



SASCOC's Response to Sport Safeguarding in South Africa

“South African athletes are significantly safer today, than they were four years ago in 2017 when South Africa, along with 115 other countries signed the Kazan Action Plan, essentially agreeing to address the safeguarding of athletes across the country. The South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee (SASCOC) has been addressing Sports Safeguarding, aggressively, both proactively and reactively over the last two years.” This is according to Ms Kim Pople, SASCOC Board Member responsible for Safeguarding. The macro sport body has a duty care to ensure all system are in place in addressing Safeguarding within the industry.

In 2019, SASCOC, developed South Africa's first Sport Safeguarding Policy, which among other things called for all South African Sporting Federations to address three main safeguarding focal points.

1. Ensure that all Sporting Federations develop and adopt a Safeguarding Policy.
2. Ensure that all Federations train and develop both Designated Safeguarding Officers to enforce policy requirements and ensure that all persons working or volunteering in sport complete a basic Safeguarding Awareness Certificate.
3. Compel that all Federations ensure that all persons, working or volunteering in their Federation are cleared against the Sexual Offences Register, the Child Protection Register and have a criminal Check done.

“Rolling this policy out has not been without challenges” added Ms Pople, “but SASCOC has a zero tolerance for harassment and abuse, and this commitment has allowed us achieve much of the success that we have obtained.”

SASCOC has identified and appointed strategic safeguarding portfolios within their structures including, a Safeguarding Officer, Safeguarding Case Management Panel, and a Safeguarding Policy and Education Working Group. The organisation has also partnered with The Guardian, who are the safeguarding partner to many of South Africa's Sporting Federations and are South Africa's largest Sport Safeguarding Company. Through this partnership, SASCOC has access to additional Sport Safeguarding Specialists. Additionally, SASCOC has made available to all South African Sport Federations, The Guardian's Anonymous Reporting App. This app allows all child and vulnerable athletes to report any challenges they may face anonymously to SASCOC, which allows it to investigate in accordance with its policies.

SASCOC is currently negotiating the implementation of Safe-Guard Management Tool which is another international first in Sport Safeguarding developed by The Guardian. This Sport Safeguarding Administration Management Tool will give SASCOC the ability to see



instantly which federations have not adequately addressed safeguarding and identify what assistance they may need.

“Safeguarding is not an action, it is a process that needs to develop into a culture” said Marc Hardwick, Managing Director for The Guardian. “We are proud to have partnered with SASCOC for their Olympic and Paralympic Teams and to be on this Safeguarding Journey with them. In as much as there has been quite a lot of negative focus on safeguarding challenges recently by NGOs like My Only Voice, I think this has been beneficial because it reminds us that getting this wrong is not an option. With that said I think it is prudent to bear in mind that SASCOC’s Safeguarding Policy is only two years old. Changing entrenched ways like hazing and poor reporting structures that have been a part of an institution as big as South African Sport for such a long time is not an overnight task. We are proud to say that in as much as we have weathered some knocks along the way, SASCOC has never wavered in their commitment to ensuring that every child and vulnerable athlete is safer today than yesterday.”

With SASCOC’s Safeguarding Policy only two years old, SASCOC is already revisiting some of the sections so they can adapt and change to ensure that all South Africans will not only enjoy their constitutional right to sport, but as far as possible do everything to eliminate all non-accidental harm.