

Section 3 – Policies and procedures

3.1.4 - Guide to safer recruitment - taking on new volunteers, employees and contractors

Why people matter – all children should be able to play tennis in a safe and enjoyable environment. This relies on the good practice of adults, on court and off. Bad practice and abuse from a minority of people can undermine the efforts of others. The best way to deal with bad practice and abuse is to prevent it from happening. One important way to do this is to follow safe recruitment practice **before** new employees, volunteers and contractors gain access to tennis venues and events.

Who does this apply to? – anyone who will be in a position of authority over children or other vulnerable people should be recruited with care. This includes volunteers, employees and contractors. Coaches, officials, assistants, committee members, tournament organisers and many others may be included. If someone is going to have substantial contact with children, you must be thorough. This also applies to senior committee members and other club officials who have responsibility for overseeing and managing activities involving children or young people. Unfortunately, serious abuse is often committed by adults who are known and trusted in their community. This means that you should follow good procedures in every single case. Do not be suspicious of the people around you, but be thorough enough to meet your responsibilities.

This document sets out five important steps that you should consider. Also remember that the LTA produces detailed guidance on many of the issues discussed here. To access this guidance, go to www.lta.org.uk/childprotection, or contact the Child Protection Department directly using the details below.

Five steps to safer recruitment:

1. **Take a background and history** – this is particularly important for employees, but also applies to those seeking senior committee roles and to coaches who are contracted to provide junior coaching. Make sure that you have seen a full CV or work history. Ask about any gaps or inconsistencies. This can be a very useful way of spotting previous problems or concerns. You might not take a full history from volunteer helpers, but don't be afraid to ask about their experience and skills.
2. **Ask for references** – as with the background and history checks, this is particularly important for employees, contractors and committee members. Ask for the names of two referees and follow these up. Both referees should be people who have known the candidate in a professional capacity for a substantial period of time (at least 3 years). Ask them to comment on the candidate's suitability to work with children and vulnerable people, and about the quality of their work. Also ask if they ever had reason to take disciplinary action against the candidate.

You may not require references for volunteers taking on minor roles, if they are well-known to you or other club members. However, consider pursuing these for volunteers taking on large or important roles. Seeking references is one of the best ways of ensuring that you take on the right people. Make all roles subject to satisfactory references and be prepared to follow this up, if they are not produced.

3. **Get a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure** – CRB disclosures are useful for ensuring that any known risks can be properly managed. It is important to remember, however, that a CRB disclosure is only one of the five steps outlined here. It is a good way

of finding out significant information but it should not be used in isolation.

The LTA offers a CRB service and has a dedicated CRB team. This team will help you to apply for any checks that are needed, while the Child Protection team provides individual risk-assessment and support to ensure that all disclosures are dealt with fairly and safely. You should seek a CRB disclosure from anyone who will be coaching or in sole charge of children or vulnerable people. Other people who should complete a disclosure are: senior committee members; junior co-ordinators and captains; coaching line-managers; and others who may be required to deal with sensitive information involving welfare or disciplinary issues. Volunteers do not have to pay to complete a CRB disclosure.

You will normally request a CRB check on anyone who is new to the organisation, or taking on a child-related role for the first time. You should be cautious about accepting checks that were not carried out by the LTA: do not accept a candidate's own copy of a CRB disclosure, without first checking the status of the disclosure with the LTA (anything over than 12 months old is likely to be rejected). The LTA produces separate guidance on this issue, and you can seek advice by contacting the CRB or Child Protection departments.

If you are waiting for a CRB check to come back, you could use 'self-disclosure' as an interim measure. But remember to make things clear to the candidate: they could be asked to leave their role, if the CRB reveals anything of concern, and inaccurate self-disclosure can lead to further action. CRB disclosure is not an award, certificate, or guarantee. It is only one source of information and it should be considered alongside all others.

- 4. Set up agreements or contracts** – make sure that roles and responsibilities are absolutely clear. Even for volunteers, there should be a clear 'line manager' who takes responsibility for supporting and overseeing the role. There should also be clear expectations around conduct. The LTA produces a code of conduct for those working with children in tennis (see Tennis Clubmark resource 3.1.2).

For employed and contracted coaches, make sure you have proper contracts in place. Any contract should clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of the parties, and include details of how performance will be monitored and reviewed. It should also make it clear that action will be taken if conduct falls short of the relevant standards. Some clubs are nervous about putting contracts in place; but without them, it is difficult to deal with problems when they arise. If your coaching programme (and a significant percentage of your financial turnover) is in the hands of a coach, it can make sense to spend a small sum on getting a solicitor to draft a simple contract. LTA licensed coaches must abide by general conditions imposed by the LTA. If your coach does not have an LTA Coach Licence, it is even more important to have a rigorous contract in place.

- 5. Organise an induction** – make sure that all new starters are given a proper induction. This should include information on the standards expected of those working with children, and on the arrangements in place at the club for ensuring the welfare of children and young people. Remember to hand out a copy of your child protection policy (see resource 3.1.3 in this folder) and to provide contact details for relevant Child Protection officers and agencies.

What if the recruitment process reveals a concern?

You may feel that someone is not suitable to hold a particular position. They may lack the skills you require, or have a track record of poor work or dishonesty. You might decide not to take on that person. If you are concerned that a candidate might pose a risk to children, you can get advice on what to do by contacting the Child Protection Officer at your county LTA, or by contacting the LTA Child Protection Department using the details below.

By taking recruitment seriously, you can help to make British tennis friendly, professional and safe for children and young people.