

April 2008

To all Clubs

Safeguarding Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults

The purpose of this letter is to bring Clubs up to date with requirements for safe recruitment procedures when working with children and young people and to inform clubs how the ULSTER BRANCH TENNIS IRELAND (UBTI) intends to support them in taking these forward.

UBTI believes that all children and young people have a right to have fun, be safe and be protected from harm, whether involved in Tennis at a local level, or competing at national or international championships. UBTI believes that we have a duty to ensure the safety of children participating in our sport. We have therefore been working to introduce Safeguarding procedures which will meet our moral duty and legal requirements, which will be to the benefit of everyone in Tennis – children, parents/guardians and sports leaders. Part of this implementation is to ensure that we have appropriate volunteers and coaches working with our young people. We are very conscious that without the commitment of a large number of individuals volunteering their time many young people would not get the opportunity to play Tennis. It is vital that they are of good character.

Currently the good practice advice on the recruitment and selection process for coaches (and managers and other volunteer helpers) is that they are vetted before appointment. The purpose of the check is to make sure that people are not appointed who might be unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable people. The process will be highly confidential, with a maximum of four UBTI officers sitting on a Case Management review Panel being privy to results. Applicants can be assured that adverse reports received through the vetting process will be taken into account only when it is considered relevant to the role. Any disclosure will be seen in the context of the role and the nature of the information.

UBTI has registered as an *Umbrella Body* for clubs with AccessNI who are the organisation responsible for vetting from 1 April. This means that Clubs should have no direct dealings with AccessNI but must operate through the UBTI. Ms Dorothy Moore is the accepted lead signatory on applications to AccessNI and we are considering registering one other member as counter signatory. This small group will be our 'assurance panel' deciding whether adverse reports as referred to in the previous paragraph have a bearing on appointments. Case management review members will be vetted as part of the process.

Potential appointees will be required to complete a UBTI/Club Recruitment form and an AccessNI Disclosure Certificate Application form (**copies available from our web site www.ulstertennis.co.uk**) giving personal details which will enable AccessNI to carry out their checks and assist UBTI in appointing appropriate individuals within the sport. All forms will be kept confidential and only the Disclosure Certificate Application form will be forwarded to Access NI. Once the information has been returned from AccessNI to UBTI and a decision taken by them, the information cannot be retained by either UBTI or the club. This copy of the certificate must be destroyed. The individual applicant will also receive an AccessNI certificate which they should retain. Clearances are not portable between organisations and a coach or manager switching clubs may find the vetting process being repeated within a short period. It will be for a club to decide whether a clearance is still valid for a coach or volunteer joining from another club or a new check instigated. There is at present no requirement for regular updating of clearances for a long serving coach or manager, but changes due to be introduced in 2009 may introduce a system of on-going monitoring.

UBTI advice is to check all new arrivals who are going to work with children i.e. in regulated positions, regardless of recent vetting at a previous club.

You will find that in future all job descriptions and application forms will clearly state that clearance as part of the safe recruitment process is a requirement before appointment. Clubs must adopt a similar approach.

Clubs could be forgiven for believing that all the foregoing is unnecessary bureaucracy. You can be assured that this is not the case. Sport NI have made the introduction of safe recruitment procedures that include an AccessNI check a requirement of all sports involved in the modernisation process. Along with our moral and legal obligation to safeguard children we also have a responsibility to comply with their requirements for auditing purposes that impact on our funding.