

UPSKILLING THE COMMUNITY SPORT VOLUNTEER WORKFORCE TO RESPOND TO DISCLOSURES OF CHILD ABUSE IN SPORT

**CO-DEVELOPED RECOMMENDATIONS WITH
PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE OF ABUSE IN
SPORT AND SPORT VOLUNTEERS**

The Safe and Inclusive Sport Research Group,
Institute for Health and Sport (IHES)

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Recognition of lived experience of child abuse in sport

This statement is inspired by the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse statement.

The Safe and Inclusive Sport Research Group (IHES, Victoria University) recognises and honours the lived experiences of all victims and survivors of child abuse in sport, including the members of the Lived Experience Committee and Advocate who have collaborated with the researchers on this project, Ali Quigley, David Lukins, Deb Graham, Helen Wilke, Jade Sharp, Larrissa Rue Haven, Maddy P., and Sophie Moore. We recognise that child abuse continues to affect children and young people in sport and across society. We are committed to advancing their voice, leadership and wellbeing through our research, advocacy, and action.

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Content note and personal support

This report talks about diverse forms of child abuse in sport. There is no descriptive account of abuse but mentions of trauma related to institutions responses. For support, please visit this page: <https://nationalcentre.org.au/#helpandsupport>

Citing this report

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1. Introduction

1.1. Project context and aims

1.1.1 The need for urgent survivor inclusive action to respond to child abuse in sport

Sport is one of Australia’s most significant social institutions. Recent participation data¹ estimates that 3.6 million (71%) children aged 0-14, and 54% of adolescents aged 15-17 participate in organised club sports every year. As the delivery of community sport clubs rely on millions of sport volunteers², they play a critical role in creating child safe organisations in Australia. Given the high frequency of child abuse in sport (Pankowiak et al., 2022), barriers to disclosures and lack of trauma-informed processes in Australian sport (Forsdike et al., 2025; Marshall et al., 2026; Woessner, Pankowiak, et al., 2026; Woessner et al., 2023), volunteers’ capacity to recognise and appropriately respond to children’s disclosures requires urgent research and action.

Urgent survivor-inclusive action is needed not only to prevent further harm in sport, but also to recognise the rights of survivors/people with lived experience (PWLE)³ of child abuse to social justice by involving them as active contributors to solutions. The following written feedback, provided by one Lived Experience Committee member and echoed by others, reinforces that meaningful and inclusive action matters deeply to those with lived experience of child abuse in sport (see Section 2, Collective Statement by the Lived Experience Committee).

“My worst fear would be that the guidelines that are developed for incorporating lived experience just sit on a shelf gathering dust. I’m interested in exploring ways and case studies of how this might be practically used by organizations, especially at the grassroots level, knowing that they often rely a lot on volunteers and have limited governance mechanisms.” (Written

¹ The latest Australian Sport Participation prevalence data can be found in the AusPlay report (2025) <https://www.ausport.gov.au/clearinghouse/research/ausplay/results> Estimates represent data collected between 1 July 23 and 31 Dec 2024 (see p.8 for 15-17 adolescents, and pp. 18,19 for children under 15).

² Australian Sports Commission. (n.d.). Volunteering. <https://www.ausport.gov.au/volunteers>

³ We acknowledge that individuals may choose to identify using different terms, e.g., lived experience, victims/survivor, etc. (see [National Centre Language guide](#)). The term “Lived experience” of child abuse in sport is used in this report when referring specifically to the 7 individuals who collaborated with the research team on this project, as this is the terminology they collectively decided. When referring to the literature more broadly, the term victim-survivors is used reflecting the researchers’ paradigmatic commitment to survivorship and survivor epistemology.

feedback provided by one of the members of the Lived Experience Committee to the research team during meeting 1 of this project).

1.1.2 Project aims

To our knowledge, this participatory action research (PAR) project is the first internationally to collaborate with both people with lived experience (PWLE) of child abuse in sport and community sport volunteers to examine and address gaps in sport volunteers' capacity to respond to disclosures of child abuse. The research aims to support the development of child safeguarding initiatives in sport that are more inclusive, meaningful, acceptable, and relevant to those most directly affected. Specifically, the project was commissioned to inform the National Centre's research mobilisation strategy, including policy and advocacy, e-learning, and resource development.

The project aimed to co-develop:

1. priority recommendations (herein "actions") to guide decision-makers in the sporting and mainstream child safeguarding sectors to strengthen policies and practices, so that sport volunteers can better *respond* to disclosures of psychological, physical, and sexual abuse within community sport clubs.
2. reflexive principles for participatory action research with victim-survivors of child abuse in sport to inform critical and inclusive safeguarding in sport research.

1.2 Research background

1.2.1 Frequency and disclosures of child abuse in community sport clubs in Australia

This project builds on our team's research on child abuse in community sport, defined as the sexual, physical and psychological abuse of a child (18 and under) by a peer or an adult (a coach, volunteer, parent) within sporting practices, events/ competitions, and the broader sporting environment (e.g. travels/ camps etc) (Pankowiak et al., 2022). Our research established that: 1/ child abuse in sport clubs in Australia is frequent (Pankowiak et al., 2022), 2/ children's disclosures of their experiences of abuse in sport are rare (Woessner et al., 2023), and 3/ when disclosures do occur, young people are often dismissed, including through adults' normalisation of interpersonal boundary crossings and abusive behaviours in sport (Woessner et al., 2023). Victim-survivors accounts of their disclosures also suggested that community sport clubs lack procedures and skills to respond appropriately and, in a trauma-informed way, both interpersonally and organisationally, to young people's disclosures of abuse (Woessner et al., 2023).

This project directly builds on our more recent work across two complementary research streams. The first stream (See 1.2.2) includes two studies drawing on the COM-B model of behaviour change, aiming to assess and improve Australian community sport volunteers' capabilities (C), opportunities (O), and motivations (M) to effectively respond to disclosures of

children's experiences of diverse forms of abuse in sport (the target behaviour, B). This included a national survey assessing volunteers' COMs (Woessner, Parker, et al., 2026), and a pilot evaluation of a theory-based educational workshop designed to strengthen volunteers' response to abuse in sport (Woessner, Pankowiak, et al., 2026). The second stream (see 1.2.3) focuses on critical, methodological reflexive inquiry aimed at developing a framework for PAR with survivors of abuse in sport. This framework is intended to guide our own research practices and to encourage more equitable and collaborative approaches in research policy and practice, directly informed by the struggles of survivors in sport (Pankowiak, 2025). These two streams informed the aims and conduct of this project.

1.2.2 Sport volunteers' capacity to appropriately respond to child abuse in sport

Our national survey assessing the readiness of sport volunteers to respond to child abuse in sport clubs (Woessner et al., 2023) showed that while the majority of volunteers surveyed reported strong personal motivation to appropriately support a child disclosing abuse in sport, there were critical gaps in volunteers' capabilities (skills and knowledge) and opportunities (organisational/ social support) to do so. [A detailed summary of this study is provided in Appendix A, with easy-to-understand infographics, which were co-developed with the LEC and provided in Appendix B.] Fewer than half of respondents reported being able to apply trauma-informed responses to disclosures, and, of concern, 20% still believed children could lie about abuse, despite evidence that false disclosures are very rare. The organisational, social and cultural environment within clubs was a key barrier to volunteers' effective responses and included fear of repercussions for raising concerns about a child, actual experiences of retaliation, lack of trust in sport organisations' reporting systems, and lack of sport-specific child safeguarding training.

