports have acted as a mask to the sufferings that some individuals experience as part of their participation. As a result, abuse in sport can occur unchallenged and go unreported. Sport organizations therefore face the same issues related to safeguarding which are placed on other major social institutions [Coulter, 2007].

There has been a growing body of research into abusive relationships in sport over the past two decades. This work includes qualitative studies which have explored the experiences of victims of sexual abuse (Brackenridge, 2001) and emotional abuse (Gervis and Dunn, 2004; Stirling and Kerr, 2009). Quantitative methods have been employed to assess the prevalence of abuse in sport in a range of countries, including the USA (Volkwein et al., 1997), Australia (Leahy, Pretty and Tenenbaum, 2002), Canada (Kirby, Greaves and Hankivsky, 2000), Denmark (Toftegaard Nielsen, 2001), Japan (Mori, Rhind & Gervis, 2015) and the United Kingdom (Rhind, et al., 2014). The emerging evidence shows that children are subjected to various forms of abuse in the context of sport.

In the first prevalence study within the UK, Alexander *et al.* (2011) administered questionnaires to over 6000 young people. They were asked to reflect back over their experiences of organised youth sport in the UK. Although sport was viewed as a positive experience for many young people, many had also had negative experiences. Participants reported experiencing emotional abuse (75%), sexual harassment (29%), physical abuse (24%), self-harm (10%) and sexual abuse (3%). Vertommen, et al. (2015) surveyed over 4000 adults regarding their experiences of youth sport in Belgium and the

Netherlands. The responses suggested that 38% of all respondents reported experiencing psychological violence, 11% experiencing physical violence, and 14% reported having experienced sexual violence. These studies illustrate that abuse and violence in sport represent key threats to the integrity of sport and hence there is a strong rationale for safeguarding measures to be developed, implemented and evaluated.

The existing body of work is limited by the fact that it tends to focus on individual countries, primarily within Europe. Indeed, the state of the art review of violence prevention programmes commissioned by UNICEF focused on industrialized countries (Brackenridge, Kay and Rhind, 2012) highlighted that the lack of research within the global south means that there remains a significant gap in our understanding. A marked absence was identified with regards to the best mechanisms for addressing this problem. As a result, the need for a set of international standards was identified (Brackenridge, et al. 2012).

To address this identified need, a working group with representatives from a range of influential organizations was established in 2012 to consider how sports provision could be kept safe. This working group developed a draft set of child safeguarding Standards (please note that, based on feedback during the pilot process, the final name was changed from Standards to Safeguards). The safeguards set out the actions that all organizations working in sport should have in place to ensure children are safe from harm (Mountjoy, Rhind, Tiivas, & Leglise, 2015). They reflect international declarations, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, relevant legislation, government guidance, existing child protection/safeguarding standards and good practice.

The development of these International Safeguards was informed by a comprehensive review of the extant literature (Brackenridge, et al. 2012). This included empirical evidence, relevant policies and existing local or national programmes (Brackenridge, et al., 2012). These International Safeguards help to overcome the range of challenges that have been highlighted in the literature

related to safeguarding in sport. Firstly, there is a need for a global framework which can guide and facilitate the development of policies, procedures and practices at the national and local level (Chroni, et al., 2012). Secondly, they also encourage organisations in sport to adopt proactive measures to prevent abuse, such as background checks and education. Thirdly, they help organisations to implement responsive measures when a safeguarding concern is disclosed. Finally, they encourage organisations to embed evidence-based practice through effectively collecting and learning from data (Raakman, Dorsch & Rhind, 2010).

The International Safeguards for Children in Sport are:

1. Developing Your Policy
2. Procedures for Responding to Safeguarding Concerns
3. Advice and Support
4. Minimizing Risks to Children
5. Guidelines for Behaviour
6. Recruiting, Training and Communicating
7. Working With Partners
8. Monitoring and Evaluating

The continued development of these Safeguards should be grounded on robust evidence which enhances understanding of how their effective and efficacious implementation can be maximised. Speaking more generally about safeguarding systems, Wessells (2009, p.12) explained “A stronger evidence base is needed for the purposes of building inter-agency standards of practice and harmonising supports at national and international levels...the sector needs a stronger evidence base that enables inter-agency consensus on effective practice, and that serves as a foundation for good practice guidelines that harmonise diverse child protection efforts.” This point is also salient when specifically considering the sport context.

