

Appointing or becoming the Child Protection Officer for your club

National support, local delivery

Action to safeguard and protect children is most effective when it happens at grassroots. Club Child Protection Officers (club CPOs) provide a vital link between the strategies and guidance at national level and the action and delivery at local level. Every club that treats safeguarding children as part of the delivery of healthy, high-quality sport is helping Real Tennis and Rackets to win the confidence of parents and players. Club CPOs help to co-ordinate and advise in this area of their club's activities, with the support and backing of the T&RA. Club CPOs can also help to make sure that problems are dealt with quickly and effectively. That's why the T&RA asks every club to appoint a CPO.

Who is suitable to be a CPO?

There are no formal requirements or qualifications for a club CPO. It makes sense to try to find a volunteer or staff member within your club who has a relevant background (e.g. social worker, health visitor, teacher). If you don't have a volunteer with directly relevant experience, then you need to look at the skills and tasks outlined below and find someone who can take these on.

If you are taking on the role of CPO, you can build up the knowledge outlined by accessing T&RA guidance documents. Most importantly, you can attend a 3-hour safeguarding workshop, such as the Sportscoach UK workshop Safeguarding and Protecting Children.

The CPO will need to sit on the Club Committee or work with committee members. If possible, avoid appointing a CPO who is also a coach or junior coordinator within your club. This will help to avoid any conflicts of interest.

Skills and qualities of a CPO

- Must be child-focussed, and able to think about things from the perspective of a junior.
- Must communicate well with both adults and children.
- Must have administration and recording skills.
- Should be able to promote and advocate for good practice and safeguarding within the club.

Core tasks of a CPO

- To assist the club to put in place a child protection policy and plan.
- To assist in putting the policy and plan into action.
- To promote the child protection policy, the CPO's own contact details, and the club's procedures.
- To maintain the contact details for the County LTA, and for local statutory services (i.e. social services, the Police, and the local safeguarding children board).
- To act as a point of contact for any child protection concerns.
- To record child protection cases in an effective and reliable way.
- To communicate with the County and national LTA over child protection cases.
- To seek training and information from the LTA, and to cascade this to others in the club.
- To ensure that confidentiality is maintained, and also that information is passed on where necessary.
- To ensure that recruitment is safe, and that appropriate checks, such as DBS checks, are carried out where relevant.

Core knowledge for a CPO

- Core values of good practice.

- The role of the T&RA and of clubs affiliated to the T&RA.
- T&RA procedures, policies and guidance.
- Roles, responsibilities and contact details of local statutory agencies.
- Confidentiality procedures/principles.
- Basic principles of equality and diversity.
- Preventive and pre-emptive approaches to safeguarding.
- Forms and signs of abuse.

What help is available for club CPOs?

The LTA produces a range of guidance and information that will be useful for club CPOs. The CPO Hitlist provides advice about important tasks for CPOs and clubs, and can be a useful starting point. A 3 hour basic awareness course in child protection such as such as the Sportscoach UK workshop Safeguarding and Protecting Children will provide important knowledge and confidence. Contact them direct about possible spaces on these courses.

Remember that the T&RA has a Child Protection Officer who can provide direct support and advice. You can contact him if you need information about getting started in your role.