Combined with already low disclosure rates among children (Woessner et al., 2023), these findings point to critical gaps in current safeguarding practices in community sport in Australia. They highlight an urgent need for survivor-inclusive action by decision-makers across mainstream child safeguarding and sport sectors (Pankowiak, 2025), to ensure that volunteers are equipped and supported to respond effectively to disclosures so that children who experience abuse receive timely support and further harm is prevented. This evidence underpins this collaborative project and the co-development of key priority actions.

1.2.3 Ethical and healing-informed participatory research with people with lived experience of child abuse in sport

The increasing use of participatory action research (PAR)⁴ approaches with communities most concerned by the topic of inquiry reflects long-standing advocacy by groups impacted by interpersonal and structural violence, including survivors of child abuse in sport (Pankowiak, 2025; Rivers-Cochran & Austin, 2025; Shore, 2025). These groups have called for research to be conducted with them rather than on them (Dembele et al., 2024; Dudgeon et al., 2020). Recognising the expertise of PWLE of child abuse is reflected in the [National Centre's Strategic Plan 2025-26](#), as well as in our research team's commitment to centring PWLE of abuse in sport, including the seven members of the Lived Experience Committee (LEC), supported by a Lived Experience Advocate and academically guided by a Survivor-scholar.

Participatory action research has a long history in the social sciences (Fals Borda, 1979; Freire, 1970; Lewin, 1946). It is an overarching approach to research, rather than a specific method, which combines research and action through ongoing, iterative processes of action, reflection, and learning with participants involved as active partners throughout the research process (e.g. in the choice of questions, methods, interpretation and dissemination of the findings), rather than as informants or subjects (Rich et al., 2024). While more pragmatic forms of action-research focus on practical improvements, our work is guided by PAR's emancipatory orientation, which centres those most impacted by structural and interpersonal violence and seeks to shift unjust socio-political conditions (Dudgeon et al., 2020; Orkideh et al., 2026; Wallerstein et al., 2017).

Through PAR, we seek to address and redress not only the betrayal many child abuse survivors have experienced from sport organisations, but also the ongoing structural and epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988), they continue to face. This includes having their experiences discredited or minimised by sporting stakeholders (Vertommen et al., 2024; Woessner et al., 2023), or having their stories used for research without meaningful opportunity to collaborate, and advocate alongside researchers (Pankowiak, 2025). When conducted ethically, PAR can shift these power dynamics by recognising PWLE of abuse in sport as legitimate knowledge holders (Fiolet et al., 2024; Lamb, 2023) and focusing on what needs to change from their lived realities (Pankowiak, 2025). Bringing together lived expertise and practitioner knowledge with critical academic perspectives can strengthen the contextual relevance of research findings (Dembele et al., 2024). In this project, we built on earlier work identifying gaps in volunteers' capacity to respond to disclosures of child abuse in sport (Woessner, Pankowiak, et al., 2026) and developed shared interpretations and recommendations in partnership with survivors, and with input from sport volunteers.

⁴ We use the term PAR in this report to reflect our alignment with the emancipatory tradition associated with Fals Borda and Freire, while recognising the range of related terms now used across disciplines, including community-based/-engaged participatory research, co-production/co-design, lived experience research, citizen/ community science, etc. ((Wallerstein et al., 2017)

While PAR with marginalised communities is not new there is a gap in ethical and methodological reflexive accounts and guidance for PAR with PWLE of child abuse in sport (Pankowiak, 2025), with only a few studies in sport safeguarding policy and education initiatives (Hartill & Jones, 2025; McMahon et al., 2022; Mountjoy et al., 2022). This gap is particularly relevant to child safeguarding research in institutional contexts, where survivors are often harmed not only by individuals, but also by organisational and cultural responses to abuse. It was also informed by the reflections of Aurélie Pankowiak (survivor-scholar) and Ali Quigley (Lived Experience Advocate), on their experiences, both positive and harmful, participating in projects seeking survivor input in sports.

Therefore, a secondary aim of this project was to develop an initial set of reflexive principles for survivor-centred, participatory child safeguarding in sport research, grounded in the contributions of PWLE of child abuse in sport. These principles are not intended to replace the extensive literature that already exist on PAR. Rather, they extend this broader work into the specific context of survivor-centred research in sport. Given the scope of this project, the principles are presented in Appendix D as an initial resource that will be further developed through future survivor-centred research within our research group.

2. Collective Lived Experience Statement

Prior to outlining our collaborative research methodology (section 3), we felt it essential to begin the report with the perspectives of the members of the LEC. Early in our collaboration with the LEC, we collectively agreed that, beyond identifying key actions, it was important to create space for their broader reflections, emotions, and priorities. Through our engagements, we developed a collective statement addressed to the sport sector and decision-makers. Centring their words at the outset of this report honours their truth and pursuit of justice, both personal and collective, and provides crucial context for the findings that follow. We stand in solidarity with their message, which can be read below.

We're a group of people with lived experience of diverse forms of child abuse in Australian sport from the grassroots to the elite level. This is a statement we put together after discussing our impressions of the survey results on sport volunteer's capabilities to recognise and respond to child abuse in community sport in Australia.

Reading the report brought up many emotions. Overall, we're surprised, frustrated and disappointed about the lack of progress on child safeguarding practices in sport, in light of the learnings from the Royal Commission on Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse (2017), and in light of major policy developments including the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (2019) and Sport Integrity Australia's Child Safeguarding Policy (2020). One of us feels like "nothing has changed since the abuse that happened to me back in the 1990's". We agree and feel change is 'too slow'. We recognise that volunteers are at the forefront of sport delivery, that they are asking for more guidance, education and support from club leaders to better respond to children's disclosures. And we're encouraged to see that volunteers are overall motivated to respond to abuse when they see it, this was 'heartening' for some of us to read.

But we're frustrated to realize that volunteers are widely unsupported, especially as "the education piece has been needed for years". We're very worried about 'the fact that some adults still believe that kids lie about child sexual abuse when the evidence clearly indicates the opposite' and 'disappointed that community attitudes have not shifted' and that volunteers' 'passive attitudes still permeate when children raise concerns'. We know that many volunteers have the 'best of intentions and intuition that things might be wrong', but it's saddening to read that 'some don't see caring for a child's wellbeing as their role, or underestimate what they personally could do to contribute to a child's safety'. Volunteers recognize current reporting systems are 'not effective', but there doesn't seem to be evidence that anything is being done to change them: 'if they know it's not effective, who are they approaching to lobby for something better?'

We want to stress how essential it is for sport volunteers to understand that they're not just helping a club out, they have a responsibility for the wellbeing and safeguarding of the community and can make such a positive difference in a young person's life. We want to tell volunteers: not taking any action when a child tells you something because you're scared of what your action may lead to is so much worse than doing something and not getting it 100% correctly. One of us said that: 'part of the trauma and the impact is the fact that no one took action. There were multiple adults in positions of authority who could have prevented and stopped it...people involved really make a true difference, because for me that inaction is half the impact, [beyond] the abuse itself'.