Based on an extensive review, Wessels (2009) identified seven factors which facilitate the effectiveness and sustainability of child protection systems: community ownership and responsibility; incorporating and building on local resources; leaders' support; genuine child participation; ongoing management of issues of power, diversity, and inclusivity; external training and resources; and linkages with other parts of the child protection system. It has also been argued that efforts to strengthen child protection systems often adopt a top-down approach which fails to engage with communities and families (Wessels, 2015).

This work highlights the range of factors which facilitate the implementation of safeguarding policy. The aim of the present research was to build on this work by capturing the experiences of representatives within a diverse range of international organisations who completed a pilot of the International Safeguards over a two year period within sport contexts. The current paper focuses on the processes which appeared to facilitate or present barriers to the implementation of this systems approach. This paper therefore addresses a significant gap in the literature regarding the application of the systems approach in sport, and particularly in relation to the International Safeguards. Such work is important due to the millions of children who participate in sport around the world.

Methods

Participants

All of the 49 organizations who were piloting the Safeguards were invited to participate in this research. A total of 32 organizations agreed, which represented a response rate of 64%. Each organization was classified as either a 'deliverer' (N=16) or 'governor' (N=16). Deliverer organizations are those who work directly with children. These organisations were based in Africa (n=7), Asia (n=4), Europe (n=3), North and South America (n=2). Governors work with partner or member organizations who in turn work directly with children. These organisations worked internationally (n=11), Europe (n=3) or in

North and South America (n=2). In order to maintain anonymity, organizations are identified as either a deliverer (local, national or international) or governor (national or international). The research team had a key contact within each organization who had overall responsibility for safeguarding the children and the implementation of the Safeguards. These participants represented a range of different roles including Chief Executives, Directors, Managers and Coaches.

Data Collection

Our approach is based on a transactional and subjectivist epistemology (Morrow 2007). This is based on the assumption that meaning is co-constructed through the researchers' interpretations of the perceptions and experiences of the participants and is an approach that values subjectivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). . The aim is not therefor to discover a single truth but rather to explore a range of perceptions and experiences which will enhance understanding of how the Safeguards can be implemented in diverse contexts.

In line with this approach, qualitative data were collected from three main sources. Firstly, one-to-one interviews were conducted with the key contact to gain in-depth data regarding the experiences of the participants at the end of year 1 of the pilot in relation to working towards the Safeguards. An interview guide was developed based on relevant theory and literature (e.g., Brackenridge et al., 2005). Interviews were conducted via Skype or telephone. The interview covered the participant's feelings, thoughts and behaviors regarding the Safeguards as well as the processes which were perceived to facilitate or hinder their implementation. They ranged in length from 45-105 minutes.

Secondly, organizations were allocated into 9 virtual groups to create learning sets. Organizations were grouped based on their mission (e.g., competitive sport, participation), size (international governors, local deliverers) and geographical location (i.e., to ensure that Skype calls could take place at convenient times for all participants). These learning Sets

were conducted approximately every 2 months via Skype to discuss experiences and share good practice. The leaders of these sets completed a template feedback form after each discussion to feedback any challenges or areas of success. Finally, a password-protected on-line forum was also created. This provided all participants an opportunity to share their thoughts or pose questions to the other pilot organizations at any time. All of these discussions were included in the analysis.

Procedure

Each of the 49 organizations who had volunteered to pilot the Safeguards was contacted to provide an overview of the aims and nature of the research. An informed consent form was then sent to any organizations who showed an interest in taking part in the research. All interested organizations signed and return this form. Approval was gained from the university research ethics committee prior to data collection. All participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time and that their data would remain anonymous and confidential. Interviews were conducted at a mutually convenient time. Data were also collected via the learning sets and online discussions periodically throughout the process.

Data Analysis

The data were transcribed and analyzed according to the guidelines provided by Braun and Clarke (2006). Thematic analysis is a five stage process through which themes and patterns within qualitative data are identified, analyzed and reported. Firstly, the research team became familiar with the data through reading and re-reading the interviews, learning set feedback forms and online discussions. Secondly, preliminary codes were then identified through highlighting significant areas of the dataset. Thirdly, the identified codes were then grouped into salient themes. Fourthly, all codes and themes were then reviewed such that

their coherence could be assessed. Finally, the emergent themes were defined and given an illustrative label.

