



Children and young people in sport – getting help

Participation Unit
October 2016

NSPCC



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- Steelstown GAA
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Introduction

The Football Association (FA) nominated the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) through its Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) to be the recipient of the UEFA Children's Foundation charity award of 1 million Euros over three years.

This award has enabled the NSPCC to extend our reach through a range of universal national services, which focus on protecting children and young people and preventing abuse, further into the sport sector, within football in particular.

To enable these services to be fit for purpose, NSPCC has been hosting consultations with young people over the course of the project. The aim has been to ensure that the right and relevant information is out there to support young people involved in sport.

Previously, young people were involved in a piece of work around identifying worries they thought were important to young people involved in sport, and what they would like club welfare officers to be like – as they would be the person responsible for supporting them if there was a serious problem.

For this round of consultations, the focus was on how young people in sport view 'help', and how the NSPCC service Childline can be there for young sportspeople. The idea of the consultation was to get a snapshot in time of what young people are saying, rather than it being a piece of academic research.

We involved 128 young people aged between 8 and 18 from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. 60 respondents were male and 68 were female.

Data collected from young people during the sessions was grouped by young people's answers to the questions or themes. Answers which reoccurred and were significant are included in the report. Other answers young people gave which were individual thoughts are not included in the report. Some activities during the sessions required the group to contribute as many answers as they could, whilst others saw young people working in a group and debating their ideas. This is why the data sometimes exceeds the number of young people who took part, and sometimes is lower. This is also why numbers are included as "number of responses" rather than "number of young people."



View from NSPCC Support in Sport advisory group

A young person's advisory group has been created to help shape this work. Some of the young people have read the report, and helped us to shape the recommendations.

I think the most important thing for me is advertising places of help. Advertising it is good, if no one knows what to do if they have a problem or worry, or where [to] go. They need to see there are things to help, to see where to go and stuff.

Maddie, Age 14

Childline stands out for me in the report. I think most people feel more comfortable knowing it's definitely confidential. I guess if coaches got told by a young child they had a problem, they could just tell them to contact Childline; so we need to make sure we're promoting it to adults, not just children.

Frankie, Age 14



Section One: Getting help

The first exercise with young people explored 'Getting help' – if they had a problem related to sport – where they might go for help, who they would approach, and what they would be looking for in a response. It was also important to find out who young people thought they would not turn to.

Responses were unprompted, so responses below were all generated by the young people themselves.

Who would young people go to for help?	Number of responses	Percentage
Family	76	43%
Coach	36	20%
Friends	28	16%
Teacher	22	12%
Police	7	4%
Childline	5	3%
Club welfare officer	2	1%

Family was the young people's first source of support, followed by coaches. One fifth of young people said they would go to a coach, and their comments highlighted the fact that coaches get to know children very well, are supportive and understand issues related to their specific sport. Comments about coaches included:

They understand sport related issues

Female aged 12

They'll have more knowledge and understanding about the game

Male aged 15

They are role models and people you can trust

Female aged 17

One thing of particular interest is that a very low number of young people identified their club welfare officer as a person they could turn to about a problem. The club welfare officer is the designated safeguarding person for the club, and it would be their role to act on any child protection concerns – so it is worrying that young people would not think of them in relation to help and support. This also resonates with the earlier report on children's worries in sport, where nearly three quarters of young people did not know who their club welfare officer was.

Where would young people go for help?	Number of responses	Percentage
Childline	24	22%
Police	23	21%
Home	20	18%
School/teacher	17	16%
Internet/online	13	12%
Hospital/doctor	6	6%
Sports club	5	5%

Childline ranked the highest for where young people should go for help. This seems really positive, but may be skewed by the fact the session was run for Childline; young people's answers to other questions later in the report suggest this might not be the case in reality.

A fifth of young people saw the Police as where they would go to for help – maybe suggesting that they were thinking of their worry as being a very serious concern, rather than what might be a day-to-day problem or worry.

It was also interesting that only around a tenth of young people would go online for help. Given our understanding of children and young people using digital self-help tools for advice, this figure seemed particularly low.

