Volunteer Scotland

Child Protection in Sport

Introduction

We have been invited to provide a written response to two specific questions:

- Does the current situation regarding the number of former football players speaking publically about allegations of historical child sexual abuse in football have an impact on your area?

- What assurances can you provide that the current safeguards and culture of sporting organizations ensures that the allegations of historical child sexual abuse in football could not happen today in sport?

Volunteer Scotland

Volunteer Scotland (VS) is funded by the Scottish Government as Scotland’s national body for volunteering. VS are working with cross sector partners to increase volunteer participation and well being as well as being a change agent in the transformation of volunteering in Scotland. VS are active in addressing the barriers to volunteering and to address the long standing flat line trends in adult volunteering.

We take a values approach;

- The asset in our people
- Mutuality and reciprocity
- Community building
- Public value

We focus our integrated services on how we can make a positive impact to increase volunteer participation, including sport. Our aim is to ensure that we place the volunteer at the centre of finding the pathways for people to give their time to the benefit of communities, activity and projects across Scotland, year on year. We know that the disclosure checking is a core element of this process, and we aim to increase our engagement with volunteers in all sectors. We measure, monitor and evaluate volunteering activity and its impact across all sectors and that increasingly volunteers will be more active at a local level as part of community empowerment.

Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services

Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services (VSDS) is awarded a grant administered by Disclosure Scotland under the Scottish Government Learning and Justice Division. VSDS is registered with Disclosure Scotland under Part V of the Police Act 1997 and authorized to act to countersign disclosure applications on behalf of organizations. VSDS is bound by the Disclosure Scotland Code of Practice and disclosure legislation.

VSDS since 2001 is an umbrella body for a significant percentage of voluntary sector organizations with authority to check and countersign applications for individuals wishing join the PVG Scheme to access roles working with children and/or protected
adults. We provide disclosure checks to volunteers at no cost to the organization, playing an essential part in the development of the sector, its associated communities and its contribution to Scotland. We also process disclosure applications for paid staff working in voluntary sector organizations.

Disclosure Scotland is the sole funder of VSDS. Our core responsibility is facilitating access to disclosure checks for qualifying organizations within the voluntary sector, enabling them to avoid recruiting unsuitable people to work with Children and Protected Adults as defined under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007.

VSDS estimate that we process around 17.5% of all PVG applications in Scotland (Source: Disclosure Scotland Weekly Performance Reports 2016, intranet).

The Disclosure Service is a major element and key function of Volunteer Scotland, a highly valued and sought after unique facility for voluntary sector organizations who engage volunteers. As an organization we understand volunteering and the voluntary sector, the trends, networks and issues.

### Operating Context

**Customer Operations**

We handle PVG Scheme Record applications for volunteers new to the scheme and Scheme Updates for those who are either moving into a different role, different organizations or where an organization would wish this as part of their policy.

There is a distinct trend in the voluntary sector that would indicate a higher turnover than is apparent in the business sector where we see higher application rates for Scheme Records than we do for Scheme Record Updates.

We project that we will receive approximately **50000** unique applications in Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services over the year. We offer quarterly reviews to the Governing bodies, such as Church of Scotland, SYFA and Catholic Church Safeguarding Service to ensure compliance with the Code of Practice and their legal responsibilities with regard the Referral Process.

**Training**

This area focuses on the training and support of the voluntary sector. The function delivers a high quality product in PVG and Signatory Training. This is in high demand where around 30 external sessions around the country and 15 internal sessions are conducted annually. They also provide bespoke sessions when required to qualifying organizations e.g. Cricket Scotland, RSPBA and Royal Voluntary Service. In addition to the training programme, the team also undertake support visits each year based on an agreed criteria e.g. error rates, volume of applications, information received about an organization. Additionally, we also have excellent relationships with the TSI Network and regularly provide training and support to the organizations dealing directly at a local/regional level. Our aim this year is to continue to develop this relationship, with Voluntary Action Scotland (TSi
network support) as well, and increase the uptake of the training available both onsite at our Stirling base and externally in the regions supported by the local TSI Network.

This training is provided free to organizations as part of the funding grant made my Disclosure Scotland. From April 1st 2016 to 31st December 2016 we have delivered 55 support visits, and are on target for a total of over 70, across Scotland.