A range of strategies was employed to enhance the trustworthiness of this process. Participants were given opportunities to comment on the accuracy of the transcription as well as the interpretation of the data with regards to the emergent themes (Holloway and Brown 2012). Regular meetings were held with the people leading each of the learning sets to ensure that their input was encouraged throughout the process of analysis. The researchers endeavoured to demonstrate both contextual sensitivity and contextual intelligence throughout this analysis and this is reflected in the rich descriptions provided in the following section (Holloway and Brown 2012). The research team also held regular meetings to reflect on their expectations and experiences such that any biases could be identified and mitigated against.

Results

Through the data analysis process, 8 key themes emerged which appeared to underpin the successful implementation of the Safeguards (see Table 1). These 'pillars' have been labelled using the acronym CHILDREN; Cultural sensitivity, Holistic, Incentives, Leadership, Dynamic, Resources, Engaging stakeholders and Networks. The use of the acronym 'CHILDREN' was identified after the participants emphasised the practical benefits of having findings which people could easily remember. A list of 8 labels was perceived to be daunting and unhelpful whereas the over-arching name 'CHILDREN' was seen as capturing the underlying essence of these strategies (i.e., seeing children as children). Only two of the themes needed to be re-labelled to make the acronym without changing the definition and focus of each pillar (i.e., Temporal was changed to Dynamic and Ownership was changed to Engaging stakeholders). Each of these strategies is discussed below, with illustrative examples.

Table 1: The eight CHILDREN pillars under-pinning the Safeguards

Pillar	Description
Cultural sensitivity	There was a clear need for flexibility within the Safeguards such that they can be tailored to the cultural and social norms of the context
Holistic	Safeguarding should be viewed as integrated into all aspects of an organisation as opposed to being an additional element
Incentives	There needs to be a clear reason for individuals and an organisation to work towards the Safeguards
Leadership	The Safeguards need to have strong support from those working in key leadership roles
Dynamic	The safeguarding systems within an organisation need to continually be reviewed and adapted to maintain their relevance and effectiveness
Resources	The implementation of the Safeguards needs to be supported by appropriate resources (e.g., human, time and financial)
Engaging stakeholders	A democratic approach should be adopted which invites and listens to the voices of those in and around the sport (e.g., parents,

	coaches, community leaders)
Networks	An organisation's progress towards the Safeguards will be strengthened by developing networks with other related organisations

Cultural Sensitivity

It is fundamental to develop a good understanding of the complex safeguarding context which arises from the interaction of different cultures at the national, community, sport and organisational level. Without such understanding, the prospects for making significant and sustainable impacts through the Safeguards are likely to be limited. Participants advocated a balance between establishing standards as well as allowing for flexibility such that appropriate adaptations can be made to suit the given context:

> "In terms of the Safeguards, it is really comprehensive but, speaking from the field, is that Standard contextualised appropriately to the field context? Every country is different and it is very difficult to have one Standard that can cover all because you have to consider the unique contexts of each country. What is useful is that you create this structure for us…then there should be the flexibility, I hope, to contextualise the Safeguards." (international deliverer)

Participants discussed cultural sensitivity in terms of understanding local norms in a way which informs implementation. For governing organisations, the need for cultural sensitivity was particularly important in terms of the planning stages and when selecting the personnel who will be delivering the key safeguarding messages. For example:

> "You have to really understand and embrace the local context. You can speak to people in local communities about the local infrastructure. You can train up people to

> talk to local communities… as they will relate much more than a foreigner coming in and doing that." (international governor)

Other participants discussed cultural sensitivity with respect to how safeguarding issues are managed. This was particularly highlighted by international organisations in which there may be a cultural clash between what may be viewed as socially acceptable in one area being viewed as inappropriate in another area. The following quote illustrates the importance of managing such tensions with respect to the role of a coach:

> "Coaches should create a safe space and recognize that cultural norms influence both practice and expectations but consider them carefully to ensure that children's rights are protected. If something happens which would be culturally normal for that setting, we have to balance up whether you actually create more problems by addressing it in the way in which you would address it in the west. That is a judgment call which does not have the precision that many people may want from policies but it is the only way we can find to address complexity." (international deliverer)

The importance of communicating in the local language was also emphasised as a way of demonstrating cultural sensitivity:

> "I have three challenges globally: translation, translation, translation. We make way to many things in English. This leads to resistance when you put something in English in front of a coach from another country, in a way it is a slight, an insult. There would be pushback there if it is not translated." (international governor)

