



Club framework for safeguarding standards in sport



Background

In 2000, the Irish Sports Council (ISC) and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland (Sport Northern Ireland) produced the first edition of the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*¹ to help safeguard and protect children and young people in sport.

In order to assist sports clubs to assess their progress and be clear on what it means to implement the code, the Irish Sports Council and Sport Northern Ireland promote this all-Ireland safeguarding framework. The framework is based on current good practice for the voluntary sector as outlined in *Our Duty to Care*². Drawing from the field of safeguarding within sport, it is informed by legislation and guidance, evidence from research and experience of what works.

The framework provides a set of standards of good practice for clubs to work towards. These standards raise awareness and help organisations know what they need to do to protect children involved in sport, and to minimise avoidable risks. When implemented fully, the standards should provide parents with increased confidence and peace of mind. Most importantly, they should help create safer environments for children, where those children can enjoy and get the very best from their involvement in sport.

¹ The *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* (reprinted 2006) is a joint publication produced by the Irish Sports Council and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland (Sport Northern Ireland). Available from: www.sportni.net/childprotection/codeofethicslow.pdf

² *Our Duty to Care* is the name of two different documents produced in both Northern and Southern Ireland but based on the same principles for the voluntary sectors.

Vision

Children who have positive early experiences of sport are more likely to continue some degree of lifelong participation. This contributes to their ongoing physical and emotional wellbeing in adulthood. Sport, therefore, has a lot to offer children – provided it takes place in an environment that is safe, promotes enjoyment, and respects the physical and emotional health and wellbeing of each individual athlete.

Providing children with a safe and enjoyable experience of sport means addressing a number of practical issues, such as ensuring that your equipment is in good working order, and that your coaches and sports leaders have appropriate knowledge and are able to communicate effectively with children. This safeguarding framework is intended to contribute to an overall safe and enjoyable experience of sport by addressing your specific moral and legal responsibilities to protect children from abuse, harm and exploitation when they participate in club activities.

Purpose

- To help create a safe sporting environment for children and young people³ and protect them from harm⁴.
- To provide a benchmark to assist those involved in the club to make informed decisions⁵.
- To promote good practice and to challenge practice that is harmful to children.

³ The terms “children and young people” and “children” will be used interchangeably in the text to refer to those under 18 years of age.

⁴ “Harm” may result from sexual exploitation, physical abuse or emotional abuse or neglect, harm from bad practice or undue pressure that effects the child/young person’s health and development.

⁵ Decisions may be about whether to allow use of facilities, funding or affiliation, for example.

Principles

- Children and young people have a right to enjoy sport, free from all forms of abuse and exploitation.
- Everybody has a responsibility to support the care and protection of children and young people.
- Sports clubs have a duty of care to children and young people who take part in their activity.

Audience

This safeguarding framework relates to any sporting activity that takes place in an organised setting and is to assist clubs in implementing best practice.

The framework may be used by sporting organisations, including funding, governing and umbrella bodies, for a variety of purposes, such as to raise standards, assist in decision making or for enforcement purposes.

The framework is also targeted at those organisations within the wider protective community that specialise in the care, welfare and safeguarding of children, with whom sports organisations can work hand in hand. These include safeguarding committees, police and children's social work services.

Benefits

As well as being of benefit to children, there are a number of potential benefits for clubs that use the framework to achieve best practice. These include:

- identifying areas where action is required to keep children safe
- making a positive statement to children, parents and volunteers about how they are valued by your club, which may promote sustained or increased participation
- providing staff and volunteers with increased confidence in working with children
- creating links with local organisations whose main business is the care and protection of children
- fulfilling certain legal responsibilities in keeping children safe
- supporting everyone in your club to play their part in protecting children
- meeting the expectations set by Sport Northern Ireland and the Irish Sports Council.

What is the framework based on?

The safeguarding framework is split into six sections, as listed below:

- 1) Safe recruitment and selection
- 2) Effective management of staff and volunteers
- 3) Reporting concerns
- 4) Code of behaviour
- 5) Sharing information
- 6) General safety and management of activities

1 Safe recruitment and selection

The majority of people who want to work with children are well motivated and, without them, voluntary and community sports clubs could not operate. Unfortunately, some individuals will try to use voluntary and community sports clubs to gain inappropriate contact with children. Others may not have the skills, knowledge or values to work with young people.