"Sports club" itself was the lowest response to where young people would go to help, which seems at odds with the fact that the young people said coaches were supportive and understanding in the previous section. We suspect that the young people disconnect the club with the coach, meaning that their trust is in the day to day staff who engage with them rather than in the organization.

The next question we focused on for young people was to look at the key things that would help encourage young people to get help. These were again unprompted but four very key themes arose from the responses.

What would encourage young people to get help?	Number of responses	Percentage
Trust and feeling safe	22	45%
Being upset or in need of help	10	20%
Confidentiality	10	20%
Being bullied	7	14%

Trust and feeling safe was key in helping a child to share a problem, with nearly half citing this. The people and places they identified are then perhaps seen as trustworthy by these young people. The young people gave comments about how trust was really helpful when you were unsure or required immediate help.

*Desperation
Female aged 14*

*Under a lot of
pressure
Male aged 15*

*Not knowing
what to do
Male aged 12*

Confidentiality was also something important to the groups. Knowing what would happen with what they shared played a role in their decision. We did not discuss the barriers and issues around confidentiality and this could be something to explore in the future with young people and clubs. We could explore the extent to which confidentiality and fear of consequences guides young people's response to seeking help.

It was a positive sign that 'getting bullied' was noted as a response. Schools and many clubs will have anti-bullying policies in place, so young people may already be clear this is a concern they need to seek help for.

The next question we asked young people to consider was who they would not ask for help if they were worried about a problem or incident. These were again unprompted and young people's responses have been themed.

Who would young people definitely not go to for help?	Number of responses	Percentage
Strangers	26	20%
Teachers	26	20%
Friends	22	17%
The person who upset them	17	13%
People on the internet	10	8%
Someone who would tell	9	7%
Family	7	5%
Coaches	6	6%
Police	4	3%

It was clear that young people would not tell someone who was unknown to them, including someone online.

What is surprising about the responses here is that as many young people said they would not go to teachers for help as said they *would* in response to the earlier question. This shows that although school and teachers are in a good position to help young people, there are clear barriers that prevent young people from talking to some teachers. Some of the reasons included:

Teachers in case they spread it in the staff room

Female aged 11

Strict teachers

Female aged 16

Equally, friends ranked high in both people young people would and wouldn't talk to. This was for a number of reasons, including not trusting friends, not burdening them with their worry, or preferring to talk to someone perceived to be unbiased.

Contacts to Childline have seen that talking to peers about problems is an emerging trend – which in turn impacts on the friend, who may also worry. New information on the Childline website and communications plans are now looking to reflect this – having advice for both young people looking for help with a problem, and friends who may be worried about someone else.

Friends cos they might not want them to know

Male aged 11

Friends in case they tell someone

Female aged 11

People connected with the issue

Female aged 14

Friends I don't trust but are still my friends

Female aged 12

Perfect helper

It was important to see what kind of person the young people would turn to for support if they had a worry. A similar exercise was run with young people for the last report, specifically around what they think the perfect welfare officer should be like and it would be interesting to make comparisons between the two exercises.

We asked young people to think about:

- **Head** - What they should know?
- **Heart** - What they should be like? What values?
- **Feet** - where should they go with what you tell them?

Below shows common answers they gave.

Head:

Knowledgeable

How to help

Knows to be understanding

Can give you the right advice
and information

Feet:

Keep confidential

Family

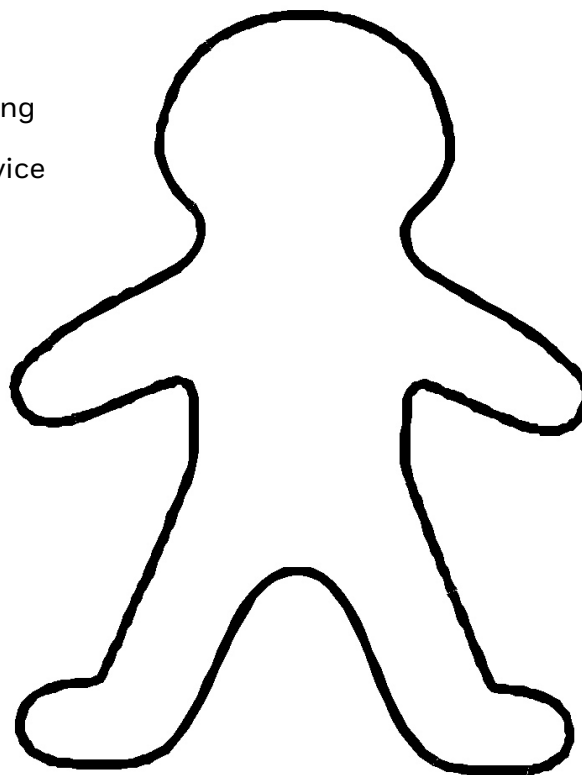
Tell someone/get help

School

Police

Childline

Tell someone else at
their club



Heart:

Trustworthy

Loyal

Kind

Caring

Approachable

Easy to talk to

Respectful

Responsible

Helpful

What they should know (Head)	Number of responses	Percentage
Knowledgeable	46	41%
How to help	44	40%
Knows to be understanding	13	12%
Can give you the right advice and information	8	7%

Being knowledgeable was seen as the main characteristic that the perfect helper should have. The perfect helper should know how to help the child/ young person. This showed that young people would turn to people who will give them solutions and ideas.

Being understanding and helpful also featured in the key qualities young people would want to see in a club welfare officer, so these are attributes young people clearly value.

What they should be like (Heart)	Number of responses	Percentage
Trustworthy/loyal	43	30%
Approachable/easy to talk to	24	17%
Caring	20	14%
Respectful	19	14%
Kind	18	13%
Helpful	9	6%
Responsible	9	6%

The majority of young people felt that one of the most important characteristics of the perfect helper is that they must be trustworthy and loyal – which matches their earlier answers about what would encourage a young person to seek help. Overall there was a feeling that the perfect helper must be approachable, caring, respectful and kind.



Again, this resonated with the work around club welfare officers – approachable was the top characteristic noted by young people in that exercise.

What they should do with what you tell them (Feet)	Number of responses	Percentage
Keep confidential/secret	12	22%
Tell family	10	18%
Get help	10	18%
Tell School/ Teacher	7	13%
Tell Police	7	13%
Childline	6	11%
Tell someone else at the club	3	5%

The majority of young people said that any information that a child or young person passed on to the perfect helper should be kept confidential.

However there was an almost equal view that the perfect helper should seek support or pass on to a family member. This would be an interesting area to explore further with young people in the future as there may be areas or issues where young people want confidentiality and others where they feel the family or appropriate professional would need to be involved. Confidentiality was noted in the earlier exercise around what would help a young person to seek help, so it would be of interest to look at the levels of confidentiality young people are talking about.

What is really interesting is that no young people who took part in the club welfare officer exercise mentioned confidentiality at all – whereas for this exercise it was important. So that could suggest that young people do not consider their club welfare officer to be someone they can turn to around serious concerns they have.

Summary of Section One

This section has focused on exploring when young people have a problem relating to sport who and where they would go to for help.

Who	Family and Sports Coaches
Where	Childline and Police
Who not	Strangers and Teachers

The people who could provide help to young people should be:

- Knowledgeable
- Trustworthy
- Understand Confidentiality

The section has also highlighted some potential future areas for future consideration

- Barriers to confidentiality in sports settings
- Relationship between school and sports settings
- Relationship between family and sports settings
- Coaches and/or clubs' role in signposting young people for help or self-help resources
- Promoting places of help/resources to coaches
- Knowledge of coaches and/or clubs about issues facing young people
- Importance of strong anti-bullying policies
- How young people view confidentiality – its importance, and what levels are acceptable in particular situations.
- The role of the club welfare officer and confidentiality