As well as considering the concept of culture at the national and community level, participants also discussed sensitivity with respect to the culture of the given sport. Some participants described how the implementation of the Safeguards may be viewed as incongruent with the culture of the sport. The following quotes illustrate this point in terms of

a tension between safeguarding and fundamental assumptions around informality and masculinity:

> "I think that there is the general resistance to change. A lot of the things that we have done have asked our membership to change, not significantly but it is so much embedded in the culture of sport that things are familial and familiar and so to bring on a bunch of rules and background checks and hiring practices and all of these things that feel a lot more desk-jobby, or that we are all skeptical of each other or that we are going to tell on each other, I think that people did not like that because it felt inconsistent with the reasons that they love and connect with sport."
>
> "I think that to really change the culture we have to get way down into the heroism around sport and the thought that we need to make kids tough for them to succeed. It is really deeply embedded in there, including the parents…we are really changing these big issues around masculinity but this would be a really big cultural change." (international governor)

Cultural sensitivity is thus a key pillar which should underpin the implementation of the Safeguards. Implementing an approach which has been created in the global North to the global South, without cultural sensitivity, will likely have limited impact (Krueger, Thompstone & Crispin, 2013: Rhind, Brackenridge, Kay & Owusu-Sekyere, 2015). The culture within the organisation and the given sport also merits consideration.

Holistic

The second pillar highlights that developing a safeguarding system needs to be done in a holistic way. This often formed part of the safeguarding philosophy of those organisations who had more advanced safeguarding systems. This principle is encapsulated by the following quote from a local deliverer:

> "My mantra has always been that safeguarding is a thread and not a blanket. In some organizations that you go to you end up seeing a blanket that is shrouded over everything and covered by reams of paper and policies…Safeguarding is not something that you should physically see in your face, it is something that is subtly positioned throughout the organization, whether it is people, whether it is posters, people know that it is there."

Indeed for some organisations, realising this holistic approach was a key marker of success:

> "What I would consider to be a really big win, is that the safeguarding items are just woven in with everything else we are doing. It is not ringing an alarm, or it is not such a drag to say do not forget to think about safeguarding." (international governor)

Participants described how this philosophy was manifested in their approach to implementing the Safeguards. For example, participants explained how identifying links between safeguarding and other key aspects of the organisation helped to facilitate the holistic approach.

"We have had a really big shift. My work over the last three months has been working with the Board to show how things tie up with the coaches, the physios, the youth workers, so I can happily say now that I think we have got a good balance throughout the club."

Other participants discussed how their approach to staff training had facilitated a holistic approach:

> "I have been here for three and a half years. When I came in it was very much this is coaching, this is welfare, this is safeguarding. By having these mixed up sessions it is getting people to understand that this is working with young people. You do not divide the categories." (local deliverer)

It is therefore important to adopt a holistic view of safeguarding such that it is integral as opposed to peripheral. This reflects the broader philosophy of adopting a systems approach to safeguarding (UNICEF, 2013).

Incentives

There needs to be a reason for people to work towards the Safeguards. Incentives are required to initiate action and then to maintain momentum. Without such an incentive, progress can be challenging, as identified by a local deliverer:

> "This does not add money, it does not add impact. It can often create more work and more trouble because you are aware of things and how you ought to be doing something about it and the organization may have to adapt."

This was supported by an international governor:

> "There are so many priorities for an organization that unless you have something to keep reminding you and explaining why it is important then it can slip down the priority list."

The ways in which different organisations employed incentives varied and hence there needs to be an understanding as to what would motivate the key stakeholders in a given setting to work towards the Safeguards. Participants explained that progress was often due to an extrinsic motivation of a 'stick', such as linking the work to funding. Governors highlighted that this was an effective strategy:

> "One way is to tie it to funding. To say that you need to have a policy, or at least commit to having one in place by a certain time, to get the funding." (international governor)

Delivery organizations also acknowledged that linking this work to funding was a key incentive and that it was this that initiated change:

"For the funders there is a definite requirement. They want to see an organizational document to demonstrate that you have safeguarding or child protection policy in place…The trouble is that money talks. If it is a requirement of the funding then people will do it." (local deliverer)

For other organisations, the incentive was created by an event which contributed to a reactive approach, such as in response to a high-profile case:

"I would love to tell you that we were visionary and that we had recognized this as a responsibility but we definitely came to this effort out of a crisis. Negative media attention, law suits, concern of abuse. One of our initial and on-going challenges is that sense of urgency so we did not have the opportunity to roll it out in a more deliberate way that told a story and made sense. So whatever we had ready and whenever it was ready we put it out." (national governor)

Participants reported that the 'carrot' approach which facilitates intrinsic motivation was preferable. One strategy to achieve this was through emphasising the links between safeguarding and the existing priorities of an organisation. One international governor explained:

"We have to influence members through finding out what is their motivation, what is their passion. Normally they are passionate about the sport and about growing their sport. So this is what we tend to focus on. It is about making sport a positive experience so that they want to come, when they come they want to stay and when they go home they want to come back. Word of mouth is the best marketing tool."

It is therefore important that there is an incentive to initially encourage and then to maintain engagement with the journey towards the Safeguards. Alongside the identification of incentives, the concept of social validity also merits consideration. This concerns the social importance and acceptability of intervention goals, procedures and outcomes (Foster & Mash, 1999).

This can be facilitated through highlighting how an intervention is appropriate to address the problem, adheres to beliefs about how interventions should look like and is viewed as being unobtrusive (Kazdin, 1981). If people within a given context do not perceive there to be a need for safeguarding within their organisation, then this could represent a significant barrier. As a result, it is important that the necessity for the Safeguards is outlined along with meaningful incentives as this will be a key pillar which will under-pin the safeguarding system.

Leadership

Having strong support from senior management within the organisation was another key pillar towards building the safeguarding system. Support from key departments, and ultimately the Chief Executive Officer was highlighted as important by a national deliverer:

> "We have got extraordinary support and commitment in the organization. So, the Human Resources department works very closely with me to ensure adherence on child protection and the Chief Executive Officer is the person with terminal responsibility for that surface and he is accountable to the Board on child protection issues."

The most senior figure has the power to influence the development of a safeguarding culture within an organisation. An example of this was provided by a national deliverer:

> "I think that a lot of the credit will go to the Chief Executive Officer. It is the same person who founded the organization and because, from the outset, the people who developed the programme, from the very beginning one of the pillars of the programme was ensuring a safe environment. So even before we were using the words child protection, we were working on issues of safety, you know, and this built a culture through the organization of child protection which has just held us in good stead. It has been very easy then for the new Chief Executive Officer to say that we

have made this commitment as an organization and we hold to it both in policy and in practice. So that culture of safety and inclusion has been built in from the beginning. It is not possible to think about our programs without those things."

Leadership from senior members of staff was found to be critical in terms of initiating, driving and supporting change. This is coherent with the findings of Wessels (2009) who also highlighted the importance of having support from leaders. Leaders can facilitate a proactive safety culture in an organisation through the ways in which they prioritise safeguarding and the actions they take regarding safeguarding issues.

Dynamic

Working towards the Safeguards should be viewed as a dynamic journey along which one never actually reaches the destination. Many key influencing factors (e.g., cultural/social norms, political landscape, different forms of abuse, increased understanding through research) will change over time, ensuring that one needs to continually review policy and practice. Through adopting a temporal approach, the Safeguards can help to ensure that organizations have a realistic goal to work towards, no matter where they are on their safeguarding journey. This incremental approach was supported by a number of participants:

"It is about saying that it can take up to 10 years and that here are the key staging posts along the way. The self-audit is useful for this to say, right, here is the baseline, here is where I came in, and two years down the line here is where we are now. So you actually feel as though you are progressing somewhere. Even if you have just targeted a couple of areas and you have a couple of things in place, you have actually shown progress and someone is acknowledging that." (international governor)

An effective strategy was reported to be focusing on specific areas and identifying achievable goals. Regular reviews can then help to evaluate progress and facilitate a dynamic approach. An illustrative example of this was described by an international deliverer:

> "I think that what I do here is to really consider the work and the context and where they are at. Even though I have all these pages of the Safeguards it does not mean that my staff can see them all or they will feel overwhelmed and I could not do anything at all. So at the beginning I had to think about our programme and see how we could use some of it, not all of it. We can start from a tiny bit, do the easy one first and then start to link it to another step. So this year we integrated some of the Safeguards concepts into our training so we could build the capacity of the coaches, the leaders and the teachers. We used components of the Safeguards in there so we can create awareness and now they know the importance of safeguarding. Then, during the on-going support when we follow up with them, we also start to mention these other aspects as well. So it is an on-going process. You build awareness, then you make sure that you really see them doing it and you make sure that children are protected during your observations. When you see the progress you can review and evaluate again, maybe after six months or a year in terms of what else do they need and what capacity do they need more of?"