We urge those involved in community sport and its governance to act to provide the tools, structures and leadership for volunteers to be able to recognize the many normalized forms of abuse in sport, and effectively respond in a trauma-informed way, when they witness abusive behaviours. When young people talk to you, listen, believe them, and act. It will change lives.

The Lived Experience Committee Members, including David Lukins, Deb Graham, Helen Wilke, Jade Sharp, Larrissa Rue Haven, Maddy P., and Sophie Moore. With the support of Ali Quigley, Lived Experience Advocate, survivor-scholar Dr Aurélie Pankowiak, and co-authors from The Safe and Inclusive Sport Research team (IHES, Victoria University).

3. Participatory research methodology

To achieve the primary aim of co-developing key priority actions (presented in Section 4) for decision-makers to strengthen support for sport volunteers and improve responses to disclosures of child abuse in sport clubs, we employed a survivor-centred participatory design. As part of this approach (described below), we used the Group-Level Assessment (GLA) method with both the 7-member LEC and a group of sport volunteers.

3.1 Centring people with lived experience of child abuse in Australian sport

3.1.1 Preparing for PAR with survivors of abuse in sport

Preparation for this project began mid-2024, several months before the project formally commenced, and was intentionally resourced. This reflected our commitment to centre the agency, safety, and wellbeing of PWLE, recognising that ethical collaboration with people harmed by institutions requires time for relationship building with care, trust, and appropriate support. Before reaching out to victim-survivors of abuse in sport, the research team developed an ethical, methodological framework, informed by academic literature on PAR, notably Lamb (2023)'s framework, and by AP and AG's reflections on their experiences as lived-experience experts in sport safeguarding projects (Pankowiak, 2025). The framework (approved by Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee) included the development of processes and resources to support informed and safe participation and inclusive decision-making, researcher accountability to the LEC members, and ongoing reflexivity about researcher positionality, relationships with PWLE, and power dynamics between survivor and the sporting institution. This framework and its application throughout the project with the LEC members, informs the project's second output: reflexive principles for participatory research with PWLE of child abuse in sport (see Appendix D).

3.1.2. Establishing the Live Experience Committee

Expression Of Interest (EOI): To ensure participation opportunities extended beyond individuals already known to AQ (Lived Experience Advocate), and AP (lead survivor-scholar), both involved in survivor communities, we widely advertised an EOI, launched early May 2025. We invited all adults (18+) victim of diverse forms of child abuse when playing sport in Australia at all competition levels and advertised through social media (incl. paid ads), and via advocacy organisations and networks. We made intentional efforts to reach diverse survivors through contacting community-specific organisations (e.g., Proud 2 Play advocating for LGBTQ+ inclusion in sport), and by using explicit inclusive language in our communications. The EOI could be accessed through a short online form. The landing page included detailed information about the project, a list of self-reflective questions to support applicants' agency in assessing their availability to participate and what additional support/ accommodations they may need. The EOI form included demographic questions and optional sensitive questions about their experiences in sport to support diversity of representation within the LEC if there were many applicants. Applicants' self-identification as having lived experience of diverse forms of child abuse was accepted without requiring disclosure of abuse.

Initiating trust and connection with interested individuals: Although we initially planned to recruit four to six members, nine eligible individuals submitted EOIs and we decided to contact them all to accommodate participation, using their preferred mode of communication (email or phone). From the outset, we sought to reduce the hierarchical and procedural tone often associated with academic research by communicating with warmth, openness, and transparency. Trust-building was prioritised through timely and clear communication, and all

individuals were offered the opportunity to engage in one-to-one conversations with the research team, which two participants chose to do. We consistently emphasised that participation was voluntary, that individuals could withdraw from the project at any time without consequence. It was important for the lead of the project, also a public survivor of CSA in sport, to contact interested individuals to establish trust and connection. We provided everyone with a suite of project documents underpinning the framework and our reflexive principles (see 3.1.1 and Appendix D) and encouraged them to take time to reflect before deciding and to return to us with any questions, concerns or any accommodations they might require, recognising the potential impacts of trauma and related psychosocial disabilities. One individual did not respond to initial contact, another chose not to proceed following an initial telephone conversation, and a follow-up. Seven PWLE of child abuse in sport joined the LEC.

3.1.3 The Lived Experience Committee

This project was conducted in collaboration with David Lukins, Deb Graham, Helen Wilke, Jade Sharp, Larrissa Rue Haven, Maddy P., and Sophie Moore; six women and one man. Most of them (n=4) were between 36-45 years, in addition to two younger members (18-35 years), and one older member. Some members identified as having a disability, and as being a member of the LGBTQI+ community. No member identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, or as being from a culturally and racially marginalised (CARM) group.

All seven members experienced psychological and physical abuse, and six also experienced sexual abuse (with one outside of sport) during their sporting participation/ career. These experiences happened in five different sports (with three in the same sport). In terms of level of competition: one member participated at the local club level; one competed at the state level; one at the national level; and four at the international level. Among those who competed at higher level, two reported experiencing abuse at both grassroots and high-performance levels. In total, three members reported experiencing abuse at the community sport level. Some members also brought their recent/ ongoing experiences as coaches, sport administrators, athletes, as well as individuals not involved in organised sport at all anymore.

3.1.4 Partnering with the LEC

Our research team's collaboration with the seven LEC members started in July 2025 and primarily took place during online workshop/meetings (Microsoft Teams), accompanied by email communication related to project activities and emerging opportunities for engagement in safeguarding initiatives in sport. A total of 8 meetings took place including six (July-Nov 2025) specifically focussed on establishing connection and developing the recommendations presented in section 4.

Using the Group Level Assessment Method to co-develop the recommendations.

The LEC meetings were facilitated by MW, AP and AQ, and comprised two core components: an open-ended rapport building discussion, and a second more structured discussion on idea generation. Relationship building included ice-breaker activities, project updates, and open-ended discussions intended to create space for members to share

reflections, feelings, or concerns related to the project or to external events. The structured group activities were facilitated by the Group-Level Assessment (GLA) method and vignettes (hypothetical scenarios) to support the co-development of priority actions and to inform the reflexive principles for participatory research with survivors of abuse in sport. The GLA method is a widely applied PAR method (Vaughn et al. 2025), which aims to generate ideas around a particular problem (in our case, sport volunteers' response to instances of child abuse in clubs) with key stakeholders' groups, facilitate interpretations and develop priority actions from these ideas. It entails 7 steps: 1/ climate setting, 2/ idea generating, 3/ ideas appreciating, 4/ reflecting, 5/ understanding/ analysis, 6/ key ideas selection, 7/ action prioritisation (Vaughn, 2025). Aligning with the emancipatory goals of the research, we adapted and applied the method sequentially across the meetings (summarised in Figure 2) centring the engagement of the LEC committee first, and sport volunteers second (see 3.2).

Following each meeting, the research team prepared a concise written summary of key discussion points, representing a rapid form of thematic analysis. These summaries were shared with LEC members for verification, clarification, and additional input, with the goal to facilitate reflection, understanding and key ideas selection (GLA step 4, 5 and 6). Throughout this process, the role of the research team was to facilitate the articulation of LEC members' perspectives and to ensure their views were accurately interpreted and reported. This involved actively seeking feedback on emerging ideas and on successive drafts of the priority actions. This collaborative approach directly informed the collective statement addressed to decision-makers (Section 2 of this report), the list of priority actions (Section 4), and other key decisions such as for exemplifying collectively deciding "Lived Experience Committee of child abuse in sport" as a group name, and to be publicly named. These are outcomes of the LEC's sustained commitment and engagement in the project.