Good recruitment and selection procedures will help screen out and discourage those who are not suitable from joining your club. These procedures will benefit everyone. Staff and volunteers will have a clearly defined role, which should enhance their self-confidence and have a positive impact on the children in your club. Parents will also be assured that all possible measures are being taken to ensure only suitable people will be recruited to work with children.

For more information, see section 3.5 in the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* or visit www.thecpsu.org.uk

2 Effective management of staff and volunteers

Good management of staff and volunteers will contribute to safe activities for children. It will also create an atmosphere within your club where staff and volunteers feel valued, are listened to and where issues can be dealt with quickly by systems already in place. Once staff or volunteers are recruited, they should be informed about your club's policies, procedures and guidelines. They should also be provided with appropriate training, support and supervision. This will minimise unintentional harm of children or young people through lack of knowledge or skills by staff and volunteers, and should help managers to pick up on possible intentional harm.

For more information, see sections 2 and 3.6 in the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* or visit www.thecpsu.org.uk

3 Reporting concerns

It is important to have clear, step-by-step guidance and procedures in place to facilitate staff and volunteers in reporting safeguarding concerns or disclosures should the need arise. These should clarify roles, responsibilities and lines of communication.

Although it is your responsibility to report any safeguarding concerns, it is **not** the responsibility of your club to identify and investigate possible instances of abuse of children. This is the role of the statutory agencies: in Northern Ireland, the appropriate Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) or the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI); in the Republic of Ireland, the Health Service Executive (HSE) or the Gardaí (police force).

It is important that your club has clear procedures in place for reporting and dealing with safeguarding concerns, disclosures and allegations. As well as reporting allegations to appropriate authorities, you should also follow your own organisation's internal disciplinary procedures.

In Northern Ireland, if you have cause to remove an individual from your organisation (or they leave before you have a chance to remove them) because you think that they have engaged in relevant conduct or have harmed or placed a young person/vulnerable adult at risk of harm (or they have received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence), your governing body (GB) should facilitate and support you in your club's referral to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA), regardless of whether a criminal investigation proceeds or not.

Procedures help to ensure a prompt response to concerns about a child's safety or welfare. They also help your organisation to comply with and implement legislation and guidance. All concerns should be recorded and passed to your club's designated safeguarding children officer, no matter how insignificant the concerns may seem, and regardless of whether they relate to situations internal or external to your organisation. For instance, concerns connected to a family or school situation should be noted in just the same way as concerns related to your club.

For more information, see section 5 in the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* or visit www.thecpsu.org.uk

4 Code of behaviour

It is likely that your club is already engaged in good practice. However, it is essential that everyone involved in your club knows what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. This can be done through a code of behaviour for those in positions of authority, parents and young people.

Every club should have a written code of behaviour relating specifically to adults and children, adapted from the governing body (GB) guidelines relevant to their sport. Your club will also need to consider and formulate guidelines relating to specific areas in which you are involved, such as day trips, competitions and residential events.

Having a code of behaviour minimises the opportunity for children to suffer harm, seeks to protect staff and volunteers from false allegations, and informs parents of the child-centred ethos of your club.

It will also ensure consistency of practice and will promote the safety, protection, enjoyment and comfort of children. A code of behaviour will give staff and volunteers the confidence to carry out their roles and to develop positive relationships with children.

It is an essential framework for staff and volunteer interactions with children with regard to support and supervision, training needs and disciplinary actions.

For more information, see section 4 in the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* or visit www.thecpsu.org.uk

5 Sharing information

Good communication makes for good practice. If your club puts good systems in place and provides opportunities for sharing information with children, parents, staff and volunteers, everyone will feel that their input is valued and that their ideas and concerns will be listened to. An ethos of partnership between parents, staff and volunteers will engender mutual trust.

It is important that general written information on policy and procedures is circulated to everyone connected with your club in a way that is understandable to all, such as through an information session or by sending out information leaflets or newsletters.

For more information, see section 2.7 in the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* or visit www.thecpsu.org.uk

6 General safety and management of activities

In order to ensure that the safety of children is paramount, your club should have given thought to providing a safe environment for children and young people.

It is important to plan activities so that they are safely managed and take into account the nature of the activity and the age range and ability/disability of participants.