Within a dynamic approach, it is also important to celebrate successes when key milestones have been reached:

> "We have built the foundation and we have done a lot of work. I feel really good about what we have done, but there is still a long way to go. I think that if we did not take a breath now and celebrate that we have reached a certain level, in that we are far beyond where we were three years ago, we would lose our people, thinking that we have already done so much, how much more do you want us to do?" (national governor)

Effective safeguarding systems were viewed to be those that are always moving forward and adapting to their ever changing context. The use of the journey as an analogy

appeared to be well received by participants. It helped to emphasise that the important point is to be continually progressing as opposed to reaching a given destination and then turning attention elsewhere. This helps to ensure that all organisations are encourage to continually improve, whether they are creating a safeguarding system for the first time or have a fully embedded system which has been in place for many years.

Resources

Resources was highlighted as a key theme. In a minority of cases, participants reported that safeguarding was well funded within their organisation. For example, one local deliverer said:

> "I count myself lucky that we have a lot of resourcing from my company. They give me enough money to do what we need to do and to go beyond what we are required to do by our governing body."

However, in the vast majority of cases, having insufficient resources was often cited a as a key barrier that prevented the building of a safeguarding system:

> "I am a department of one person. It is just a resource issue." (national governor)

Many organisations rely on volunteers. In other organisations, safeguarding was assigned to be just one part of an individual's role. This lack of resourcing may contribute to a negative perception of the Safeguards as it is viewed as being additional workload for already over-worked people. For example:

> "One of our key challenges is that outside of our small core team, we do not have any paid staff. They are all volunteers. They are all doing it on top of their day jobs. They tend to see the Safeguards as a bit of a noose maybe sometimes." (international governor)

Where possible, having a dedicated individual can be of real benefit:

> "Having the resource for a person to be able to support clubs to achieve the Safeguards helps. Sometimes they need someone to drive this." (national governor)

The funding of human resources will primarily be an internal issue for each organisation. However, there was strong support for a resource library being made available through this project. This was seen as particularly beneficial for smaller organisations:

> "I think that one of the things that this working group needs to do is to build up a library of policies from around the world from small organizations, not big organizations, because organizations which work in sport tend to be small and therefore they need not to be these fifty page manuals but rather a few pages long with a few forms from which people can get ideas. The kinds of forms that they need people to sign off on and the kinds of topics that they need to cover." (local deliverer)

Having appropriate resources, both internal and external to the organisation, was therefore viewed as a pillar that can play a significant role in facilitating or preventing work towards the Safeguards. As highlighted by Wessels (2009), it is important that people incorporate and build upon existing resources.

Engaging stakeholders

Participants felt that a collaborative approach should be adopted to earn the buy-in of all key stakeholders and to facilitate a sense of ownership amongst these groups. Key stakeholders should be considered at all levels. This can ensure that the Safeguards are developed for a community, by that community and implemented through the community. This approach was described by an international deliverer:

> "We are very passionate about not being 1st world experts going in to fix people. We want everything we do to be about growing people within their community,

acknowledging their reality and helping them to identify their next steps. Our concept of education is not about an empty vessel which needs to be filled, whether they want it or not. We move people from learned helplessness, through self-organized learning through to self-directed learning."

An autocratic approach with a perceived air of superiority may lead to resistance. A powerful illustration of this was described by an international deliverer:

> "I have a memory of a young girl who was very bright, around 21 years old, who had been abducted as a child soldier and had obviously been raped etc. She was now learning to be a welder and came to participate in our programme. She was as quick as can be in her thinking. She wore a t-shirt that said 'Every 10 seconds in America, someone is diagnosed with AIDS', and this was a tremendous message to me as she was saying do not come over here and tell me what to do, you have got your own problems in your own country. By all means work with me, do not impose on me. She would not know how much she has influenced me but that particular t-shirt influenced us greatly."