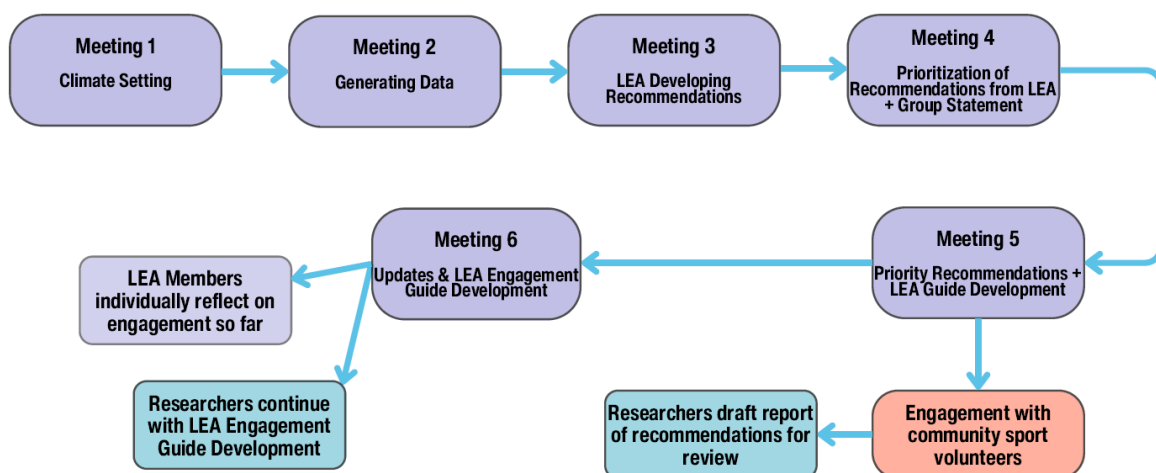


Figure 1. Overview of the Groupe Level Assessment methods implemented across meetings 1 to 6 with the seven LEC members

Facilitating emerging opportunities for survivor input in safeguarding initiatives

Aligned with our commitment to critical, emancipatory research with survivors of abuse in sport, and in response to LEC members' concerns that the recommendations may not be acted upon (see sections 1.1.1 and 2), we sought to facilitate additional opportunities for their input when these arose. These included notably 1/ Opportunities for the LEC to provide feedback on the Play By The Rules Child Safeguarding online course, 2/ Advocating for LEC members to be provided an option for anonymous feedback on Sport Integrity Australia, Child Safeguarding and Complaint policies, 3/ involvement in the Media release (see Appendix C).

Two additional online workshops were held in February and April 2026 to plan broader dissemination of the study and associated recommendations. A further two meetings are scheduled (July-August 2026), following the delivery of this report to the National Centre, to close the project and reflect on and evaluate our collaboration. All LEC members have remained engaged throughout the project and have expressed interest in continued involvement in the implementation of the recommendations.

3.2. Input from community sport volunteers on the initial set of priority actions

3.2.1 Community sport volunteers' recruitment

In addition to centring PWLE of child abuse in sport, we also recognised the importance of including community sport volunteers' perspectives. Australian research demonstrates that volunteers' input are often under-represented in sport development (Mountifield, 2024), although efforts are being made to address this gap (e.g. Australian Sports Commission's Sport Volunteer Coalition Action Plan)⁵. As community sport volunteers are often extremely time-poor, balancing employment, parenting or other caring responsibilities, and their volunteer roles in sport (Donaldson et al., 2021; Innes et al., 2025), we made two key decisions to maximise participation in this project. First, we contacted community sport volunteers who participated in the national survey and had provided their contact details for future involvement in child safeguarding research. Second, we adapted the Group-Level Assessment (GLA) method so that it could be delivered within one or two 90-minute workshop, with the option of an additional meeting.

We contacted approx. 50 sport volunteers via email. The email included a participant information sheet outlining the project, the terms of safety and engagement, and the available support resources. We were also explicit that the project was grounded in a social justice approach and explained that discussions would be informed by our collaboration with the LEC, including the priority action they identified, and that as a result, their full anonymity could not be guaranteed. We also made it clear that, if potentially problematic views were expressed

⁵ <https://www.ausport.gov.au/volunteering/sport-volunteer-coalition-action-plan>

during discussions, for example, perspectives that normalised violence or minimised the experiences of victim-survivors, the research team would respectfully and gently challenge these assumptions. This approach was explained as consistent with the project's social justice orientation and values.

3.2.1 The recruited sport volunteers

Seven sport volunteers responded to the initial email, and all agreed to take part in the project. The group was composed of 5 women and 2 men, aged between 40-69 years, who resided in five different states (2 regionally) and were employed in diverse sectors (2 in sport and recreation, 3 in health and 2 in the private sector). They volunteered in 6 unique sports, and had different roles across governance, coaching/officiating, with one volunteer in a child safeguarding role.

3.2.3 Collaboration with the sport volunteers

Due to the difficulty of finding a single time that suited all seven volunteers, our research team scheduled two separate 90-minute meetings at the end of October 2025, each involving three volunteers. These meetings were facilitated by MNW, AP, and AQ. One volunteer who was unavailable throughout October met with us individually in early November 2025, contributing their reflections and building on the ideas generated in the two group meetings.

In line with our commitment to prioritising the LEC, we met with the committee before beginning engagement with the volunteers. We shared the number and profile of the sport volunteers who had agreed to participate, and we reiterated that we asked the volunteers to approach this project as reflexively as possible, given the possibility that LEC members might join the sessions. We also explained the difficulty of finding a common meeting time with volunteers and why the sessions had needed to be scheduled quickly. We offered LEC members the option to attend the volunteer workshops if they wanted to contribute directly and ensure their perspectives were represented, explaining that, at a minimum, AQ would attend as a representative, and would intervene if needed to ensure LEC views and values were upheld. All LEC members agreed that Ali would attend on their behalf, and none chose to join the volunteer meetings directly.

Our meetings with the sport volunteers followed the adapted GLA method, beginning with ice-breaker activities to build rapport, followed by idea generation and prioritisation. We provided volunteers with a document in advance that integrated the survey findings and the LEC's group statement and priority recommendations. This document formed the evidence base for our discussions. This process led to the co-development of the list of priority actions presented in the section 4.

3.2.4 Integration of priority actions

As a result of the GLA workshops with both the LEC and the sport volunteers, two lists of key priority actions were developed. To support readability and ensure clarity for stakeholders, MWN and AR (research assistant) conducted a content analysis of the two lists and

consolidated them into a single set of actions. The consolidated priority actions were then formulated by considering who we assume should hold responsibility for each action, based on existing literature on the Australian sport sector and sport governance more broadly, and our team's diverse experience working with a wide range of sport stakeholders. This process resulted in a final set of key actions, and the full report was reviewed by LEC members who validated the final list, providing small edits to the wording of the recommendations.

4. Co-developed key priority actions for the sport and mainstream child safeguarding sectors to improve appropriate response to people victim of abuse in sport

The priority actions are presented below and addressed to three stakeholders' groups: 4.1. Sport volunteers, 4.2. Sport governing bodies, including clubs, State Sport Associations (SSAs), and National Sport Organisations (NSOs), and 4.3 Government agencies, including those operating within the mainstream child-safeguarding sector.

