

## Impact case study (REF3b)

<b>Institution:</b> Edge Hill University
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 26 - Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism
<b>Title of case study:</b> Child protection, sexual abuse and welfare: raising awareness, shaping policy and changing practice in youth sport.
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> The research on which this case study is based has: (1) Contributed significantly to raising awareness of child sexual abuse in sport within the international community, particularly in relation to the abuse of boys, and to the development of a European agenda for the prevention of sexual violence in sport; (2) Enhanced the ability of the Rugby Football League (RFL) to meet its national obligations in relation to safeguarding children and established the first longitudinal evaluation which monitors the development of child protection and safeguarding in sport; (3) Facilitated the RFLs engagement with the international sports and child welfare community.
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> Research into the sexual abuse of children in sport has a relatively short history which can be traced back to the mid-1990s when a few high-profile cases emerged. Early research into this problem focused almost exclusively on female victims. Hartill's work, however, addressed the problem of the sexual abuse of boys in sport. In addition, Hartill (Senior Lecturer at Edge Hill since 30/10/00) and Prescott (Senior Lecturer at Edge Hill University 01.01.01-31.08.12) have conducted research into the UK's response to sexual (and other forms of) child abuse in sport through work with the British Rugby Football League (RFL) (Hartill, 2012, Hartill and Prescott, 2007). The underpinning research was undertaken from 2001 onwards.  Hartill's research represented the first investigation into the sexual abuse of male children within sport. The research generated life stories of men who had been sexually abused as children within a sport context and showed that the cultures of male-sport (notoriously closed environments) were frequently conducive to the sexual abuse of boys (Hartill, 2009, 2013). These conclusions have been reinforced by the steadily increasing number of male athletes disclosing childhood sexual victimization by coaches and others in positions of trust within sport since Hartill began publishing on this issue. In particular, it offered an original sociological perspective on child sexual abuse in sport beyond dominant pathological approaches which fail to consider adequately the socio-cultural antecedents of sexual violence.  The research relationship between EHU and the RFL was initiated in 2001 as the RFL began the process of producing its first child protection policy and procedures. The Chief Executive Officer for BARLA (British Amateur Rugby League Association) invited Hartill to join the Child Protection in Rugby League Working Group. As in other UK sport governing bodies, there was no intention to monitor or evaluate the implementation of the policy. However, EHU has now produced three studies for the RFL in relation to its approach to child protection and safeguarding (Hartill and Prescott, 2002, 2007; Prescott and Hartill, 2012). This research provided specific information on where the key challenges lay in relation to the RFL's approach to safeguarding and provided guidance and support as it established and implemented its child protection policy and procedures.  From a total population of 205 UK clubs, a postal survey elicited a 37% (75 clubs) response. The research (Hartill and Prescott, 2007) found that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 15 per cent (n=11) of responding clubs had not designated a 'club child protection officer' despite the requirement to do so within the RFL policy;</li> <li>• over a fifth (n=16) of clubs had not presented the policy and procedures to their members 12 months after the launch of the policy;</li> <li>• where the policy was presented, it tended to be designated a low-priority status;</li> <li>• children and young people were not included within the development of the child protection policy and procedures, nor the implementation process;</li> <li>• two-thirds (n=48) of respondents stated the policy had a positive impact on their club, a fifth (n=15) stated it had no impact, and 7 per cent (n=5) gave a negative response to the child protection policy.</li> </ul>

### 3. References to the research

As an indicator of the quality of the underpinning research, the global leader in this field, Prof. Celia Brackenridge OBE, has frequently invited Hartill to present his various research findings (both in person and in print) and has, on multiple occasions, noted his body of work, particularly on child sexual abuse in sport (e.g. Hartill, 2013) as an important point of reference within the field of sexual violence and child protection in sport. Some indicators of this are: the stimulation of further attention on the male victim of sexual abuse in sport ([Parent and Banon, 2012](#)); requests for consultation by national and international policy-makers (e.g. the [Children's Commissioner](#), the [European Commission](#)); requests to write field reviews for international organizations (see ICSSPE's *Directory of Sport Science*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed.); and favourable citations (Hartill, 2007, 2009) in national and global reports on child abuse and prevention of violence against children by highly influential organizations such as the NSPCC ([Alexander et al., 2011](#)) and Unicef ([Unicef, 2010](#)). All items are available on request. Outputs 3 and 4 are submitted in REF2.