In addition since April of 2016 we have delivered 55 training courses to 439 delegates nationally – from delivery in our office in Stirling both face to face and via the internet, to visiting organizations to run sessions when and where requested.

**Partnership Working**

We have also provided relevant information regarding PVG Applications to Sportscotland.

Since the introduction of PVG a total of 54538 applications have been submitted where 10604 of these have been in 2016, for the listed sports bodies.

Overall between 28-2-11 and 31-12-16 we have passed to Disclosure Scotland 311,900 PVG applications for 4086 different primary bodies.

**Child Protection in Sport**

**Does the current situation regarding the number of former football players speaking publically about allegations of historical child sexual abuse in football have an impact on your area?**

The allegations of historic abuse have both a direct and indirect impact in our area. Directly there is our need to increase our pro active offers of support to volunteer involving organizations. Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services, as part of the funding proposal to Disclosure Scotland for coming years, has committed to providing additional resource to supporting and training the voluntary sector in their duty to protect the most vulnerable in our society. We have made resources available from our Operating capacity to contact our enrolled organizations that are specifically sport orientated, to discuss their individual requirements and to offer bespoke support where necessary. We have also initiated a series of Best Practice Workshops with interested enrolled bodies to discuss their current policies and procedures around PVG and Recruitment. These are being held in our Stirling office with the view to enlisting the Regional TSI Network to roll these out geographically where there is demand.

Indirectly, there is a broader concern about maintaining public confidence in the current system of protection. There is a balancing act required here which enables confidence amongst children and vulnerable groups, families, volunteers, and staff. If for example, volunteers become afraid of how they will be perceived, or that they will risk accusation then this will affect their willingness to volunteer. It’s vital that everyone plays their part in a proportionate system that places safety and protection centre stage and that everyone feels the benefit of being part of such a system. That there is confidence that there are robust measures in place to identify any person that poses a risk and to ensure ongoing vigilance, whilst providing the most
encouraging, safe and positive environment for volunteers who are contributing to children's growth, and well being.

What assurances can you provide that the current safeguards and culture of sporting organizations ensures that the allegations of historical child sexual abuse in football could not happen today in sport?

Crucially the current safeguards were not in place at the time of the historic child sexual abuse. Scotland has, we believe, a balanced and proportionate system with a careful balance of legal requirements along with guidance, support and good practice. There is, however, a constant need to learn and continually improve and it's not possible to offer unqualified assurance. There is a constant churn factor of people and organizations, and there is often an over emphasis placed in criminal records information rather than the culture of safeguarding rightly expressed in the question. There is a shared responsibility outwith record checks to create the environments that ensure the highest standards of safeguarding that gives everyone involved confidence and enables people to fully enjoy their sporting activities. This is our core aim, and with Scottish Government funding there is a free expert resource available for all voluntary sporting organisations in Scotland. Working along with Disclosure Scotland we will be undertaking an outreach approach over the next year to work with organisations to build the local capacity for creating a culture that builds the best possible safe experience for both children and volunteers, and is vigilant about conduct that is unacceptable, and where required fulfils the legal duty to make a referral.

Volunteer Scotland Disclosure Services is fully funded by Disclosure Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government to offer a wide range of services to the voluntary sector. We annually provide in excess of 55 training sessions on PVG across Scotland in support of the sector. In addition we also undertake around 70 Support Visits nationally to provide the sector with a comfort that their policies are robust and fit for purpose. We will be increasing this level of support in the coming years, funding permitting.

The service we provide is greatly valued by the voluntary sector and is in great demand. Our enrolled organizations and responsible individuals operating in senior roles within are dedicated to their cause and to protect those beneficiaries that are most vulnerable.

In Conclusion

Volunteer Scotland and our Disclosure Services is committed to ensuring the voluntary sector is fully aware of its requirement to protect the most vulnerable it our society. To undertake the capacity training and support that is required to make sure that those participating in sporting activities, and other pastimes, are protected and that safeguarding is paramount in the policies of these Sporting Bodies. That we continue to develop the confidence of everyone involved in sporting organisations with a balanced and proportionate system of safeguarding that addresses the risks of individuals who would do harm.