As introduced in section 1.1., these priority actions should be read not as aspirational suggestions, but as **urgent actions for the sporting sector and related child safeguarding stakeholders**. Our findings, together with the LEC's insights and collective statement (see 2.) and the input of community sport volunteers, show that current gaps in volunteers' capabilities, organisational support, and reporting systems can leave children unheard, unsupported, and at continued risk of harm. When individuals and organisations do not respond appropriately to child abuse, the harmful consequences of the abuse itself are compounded by harmful responses, contributing to lifelong harm, and allow abusive behaviours to remain unaddressed and normalised within sporting environments.

Implementing these actions in a survivor-inclusive manner offers urgent, practical pathways towards safer, more responsive and more trauma-informed sporting cultures for children, young people, victim-survivors, and the adults responsible for their wellbeing.

4.1. What can sport volunteers do?

- Club volunteers should openly communicate about and increase the visibility of child safe policies, practices and adults in key child safeguarding roles in their club. This can be as simple as sending a monthly email, holding a start of season session, or posting signage in physical and online spaces (e.g. social media page/ website).
- Club volunteers should ensure children's voices are heard and hold influence over decision making power within the club, in accordance with the **National Principles for**

Child Safe Organisations – Principle 2 (e.g. developing a youth committee or opening a suggestion box for club members to anonymously leave suggestions).

- Club volunteers should upskill themselves and others in how to recognise diverse types of child abuse within the sport setting. Examples of free and self-paced/ bespoke short courses and resources include:
 - The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse **short courses** and **resources**. While usually focussed on child sexual abuse, these resources can inform responses to psychological and physical abuse, and core principles should be adapted to the specific context of the sport club.
 - Play by the Rules also offers a series of **eLearning & Scenarios**, including specifically on child safeguarding in sport clubs.

4.2. What can clubs, State Sport Associations/ Organisations (SSA/Os), National Sport Organisations (NSOs), peak sporting bodies do?

- **Education:** Sport peak and governing bodies (SGBs) should develop, evaluate and update educational initiatives for theoretical/ practical knowledge and skills' development that are accessible and easy to use for volunteers (including guidelines, ongoing training, recall of information with visual aids) and that aim to increase:
 - volunteer's ability to recognise all forms of abusive/ inappropriate behaviours (this should include deconstructing normalised behaviours in sport and provide very clear and concrete examples of what this looks like in practice),
 - volunteers' knowledge and ability to understand/ application of trauma-informed principles when responding to a child telling them about abusive behaviours (e.g., listen, believe, support and act),
 - volunteer ability to know what to say and do to when a concerning/ harmful behaviour is reported but is not covered by Sport Integrity Australia / the Sport Child Safeguarding Policy and has to be dealt with 'in house'
 - volunteer understanding of their power over children and power dynamics between peers (including physical and emotional boundaries, safe touch, communication etc.),
 - volunteers' understanding of relational (professional, emotional, physical e.g. 'safe touch') boundaries
- SGBs should **create case studies** (individuals/ community sport clubs) showing good examples of a culture promoting disclosures and effective response to child abuse in sport.
- SGBs should **create and evaluate campaigns that include the stories and views of people with lived experience of child abuse in sport**, and aim to:
 - Bust two harmful myths:

a/ Myth: children lie about abuse; Fact: it is extremely rare for children to lie about abuse

b/ Myth: making a mistake or saying something wrong when addressing abusive behaviours towards a child is worse than not taking action; Fact: taking action, even if wrong or making a mistake, is better than leaving a child in an abusive situation.

- Demystify the language of 'abuse' to volunteers while not minimising the potential of abusive behaviours for harm.
- **Give financial and strategic** priority to promoting effective identification/ responses to child safety concerns by volunteers in community sport (which necessarily includes evaluation).
- Review the extent to which **child safeguarding/ wellbeing is embedded within the structure of individual sports** (NSOs /SSA/Os / Club levels), including the following elements: how trauma-informed response is encouraged in all clubs, role overlap (Child Safeguarding Officers/ Member Protections Information Officers/ Child wellbeing), whether codes of conduct in diverse roles are embedding duties to effective response to child abuse, and sport-specific members' beliefs towards a culture of disclosure.
- **Very clearly, visibly and frequently communicate the process of raising concerns about a child** to parents and volunteers (process, support, outcomes, consequences etc.) through diverse medium (email/ social media communication, in visuals through posters and banners, in on-boarding new volunteers).
- **Leaders should model safe and appropriate relationships with children**, especially leaders in sport clubs (e.g., board member, president, secretary etc), including taking responsibility for their own training in the space, and acknowledging everyone is responsible for the wellbeing of children and promoting a culture of disclosure.

4.3 What can government agencies and mainstream child safeguarding organisation stakeholders do?

- **Evaluate the application of the national working with children check** to ensure it is tailored to sport, with no exemption for sport volunteers, and embeds required education on child abuse in sport within the process.
- **Evaluate and strengthen regulatory mechanisms** to ensure community sport organisations are accountable for implementing child safe standards, including through regular auditing and transparent reporting of child safeguarding concerns, responses, and outcomes.

- **Ensure child abuse reports in sport can be assessed and investigated independently** (outside of sporting organisations), including by reviewing Sport Integrity Australia’s jurisdiction and establishing appropriate independent pathways for sports not signed up to the National Integrity Framework.
- **Cross sector collaboration should be a national priority:** The sport sector should collaborate with other more advanced/ specialist sectors to support staff/ volunteers to recognise/ respond to child abuse.

5. Next Steps and Conclusions

Through collaboration with seven individuals with lived experience of child abuse in sport and the input of seven community sport volunteers, this project co-developed a set of key priority actions (section 4) to guide decision-makers in the sporting and mainstream child safeguarding sectors, including the National Centre, in improving sport volunteers’ capacity to respond to disclosures of child abuse in community sport. These recommendations were informed by our national survey of sport volunteers, which assessed volunteers’ capabilities, opportunities, and motivations to respond to disclosures of child abuse in community sport across Australia (Woessner, Parker, et al., 2026). The priority actions are directed at three groups: 1/ Sport volunteers, 2/ Governing bodies, including community clubs’ governance, SSAs/ SSOs, and NSOs, and 3/ Government agencies and organisations responsible for child safeguarding more broadly.

Through this project, our team has established what we believe to be a strong and ongoing collaboration with the Lived Experience Committee (LEC). We continue to reflect on and evaluate our collaboration and processes, and we will be conducting additional evaluative research with LEC members to better understand their experiences in the project and views on PAR on child safeguarding in sport.

Looking ahead, **it is imperative that the priority actions emerging from this project are progressed beyond the research setting.** Existing scholarship, as well as the extensive testimonies shared publicly by victim-survivors, consistently demonstrates that formal legal avenues seldom deliver a sense of justice or redress. In this context, many individuals derive meaning, agency and a form of social justice through involvement in initiatives that seek to reform or transform the institutions responsible for their harm, such as PAR projects, e.g. Fiolet et al. (2024).

Accordingly, and grounded in both the pursuit of justice for victim-survivors and the broader imperative to safeguard the wellbeing of current and future young participants in Australian sport, it is essential that the National Centre and the sporting sector demonstrate a clear

commitment to implementing the co-developed priority actions and responding substantively to the LEC's collective statement. Such action represents not only an ethical obligation but a necessary step toward system-level change.

