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How open is open: exploring the boundaries of openness in setting up a safeguarding learning network

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THU: How open is open: exploring the boundaries of openness in setting up a safeguarding learning network (Jude Toasland)

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A case study exploring setting up a safeguarding learning network for sport

<https://youtu.be/vHA48wt1xzI>

In a culture where Wikipedia is commonly used as a source for information and Twitter leads to consultation with colleagues in the development of projects, open networking and learning is growing across every industry. However, Weller (2014) describes the 'the central tension of openness' (p.15) to outline the strain between the principles of shared learning and development, and the pressures of commercial interest and financial viability. This project explores an additional tension between utilising the benefits of open learning within a safeguarding context and managing issues of confidentiality and risk, and asks the question "how open is open?"

Within the sport sector, safeguarding officers are supported by the Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) to make sport a fun and safe community for children and young people. To enhance the knowledge and skills of sport safeguarding officers, the Unit provides training and learning opportunities, as well as making resources available on it's website. In an environment where there are increasing pressure upon time, limited resources and developing technologies, the Unit is now developing more opportunities for learning and sharing in an open space, through webinars and online toolkits. However, this has brought challenges, including ensuring the appropriate use of openly available resources and information and managing resistance by some safeguarding officers around accessing online materials or engaging in safeguarding discussions in an open environment.

This presentation will describe a consultation with the sector followed by the initial piloting of the sport safeguarding learning network. The consultation was conducted through online surveys and discussions, followed by a presentation to the host organisation. This raised issues of enthusiasm for an opportunity to share and learn, alongside concerns around confidentiality and organisational risk. The question of openness led to interesting discussions and developments in the project's direction and the early signs of the development of an online community of proactice. This has drawn on the work of Wenger et al (2002) around the

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Jude Toasland
6 January 2017

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establishment of an online community of practice and was inspired by the lessons of Salmon (2011) to establish this effectively.

This presentation will explore the boundaries of openness within a safeguarding learning network and identify recommendations to take this innovative network forward at a pace and with the necessary support to engage the audience effectively.

References

Groom, J quoted in Cronin, C (2014) Navigating the Marvellous: Openness in Education

Weller, M 2014 The Battle For Open: How openness won and why it doesn't feel like victory. London: Ubiquity Press. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/bam>

Wenger, Etienne; McDermott, Richard; Snyder, William M. (2002). Cultivating Communities of Practice Harvard Business Press; 1 edition. ISBN 978-1-57851-330-7.

Extra content

Note

- ▶ All images used are from the CPSU website and as this presentation is related to a CPSU project there is no need for additional permission to use them.
- ▶ Alt-Text has been added to all images in the presentation



[Jude Toasland](#)

12:18 on 4 February 2017

Script

1. Welcome to my presentation entitled "How open is open: exploring the boundaries of openness in setting up a safeguarding learning network"
2. My name is Jude Toasland and this presentation forms part of the H818 Open University module.


I am a senior consultant for the Child Protection in Sport Unit. We work with sports organisations to keep children safe in sport. I will be talking to you about a project to enhance the advice, training and support of those people who take a lead safeguarding role in sports organisations.

At present we provide resources and webinars openly through the CPSU website and webinars. However we would like to extend this to more online services to train and support safeguarding leads.

3. Initially the vision of this "sport safeguarding network" was influenced by Wenger's concept of the community of practice, with the key domain being safeguarding in sport, the community moving from offline support to more online and a practice of shared learning and development. It was initially envisioned that this would be one network consisting of a forum which would also be the place for development, learning and discussion. This was thought to require some boundaries and therefore not to be

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entirely open.

