

SAFEGUARDING IN PHYSIOLOGICAL TESTING

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INTRODUCTION

The British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) aims to promote a culture whereby the importance of safeguarding and welfare within sport and exercise sciences is a priority (Kavanagh et al., 2016). Physiologists working in a variety of settings must be cognisant of their duty of care toward clients, participants and co-workers. Traditionally, a legal duty of care amounts to risk; whether reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable risk have been identified and action(s) are taken to reduce such risks. A duty of care further relies upon the moral obligation placed upon an individual to understand their role in the prevention of foreseeable harm to others in order to ensure their safety or wellbeing (Kavanagh, Rhind & Gordon, 2020). As a physiologist there is an obligation to maintain both legal standards of care and to act in accordance with professional standards set out by your regulatory body. The duty of care thus assumes your responsibility for the care of another individual and necessitates the actions you take in order to mitigate foreseeable risk(s).

Safeguarding serves to promote the welfare and wellbeing of *everyone* in sport, and is central in fostering a duty of care (Kavanagh, Rhind & Gordon, 2020). Safeguarding is of primacy in physiological practice whether it be during research, applied practice, clinical practice or in teaching and learning. Safeguarding, concerns a professional obligation to protect all parties (for example the client, athlete and/or self) from maltreatment or harm (Mountjoy et al., 2016). Everyone is potentially involved in the management of safeguarding concerns as a perpetrator, victim, or bystander. This includes all stakeholders from athletes, peers, and coaches through to parents, sport scientists or other members of the athlete entourage.

The range of potential threats that an individual can be exposed to are recognised to occur across three levels: the individual level, whereby there is a potential risk to self (e.g., depression, self-harm, substance abuse, and disordered eating); the relational level, a risk that occurs between individuals (e.g., sexual, physical, and emotional abuse, discrimination or harassment); and at an organisational level, between an individual and a performance system or organisation (e.g., systems which promote over training or competing with an injury, institutional doping, or an unhealthy organisational culture). Physiologists should be aware of these levels in order to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of participants and to identify or mitigate risks which may arise at each of these levels (Mountjoy, et al., 2016).

SAFEGUARDING RESPONSIBILITIES

As a physiologist you occupy a position of power and authority, particularly when working with children or young people. In this role it is essential to demonstrate moral and ethical standards throughout your practice toward safeguarding the self and others. Physiologists should be able to recognise and mitigate risks posed to others while understanding how to report or manage safeguarding concerns that they may observe or have disclosed to them during their practice. The International Safeguards (Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018) outline a number of measures that should be put in place by any organisation providing sports activities. The 8 Safeguards are outlined in the below table along with their application to physiological testing.

Table 1

International Safeguards for Children in Sport (adapted with permission from Rhind & Owusu-Sekyere, 2018).

Safeguard	Description	Action
1: Developing your policy	Any organisation providing or with responsibility for sports activities should	You should be familiar with the related policies for the organisations

	<p>have a safeguarding policy. This is a statement of intent that demonstrates a commitment to safeguard everyone involved in sport from harm, and provides the framework within which procedures are developed. A safeguarding policy makes clear to all what is required. It also helps to create a safe and positive environment and to show that the organisation is taking its duty of care seriously.</p>	<p>and contexts in which you work. As well as these Safeguarding policies, you should also be familiar with any other relevant policies concerning equity, working with vulnerable groups and health and safety. It is good practice to save links to these policies such that they are easily accessible. Be mindful that there may be a number of policies at any given time including those regulations that govern being a BASES accredited practitioner (e.g., BASES Safeguarding and Welfare Policy) and/or those in place for the organisation(s) in which you are working.</p>
<p>2: Procedures for responding to safeguarding concerns</p>	<p>Procedures describe the operational processes required to implement organisational policy and provide clear step-by-step guidance on what to do in different circumstances. They clarify roles and responsibilities, and lines of communication. Procedures help to ensure a prompt response to concerns about a person's safety or wellbeing.</p>	<p>You should be familiar with the procedures required to report and manage any safeguarding concerns. There may also be relevant complaints and disciplinary procedures. It is good practice to make contact with the person to whom you should report concerns after reading this guidance. This should mean that you are more comfortable making a disclosure should a concern arise.</p>
<p>3: Advice and support</p>	<p>Arrangements made to provide essential information and support to those responsible for safeguarding. People should be advised on where to access help and support. An organisation has a duty to ensure advice and support is in place to help people to play their part in safeguarding such that they know who they can turn to for help.</p>	<p>You should identify the people and resources which can support you to effectively fulfil the safeguarding aspects of your role (e.g., Welfare Officer or Safeguarding Manager). The Child Protection in Sport Unit provide a range of helpful resources on their website (www.thecpsu.org.uk).</p>
<p>4: Minimising risks (to children)</p>	<p>The measures which are taken to assess and minimise the risks to people in the organisation. Minimising risks by putting safeguards in place.</p>	<p>Safeguarding should be a part of the planning in physiological testing; make a safeguarding plan. Aim to mitigate risk and work in a matter which prioritises the safety of participants. Key factors to assess may include: ages of participants, additional needs or potential vulnerabilities, the nature of the activity being conducted, how the place or space of the activity may increase vulnerability of participants.</p>

5: Guidelines for behaviour	An organisation should have codes of conduct to describe what an acceptable standard of behaviour is and promote current best practice. Standards of behaviour set a benchmark of what is acceptable for all and codes of conduct can help to remove ambiguity and clarify the grey areas around what is viewed as acceptable behaviour.	You should be familiar with the BASES code of conduct and ensure that this is embedded in your practice, for example, the BASES Safeguarding and Welfare Policy (2017a) and the BASES Code of Conduct (2017b). You should also check for any other codes of conduct within the various contexts in which you work.
6: Recruiting, training and communicating	Everyone within an organisation has a role to play in safeguarding. Ensure that you are up to date with safeguarding knowledge and continue to re-educate yourself in this area to identify any changes in legislation or guidance.	You should attend the BASES Safeguarding Welfare in Sport and Exercise Sciences workshop to ensure you are familiar with current legislative, organisational and professional requirements and are aware of relevant reporting and/or referral requirements.
7: Working with partners	Where organisational partnership, membership, funding or commissioning relationships exist or develop with other organisations, the individual and/or organisation should use its influence to promote the implementation of safeguarding measures.	You should be a champion for safeguarding and demonstrate this through your practice. You should work with other physiologists, stakeholders and organisations to identify, share and embed good practice with respect to safeguarding.
8: Monitoring and evaluating	It is essential that there is on-going monitoring of compliance and effectiveness, involving all key stakeholders. This is necessary because organisations need to know whether safeguarding is effective and where improvements and adaptations are needed, or recognise patterns of risk.	You should conduct an audit of your current knowledge, confidence and behaviours in relation to each of these safeguards. This can help you to identify gaps and set goals to work towards. This can be repeated on an annual basis to ensure that you keep up to date.

Following the recommendations of the international safeguards will help to safeguard you as a physiologist, the people with whom your work as well as your organisation and profession as a whole.

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