The implementation of the recommendations set out in this report will be shaped by the context in which they are taken forward. Sport is a highly autonomous and under-regulated sector (Greenhow & Raj, 2020), and in Australia, it is also a deeply embedded cultural institution (Ward, 2013). These features make system and cultural change challenging and slow. For this reason, actions need to be multi-level and coordinated across multiple actors and organisations, supported by the advocacy of leading child safeguarding organisations, such as the National Centre, and developed in collaboration with people with lived experience of abuse in sport, and stakeholders within sporting organisations who are willing to drive change.

Finally, outside of this research project and Ali Quigley's broader advocacy work for victim-survivors in sport in Australia, we are not aware of any other initiative in Australia that partners with PWLE of abuse in sport, making this project a particularly novel contribution. As outlined in the introduction, when collaboration with PWLE is conducted safely and authentically, their involvement can be a powerful mechanism for change, both for victim-survivors themselves and for the institutions that have caused harm. It is therefore essential that action in this area continues.

APPENDIX A – Summary of our national survey assessing sport volunteers’ readiness to respond to child abuse in sport (Woessner, Pankowiak et al., 2026)

This study published in the Journal of Interpersonal Violence formed the evidence base for this project. Easy to understand infographics co-developed with the Lived Experience Committee can be found in Appendix B.

Study Reference: Woessner, M. N., Parker, A. G., McLachlan, F., & Pankowiak, A. (2026). The Capabilities, Opportunities and Motivations of Sport Volunteers to Respond to Child Abuse: Results From a National Survey in Australia. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 0. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605251413520>

Aims

The aim of the study was to assess Australian community sport volunteers’ current capabilities, opportunities and motivations to respond to child abuse in sport. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first study of its kind internationally. Such baseline data is needed to develop prevention strategies that are tailored to the specific context, knowledge, skills and attitudes of sport volunteers.

Methodology

The research team developed a tailored questionnaire based on the COM-B theory of behaviour change. The theory posits that in order for an individual to perform a behaviour (B) (in the case of this project, an effective response to a disclosure of child abuse), they need the capabilities (C, confidence/competence), the opportunities (O, external support from people and resources) and motivation (M, internal motivation and intention) to respond. The initial questionnaire was piloted with community sport volunteers and participants prior to survey dissemination. Over 300 responses to the survey were recorded in late 2024, with 218 individuals completing the full questionnaire. The questionnaire included background questions (demographics, sport participation profile, volunteer roles and experience, education and employment) as well as three subsections on capabilities, opportunities, and motivations for effectively responding to child abuse in sport.

Analysis

All questionnaire responses were analysed using SPSS (Version 29). Frequencies were calculated for participant demographics and agreement levels (‘strongly agree’ and ‘agree’) on all Capabilities (C), Opportunities (O), and Motivation (M) items. Mean scores for each sub-factor (C=10 items, O=10, M=17) were calculated by summing item scores and dividing by the number of items, producing scores between 1 and 5. Group differences across demographic variables (gender, sport participation history, and volunteer role) were assessed using two-way independent samples t-tests ($p < 0.05$) on sub-factor means and the total COM score.

Key Findings

The volunteers reported having high motivations to respond to child abuse in sport, but less capabilities, and opportunities to do so.

• Capabilities

- ◆ The percentage of respondents agreeing that they had the capabilities to respond to a child disclosing to them was generally high, but only a small proportion (15-35%) “strongly” agreed, with most volunteers stating that they only “agreed”, suggesting they are not fully confident.
- ◆ Volunteers’ lowest capabilities were those related to trauma-informed care, with less than half of the respondents knowing what a trauma-informed response is and even fewer agreeing that they could apply trauma-informed principles when responding to a child disclosing abuse to them.
- ◆ 20% of respondents did not agree with the statement that it is very rare for children to lie about being abused.

• Opportunities

- ◆ Only 55% of respondents believed their sport club makes it clear that responding to abuse is part of their role.
- ◆ 20% felt they could face repercussions if they raised an issue of child abuse in their club.
- ◆ Less than 40% of respondents agree that the current system for reporting child abuse in sport is effective.
- ◆ Many of the qualitative comments highlighted the absence of any sport specific education or training opportunities.

• Motivations

- ◆ The volunteer community (85%) agreed that knowing how to respond to child abuse was part of their role. This also means that 15% do not believe that it’s their role.
- ◆ Many of the qualitative comments indicated how volunteers’ moral responsibility or lived experience inspired their beliefs and actions related to child abuse in sport.

• Demographic and sport experience relationship to COMs

- ◆ Opportunities were significantly higher for those volunteers who held committee roles or those who identified as men.
- ◆ Volunteers in safeguarding or member protection roles had significantly higher scores across all COMs elements than other volunteers.
- ◆ Volunteers who had recently completed safeguarding education course also had higher COMs compared to those who had not.

- ◆ Qualitative responses to the survey did suggest that many volunteers felt that much of their skills and knowledge came from their professional roles in sectors outside of sport (education, health, etc).

Implications

The findings reveal several strengths as well as critical gaps in the community sport sector's readiness to respond to child abuse in sport. Most notably, trauma-informed care emerged as the area of greatest concern, with less than half of respondents able to identify or apply trauma-informed responses. This reflects a need for urgent, targeted education and support to build foundational safeguarding knowledge among volunteers and staff.

While general agreement with safeguarding capabilities was high, the lack of strong agreement suggests confidence is shallow, potentially undermining the effectiveness of safeguarding responses in practice. Alarming, 20% of respondents expressed scepticism about the rarity of false abuse disclosures, pointing to lingering beliefs that may inhibit swift and supportive actions.

The perceived absence of both social and structural support (organisational policies and sport club culture) for volunteers is something that needs to be urgently addressed by the broader sport and government sectors. Only 55% of volunteers felt their club made it clear that responding to abuse is part of their role, and one in five feared repercussions if they raised concerns of child abuse in their club, with some sharing actual repercussions they had experienced. Coupling this sport climate, with the established low rates of disclosures by children paints a worrying picture for how many children's experiences of abuse remain undisclosed, or unsupported and silenced. The current reporting systems were seen as ineffective by the majority volunteers, and qualitative feedback pointed to an absence of sport-specific training for the volunteers.

The data also revealed disparities in opportunities to effectively respond to child abuse, based on volunteer role and gender. Club committee members reported greater access to information and perceived ability to act on child abuse, and men reported higher levels of opportunities than women. These findings highlight potential inequities in training access, influence, and support, and point to the continued need to address power imbalances (in gender, roles, etc.) within clubs to enable all volunteers to be effective responders to child abuse.

Despite these challenges, there is a strong moral drive among the volunteer community, with 85% agreeing that responding to child abuse is part of their role. Many are motivated by a personal sense of responsibility or lived experience. Harnessing this motivation, while addressing gaps in capabilities, opportunities, and systemic support, is vital for creating safer sporting environments for children.

APPENDIX B – Infographics of Woessner, Pankowiak et al. (2026) key findings

These infographics were co-developed with the Lived Experience Committee and informed the media release of the study and subsequent study dissemination activities.