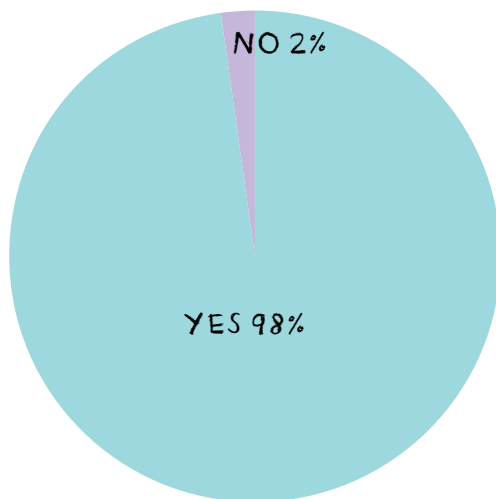
Section Two: Young people's thoughts on Childline

The questions explored with young people in this section were:

- Did you know about Childline before today?
- Do you think enough young people know about Childline?
- Do you think young sportspeople see Childline as a place for them?
- Do you think your coach would recommend Childline to you?

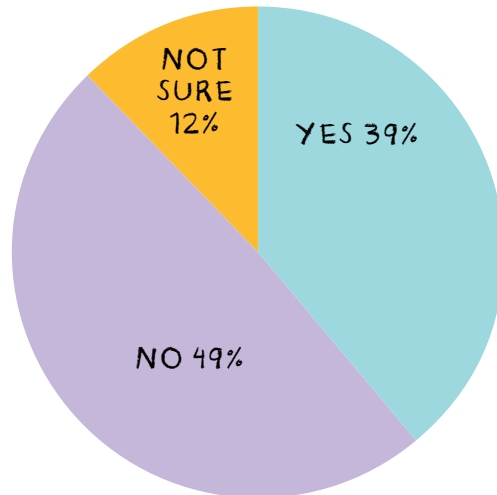
“Did you know about Childline before today?”

Three male participants aged 10-12 had not heard of Childline.



It is incredibly positive that such a high percentage of the young people had heard of Childline.

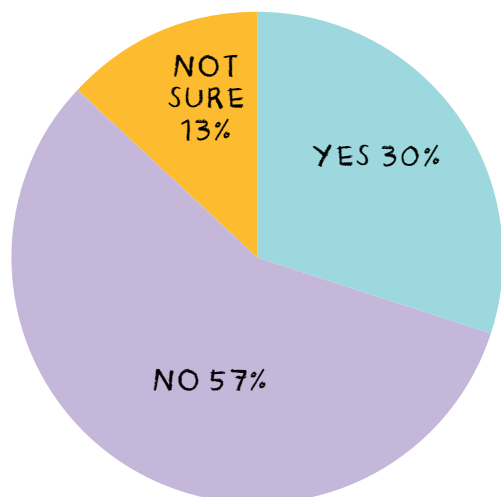
“Do you think enough young people know about Childline?”



There was an exploration with young people about why the majority felt not enough young people knew about Childline – despite 98% of them knowing about it themselves.

Young people talked about most likely seeing Childline posters in schools, or during assemblies, so their knowledge was largely built from either direct marketing materials to school, Schools Service assemblies or teachers talking about Childline.

“Do you think young sportspeople see Childline as a place for them?”



The majority of young people did not feel that sportspeople see Childline as a place for them. Their reasoning was mixed in response but the quotes show themes around seeing it as a last resort if clubs do not help, and some of the barriers to contacting Childline.

If you've gone to your coach or welfare officers and you're not getting anywhere

Female aged 16

Clubs already have things in place to support us

Male aged 17

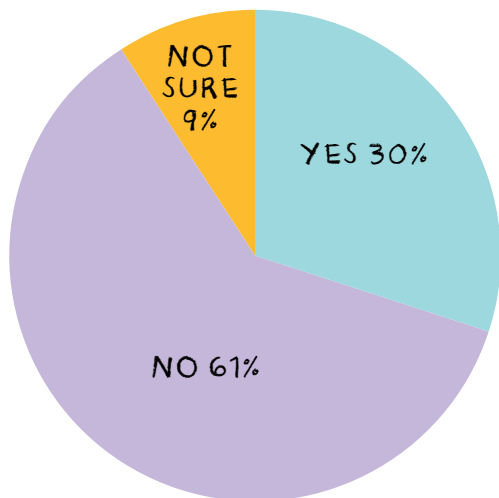
No - seen as for abuse or bullying only

Female aged 18

They would rather bottle it up and maybe realise it during a match

Male aged 15

“Do you think your coach would recommend Childline to you?”



