



Press Release

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For immediate release

LTA partners with University of Kent's Centre for Child Protection to launch Safeguarding Simulation

The LTA and The University of Kent, supported with funding by Sport England and the National Lottery, are pleased to have partnered today to launch a safeguarding simulation called 'Izzey's Story: a safeguarding concern in tennis'. The simulation, which was designed for Welfare Officers and County Safeguarding Officers, offers a new form of training to help address safeguarding issues.

The simulation explores a case of grooming happening over a period of time at a tennis club – something not easily achieved via traditional methods of training which are constrained by written scenarios or short videos. Acting as a form of learning, the simulation brings across a more accurate depiction of the grooming process and the nuanced aspects which can be overlooked, including cultural and attitudinal issues within a club, volunteers being isolated and not supported by committees, the risks around the use of social media, and the role of parents, children and others in the club.

The simulation will take players through a number of scenes following Izzey's story, including text messages, social media communication, emails, audio clips and videos of different characters interacting. It is underpinned by reference to David Finkelhor's theory on offending which describes the stages that a child sexual offender moves through in order to abuse a child, as well as contextual safeguarding which considers the environments and people outside of a child's family in the context of safeguarding.

The intention of the simulation is to provide a safe learning environment whereby a visual interactive setting and emotive characters will provide a wealth of content for players to develop their knowledge and skills in a safe learning environment that is relevant to their role. The simulation aims to increase awareness of grooming and change attitudinal values towards certain practices which are often used by groomers seeking to exploit children. Its launch builds on the Safe to Play awareness campaign, which explored some of the same issues in a different manner.

If the simulation proves successful, similar projects may be taken up by other sports with support from Sport England. The simulation was developed with Professor Jane Reeves and other experts from University of Kent's Centre for Child Protection, the LTA's National Safeguarding Manager and with the support of volunteers, Councillors, coaches, tennis leaders and young people outside the sport.

Participating in the simulation will count towards safeguarding training requirements for Welfare Officer and County Safeguarding Officers. The project, which is the result of the LTA securing funding from Sport England to develop the project alongside the University of Kent, forms part of the LTA's safeguarding strategy and forms part of our work to continue to be at the forefront of

safeguarding in sport. Anonymised data from the simulation will be fed back to the University of Kent and LTA, that will help reveal insight and trends for focus on in future training.

The LTA's Head of Safeguarding, Dave Humphrey said: "We all have a vital role to play in keeping children, young people and adults safe from harm. We recognise that we constantly need to innovate and find new and creative ways of getting the educating people and improving their understanding of risks. We think this simulation will help bring to life the possibility of grooming and make all those involved in club safeguarding think carefully about situations around them. We will use the data from the project to inform future training and continue to build on the progress we've made with our safeguarding strategy. We are delighted to have partnered with the University of Kent and Sport England and hope that it proves to be a successful example for other sports in Britain to adopt."

Dr Tracee Green, Head of the Centre for Child Protection, added: 'The Centre for Child Protection has a history of getting to the heart of child protection training using the latest research, innovation and technology while working in collaboration with key stakeholders. Professor Jane Reeves has been at the forefront of this pioneering work and has built upon an impressive portfolio of simulations with inspiring impact. We are excited about this recent collaboration with the LTA – resulting in the 'Izzy's Story' game. This work builds on the core principles that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. It draws from the expertise of a proactive sporting community who want to promote good safeguarding practices and integrates proven learning pedagogy which will be of great benefit to the children 'Izzy's Story' aims to keep safe.'

Professor Jane Reeves said: 'The significance of 'Izzy's Story' is that it recognises that grooming is a sad reality in sport and that in tennis, club welfare officers and county safeguarding officers across Britain benefit from training on this. 'Izzy's Story' is an important, modern and significant piece of training designed in partnership between The Centre for Child Protection and the LTA, which tackles a complex area of abuse by entering Izzy's life.

'Officers are given a window into her life via her social media pages and the relationships she forms so they are able to see how she is groomed, the risks she is exposed to as well as the protective relationships and factors which also exist. The simulation facilitates discussions about the risks and promotes learning about the procedures, policies and relationships in the LTA that exist to protect young people like Izzy and are designed to stop grooming in its tracks.'

Welfare Officers and County Safeguarding Officers can book onto the course here: [Izzy's Story: a safeguarding concern in tennis \(lta.org.uk\)](https://www.lta.org.uk/izzys-story)

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For LTA media enquiries please contact:

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ABOUT THE LTA:

The LTA is the National Governing Body of tennis for Great Britain. We are here to govern and grow tennis, from grassroots participation through to the professional game. Our vision is "Tennis Opened Up" and we're on a mission to grow tennis by making it relevant, accessible, welcoming and enjoyable. We work with schools, with volunteers, with coaches and with venues across the whole country. We also represent the interests of over 1,000,000 Members, men and women, girls and boys, playing on more than 23,000 courts. The LTA runs and supports a network of 11,500 approved tournaments for players of all ages, the four corner-stones of which are the premier grass-court events leading up to The Championships, Wimbledon: the Rothesay Open Nottingham, the Rothesay Classic Birmingham, the cinch Championships (at The Queen's Club, London) and the Rothesay International Eastbourne. For further information about the LTA and tennis in Britain, visit www.lta.org.uk or follow us on Twitter @the_LTA.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF KENT

The University of Kent is a leading UK university producing world-class research, rated internationally excellent and leads the way in many fields of study. Kent's 20,000 students are based at campuses and centres in Canterbury, Medway, Brussels and Paris. The University is renowned for its inspirational teaching and its graduates are equipped for a successful future allowing them to compete effectively in the global job market. The University is committed to supporting outstanding research and innovation across the arts and humanities, sciences and social sciences. The University has an international community with over 40% of its academics coming from outside the UK and its students representing over 150 nationalities. The University is a major economic force in southeast England, supporting innovation and enterprise and through collaboration with partners, works to ensure its global ambitions have a positive impact on the region's academic, cultural, social and economic landscape.

ABOUT THE CENTRE FOR CHILD PROTECTION:

The Centre for Child Protection has an international reputation for practice, research and the teaching of child protection. The Centre's work regularly attracts research grants to explore new areas of knowledge, and has partnered with organisations such as the NSPCC, the NHS (National Health Service), the Home Office and Kent Police (Special Branch).

ABOUT DR TRACEE GREEN

Dr Green is the Head of the Centre for Child Protection, and has been involved with the Centre since 2016 by way of teaching on the MA in Advanced Child Protection (and related programmes), delivering training with innovative simulations, developing projects to support child protection learning and undertaking research to further the field of safeguarding knowledge and education. In early 2020, she contributed to the development and implementation of the new Social Worker Degree Apprenticeship programme at The University of Kent; establishing collaborative social work education between the University, employers across the nation and apprentices themselves.