Figure 1. Infographics of key study findings (Woessner, Pankowiak et al. 2026), co-developed with the Lived Experience Committee



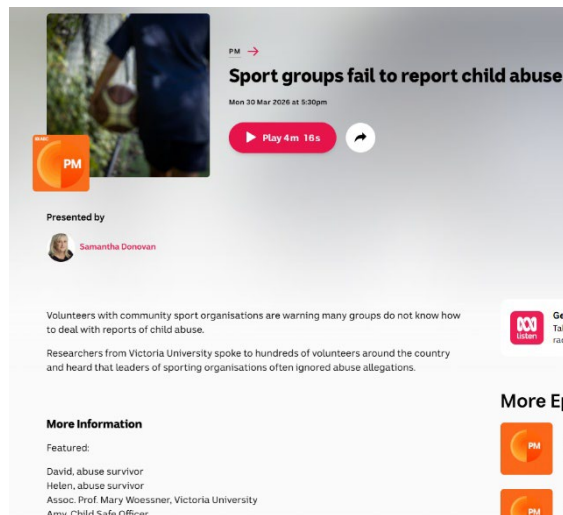
Figure 2. Infographics of priority actions for change in sport to improve responses to child abuse in community clubs, co-developed with the Lived Experience Committee

APPENDIX C – Media Release

The study findings (Woessner, Pankowiak et al. 2026) was disseminated through diverse medium, with the contribution and participation of the LEC.

ABC News Radio segment

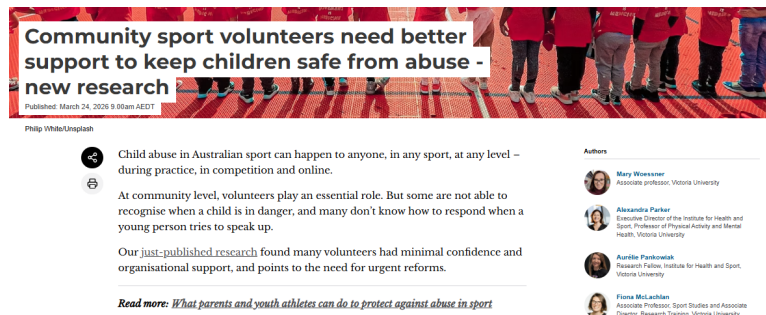
<https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/pm/sport-groups-fail-to-report-child-abuse-106513634>



The screenshot shows a radio player interface for the segment "Sport groups fail to report child abuse" on the PM program. It includes a play button, a duration of 4m 18s, and a share icon. The presenter is Samantha Donovan. The main text reads: "Volunteers with community sport organisations are warning many groups do not know how to deal with reports of child abuse. Researchers from Victoria University spoke to hundreds of volunteers around the country and heard that leaders of sporting organisations often ignored abuse allegations." A "More Information" section lists featured individuals: David, abuse survivor; Helen, abuse survivor; Assoc. Prof. Mary Woessner, Victoria University; and Amy, Child Safe Officer. There are also "More Episodes" listed below.

Article in The Conversation

<https://theconversation.com/community-sport-volunteers-need-better-support-to-keep-children-safe-from-abuse-new-research-278199>



The screenshot shows the top of an article on "The Conversation" website. The title is "Community sport volunteers need better support to keep children safe from abuse - new research". The author is Philip White/Unsplash. The article text begins: "Child abuse in Australian sport can happen to anyone, in any sport, at any level – during practice, in competition and online. At community level, volunteers play an essential role. But some are not able to recognise when a child is in danger, and many don't know how to respond when a young person tries to speak up. Our just-published research found many volunteers had minimal confidence and organisational support, and points to the need for urgent reforms." A "Read more" link is provided: "What parents and youth athletes can do to protect against abuse in sport". A list of authors is also visible, including Mary Woessner, Alexandra Parker, Aurlene Pankowiak, and Fiona McLachlan.

Blog spotlight by the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse, during National Volunteering Week 2026

<https://nationalcentre.org.au/blog/volunteers-want-to-protect-children-from-abuse-but-need-stronger-systems-to-support-them/>



The screenshot shows a blog post from the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse. The title is "Volunteers want to protect children from abuse but need stronger systems to support them". The page features a navigation menu with "Our Work", "Lived Experience", "Resources", "Knowledge Hub", "News", and "Help & Support". Below the title, there are three tags: "Research", "Victims & Survivors", and "Workforce". The background image shows a group of people, likely volunteers, in an outdoor setting.

APPENDIX D – Initial reflexive principles for participatory action research with victim-survivors/ people with lived experience of child abuse in sport

Purpose:

This document presents initial reflexive principles for participatory action research (PAR) with victim-survivors/ people with lived experience (PWLE) of child abuse in sport. These principles are not intended to replace existing academic literature and research guidance on PAR and trauma-informed research practice (see section 1.2.3. including relevant references). Rather, they offer a set of initial reflexive survivor-centred considerations emerging from the context of this project, including the collaboration between the research team, including Aurélie Pankowiak, a sport survivor-scholar, and the seven members of the Lived Experience Committee (LEC), guided by Ali Quigley as Lived Experience Advocate, including: David Lukins, Deb Graham, Helen Wilke, Jade Sharp, Larrissa Rue Haven, Maddy P., and Sophie Moore

Principles are presented here as an initial resource supporting ethical, healing and trauma-informed, meaningful PAR, that will be further developed through future survivor-centred PAR research in safeguarding in sport within our Safe and Inclusive Research Group (Institute for Health and Sport, Victoria University). Through these principles, we hope to empower researchers to conduct this mode of critical, action-oriented collaborative investigation, whilst also recognising the relational considerations, and the institutional and conceptual challenges it raises. We encourage researchers to transparently acknowledge these barriers, anticipate adverse effects, and plan how they might be overcome or addressed in future work.

The principles are informed by:

- academic and grey literature on participatory action research with marginalised communities, including victim-survivors of sexual abuse, notably Lamb (2023);
- reflections by survivor-scholar, Aurélie Pankowiak, and Lived Experience Advocate, Ali Quigley, on their experiences, both positive and harmful, participating as survivor-advocate/ survivor-scholars in sport safeguarding initiatives;
- the application of project's ethical and methodological framework including a series of supporting documents for both the Lived Experience Committee and the researchers,
- ongoing reflections and contributions from the LEC throughout this project.

