

Hiring Best Practices

Safeguarding is a part of everyone's job description. This pertains to incorporating safeguarding into your hiring processes, training your staff on safeguarding, and communicating about your safeguarding requirements and initiatives. This also means evaluating organisational structure and having checks and balances for those in power or isolated positions to keep interactions transparent and observable. There are clear action steps organisations can take, from interviews to job titles, to instill and embed safeguarding in your organisation — starting with recruitment.

The following measures can be taken during the recruitment process to minimise the possibility of hiring a person unsuitable to work with minor¹ and adult athletes. Through these actions, your national federation or club can better support all participants in having safe and healthy interactions and sporting experiences.

These hiring best practices can be reviewed and implemented by Member Federations or clubs in line with applicable local legislation and relevant government guidance.

Candidate Profile: Determine what skills and knowledge are needed to safely work with athletes and include these in the profile. This will depend on the position, for example, a coach will have more contact and need better skills working with children than someone in an administrative or grounds keeper's role.

Advertisement: Include a clear statement about your national federation or club's commitment to safeguarding athletes in any advertisement about the position. Your national federation or club can also add a screen-out question in the application process regarding an applicant's willingness to participate in a particular background screening as a condition of employment.

Written Applications: Each applicant for a position of employment seeking to participate in a program or activity within your national federation or club can be asked to complete an application form consisting of personal, identifying information and a general release with applicant's signature. The written application can:

- Ask about previous work and volunteer experiences;
- Ask questions intended to elicit information concerning high-risk behaviours;
- Provide a written release for contacting personal references and performing a criminal background check, including an indemnification clause; and
- Ask open-ended questions that encourage broad answers.

¹ Minor means a person under the age of 18 years or, where applicable, a person who is under the age of majority and meets the definition of a child for the purposes of protection in the country where the predominant nature of the alleged misconduct occurred.

Personal Interview: When possible, your national federation or club can ensure that each applicant whose experience and credentials meet the hiring criteria for a particular position receives a face-to-face, in-person interview. Through the personal interview, your national federation or club has the opportunity to evaluate applicants’ temperament, knowledge of the sport, coaching techniques, and/or training methodologies (if required for the job position), and to have open-ended discussions regarding an applicant’s experience working with athletes, including their understanding of athlete safeguarding principles and any situations that may call into question the applicant’s suitability to work with minors.

Interview questions can explore, for example, how an applicant would respond if they suspected that an athlete was being subjected to abuse or sexual misconduct; whether the applicant has been subject to disciplinary action due to their interactions with minors; and how the applicant maintains appropriate physical and emotional boundaries with athletes.

- Ensure at least two people interview or meet with the applicant and check out any gaps in the application form, including any gaps in employment history. Make sure the applicant has the ability and commitment to meet the standards required to adhere to your national federation or club’s Safeguarding Policy.
- Include at least one question that relates to safeguarding minor and adult athletes.
- Explore the applicant’s views on power, authority, and discipline, and ask for a response to a potential problem faced at your national federation or club. This will assess their commitment to promoting good practices and their ability to communicate with minors.

Example Interview Questions
If an athlete disclosed abuse to you, what steps would you take?
A child discloses abuse but asks you not to tell anyone. What do you do?
You suspect a colleague is behaving inappropriately around athletes. How do you handle it?
What safeguarding training have you completed, and how do you apply it in your role?

Reference Checks: Reference checks are another key component of the background screening processes, as they serve to provide your national federation or club with a more thorough understanding of an applicant’s qualifications. Checking references also puts your club in a better position to avoid claims of negligent hiring.

As a best practice, your national federation or club can request at least two personal references and at least one professional reference from each former employer at which the applicant worked directly with minors.

If the applicant has not previously worked directly with minors, at least two personal references and at least one professional reference from each former employer can be requested.

References can always be sought and obtained directly from the referee using an email address, postal address, or phone number. Open references (i.e., a written reference provided by the candidate) are not sufficient.

The reference checks can include inquiries to determine whether the applicant was

the subject of any reports of inappropriate conduct with minors, including grooming behaviors, child abuse, or sexual misconduct.

During the hiring process, your national federation or club may also contact individuals who know the applicant, even if such individuals are not listed on the applicant's provided reference list. This is an acceptable practice and may often lead to valuable information regarding sensitive information, such as incidents of previous safeguarding concerns, inappropriate adult-minor interactions, and observed grooming behaviors.

Education and Employment Verification: To help ensure that an applicant possesses the requisite training, knowledge, skills, and experience for the role to which they applied, your club can verify the applicant's education, degrees, experience, and/or employment history, as described in their job application and/or resume. The verification may be performed by the Safeguarding Officer or other national federation or club employee responsible for conducting background checks.

Qualification and Registration Checks: Any qualifications or professional registrations claimed in the application can be verified by asking to see original certificates.

Motor Vehicle Records Check: Anyone who will be driving athletes on behalf of your national federation or club can be requested to undergo a motor vehicle records check that provides information regarding the applicant's driving record for at least the past three years in the applicant's state of licensure.

***Background and Police Checks:**

Your national federation or club can engage a qualified third party to conduct a comprehensive background check.

International: When recruiting an employee from another country, the person can be asked for an International Police Clearance Certificate (IPCC) from their country of origin and from any other countries they have worked in for the last 10 years.

Proof of Identification: An applicant's identity can be verified by checking their passport or national ID card, as predatory offenders may provide false information and even a false identity to secure a position.

Internet/Social Media Checks: Before extending an offer, your club may consider entering an applicant's name into one or more general search engines to see if the applicant appears on any websites or in any form of news media coverage in a manner that violates your national federation or club's policies and procedures.

Self-declaration: Applicants may complete and sign a declaration of good character, including a section confirming they are safe to work with minor and adult athletes and giving permission for checks to be made. A sample statement can include: "I confirm that I have never been involved, charged, or implicated in any manner of whatsoever nature involving inappropriate behavior in regard to any minor or adult."

Acknowledgement of the Athlete Safeguarding Policy: To ensure that applicants support your national federation or club's commitment to safeguarding principles, the club can ensure that each applicant, before proceeding through the hiring

process, (1) is informed about your national federation or club's safeguarding policy and procedures relevant to prevention and (2) is willing to sign a document acknowledging their agreement to comply with your national federation or club's safeguarding policy.

Onboarding: As soon as possible after starting at your national federation or club, staff can be briefed on your national federation or club's Safeguarding Policy. The name and contact details of the designated Safeguarding Officer can be provided.