For more information, see sections 4.5 to 4.10 in the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* or visit www.thecpsu.org.uk

Standard 1 – Safe recruitment and selection

	Criteria	Examples of information to be considered (or possible evidence)	Action	Who	Timescale	Progress/ achievement
1.1	An application form that must include a self-declaration section, consent for a check and a request for references	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A written application form for a particular staff or volunteer role • A written request for two referees per applicant • Text on the application form that asks for consent to undertake a check 				
1.2	A written job description for staff (if your club employs staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of duties/requirements of the post • Skills necessary to perform the tasks outlined • Inclusion of a person specification 				
1.3	A written role description for volunteers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A description of duties/requirements of the post • Skills necessary to perform the tasks outlined 				
1.4	A process of checking coaches/volunteers via AccessNI, Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU) or Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). This may be through your club's GB/umbrella organisation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A written list of roles that your club has prioritised to have vetted • Knowledge of how your club manages the service 				
1.5	Evidence that your club follows the guidelines set by AccessNI, GCVU or CRB when confirming an individual's identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that proof of identity is requested as part of the recruitment process (suitable ID may be a passport, driving licence, birth certificate etc) 				
1.6	A commitment from your club to an open and fair recruitment process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A written statement committing to an open and fair recruitment process • Evidence of promoting vacancies for staff/volunteers/sessional workers in your club's newsletter, website etc 				

1.7	References are followed up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of the reference request form, which meets the standards recommended in appendix 3 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport</i> 				
1.8	Staff and volunteer appointments should be ratified by the management committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmation that “regulated” posts within your club have been ratified by the management committee at different levels before confirming appointment • A record of interview/meeting with at least two representatives of the organisation • A copy of minutes/questions asked at interview/recruitment meeting • Written confirmation of posts (eg a copy of letter from/on behalf of the management committee confirming the post) 				

Standard 2 – Effective management of staff and volunteers

	Criteria	Evidence (or possible evidence)	Action	Who	Timescale	Progress/ achievement
2.1	An agreed code of behaviour for new staff and volunteers within your club, outlining what is expected and required of them, and the boundaries or limits within which they must operate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of positive statements and of standards of behaviour required • Inclusion of the behaviours that should be avoided – see section 4.1 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport</i> or visit www.thecpsu.org.uk for a sample 				
2.2	Written induction procedures for staff (if your club employs staff). See sample on www.thecpsu.org.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A written list of information provided to staff and volunteers on induction, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – organisational policies – procedures – guidelines – activities and ethos – expectations, requirements and boundaries. 				
2.3	A written requirement that all staff posts within your club (if your club employs staff) complete a probationary period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A written statement in contract/agreement detailing the length of probationary period • A written form/minutes of meeting/letter at conclusion of probation period 				
2.4	A means of undertaking an annual appraisal for staff within your club (if your club employs staff) and for the reviewing of volunteer roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement outlining provision for regular support and supervision (eg minutes of team meetings, pro forma) • A written statement that appraisals are undertaken for all staff or that annual reviews are provided for volunteers in your club 				

2.5	Safeguarding training is available to your club's management board and committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence that the management group has undergone training 				
2.6	A process for inducting volunteers on your club's policies and procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A written procedure for how your club manages volunteers, which includes induction 				
2.7	At all levels within your club, there are opportunities to learn about safeguarding children and young people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of a system for auditing the training of volunteers at club level • Summaries of course evaluations • The formal induction of club volunteers into your organisation 				

Standard 3 – Reporting concerns

	Criteria	Evidence (or possible evidence)	Action	Who	Timescale	Progress/ achievement
3.1	Written reporting procedures to reflect the advice in sections 5.10 to 5.21 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport</i> . (Contact your governing body for sport-specific guidelines.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines about responding to complaints and allegations about a staff member or volunteer at your club or to an external matter Advice on contacting statutory organisations In Northern Ireland, GBs and clubs should have a process to refer those disciplined for safeguarding reasons to the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) 				
3.2	A designated safeguarding children officer at club level with a clearly defined role and responsibilities in relation to child protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The name and contact details of your club's designated safeguarding children officer Confirmation that your club's designated safeguarding children officer has undergone specific training for this role Evidence of a process for promoting how to contact your club and, if necessary, the governing body and designated safeguarding children officer Clearly defined roles for the designated safeguarding children officer at club level 				
3.3	A clear statement that the welfare of the child is paramount	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A copy of the statement from constitution agreed by AGM or your club's management The designated safeguarding children officer to report on process for implementing safeguarding procedures to your club's board/committee Ensure that your club's board/committee has a process for endorsing any changes required 				