The majority of young people did not feel their coaches would recommend Childline to them in the event of an issue they were experiencing. One way this could be looked at is whether clubs or coaches actually know enough about Childline and the issues it covers to recommend it.

It should be noted that coaches do not have an obligation to signpost young people to areas of support; this would be something that could fall to the club welfare officer. As the earlier exercise suggested, young people would be much more willing to go to their coach with a problem than

their club welfare officer. Again, maybe it would be a good idea to promote the service to those who young people *choose* to go to, rather than just the designated person.

I'm not sure they would think it's necessary

Female aged 14

I didn't know it covered sport

Male aged 12

There was a sense from young people that coaches do want the best for their players and so if they understood more about Childline, they would recommend it to the young people.

If they can't help you or you don't turn to you [sic] for help they would want you to ring Childline

Female aged 16

Summary of Section Two

This section has focused on young people's understanding of Childline and we have found that:

- 98% of young people already knew about Childline
- 49% felt young people need to know more about Childline
- 57% felt Childline doesn't reach out to sportspeople
- 61% felt coaches would not recommend Childline

The section has also highlighted some potential areas for future consideration:

- What affect would more sports related marketing have on young sportspeople's experience and understanding of Childline?
- Do coaches have enough confidence and understanding of Childline to recommend it? What might be the barriers to this? Would there be a way of raising awareness of Childline with coaches

Section Three: How to promote Childline

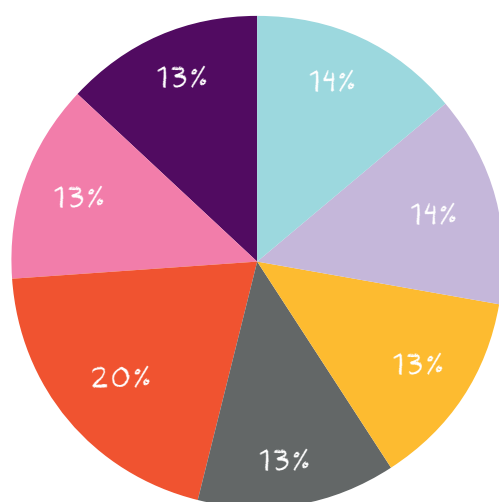
The sessions focused on how to promote Childline most effectively to young sports professionals: in schools and via direct advertising.

In schools

We only had a very small number of responses to this question and they focused solely on school assemblies or posters directly advertising Childline. Many young people could recall seeing posters in their schools and there was a minority view that these had not always been effective using cartoons and slogans.

Advertising

The young people gave ideas shown in the chart about where Childline should be advertised. A recurrent theme came through that if more sportspeople were to contact Childline, advertising would need to feature issues or pictures of young people in sport so it felt more relevant.



- Advertise online
- TV adverts
- Social media
- Stadium adverts
- Sponsorship
- Posters
- Talks at club

No cheesy things on posters
Female aged 13

Advertise the website - I didn't know you had a website until today!
Female aged 10

NO leaflets - we just throw it away
Female aged 13

Advertise specifically for sports
Female aged 12

Parks - where young people might go to play
Male aged 18

Summary of Section Three

Young people felt that Childline could be more effective in advertising via schools and clubs.

Sports related advertising, online and through clubs and sponsorship would be an effective way of reaching more sportspeople.

As in the previous section, the effect of sports-related Childline advertising would be a future area for consideration.

An additional thing to note is whether or not sports-related marketing should be targeted at the professionals as the previous activity suggested that maybe coaches and clubs need to know more about the organisation.



Section Four: The Childline website sport page

Childline designed a webpage around sport after running a consultation around children's worries in sport. It was important to get feedback on the existing Childline website page to see if it had the information young sportspeople wanted and needed.

Since the consultations have been completed, the new Childline website has been launched. The young people's feedback from the session on the sports-related page has been used to help steer the content.

