**Police vetting sport examples**

NZ Rugby

“New Zealand Rugby requires all coaches coaching Small Blacks (all teams under 13 years) to undergo police vetting. As part of our drive to continue minimising the risks of harm and enhancing the safety of the game for the generations to come, and particularly those entering the game in the junior ranks, NZ Rugby requires all new coaches (i.e. those not registered on the NZRU database prior to 2009) of under 13-year-old players to submit to a police check as a condition of obtaining registration.

The core rationale for requiring a police check is really about taking all practicable steps to ensure that our children playing rugby now are not exposed to unacceptable risks that might be posed by people who have been convicted of or charged with serious offences.

This is an increasingly commonplace practice in New Zealand and internationally.  Currently, it is standard practice in respect of occupations such as teaching and care of the elderly when people who are vulnerable are in close contact in often unsupervised situations with other people.  Junior sport is no different and one straightforward step we can take to help prevent the safety of our young kids being compromised is to endeavour to ensure that persons who have been convicted and/or charged with serious offences are not coaching those children.  Unfortunately, it is invariably not practical to ensure that persons who may pose risks to children are supervised and hence the need for this sort of policy.

NZ Rugby clearly outlines what offences are likely to disqualify coaches from coaching our junior players and we have a formal appeal process for anyone who feels that their offending does not pose a potential threat.

The test the NZRU will apply with regards offending is the extent to which allowing a person to coach rugby is considered to be a risk to the health, safety and wellbeing of children playing rugby.  These are judgement issues and it is impossible to be certain about these judgements.  However, it is widely accepted in New Zealand and overseas that convictions and/or charges of the nature identified by NZ Rugby would justify a decision not to expose children in an unsupervised capacity to those people.  We accept that that will not always be the case and that a range of other factors need to be considered (e.g. when the offending took place), but the starting point will be that such behaviour will generally disqualify someone from getting accreditation.”

PGA

“At the Professional Golf Association (PGA - Golf’s Coach Education Organisation), all new coaches are required to complete the police vetting process. The PGA has had no resistance to this, and where there have been red flag reports (we have had four such events), we have contacted the coach to discuss. To date, offences have been minor, certainly none that have warranted us having to rescind membership. Whilst a police check has value, it in no way provides a guarantee that one of our coaches won’t act inappropriately. The PGA will continue to apply this process.”

Bike NZ

“Bike NZ carries out police vetting of coaches who have contact with children and vulnerable adults, as part of a wider and consistent approach to quality assurance. We ensure coaches accredited through Bike NZ and funded through government agencies such as Sport NZ do not fall outside the boundaries of acceptable ethical standards required to deliver to children and adults. This approach also helps protect Bike NZ and participants against liability.

There have been questions from some people about why Bike NZ needs to police check. For the most part there has been no resistance once the reason for the process is explained. There have been a small number of red flags which we have been able to deal with. In a couple of cases it meant not accepting the people as coaches.”

Special Olympics

“As far as Special Olympics here in New Zealand goes, we are bound by our accreditation to the global body (based in the USA) to undertake police checks. Athlete safety and well-being is paramount and we as an organisation are entrusted to provide a safe environment for our athletes at all times. The reason we went down this track of requiring all of our volunteers to complete a Police check was to ‘try’ and ensure that we met our commitment to safety and well-being.

The challenges we have faced have mainly been around long-serving volunteers feeling that they shouldn’t have to do, given they have been involved for many years - our requirement is that all volunteers, no matter what role you play, if they wish to be involved then they must go through this process. The challenge then is us expecting a volunteer who is only involved in a one-day event, for example, to submit to the same process as someone who does week-in, week-out training with the guys.

The other challenge has been the sometimes slow turn around between submitting an application and getting the okay back, which can be difficult if the volunteer is needed to be used next Saturday to drive the van! The one thing though that we must always remember is that the check is only as good as the day it was submitted and we don’t ask our volunteers to renew for another six years.

And finally, at the end of the day, police vetting is also seen as a deterrent to would-be potential offenders - if they know you do police checks then they may think twice about getting involved with you if they have been convicted of something in their past.”