1. Journal Article: Hartill, M. (2013) Concealment of child sexual abuse in sports. *Quest*, 65: 241-254. DOI: 10.1080/00336297.2013.773532 Impact Factor: 0.661 (5 yr IF: 0.875);
2. Chapter in Catalogue of International Initiatives: Hartill, M. (2012) Evaluating child protection and safeguarding within a national governing body. In S. Chroni et al. (eds.) *Prevention of sexual and gender harassment and abuse in sports: Initiatives in Europe and beyond*. Berlin: Deutsche Sportjugend;
3. Chapter in Book: Prescott, P. & Hartill, M. (2012) The impact of child protection on British Rugby League. In C. Brackenridge, T. Kay and D. Rhind (Eds) *Sport, Children's Rights and Violence Prevention: A Sourcebook on Global Issues and Local Programmes*. London: Brunel University Press, e-book, pp.88-94;
4. Journal Article: Hartill, M. (2009) The sexual abuse of boys in organized male sports. *Men and Masculinities*, 12(2): 225-249. ISSN 1097-184X DOI 10.1177/1097184X07313361 Impact Factor 0.547 (5 yr IF: 1.188); cited by 22
5. Journal Article Hartill, M. & Prescott, P. (2007) Serious business or 'any other business'? Safeguarding and child protection policy in British Rugby League. *Child Abuse Review*, 16 (4): 237-251. ISSN 0952-9136 DOI 10.1002/car.990 Impact Factor: 0.698; cited by 11
6. Report: Hartill, M. & Prescott, P. (2002) Evaluation of BARLA's Child Protection Policy Implementation (Pilot study). Edge Hill University: Lancashire.

### 4. Details of the impact

The following impacts arose between January 2008 and July 2013.

**Impact Claim 1:** Significant and substantial contribution to raising awareness of child sexual abuse in sport within the international community, particularly in relation to the abuse of boys, and especially to the development of a European agenda for the prevention of sexual violence in sport (Statements 2-4).

Sexual violence in sport is a developing research field; many countries and sports organizations have little or no awareness of this issue. A key aspect of Hartill's research has been the transfer of knowledge to sports organizations faced with increasing responsibility for youth welfare and the prevention of sexual abuse but with little experience of this problem. Hartill has made a particular contribution in relation to male victims, who had been largely ignored in the academic literature, yet are particularly significant for many sport contexts (Hartill, 2009, 2013).

Hartill has presented his research to a range of audiences and through different media within Spain during 2012-13. For example, in the wake of two high-profile cases of sexual abuse in sport, Hartill was invited by the President of the CSD (Miguel Cardenal) to deliver the keynote presentation, and prepare training materials, for a seminar of 68 sports coaches and policy-makers in Madrid on 26 June 2013. Shortly after (July, 2013), the Grupo de Apoyo a la Prevención del Abuso Sexual en el Deporte or GAPAS(D) was established by Dr Martin (with 34 members recruited), with Hartill acting as an advisor; the group has since begun to develop materials to support sports people. In addition, immediately following the seminar, the CSD announced they were developing an education programme on the prevention of sexual abuse in Spanish sport (Statement 5).

Evidence of Hartill's impact on European policy agendas include his invitation, in 2011, as one of ten Scientific Advisors in a European Union funded project led by the Deutsche Sportjugend

## Impact case study (REF3b)

(DSJ or German Sport Youth) and supported by ENGSO Youth (European Non-Governmental Sports Organization). The main output of this project was the publication (November 2012) of a catalogue of good practice: 'Prevention of sexual and gender harassment and abuse in sports: Initiatives in Europe and beyond' (Statement 2). Hartill was invited by the DSJ to: act as lead author and co-author for the introductory chapters and Conclusion; author a chapter on evaluation of child protection in sport (Hartill, 2012); and draft the project's final [recommendations](#). This catalogue, published in several languages, has been distributed by ENGSO Youth through its network of 41 countries and partner organizations throughout Europe and is freely available to download.

The catalogue was launched at a European conference: 'Safer, better, stronger: Prevention of sexual harassment and abuse in sports' (attended by 106 participants representing approximately 20 universities, over 40 international and national agencies and governing bodies of sport, plus the European Commission and the United Nations, as well as a range of regional and local representatives). Hartill delivered several talks at the conference; his previous work on the sexual abuse of boys (e.g. Hartill, 2009) was referenced three times in the opening presentations by the European Commission Director General for Education and Culture, ENGSO Youth Chair and DSJ Chair (Statement 2).

The projects' recommendations were subsequently submitted to the European Commission in Spring 2013 by DSJ. The immediate effect has been the full recognition of child sexual abuse and sexual violence in sports by the European Commission within its action planning processes (Statements 2, 3). As an initial indicator of the impact of this, Hartill was invited by the Council of Europe's Directorate of Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination to participate in a specialist panel debate 'Protecting children and young people from violence and sexual abuse within sport' at an EPAS (Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sports) conference on the '[Inclusion and Protection of Children in and through Sport](#)' (Budapest, 7-8 October, 2013). Several closing speeches by Council of Europe officials on how the CoE would move forward on this issue referred to Hartill's contribution and directly to Hartill and Prescott's (2007) research (e.g. Council of Europe, Director ad interim of Human Rights and Antidiscrimination (Maria Ochoa-Llido); now accessible on YouTube ([http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8Of9\\_zV-4M](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w8Of9_zV-4M))).