- The bullying section acknowledges the people children said they would turn to for help
- The club welfare officer is also mentioned as someone they can turn to, helping to promote their role.
- There have been bursts of marketing specifically around sport and sport-related problems

through NSPCC and Childline's social media channels to help young sportspeople see that it can be a place for them to turn for support. This also addresses young people's suggestions that we should use digital marketing to tell young people that Childline can help with issues in sport.

- There is more sports imagery now on the page,
- The links to the message boards have remained, and there is more video content, which young people clearly liked.
- The game no longer features on the sports page – but is accessible via the Toolbox link at the top of the page.



Section Five: Recommendations

This report has focused on young people's understanding and experience of seeking help for issues related to sport. The young people have given very clear feedback that although their knowledge of Childline is high; the specific experience of Childline in supporting or understanding issues related to sport is low.

We have identified in this report a series of issues that could be considered in the future by the sports National Governing Bodies, coaches, clubs and the CPSU together with Childline:

NSPCC and Childline	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to develop sports-related advertising online to young people, and possibly through governing body channels and club websites/written materials, and also with sponsorship as effective ways of reaching more sportspeople.• Highlight the 'confidentiality' aspect of Childline more in the messaging via the Childline website and The CPSU online content – this was shown in the report to be important.• Consider specific information around school and club settings – currently, the content is designed for a broad audience of people.• Look into opportunities for NSPCC's partnership with prominent sports people, such as our current relationship with Wayne Rooney to promote Childline to young people. This could have a great impact, particularly with boys, who can be more difficult to engage. .• NSPCC Schools Service will act as a conduit for communication to audiences within the whole schools community (teachers, parents and children) to share messages about protecting children in sport. This should include making the links between school and the after-school sports environment.• The CPSU is working with respective sports councils around school sport programmes to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded across joint school sport activities.
National governing bodies	<p>NGBs need to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider what might be barriers to confidentiality in sports settings and support clubs to reduce these by providing clear confidentiality guidelines and confidential spaces.• Continue to address communications with parents and to improve the relationship between family and sports settings.• Emphasise the importance of strong anti-bullying policies through promotion at national and local level.• Communication with training providers to ensure that those at club level, including coaches, are able to provide effective help and support.
Coaches/ Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coaches and/or clubs' role in signposting young people for help or self-help resources could be better supported by provision of resources to coaches by national governing bodies and coaching organisations such as sportscoach UK.• Governing bodies and coach educators need to ensure that coaches and clubs are provided with up to date information about current issues facing young people• Clubs and coaches need to have the confidence and understanding of Childline services to recommend these to children and young people. This could be provided by additional marketing materials promoting Childline to sports bodies and other organisations, with the support of the CPSU.• Further develop the relationship between school and sports to ensure that young people are safeguarded across both settings.

Coaches/Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coaches and/or clubs' role in signposting young people for help or self-help resources could be better supported by provision of resources to coaches by national governing bodies and coaching organisations such as sportscoach UK.• Governing bodies and coach educators need to ensure that coaches and clubs are provided with up to date information about current issues facing young people• Clubs and coaches need to have the confidence and understanding of Childline services to recommend these to children and young people. This could be provided by additional marketing materials promoting Childline to sports bodies and other organisations, with the support of the CPSU.• Further develop the relationship between school and sports to ensure that young people are safeguarded across both settings.
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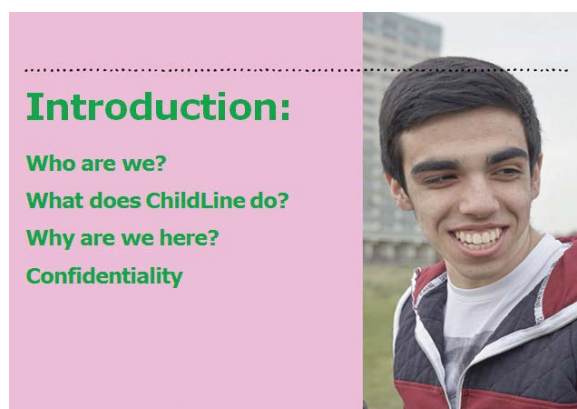
Appendix

Session plan for consultation

1.