4. Jim Groom defines openness on 'at its best ... an ethos not a license. It's an approach to teaching and learning that builds a community of learners online and offline.'
5. But in the world of safeguarding, how open is open? With safeguarding including a variety of aspects from child protection concerns through guidance and resource development.
6. It was therefore decided to consult with the safeguarding lead officers to inform this plan, along with internal discussions and consultations. The plan had several stages:
 1. Consultation – this was primarily through a survey on Survey Monkey and this was enhanced with face to face and online discussions, both internal and external
 2. Following clear feedback in the consultation that Yammer was a known and popular forum platform, the pilot was established here, starting with a selected group of interested safeguarding officers. Alongside this a webinar and teleconference discussion was held for a wider group.
 3. The pilot was then evaluated again through Yammer, webinar and teleconference as well as email and face to face discussion
 4. The Yammer group has now expanded and is forming part of a multi level network.
7. The complexity of the question “how open is open” can be explained by exploring the diversity of safeguarding topics, which a safeguarding network could potentially address. Child protection concerns are generally the most sensitive area, but only form part of the picture. Organisational dynamics can affect safeguarding and safeguarding officers frequently require the space to discuss these issues. Training developments can be across organisations before publication. Learning opportunities include the less formal sharing of knowledge and experience between practitioners. Resources include procedures, guidance and templates.

The survey therefore posed the question how open should each element be? They could be entirely open to the public, within a gated, password protected environment or in a closed, confidential setting.

8. The majority of respondents stated that child protection concerns should only be shared if anonymised, and then preferably in a gated environment.
9. There was considerable sensitivity around organisational dynamics and organisational risk. Some members would welcome the opportunity to explore these in a password protected environment but others were more cautious around organisational risk.
10. There was some disagreement with this statement with some participants wanting more open sharing of developments but this was in the minority.
11. The opportunity to learn from others was welcomed. However a gated environment was still preferred and some expressed some vulnerability about sharing information and feeling exposed.
12. There was a strong request for open access to resources, including training and guidance, extending that which is currently available on the CPSU website.
13. Over the course of this project there were some challenges. The primary one has been the increased interest from the media following recent concerns about abuse in sport. This has led to more reticence around sharing information and more concern about organisational risk. The limitations of some organisations' technology has been a

challenge and required adaptations such as the use of both webinar and teleconference platforms for discussions. For many safeguarding officers there are considerable demands upon their time, so providing a time efficient network that they could justify using was key. There was also considerable diversity across the safeguarding officers, with some becoming administrators for the forum and supporting it with their digital knowledge and other being very reticent and requiring considerable additional input. Support mechanisms for the latter group are being put in place such as clear introductions and guides to assist them. However the face to face discussions will also continue in order that all officers can gain support.

14. The sport safeguarding network is now moving towards a four level approach as opposed to one platform. This includes extending resources through the CPSU website, expanding the forum to facilitate shared learning and developments, maintain more focused task groups and consultations – both on and offline, and extend the openly available webinars as well as using webinars (and some teleconferences) for smaller meetings.
15. In summary, the question of “how open is open” has a number of different answers depending upon the type of safeguarding information communicated. Child protection concerns remain in confidential, closed settings, although anonymised examples could be used for learning and development. Organisational dynamics will be discussed in the gated forum, with clear groundrules (currently being finalised) around this. Training developments will take place within the gated forum to gain input from within the sector, and to provide learning opportunities through gated webinars. Other webinars and resources will be shared openly through the CPSU website.
16. If you would like more information about the Child Protection in Sport Unit, please visit our website. If you have any questions about this presentation I'd be happy to respond.



[Jude Toasland](#)

14:22 on 4 February 2017

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[Andy Brooks](#)

12:04pm 27 January 2017 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jude, to me looking from the outside, I really can't see how that juxtaposition plays out, openness and safeguarding, all I can see is challenges:) How is it progressing and did you reach a point you are happy with? Did you reach much the same conclusions you expected from the start? Its an area I know very little about, I will be really interested to hear your findings.



[Julie Skeats](#)

5:30pm 27 January 2017 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jude, a really interesting but challenging topic. In face to face conversations you are usually talking to a colleague so sharing information is a lot easier. What safeguards will you use to make sure that those on the network are who they say they are?