Through working with children and giving them a voice in all areas of the Safeguards, one can facilitate their engagement. For example:

> "Probably the most interesting part of our work is that the way in which we reach out to children is through volunteers from the communities in which the children live. So the children are reached out to by young people who live and work and share the same space, the same social space, as the children that they are working with. What we are trying to do is to build enough critical mass within the community, through children and through youth, to enable a certain kind of social change to happen and to enable what we call control and choice in their lives." (international deliverer)

Another key stakeholder is the delivery staff who will be working with the children, such as coaches. It is important to earn their buy-in and this may be achieved by using culturally sensitive strategies. This technique has been employed by an international deliverer:

> "With our local coaches we try to get a commitment from them by them shaking hands and making a verbal commitment. To our policy as a pre-requisite to getting a certificate from our training. This is based on the fact that we know that a personal commitment is a hand shake or a 'look you in the eyes', and agreeing to it when you have understood that you are both talking about the same thing. That actually has far more weight than a piece of paper."

Around the programme there are other key stakeholders who need to be engaged through a democratic approach. These include parents as highlighted by a national deliverer:

> "Over the last three years, as we have grown, we have also realized that if you want to engage in social change, you not only have to engage the children but also their families and the systems in the communities which should be accountable to children and their families. So we now also engage in conversations with parents every month and also work with institutions, schools and health organizations and services that people should be getting such that they reach them."

The embedding of the Safeguards can be enabled through engaging all of the different stakeholders. A community driven approach, based on a bottom-up philosophy, should lead to a better alignment between formal and informal structures and promote a sense of community ownership (Wessels, 2015).

Networks

Through working towards the Safeguards, organizations have developed networks with other relevant support services within their community. Through the Learning Sets, participants had also developed networks with other organizations. This was viewed as a key facilitating factor. This is particularly important for smaller organizations for which isolation can be a significant challenge:

> "I think that it is very important because the tendency is a lack of, a feeling of isolation by small organizations. So this is a way in which people can actually talk about it. There is a challenge in the day to day work. There is a conscious need but, again, it is isolation. I mean, I don't know what it is like in other countries but here it is like what planet did you come from?" (local deliverer)

Sharing experiences with other organizations who were facing similar challenges was viewed as being helpful:

> "It has been really useful listening to the experiences of other organizations who are in our learning set. Mainly this is in terms of communities where it is difficult to come across background checks when you are working with informal coaches or you are working in communities where there are not formal structures so how do you make sure that you are not recruiting people who have a criminal record or who have been involved in inappropriate behavior in the past? So just listening to other people and how they have gone about that has been really useful. They just give us a bit more faith in what we are doing." (local deliverer)

Through the network, a national deliverer was reassured that this was an issue which was being faced by all organizations in all parts of the world:

> "It is also very good to know, for example, that in even what we think of as the first world, there are challenges with understanding and things like that. So often it gets cast as a third world issue and some of us can get a bit defensive about that."

Building systems within organizations can therefore be strengthened through making informal and formal links with the broader safeguarding systems within the community (Wessels, 2009). Overall, the eight CHILDREN pillars were discussed by both deliverer and governor organisations as well as those working at the local national and international levels. The eight broad themes were identified and conceptualized in a way which ensured that they retained this level of flexibility. Clearly the ways in which these themes were manifested differed across these organisations. For example, in terms of Cultural Sensitivity, deliverers described the importance of adapting the International Safeguards to the specific culture in which they operated. In contrast, governors discussed the importance of ensuring adaptability such that the International Safeguards can be tailored to the different cultures in which they operate. However, both types of organization highlighted the importance of this pillar. The same can be said across all of the other pillars. The significance of each theme was acknowledged by participants in the different types of organisations and with different geographical foci, but as illustrated by the quotes throughout these results, the nature of each pillar was context specific for each organisation.

General Discussion

The aim of the present research was to capture the experiences of a diverse range of organisations who completed a pilot implementation of the International Safeguards for Children in Sport over a 2 year period. This paper highlights that there are eight key 'CHILDREN' pillars which under-pin this process: Cultural sensitivity, Holistic, Incentives, Leadership, Dynamic, Resources, Engagement and Networks. This is the first study to explore this topic and has done so through engaging with a diverse and relatively large sample of participant organisations. The fact that millions of children around the world participate in sport highlights the significance of this work, particularly in the light of

research which demonstrates that this can be a context in which children can be at risk (Brackenridge, et al., 2012).

