

Worksheet 6: Engage and Communicate

Safeguarding Children and Young People

Key points:

Clubs are encouraged to engage regular feedback from children and young people. Clubs are also encouraged to promote the 'Safeguarding Children and Young People Program' to their members regularly and provide updates on key developments.

Engaging and Communicating about Safeguarding Children and Young People

While 'Engage and Communicate' is our final stage, you might have noticed that we have encouraged you to engage and communicate with your club members, stakeholders and communities during the work you have carried out for each of the previous stages.

This stage does take things one-step further, and this worksheet focuses on what your club can do to better engage and empower children and young people in the safeguarding process in particular, and within the SLS movement more broadly.

Why is engaging and communicating with children and young people important?

Research tells us that organisations that engage children in communication and decision-making on a regular basis are more likely to encourage a culture where children and young people feel comfortable, have a sense of belonging and are more likely to express themselves if things don't feel right. As a result, we are less likely to see offences perpetrated against children and young people where such environments are proactively encouraged.

This means the safeguarding of children and young people relies on our efforts to better engage children, young people and families in our club policy making and clubs' operations. We can do this through committing to practices to listen to children and young people in constructive, inclusive and proactive ways.

For this to be most effective, we need to let go of the belief that adults know what is best for children and young people. Instead, we need to make time and effort to understand children and young people as individuals with their own issues, concerns and opinions, and we need to think about how we understand and respond to these.

SLSA's resources for engaging and communicating with children and young people

To assist clubs in thinking about ways they might develop or enhance their engagement with children and young people, Play by the Rules have developed resources for 'Involving Youth and Young People'. The resources bring together a range of approaches and ideas that you can test out to see what works in the context of your club. Examples of these ideas include having targeted methods to regularly engage feedback through to creating a youth representative position on your committee/board to ensure better representation of children and young people's views in club decision-making. To view a full range of ideas visit <https://www.playbytherules.net.au/got-an-issue/child-safe-sport/involve-children-and-young-people>

Why is it important to engage and communicate with our members and community about our safeguarding work?

Effective safeguarding relies on the buy-in and support of the whole community and for the whole community to work together to contribute to safe and positive environments for children and young people. To encourage a proactive membership and community, regular promotion of your club's approaches to safeguarding children and young people is important to familiarise the membership and the community with your initiatives and to also highlight this body of work as an SLS value and a club priority now and into the future.

Regular promotion of safeguarding initiatives and updates is likely to build a positive club culture towards safeguarding, and at the same time will assist in deterring any negative, or potentially negative behaviours.



Your Club's Role Engaging and Communicating

It is your club's responsibility to engage children and young people involved with your club and to work towards a club culture where children and young people feel comfortable, have a sense of belonging and are confident to express themselves.

It is also your club's responsibility to provide regular communication about the Safeguarding Program to members. We reiterate some suggestions included in previous worksheets and provide further suggestions for your club to consider.

Action Plan

- Identify a committee member to take leadership for i) reviewing the Play by the Rules – Involving Children and Young People resource, and ii) compiling two to three possible strategies your club can consider implementing. You might even consider running a survey or some focus groups with your children and young members to find out their thoughts and preferences for engagement and communication
- Ensure Safeguarding Children and Young People is a standing agenda item on your club committee meeting agendas to enable you to monitor and respond to any safeguarding developments or issues
- Distribute Worksheet 6, the suggested ideas for engagement to be considered for implementation by the club, and any other feedback you may have gained through surveys or other feedback
- Encourage discussion at your committee meeting and consider any implications for club practice – remember you might need to trial a few different options before you find the right fit for your club
- Follow up with communication to club.

What next?

We encourage you to continually disseminate information about your club's commitment and efforts to safeguard children and young people. Some further ideas for communication to your club and community include:

- Regularly promote your club's Commitment to Safeguarding, Codes of Conduct and relevant updates through club meetings and events
- Promote the Safeguarding Program via your club website and social media channels
- Encourage your volunteers to complete the 'Volunteer Checklist', available online
- Schedule an annual review time for the club committee to complete the 'Club Checklist' (available online) and review your commitment and developments in safeguarding, ensure policies and approaches continue to be relevant and continue to strive for best practice in creating safe and positive environments for children and young people
- Ensure the Safeguarding Children and Young People posters are visible to all members
- Disseminate resources to members and families so they feel informed and part of the initiative, including the 'Picking Up and Dropping Off Guideline and Approval Form' and 'Where to Get Help' available online.

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