[Jude Toasland](#)

7:09pm 27 January 2017 [Permalink](#)

Andy - in my role we engage in a lot of discussions around safeguarding in an open forum through our webinars, which are available to all. However these cover safeguarding practice issues, not actual scenarios which would need to be kept confidential in a secure closed space. My initial vision was one safeguarding learning network for sports safeguarding officers to share and learn. The most I have explored the subject matter the more complex the pattern of different types of safeguarding information and learning has become leading to a matrix structure of different types of information shared at different levels of openness.

Julie - through the development of varying levels of openness for different discussions it is envisaged that confidential boundaries around safeguarding concerns will contrast to open learning about safeguarding procedures. However the subject matter is a sensitive one and I am also building in support for the participants alongside the actual network itself.



[Mary Howell](#)

2:53pm 28 January 2017 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jude

I read that with interest and think your answer clarifies a couple of things that I hadn't completely understood about your project. I think you are right to think about building support alongside the resources, our experience on a MOOC about pupil behaviour is that people find it very difficult not to refer to their own experiences directly. We found that participants needed reassurance and support from mentors so I think the parallel service is an excellent idea.



[Jude Toasland](#)

3:54pm 28 January 2017 [Permalink](#)

Thanks Mary - it is interesting to reflect how much this project has changed, from one network primarily informed by Wenger's community of practice model, to a series of forums forming an overall network. I agree that people tend to talk about their own experiences so clear groundrules alongside support systems will be important and are currently in development.



[Leanne Johnstone](#)

7:59pm 28 January 2017 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jude,

What a difficult but much needed project! I agree with other comments about people finding it difficult to avoid using real life examples. What type of moderation will the forums have? Are you going to approve posts before they go live, or are you going to use a reporting method?

Looking forward to hearing more about this project.

Best wishes,

Leanne



[Jude Toasland](#)

9:24am 29 January 2017 [Permalink](#)

A very interesting question Leanne. At the moment we are working on the forum's ground rules which include consideration of moderation. As the forum is the gated component of the network it has been proposed that this is largely run for and by the safeguarding leads who post and respond to discussions without an approval process. However at present I'm the only moderator getting notifications and providing an overview of all posts in my role as subject expert. I will be expanding both moderation and administration roles shortly as it shouldn't be held by one person alone. I hadn't considered a process of reporting concerns about posts so thanks for your valuable suggestion which I will incorporate.



[Sarah Adrienne Hughes](#)

11:34am 29 January 2017 [Permalink](#)

A great project, Jude,

Who are your participants currently: I assume anyone who leads activity involving sport with children and young people? Does the content have to be slightly different for different audiences; and how have you used the views of young people in your design? This is something that the NMC asks of Nursing Programmes, so just thinking a little laterally about your project....

Regards,

Sarah



[Jude Toasland](#)

2:06pm 29 January 2017 [Permalink](#)

Thanks for your comments Sarah. They've made me think! The audience incorporates sports organisations who work with young people with a sub-group of these, the safeguarding leads in sports bodies, being part of the forum. However involving young people, although a key message for sports bodies, is not an area incorporated into this project so I'll definitely give some thought about how we can address this.



[Danny Ball](#)

8:10pm 30 January 2017 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jude,

I have just been reading through your abstract and the comments made by others and it does seem that you have a somewhat of a difficult challenge to overcome.

What it appears to me, is that you require different levels of access and openness to safeguard individuals and organisations. At the very public level is the free resources you and your team produce, along with moderated recordings of any webinars held. At the next level you might have forums which anyone can register for, but both membership and posts are moderated. Then at the very top level, you have a network/forum that is only open to a very specific group such as a leadership group etc, where the members of this group can freely post without moderation.

A lot of this could be achieved either using a virtual learning environment, or the use of internet (external) and intranet (internal) pages with differing levels of permissions.

I'll be interested to hear how you to tackle this particular challenge,

Danny



[Jude Toasland](#)

9:21pm 30 January 2017 [Permalink](#)

Thank you for some really interesting comments Danny and yes it has indeed been a challenge! Your summary of the various levels is accurate although I hadn't thought of a top level group and will give some thought as to how that fits into the structures of safeguarding in sport. As case concerns (about children) will not be shared in the forum there is less requirement for a strict moderating system - this is more around peer support and learning.

