

Every week thousands of Sheffield children take part in sport. We have some of the country's best sporting facilities here in our city, and Sheffield young people are among the next generation of champions.

Physical activity is very important in a child's growth and development. Professional health advice is that children should be active every day, to benefit their health and physical development. This can be achieved through play, dance, walking and many other ways as well as sport. Through sport, a young person learns to respect their body and to treat it well. They learn skills of co-ordination, concentration, perseverance, teamworking, communication, self-esteem, respect for others and a sense of fair play. Making sure children have plenty of safe opportunities to participate in sport is a priority for the city of Sheffield.

Keeping children safe is a parent's first concern. You can make sure your child is safe when they are being coached by taking an interest in the sports club.

WHAT SHOULD WE LOOK FOR IN A SPORTS CLUB?

Your child

Different sports suit different children, and your child should be involved in making the decision about which sport they participate in.

The needs of your child are the most important factor in choosing a sports club. Different children have different preferences and aspirations, and one sports club will not suit everybody. Listen to your child. If they don't like it, find out why.

Staff and volunteers

Make sure you know who is coaching your child, and that the club considers them safe and appropriate. Have they been trained in the club's Child Protection policy? Are they a qualified First Aider? Who supervises your child's coach? Do you know how to make enquiries or express concern about how your child is coached?

Health and safety

Does the sports club have insurance, and does the venue satisfy fire regulations? This will be easy to find out, as certificates of insurance and fire safety should be clearly displayed on the premises. Make sure you are clear on, and happy with, arrangements for transport to away fixtures or other events. Do you know who's driving, and what the sleeping arrangements are, if they're staying overnight? If your child is travelling away from home, you should have a contact number for the person responsible for looking after them.

Policies

The sports club should have policies in place that you can ask to see. This will include a Child Protection Policy and a code of behaviour. A good club will have a training plan for its staff and volunteers to make sure everybody keeps up to date.

Relationships

Are you happy with the relationship between your child and the coach? The club should have clear guidelines about physical contact and social activities between staff, volunteers, participating children and parents. Find out who in the club you can speak to if you have concerns about boundaries not being observed.

Personal care

If your child is very young or has care needs, make sure you are happy with the way they are assisted to get changed, use the toilet or receive medication.

HOW DO I MAKE SURE MY CHILD IS SAFE?

Sheffield is still one of this country's safest cities. Your child should have a great time and stay safe when they are participating in sport. If you make sure you find out all you can about the club when they join, and keep in contact with the coach and the club, you will be better able to protect your child from any harm.

Listen to your child

Talk to your child about their day and what they've been doing. If your child really doesn't want to go to the club any more, or tells you that they are scared or embarrassed when they are being coached, make sure you take it seriously.

Observe their behaviour

Sometimes a child's behaviour changes if they are being inappropriately treated by an adult or another young person. Remember that there may be any number of reasons for behavioural changes, and you should think carefully about all the networks and activities your child is involved with if you are concerned about their behaviour. Don't just assume it's their sports club.

Observe their physical appearance

You should be routinely informed of injuries sustained during their time at the club, and these will be recorded in the club's

accident book. Ask your child and/or their coach about any unexplained injuries

Who should I talk to if I have concerns?

Find out who you can talk to in the sports club if you have any concerns about how your child is treated. If your concern is with the coach, you should know who else is available to speak to you.

What will happen if I express a concern?

The club should have a number of policies and procedures to cover all aspects of health and safety, including Child Protection. Make sure you have a copy of their policy so you know what they would do when concerns are raised.



HOW ARE SHEFFIELD SPORTS CLUBS MAKING SURE CHILDREN ARE SAFE?

Clubs in Sheffield are doing lots of things to make sure our children get high-quality coaching and every possible opportunity to do well in sport, in a safe environment.

Training and support

South Yorkshire Sport, Sheffield City Council and other organisations offer training in coaching skills, sports management and First Aid. Their sports governing body will keep them up to date in developments around their particular sport and may help them with organisational development.

Child Protection Co-ordinator

Every club or organisation that provides activities for children and young people should have a named person who is responsible for making sure that child protection issues are considered. They will make sure the child protection policy for the club is up to date and that staff and volunteers have been trained in how to implement it.

Clubmark

A national standard for sports clubs, which many clubs in the city are working to achieve. Clubs must have recognised systems and trained people in place to achieve the award, along with other measures to ensure that they provide a “safe, effective and child-friendly environment for young sports people”.

HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT CHILD SAFETY?

The Child Protection in Sport Unit has a website with lots of information about safety in sport. You can find it at www.thecpsu.org.uk or www.sportprotects.co.uk

The NSPCC is a good source of information about child protection and child safety. Their helpline number is 0808 800 5000 and their website is www.nspcc.org.uk

Make sure your child has at least one other adult they know well and can talk to, as well as yourself. They might find it easier to talk to someone who is not part of their household. You should also make sure they have access to information about services like ChildLine 0800 1111.

Ask at your child’s school or at your local community centre or church for information about parenting classes or support groups for parents in your area.

If you need to report a concern about child safety direct, please contact:

South Yorkshire Police 0114 220 2020
Sheffield Social Services 0114 273 4855