2.



3.

Children's worries in sport

"What do you think worries children involved in sport?"
100 young people were asked this in Summer 2015.

The top 5 issues young people noted, without any prompts, were:

- Injuries, tackles 54%
- Bullying 39%
- Pressure 33%
- Mistakes 28%
- Abuse 27%

Being scared was the top reason that someone would not report a problem, with over one tenth attributing worries not being reported because of fear of consequences

4.

Getting help

Where do young people involved in sport turn to when they need help and advice?

What people?

What places?

What would encourage them to seek help?

Where/Who would young people definitely not turn to for help?

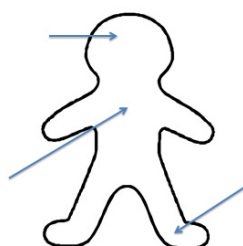
5.

Asking someone for help

Who would be the perfect person to ask for help?

Head:
What should they know?

Heart:
What kind of person should they be?



Feet:
What steps should they take to help children?

6.

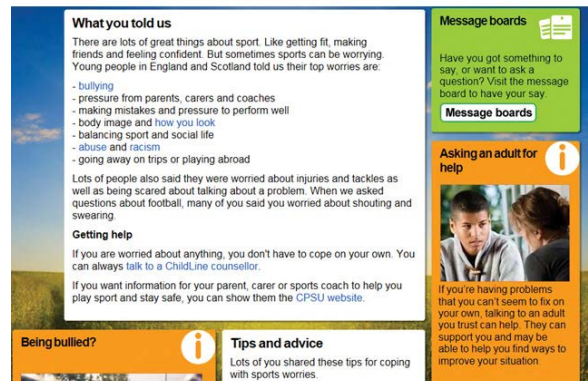
Childline and sport

1. Had you heard about Childline before today?
2. Do you think enough young people know about Childline?
3. Do you think young athletes see Childline as somewhere they can turn to? Why?
4. Do you think your coach would see Childline as somewhere you can turn to? Why?

7.



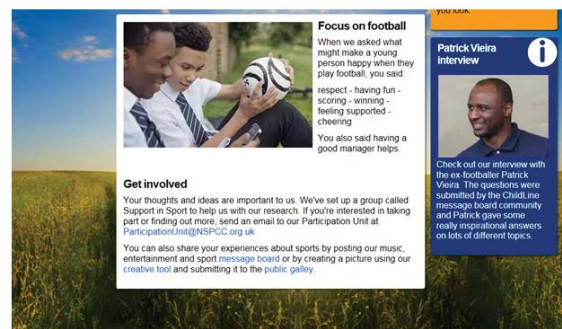
8.



9.



10.



11.

Childline website's sports page

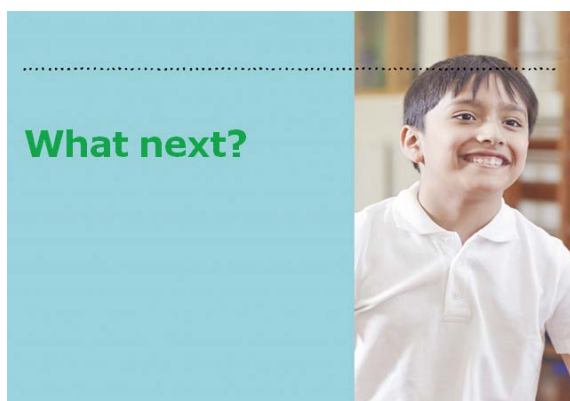
1. What do you think?
2. What do you like about the page?
Green sticker
3. What don't you like about the page?
Red sticker
4. What would you like to see on the page in the future?

12.

Promoting Childline

1. How can Childline be better at being seen as a place for help for young athletes?
 - When young people need help
 - In schools
 - Advertising
2. How can we make Childline somewhere children would recommend as a place of help and advice to their friends?

13.



14.



Find out more about our work at
nspcc.org.uk and **thecpsu.org.uk**