One of the challenges is developing a network across a wide range of organisations. For an internal network we have our intranet, but across organisations there are the challenges of varying technology and culture to wrestle with. However I would welcome opportunities to develop a virtual learning environment more fully, and this part of the project will extend over the coming year and beyond.



[Alison Brereton](#)

6:43am 1 February 2017 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jude

Its a very impressive and challenging project to undertake. Have you carried out any primary research on the participants perceptions and views on the plan?

Ali



[Stephen Gardiner](#)

10:38am 1 February 2017 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jude

Interesting project and I think a very difficult one to tackle. i note that other colleagues have mentioned that you may have your work cut out on this project.

I may have missed this but surely the sports professional/regulatory body would have policies and procedures on safeguarding and reporting and one would hope that this professional body with then disseminate this information out to its members via their online portal.

I know from my professional body any updates we get we get an email to inform us that a new alert has been posted for us to log in read, report and feedback on. Is this something you are trying to achieve. Also isn't this part of the CRB (or its new equivalent is)

What may be a useful tool is to tailor the child safeguarding course and that of the adult one as well and tailor it to the sporting community, i.e mention about changing rooms, dignity etc

Hope that helps



[Uffe Frandsen](#)

3:02pm 1 February 2017 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jude

I think your project has great potential despite the challenges. I can think of other groups of people meeting in an on or offline environment to discuss their profession and its challenges - while being aware of confidentiality in regard to people and situations in their individual professional work. This could be doctors, nurses, psychologists, barristers etc. Will safeguarding officers be aware of this confidentiality challenge?



[Jude Toasland](#)

8:14pm 1 February 2017 (Edited 9:05pm 2 February 2017) [Permalink](#)

Thanks for your questions.

Ali - following a survey of participants plans have been discussed (and continue to be considered) in e-meetings and telephone discussions to inform the finished model.

Stephen - my team actually works with sports governing bodies who then inform and train their clubs. So our role is to enhance the knowledge and understanding at the national level. This includes support around policy and procedures development, training development, safe recruitment (which includes criminal records checks) and practice issues. The network will be across these governing bodies to support this work and encourage shared learning.

Uffe - the challenge of confidentiality cannot be underestimated and, although the network won't be including case discussions we are building in some clear ground rules around this issue. In fact many sport safeguarding officers originally come from other professions such as education and policing (I am an ex social worker) so the cross over is very real.



[David Jenkins](#)

10:51am 4 February 2017 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jude, this sounds really interesting! My first impression was that your area of work faces unique challenges re: openness but reading your abstract this has prompted me to think about commonalities with other areas - I look forward to hearing what links emerge between your profession and others, and what practitioners from outside safeguarding can take away from your learning.



[Jude Toasland](#)

11:26am 4 February 2017 [Permalink](#)

Yes I think that is a key challenge for this presentation David - making it transferable and interesting to those outside the safeguarding world.



[jan turner](#)

7:17am 8 February 2017 [Permalink](#)

Jude hi, I had read through your abstract at an earlier stage and returned to it today. A very interesting balance around the question of openness vs the desire to have a closed space for frank discussion. A little like this area perhaps, there is a time for close discussion and a point at which one can achieve meaningful engagement in a wider space.



[Dr Simon Ball](#)

4:24pm 9 February 2017 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jude

Please find below the main questions and comments from your live presentation. It's up to you how to answer them, whether you wish to group them, or whether you wish to point to an answer already given above, for example.

Best wishes

Simon

- ▶ Schools are now required to share policies and procedures openly. sharing things in development might help people think about how they can write their own - rather than copy them Often people don't understand the process

- ▶ Interesting how often the answer is a multimodal solution to accommodate diversity.
- ▶ have you had any more thoughts about how could you further enhance the involvement of children and young people in your design?
- ▶ Even reporting concerns - some people like to phone, others face to face, other via online forms
- ▶ I agree with some of the others about making sure children and young people are involved in the design phase.
- ▶ code of behaviour is important.
- ▶ What do you see as the main risks of an open forum?