<p>3.4</p>	<p>A process within your club for recording and monitoring incidents, concerns and referrals, and storing these securely in compliance with relevant legislation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence should be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a sample pro forma for recording an incident – a sample reporting flowchart • Guidelines on how to respond to a disclosure • Your club’s designated safeguarding children officer has knowledge of what constitutes a concern about inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour • Information on how to respond to a child who says that either they or another child is being abused • Information on how to respond to allegations against a member of staff, a volunteer or another young person • Information on how to respond to concerns about a child’s welfare where there is no specific disclosure/allegation • Relevant information included in staff/volunteer inductions • The availability of contact details for your local Health and Social Care Trust and police (for Northern Ireland), or the Health Service Executive and Gardaí (for the Republic of Ireland), including out-of-hours contacts 				
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<p>3.5</p>	<p>Well-publicised ways for those involved in your club to raise concerns about unacceptable behaviour by other staff/volunteers/parents or by other young people. These include external concerns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A process in place for communicating your reporting procedures and how to access the reporting pro forma to the club coaches, volunteers, children or parents • Children and young people are provided with information on where to go to for help and advice in relation to abuse, harassment and bullying • A process in place for communicating who your club’s designated safeguarding children officer is and how to contact them • Parents and children are provided with extracts of the safeguarding policy when their child joins your club 				
<p>3.6</p>	<p>A process for dealing with complaints by parents/carers and by young people about unacceptable and/or abusive behaviour towards children</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A written procedure with clear timescales for resolving the complaint • Promotion of how those involved in your club can make a complaint • A disciplinary process • An appeals process 				
<p>3.7</p>	<p>Guidance on confidentiality and information sharing available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may include guidance on storing, destroying and accessing records • A confidentiality statement • Commitment to use information only for the purpose for which it was requested 				

Standard 4 – Code of behaviour

	Criteria	Evidence (or possible evidence)	Action	Who	Timescale	Progress/ achievement
4.1	A code of behaviour specific to your sport for your coaches, leaders and volunteers – see section 4 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport</i> or visit www.thecpsu.org.uk (Contact your governing body for sport-specific guidelines.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The code of behaviour should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – positive statements about the values of your club and what behaviours should be avoided – specific guidelines on behaviour towards young people and officials – statements on anti-discriminatory practice. • Written guidelines on how your club responds to issues of bullying – see section 5.4 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport</i> • Guidelines relating to physical contact – see section 4.2 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport</i> • Guidelines relating to the inclusive nature of your club and the participation of children with a disability or special need • Sport-specific guidelines on ratios for your activity (visit www.thecpsu.org.uk for more information) • Specific guidelines for residential/away trips if these occur within your sport – see section 4.5 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport</i> • A signed statement of approval from club management/executive group 				

<p>4.2</p>	<p>A code of behaviour for children and young people – see section 4.4 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence should include positive statements about the values of your club and what behaviours should be avoided • Specific guidelines on behaviour towards other young people and officials, coaches and volunteers within your club • Statements on anti-discriminatory practice • Written guidelines on how your club responds to issues of bullying • Guidelines relating to physical contact • Guidelines relating to the inclusive nature of your club and the participation of children with a disability or special need • Specific guidelines for residential/away trips if these occur within your sport • Information provided in a format and language that can be easily understood 				
<p>4.3</p>	<p>Written procedures/plans for how the code of behaviour is communicated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A procedural plan on your club’s website (if applicable) • Procedures/plans included in staff and volunteer inductions • A circulation list that shows to whom the code of behaviour has been distributed • Parental signature on consent form stating that they have been made aware of the code of behaviour and will adhere to it • Young person’s signature on consent form stating that they have been made aware of the code of behaviour and will adhere to it 				

<p>4.4</p>	<p>A process for dealing with behaviour that is unacceptable or concerning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of a complaints process to ensure that those involved in your club are made aware of how to complain • Clear timescales for resolving complaints that follow your governing body’s guidance • A disciplinary process that is fair and equitable for those who may breach their respective code of behaviour • Details of sanctions that your club may apply (ensuring they are non-violent and do not involve humiliating children and young people) • Evidence of an appeals process that does not involve those who initially sat on the disciplinary panel 				
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Standard 5 – Sharing information