Table 1. Initial reflexive principles for healing-informed participatory safeguarding in sport research with victim-survivors of child abuse in sport

Principle	What it means	Example from this project
Researcher preparedness	Researchers should prepare themselves and their team to collaborate safely and relationally with victim-survivors of abuse in sport, including by investing time and resources in the development of relevant knowledge and skills, governance structures, support processes, and a shared commitment to the principles guiding the work. This preparation should remain open to feedback and adaptation throughout the project.	Before contacting the Lived Experience Committee (LEC) members, the research team extensively reviewed PAR literature, took relevant training in trauma-informed care practice, developed a suite of project documents and reflexive tools, and established processes to support safe and meaningful collaboration with survivors of abuse in Australian sport.
Ongoing reflexivity, with attention to power.	Researchers should reflect on power dynamics before and throughout the project, including their own positionality, relationships with sport organisations, the power structures in academia and sport institutions, and power dynamics within the research team itself. This includes attending to hierarchies between senior and junior researchers, researchers with and without lived experience, and those whose lived experience may or may not be publicly visible or institutionally recognised. It also includes being transparent with the partnering survivors about the project's constraints, decision-making processes, and the extent to which power can truly be shared.	The project addressed power dynamics by engaging a Lived Experience Advocate, centring the LEC before engaging sport volunteers, and openly discussing with LEC members what different sport organisations might represent for them. These reflections informed how engagement with sport stakeholders was planned and adapted.
Critically valuing lived experience as expertise	Survivors' lived experience knowledge should be recognised as a legitimate form of expertise, not only as a source of data. This recognition should be material, epistemic, and relational, including through meaningful involvement in diverse research processes (e.g., data interpretation/ dissemination), visible acknowledgement, and appropriate financial compensation. At the same time, researchers should recognise that survivor communities are not a monolith, and that lived experience knowledge is diverse and shaped by social and political contexts.	LEC members were financially compensated, acknowledged as collaborators, and involved in shaping the collective statement, priority actions, dissemination materials, and broader interpretation of the project findings, including as co-authors of this report.
Intersectionality	Participatory research should actively consider who is included, who may be excluded, and what	The EOI was advertised widely through social media, paid advertising, advocacy organisations, and

	<p>accommodations are needed for meaningful participation. Researchers should seek and value diverse perspectives across identities, experiences, and systems of oppression, including gender, sexuality, disability, neurodivergence, First Nations identity, cultural background, migration/refugee background, and level of sport participation.</p>	<p>community-specific networks. Applicants were also invited to identify accommodations or support needs, and demographic questions were included to support diversity of representation if there were many applicants. Researchers reflected on future strategies to respectfully partner with diverse survivors of child abuse in Australian sport.</p>
Recognition of survivor legacy and acknowledgement of harm	<p>Researchers should recognise the long, but under-documented history of survivor advocacy in sport, and the ways institutions, including sport and academia, have caused, ignored, or compounded harm. This recognition can occur publicly and privately, and should inform how the project is framed, conducted, and communicated.</p>	<p>The report includes a recognition of lived experience and begins with the LEC's Collective Lived Experience Statement, creating public space for survivors' feelings, priorities, and calls for change. Survivor advocacy and institutional harm were also acknowledged in conference and dissemination activities.</p>
Transparency	<p>Where full collaboration from the onset of the project, including in shaping the research aims, is not possible, researchers should clearly communicate the project's aims, scope, material constraints such as timelines and funding, and, importantly, the extent to which participants can meaningfully influence decision-making. Transparency is key to establishing safety and trust, so that everyone involved can understand who is involved, where power sits, and whether the collaboration is authentic or tokenistic.</p>	<p>Our team intended to communicate with full transparency about the role of the National Centre, and what the project could and could not influence. LEC members were also kept informed about emerging dissemination and opportunities for input in other safeguarding in sport initiatives.</p>
Agency, autonomy, and choice	<p>Survivors should be supported to make informed choices about whether and how they participate. Alongside transparency, agency, autonomy, and choice are central principles, particularly because child abuse involves profound violations of a child's agency and boundaries. This requires clear information, ongoing consent, and respect for boundaries, including the right to step back, withdraw, ask for accommodations, or choose how publicly they are identified. Researchers should not assume that trauma reduces survivors' capacity to make decisions about their own participation. Instead, a strengths-based approach should recognise</p>	<p>LEC members were often reminded that participation was voluntary and that they could adjust their involvement. The choice to remain anonymous or be publicly named in dissemination outputs was discussed in group meetings and one-on-one conversations, including the possible implications of being named in a public report.</p>

	survivors' capacities, rights, identities, skills, and survivorship.	
Centre the quality of the relationship: safety, care and open communication	Participatory research is deeply relational. Trust-building, psychological and relational safety, clear and open communication, and time for connection are integral parts of this research approach. Researchers should commit time and resource to create conditions where people feel valued, heard, and able to participate safely.	Early meetings included time for rapport-building, check-ins, and open discussion before moving into structured research activities. The Terms of Safety and Engagement stated the aim of keeping the space safe, and inclusive for everyone, while being open to critical feedback and disagreements.
Accountability	In survivor-centred PAR, researchers are accountable to survivor collaborators. This means taking responsibility for decisions and actions, explaining changes and constraints, inviting feedback and critique, and making formal complaint or feedback pathways clear and accessible.	Across meetings and email communications, the research team encouraged LEC members to provide feedback, raise concerns, and ask questions. Project documents also outlined available processes for support, feedback, and complaints about researcher conduct.
Assume disagreement, discomfort and the need for repair	Even when "do no harm" is prioritised, disagreement, miscommunication, discomfort, or hurt may occur, especially where significant power differences exist (with researchers/ sport stakeholders), and when the research seeks to unpack and address power dynamics. Researchers should treat this as something to anticipate, respond to, and repair through open communication, follow-up, and accountability.	Before the volunteer workshops, we explained that the project was grounded in a social justice approach and that if views were expressed that normalised violence or minimised survivors' experiences, the research team would respectfully and gently challenge these assumptions. This helped set expectations that discomfort or disagreement could arise and would be worked through in line with the project's values.
Use trauma-informed, healing-oriented, and neurodiversity-affirming practice	In line with a strengths-based and inclusive approach, neurodiversity-affirming practice can also help avoid pathologising survivors' ways of communicating, responding, or processing information. Instead, emotional reactions or different communication styles should be understood as needs to be supported.	Meetings included time at the beginning and end for members to check in, reflect on how they were feeling, and raise any concerns, before leaving space. These practices helped recognise that participation could bring up emotions, concerns, or different ways of communicating, without treating these responses as problems to be managed.
Inclusion, accessibility, and support	Survivors should be supported to prepare for participation, identify potential impacts, and access the supports or accommodations they need. Researchers should work to reduce barriers to participation and avoid unintentionally giving power back to sport by excluding survivors who need flexibility, support, or alternative ways to contribute.	The project was designed to support participation through flexible online engagement, written summaries after meetings, opportunities to provide feedback by email, and the option for LEC members to choose whether or not to attend the sport volunteer workshops directly. This allowed members to contribute in ways that suited their preferences, availability, and support needs.

<p>Prioritise self-identification, privacy, anonymity, and control over disclosure</p>	<p>Survivors should not be required to disclose details of abuse to justify participation. Researchers, and other stakeholders, including survivors, should respect one’s preference around naming, anonymity, privacy, and how their stories and contributions are represented. Control over disclosure is central to safety, dignity, and agency.</p>	<p>Applicants’ self-identification as having lived experience of child abuse in sport was accepted without requiring details of abuse. LEC members were given choices about how they were acknowledged in the report and public dissemination, and these preferences were revisited through group and individual discussions.</p>
<p>Celebrate milestones, reflect on learnings and close/transition safely</p>	<p>Survivor-centred collaborations should include time to recognise what has been achieved, reflect on what was learned, and collaboratively decide what “ending” or “transitioning” from the project means for the partnership. Communities are often asked to contribute to projects without seeing change, feedback, or continuity. Closing or transitioning safely includes being transparent about what happens next, acknowledging contributions, discussing whether and how people want to remain involved, and, where possible, supporting continued action beyond the funded project.</p>	<p>Additional meetings were scheduled after delivery of the report to close the project, reflect on the collaboration, and discuss potential opportunities for future involvement in the implementation of the co-developed actions, as well as future projects.</p>

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