These findings demonstrate the complex and multi-faceted nature of safeguarding. The CHILDREN pillars are coherent with an ecological perspective on safeguarding which suggests that abuse is a result of a complex interaction between the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem surrounding the child (cf. Bronfendrenner, 1979). The microsystem concerns the immediate surroundings, including key interpersonal relationships with people such as parents, peers or coaches. The mesosytem relates to the interactions which take place involving these relationships and the sports organisation or other support mechanisms. The exosystem concerns factors that influence the child such as the neighbourhood and community in which s/he lives. Finally, the macrosystem relates to the broader socio-cultural environment, including the political, legal and social context. In line with this perspective, the CHILDREN pillars highlight that in order to be effective safeguards need to target, and be tailored to, the dynamic systems at each of these four levels: microsystem (e.g., Engaging Stakeholders), mesosystem (e.g., Holistic), exosystem (e.g., Networks) and macrosystem (e.g., Cultural Sensitivity). This does not mean that a deterministic perspective should be advocated but rather suggests that safeguards at each of these systemic levels can reduce the probability of a child experiencing abuse (Sidebotham, 2001).

A significant body of empirical evidence has demonstrated that child abuse remains a key global challenge (Stoltenborgh, et. Al., 2015: World Health Organisation, 2014). Sport is not immune from this broader social problem (Alexander, et al., 2011: Brackenridge, et al., 2012; Vertommen, et al. 2015). Indeed, research has suggested that abusive practices can become normalised within the context of sport (Papaefstathiou, Brackenridge & Rhind, 2013: Stirling & Kerr, 2009). Through adopting an ecological approach, based on the CHILDREN pillars, organisations in sport can work to develop relationships and cultures which help to develop and embed safeguarding throughout the organisation.

In line with Wessells (2015), this research demonstrates that a balanced strategy is required which effectively combines top-down, bottom-up and middle-out approaches. Through a top-down approach, the importance of leadership and the provision of resources were highlighted. However, relying solely on a top-down approach may contribute to resistance. As a result, this needs to be combined with a bottom-up approach which engages with key stakeholders, including children, at all stages of the process from development through implementation to evaluation. Through sharing experiences and resources, the middle-out approach was also advocated, both within and across organisations. Learning from peers appeared to ensure significantly less resistance compared to situations in which the same messages were sent but from people senior in their organisation or from other organisations based in different cultures. Whilst each approach has beneficial elements, relying solely on one way may not lead to the most effective progress towards the Safeguards.

This research also supports the facilitating factors highlighted in Wessells (2009) review: community ownership and responsibility (i.e., Engaging stakeholders); incorporating and building on local resources (i.e., Resources); leaders' support (i.e. Leadership); genuine child participation (i.e., Engaging Stakeholders); ongoing management of issues of power, diversity, and inclusivity (i.e., Leadership); external training and resources (i.e., Resources) and linkages with other parts of the child protection system (i.e., Networks).

A potential limitation of the present project concerns the fact that the International Safeguards were initially developed based on experience from the Global North (Rhind, et al., 2015). There is a clear lack of evidence from the Global South perspective (Brackenridge, et al., 2012). Conscious of this issue, the research team ensured that participants from a diverse range of organizations were recruited. The development of the final version of the International Safeguards, and the implementation guides (Rhind, 2016a; Rhind, et al., 2016b), was informed by this diverse sample. As a result, the philosophy under-pinning this project advocates an approach through which the International Safeguards facilitate discussion and adaptation at the local level as opposed to dictation from the global level (Rhind, et al., 2015).

The international nature of the present study thus served to highlight the critical role played by cultural sensitivity. It is important to acknowledge the interactive nature of the relationship between a safeguarding system and the given context. The system needs to be adapted to suit the context in a culturally sensitive way. Through this approach, both the surface structures (e.g., helpful resources) as well as the deep structures (e.g., social norms and historical context) can be considered (Castro, Barrera, & Martinez, 2004; Chroni, et al., 2012). The need for a Holistic and Dynamic approach which offers clear Incentives were also identified as key pillars and these further build on Wessels (2009) review by highlighting the influential role played by these additional factors.

Beyond sport, this research has important messages for any organisation that works with children (e.g., schools, care homes or hospitals). The pillars identified in this research are likely to play a critical role in the safeguarding of children in and through the work of such organisations. Recent high profile cases of child abuse have served to emphasise the key role played by the organisational culture with respect to safeguarding. The framework developed through this project represents a mechanism through which people within such organisations can reflect on the approach taken to safeguard children and inform strategies to develop and embed an organisational culture that helps to safeguard children.

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