	Criteria	Evidence (or possible evidence)	Action	Who	Timescale	Progress/ achievement
5.1	A written safeguarding statement and a policy to support this statement – see section 2.7 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement in your club's constitution • A policy that states your club's intention to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – promote the welfare of children – provide a safe environment – raise the awareness of staff and volunteers through training or induction processes. 				
5.2	A sample pro forma for obtaining information from parents about their child should be provided by your club – see appendix 9 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport</i> or visit www.thecpsu.org.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This form should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – parental/guardian consent to participate in your activity – contact details – general and emergency – medical/health information – specific consent for away trips/travelling. 				
5.3	Evidence of a sample pro forma for recording information as advised in the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport</i> and <i>Our Duty to Care</i> should be provided by your club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This pro forma must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – an accident form – an incident form. See samples on www.thecpsu.org.uk • Use of an attendance register • Monitoring the drop-out rate within your sport – see section 4.8 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport</i> 				

5.4	Evidence that your club follows the guidelines on confidentiality that does not conflict with data protection legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A statement and process for sharing information that is on a need-to-know basis only • A process for storing and destroying information after a specified length of time 				
5.5	Commitment from your club to an open and fair grievance process (if your organisation employs staff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A written statement committing to an open and fair grievance process • Staff advised of this process during induction 				
5.6	Commitment from your club to an open and fair complaints process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A copy of the complaints process • Promotion of the complaints process to all those involved in your club, including staff, volunteers, parents and young people • Disciplinary and appeals processes put in place 				
5.7	Information about your club's commitment to safeguarding children that is openly displayed and available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – a process for updating your club's website (if applicable) – via newsletters or at your AGM – posters or information cards. • Young people and parents are made aware of where to go for help in relation to safeguarding • The name of your club's designated safeguarding children officer and how to contact them is widely promoted 				

Standard 6 – General safety and management of activities

	Criteria	Evidence (or possible evidence)	Action	Who	Timescale	Progress/ achievement
6.1	Evidence of a sample pro forma for recording information as advised in the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport</i> and <i>Our Duty to Care</i> should be provided by your club	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This pro forma must include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – an accident form – an incident form. Use of an attendance register A process for monitoring the drop-out rate within your sport – see section 4.8 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport</i> 				
6.2	A system in place to ensure that facilities and equipment are safe and used only for the purpose for which they are intended	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Follow guidelines relating to first aid. If your club has facilities then you are advised to have a statement that you have a first aid box available Appoint a first aid person Keep a record of fire drills and of inspections of your facilities (if applicable) Evidence of a risk assessment 				
6.3	Management of specific risks to improve the safeguards for young people should be in place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines providing advice on communicating with children via telephone calls, text messaging or chatrooms – see guidance on www.thecpsu.org.uk Guidance in relation to photography and the use of videoing for training purposes – see section 4.10 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport</i> and visit www.thecpsu.org.uk 				

<p>6.3 cont</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Records confirming the competency and qualification of your club’s coaches and leaders • Guidelines for residential or away trips if your club undertakes these activities – see section 4.5 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport</i> and visit www.thecpsu.org.uk • Guidelines for sport-specific supervision ratios – see guidance on www.thecpsu.org.uk • Guidelines for transporting young people in a minibus or private car. These should include confirmation that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the transport is correctly insured and taxed – there is an MOT or NCT certificate if required. <p>See section 4.5 of the <i>Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport</i> and visit www.thecpsu.org.uk</p>				
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To obtain an electronic version of this *Club framework for safeguarding standards in sport* checklist, please email: Paul Stephenson at pstephenson@nspcc.org.uk or visit the Northern Ireland section of www.thecpsu.org.uk

Please note this checklist is not assessed by the Child Protection in Sport Unit, Irish Sports Council or Sport Northern Ireland and it is the responsibility of your club to ensure implementation.

When you're worried about a child, talk to us.

Whatever your concern, the NSPCC Helpline is here to offer help, advice and support. You don't have to say who you are. You can talk to us in confidence. Call **0808 800 5000** or email help@nspcc.org.uk



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