The Head of the Sport Unit of the European Commission (Yves Le Lostecque) has subsequently invited Hartill to provide a commentary (in relation to gender-based violence in sport) on the Council of the European Union's proposed 'Work Plan on Sport' in order to 'define priorities and concrete measures on this topic in the framework of Erasmus Plus 2014-2020' (personal correspondence from Yves Le Lostecque).

On the basis of the work he presented at the pre-Olympic Congress on Sport in Glasgow (2012) and peer-reviewed publications, Hartill was invited to lead the UK delivery of a European Union project (DAPHNE III Programme) on the prevention of sexualised violence in and through sport. This project, titled: 'Sport respects your rights: Empowering young Europeans in sport for a culture of respect and integrity, against sexualised violence and gender harassment' was announced in 2012 by Sportunion Osterreich (Sport Union Austria). The project, focused on youth empowerment strategies in sport, is intended to reach a minimum of 1200 young people (aged 16-22) across Europe during 2013-15.

**Impact Claim 2:** Enhanced the ability of the Rugby Football League (RFL) to meet its national obligations in relation to safeguarding children and established the first longitudinal evaluation which monitors the development of child protection and safeguarding in sport (Statement 1). Hartill was invited to sit on the Child Protection in Rugby League Working Group in 2001 and asked to monitor the development of child protection and safeguarding practices. The subsequent reports led to further change in the policy and practices of the RFL and enabled the organization to meet its national obligations to safeguard young people's welfare. The research made the following recommendations to the RFL:

1. Establish a dedicated funding stream for child protection;
2. Appoint a child protection 'champion' and establish appropriate organizational support;

## Impact case study (REF3b)

3. Re-evaluate the implementation of the policy and general approach to child protection, especially at club level, in relation to:
  - o The introduction and presentation of the policy and procedures;
  - o Seeking children's views and establishing a child-centred approach;
  - o Establishing support mechanisms for clubs and especially Club Welfare Officers;
4. Establish a formal evaluation for the implementation of the national child protection/safeguarding policy.

In response to the recommendations:

1. The RFL has established a dedicated Safeguarding Unit with a full-time Safeguarding Manager who champions safeguarding and provides support and training for clubs;
2. The RFL provides free training for Club Welfare Officers and heavily subsidised training for other club personnel;
3. The RFL established an annual Safeguarding conference and monthly newsletter, published and distributed by email to all Club Welfare Officers;
4. The RFL lead officer for safeguarding regularly meets with children at a range of clubs to seek out their views and has committed to a youth empowerment project (see below);
5. The RFL is the only state-funded national sport governing body to engage in an extensive, longitudinal programme of research into child protection in sport and this continues to date. (Safeguarding Officer, Lead Safeguarding Officer).

The researcher-practitioner relationship established by Hartill through a sustained collaborative and critical engagement with the RFLs work in this area resulted in changed thinking among those responsible for welfare within the RFL, especially in its position towards research and transfer of knowledge outside the organization. For example, the RFL agreed to a more extensive investigation into safeguarding in rugby league in 2010 and Hartill was asked by the Lead Safeguarding Officer to deliver his preliminary research findings to the RFL's Annual Safeguarding Conference (attended by the majority of its Club Welfare Officers plus many coaches).

**Impact Claim 3:** Facilitated the RFLs engagement with the international sports and child welfare community (Statement 1).

As a consequence of the collaborative relationship between EHU and the RFL, and Hartill's involvement in the German Sport Youth project (see above), the Lead Safeguarding Manager (Colette Eden) was invited to the Berlin conference (['Safer, Better, Stronger: Prevention of sexual harassment and abuse in sports'](#)) to present the RFL's welfare prevention work, informed by Hartill's research. Hartill's work has enhanced the reputation of the RFL's endeavours in child protection and safeguarding, nationally and internationally, by supporting and promoting the work of the Safeguarding Unit and facilitating their engagement with wider and more diverse communities in Europe. This has enabled the wider European sports community to access the knowledge and experience accumulated through the EHU-RFL collaboration from both a practitioner and research perspective (e.g. Statement 4).

### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact

#### Factual statements (1-4)

1. Director of Operations and Safeguarding, Rugby Football League (Claim 2 & 3)
2. Director of Youth Sport, German International Olympic Committee (Deutscher Olympischer SportBund, DOSB) (Claim 1)
3. Chairman, International Centre for Ethics in Sport (Germany) and President of ENGSO Youth (Claim 1)
4. Associate Professor in Physical Education, Vic University, and founder of GABAS(D) (Claim 1)

#### Other sources

Deutsche Sportjugend im Deutschen Olympischen Sportbund e.V. (2012). *Prevention of sexual and gender harassment and abuse in sports: Initiatives in Europe and beyond*. Available at [http://www.youth-sport.net/fileadmin/fm-youthsport/projects/prevention\\_harassment/Catalogue\\_Initiatives\\_in\\_Europe\\_and\\_beyond\\_2012\\_2.pdf](http://www.youth-sport.net/fileadmin/fm-youthsport/projects/prevention_harassment/Catalogue_Initiatives_in_Europe_and_beyond_2012_2.pdf) or on request.