Child Protection in Sport Unit

NSPCC

Virtual events and competitions for children – safeguarding guidance for activity deliverers

Introduction

The onset of Covid-19 has meant that organisations that normally host sport and physical activity events and competitions have had to look at other options, including delivering them virtually. Circumstances where a virtual option is possible include:

- a young person recording a video of a dance to be judged

- an activator or coach facilitating a group of young people taking part in an activity for competition – such as entering as a team – albeit filmed at separate locations

As more and more organisations begin to use virtual media during the pandemic, we could see online activities becoming a more normal delivery model in the future, and particularly useful should face-to-face activities or events have to be cancelled for other reasons (for example, the weather).

Pre-activity planning

Safeguarding considerations

Safeguarding should be at the forefront of planning and delivery of any virtual activity in the same way as it would be for a face-to-face event. You should ensure:

- the activity is appropriate for the young person's age, ability and physicality

- a risk assessment is undertaken

- you have consent from parents for the child to take part

- young people are informed of the appropriate dress code for the activity

- more than one adult is involved in the facilitation of the activity, and all facilitators should receive any completed videos for monitoring purposes

- procedures are in place for how data (including photographs and videos) are stored securely, encrypted and deleted in a timely manner

- event facilitators have the contact details of a designated person who will manage any concerns pre-, during and post-event; young people must also be given this information

- the environment in which the young person takes part is appropriate (for example, not in a bedroom) and that:

    ○ other family members or people should not be in view

    ○ anything that provides personal or identifying information (including car number plates, house numbers, street names, and school or club logos) should be out of sight – this applies to both young people and activity leaders

Communicate with parents and young people

Prior to the virtual activity, organisers should provide some basic information to both parents and young people:

- what the event is and what the aims are

- who else will be involved – adults and other young people

- whether the activity will be available for anyone to view online or whether it is for a closed audience (for example, School Games organisers or coaches); young people need to understand this in order to feel comfortable and confident taking part

- whether the activity (or part of it) will be recorded and, if so, for what purpose

- whether any videos or photographs will be posted online after the event
- where materials are to be kept, how they will be stored securely
- guidance for parents and young people on the appropriate online platforms to use

Once decisions have been made on the format and content, written permission should be obtained from both the parent and young person. Be clear about which aspects participants can opt in or out of. For example, a young person may be happy for competition results to be shared but not videos.

Provide or link to information about staying safe online. Useful links to organisations and resources are provided at the end of this briefing paper.

Provide parents and young people with contact information of who they can speak to if they have any worries or concerns about any aspects of the activity.

Ensure that young people are given full details of what the activity will entail:

- how long it should last
- any equipment they will be using
- codes of conduct – these must be abided by

Delivering a virtual activity for competition entry

Those involved in a virtual event should have received appropriate safeguarding training and be aware that young people could disclose something in an online environment.

Organisations should ensure that those facilitating events online are recruited through safe recruitment procedures in the same way as for physical delivery. Be aware that under normal circumstances at a large face-to-face event there generally will be many adults involved, so single online interactions with a group has different risks.

Strict rules must be in place during the virtual competition, including:

- no one-to-one interaction online between an adult and a young person
- no contact online between adults and children outside of the activity
- use of an appropriate platform for videos or photographs – only those involved in the project should be able to view the images and videos
- the adults delivering the activity must be competent in running events virtually and be able to monitor throughout
- more than one adult from the organisation delivering the activity should be aware the activity is taking place, with an option to monitor if required
- the organisation's safeguarding lead officer should be made aware of the event, details of those delivering, the platform being used and which group of young people are involved
- for security, there should be encryption or password protection on any uploaded items from young people

For further information on online platforms, apps and social media sites, visit **Net Aware**, which provides information about sites' privacy, age ratings and any risks, and tips on how to stay safe.

Mitigating risks

It is essential that children are safeguarded from potentially harmful and inappropriate online material.

In addition to basic safeguarding training and information, deliverers should have access to training or guidance about the risks within the online environment.

What are the risks and how can you help to mitigate them? These are detailed in the table below.

Risk	How to help mitigate it
● young people don't know where to go if they have concerns	○ ensure this information is provided in the joining instructions and again mentioned at the start of an activity ○ include links to **Childline** (0800 1111) in any information that is sent out
● young people may see unsuitable material	○ ensure parents are aware of the activity and provide written consent ○ provide information to parents and young people about security settings ○ ensure event organisers use appropriate platforms
● young people could enter without parental consent	○ copy parents or carers into any information about the event ○ emphasise to young people that part of the code of conduct is parental consent
● young people could use a platform that is not age appropriate	○ promote participation on platforms that are age appropriate for the group you are working with ○ emphasise, as part of the code of conduct, that young people must only use age-appropriate platforms ○ provide guidance to young people and parents on the platform guidelines and the risks
● adults or other young people may use this contact to initiate grooming of the young person – often starting by encouraging further private contact away from the activity	○ ensure that codes of conduct for adults and young people emphasise no online contact away from the activity, including friend or follow requests on social media platforms ○ ensure safe-recruitment processes are in place for adults involved in the activities ○ ensure everyone knows how to report any concerns, including what coaches or activators should do if they receive friend requests from young people ○ build in training and learning opportunities on this subject for those adults working with children
● competition entries sent directly to an individual rather than an open monitored inbox	○ have clear rules on entry procedures – entries to be sent to a joint inbox that is monitored by more than one person
● young person doesn't have appropriate privacy settings on social media – this may mean that images are made public and could be accessed and misused by anyone	○ ensure everyone is given access to guidance on social media security – ask for confirmation on the competition entry form that this has been read ○ if you have anyone in your organisation who deals with the website or social media, see if you can have them as a contact for support and advice
● young people sharing other children's images without that individual's consent	○ have clear codes of conduct prohibiting this behaviour and ensure young people have read and signed this ○ ensure parents have also seen this code of conduct
● outsiders 'virtual-bombing' the activity – when an uninvited person joins the event	○ ensure security setting are set to private and invite-only on the chosen platform

Further information

For further information, see our guidance on **remote teaching and coaching**.

Resources

Guidance for organisers

Ineqe Safeguarding Group
Resources for keeping children safe online
Tel: 028 9023 2060 | **ineqe.com**

Guidance for children

Child Exploitation and Online Protection command (CEOP)
Advice on making a report about abuse online
ceop.police.uk/safety-centre

Childline
Free and confidential advice for children and young people
Tel: 0800 1111 | **childline.org.uk**

Think U Know
Advice for children and young people on keeping children safe online
thinkuknow.co.uk

Guidance for parents

Childnet International
Offers a toolkit to support parents to speak to children about their online life
Tel: 020 7639 6967 | **childnet.com/parents-and-carers**

Net Aware
A parents' guide to apps, games and social media sites
Tel: 0808 800 5002 | **net-aware.org.uk**