[Jude Toasland](#)

10:10pm 9 February 2017 [Permalink](#)

Thank you to everyone that attended my presentation this morning and for some very interesting questions. I will take these point by point below.

1. *Schools are now required to share policies and procedures openly. Sharing things in development might help people think about how they can write their own - rather than copy them. Often people don't understand the process.*
 - ▶ I agree that it would be great to encourage and support participants to share information. There is willingness to share procedures and guidance with one another but more reticence about sharing training developments - partly due to lack of confidence, part organisational risk and part concerns about intellectual property. I would also say that some officers with less time (or interest - many don't choose their safeguarding role and it is an add on to their day job) may use other policies that are not effectively adapted to their setting. The challenge is managing creativity and learning verses reticence and lack of buy-in.
2. *Interesting how often the answer is a multimodal solution to accommodate diversity.*
 - ▶ Absolutely - one size never fits all and diversity requires versatility which can be a challenge when working to set objectives and key performance indicators from funders and employers!
3. *Have you had any more thoughts about how could you further enhance the involvement of children and young people in your design?*
4. *I agree with some of the others about making sure children and young people are involved in the design phase.*
 - ▶ I see this as an interesting next step for the project. The project's primary audience is the adults who work to safeguard children and young people and are frequently several levels away from the young people themselves. However we encourage sports bodies to creatively engage young people and this should be a challenge to ourselves too. As I commented in the presentation, young people often know more about this area and bring new experiences and ideas to inspire us
5. *Even reporting concerns - some people like to phone, others face to face, other via online forms,*

- ▶ Exactly - this is another example of the diverse needs of our audience and the need for flexibility within the model to make it responsive and effective to individual needs, within a framework that affords control and risk management. The NSPCC helpline is our primary route for people to report concerns and there are now several avenues through which to do this including electronic and telephone.

6. *Code of behaviour is important.*

- ▶ A code of behaviour is something that I came to quite late in the day and is now being developed with the group. I didn't want to impose something as this is essentially their space, however on reflection it is an area which would have been better included at an earlier point in the project.

1. *What do you see as the main risks of an open forum?*

- ▶ An entirely open forum would pose risks for organisations which could then have an impact upon safeguarding children, as it would not serve its purpose of enhancing safeguarding practice. The reason for this organisational risk is that an open forum would expose organisational practice, questions and examples in a public environment which could be misused by those who do not understand the subject matter. An example of this can be seen in the recent media reporting of the abuse in football concerns with a focus on numbers of case concerns instead of practice and confusion about which organisations were responsible for sports clubs. The outcome of an entirely open forum could potentially be a forum that either promoted organisations (positive stories only), left the more open individuals more vulnerable or was not used at all due to concerns about these risks. For this reason, and in response to the survey, a gated forum has felt more appropriate. This enables sharing of resources, information and learning in a safer space.

I'd welcome further questions and discussion.



[Pat Townshend](#)

3:23pm 10 February 2017 [Permalink](#)

Hi Jude

Firstly - well done! I've just watched the recording and your presentation explained your project well. I have a little experience of having responsibility for a password protected forum and we had some anxiety about moderation before setting up. But staffing levels meant that if it were to have needed pre-posting moderation it would not have been possible. Our protection was a 'terms of use' statement and a flagging system to allow users to alert us to problems. It was helpful that the terms of use were co-created by an administrator and a technician. They in turn took their inspiration from other terms of use they picked up from other sites. The sanction for abuse was to lose access to the site.

Over its two years of operation we only ever had one flag, and that was a mistaken one!

best wishes

Pat



[Jude Toasland](#)

6:02pm 10 February 2017 [Permalink](#)

That is really helpful Pat. I've tried to introduce a "groundrules" for the site but it got a bit lost. I like the simplicity of a 'terms of use' statement. Working alongside IT has been a challenge but you have inspired me to get onto this next week.

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