



Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships in Sport

National Children's Officer (NCO)

Each Governing Body of Sport should appoint a National Children's Officer. The National Children's Officer should be a member of the Executive Committee, or have access to the committee and its accompanying documents, to ensure that children's interests are kept on, and influence the decisions of, the agenda of the Governing Body.

The role of the National Children's Officer involves:

- Knowledge of the Safeguarding Code and relevant child protection legislation (Children First Act 2015 (ROI)/ National Vetting Bureau Act 2012-2016, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017).
- Commitment to attendance at appropriate training as required in order to act as a resource to members in relation to children's needs
- Co-ordination of Child Safeguarding training.
- The promotion of the values, attitudes and structures which make sport enjoyable for children
- Circulation of all relevant information and resource materials, on children's sport to clubs and affiliates of the sports organisations
- Communication with Club Children's Officers to ensure the distribution of the Code and the promotion of related education programmes, materials events and governing body related codes
- Liaison with all clubs to examine the rules, regulations and structures to ensure that they are child centred, e.g., equal playing time, appropriate competition structures, modified equipment to allow sense of achievement and success, use of protective gear, bullying policy etc.

- Liaison with clubs, to ensure drop-out rates and transfers are monitored so that unusual developments or trends can be addressed, including transfer of sports leaders
- Assisting in the development of a system of record keeping which maintains confidentiality while allowing for appropriate information to be passed to relevant authorities where necessary
- Ensuring that the Governing Body develops an appropriate sport specific policy, which includes a policy statement, codes of conduct, disciplinary procedures, bullying policy, safety statement, recruitment and selection policy and reporting procedures.

Club Children's Officer (CCO)

The appointment of Club Children's Officers in a sports clubs/organisations is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere. They act as a resource with regard to children's issues.

In summary the Children's Officers should review current policies in relation to young people, check that all activities are safe and fun, and inform adults of how to deal with any concerns that may arise in relation to the protection of children and young people. Club Children's Officers should be child centred in focus and have as the primary aim the establishment of a child centred ethos within the club. S/he is the link between the children and the adults in the club. S/he also takes responsibility for monitoring and reporting to the Club Management Committee on how club policy impacts on young people and Sports Leaders.

The Children's Officer should be a member of or have access to, the Club Management Committee and should be introduced to the young people in an appropriate forum.

The Club Children's Officer should have the following role:

To promote awareness of safeguarding guidelines within the club, among young members and their parents/guardians. This could be achieved by:- the production / distribution of information leaflets, the establishment of children's /age- group specific notice boards, regular information meetings for the young people and their parents /guardians

- To influence policy and practice within the club in order to prioritise children's needs
- Establish contact with the National Children's Officer at governing body level.
- To ensure that children know how to make concerns known to appropriate adults or agencies.
- To encourage the appropriate involvement of parents / guardians in the club activities
- To act as an advisory resource to Sports Leaders on best practice in children's sport
- To report regularly to the Club Management Committee.

- To monitor changes in membership and follow up any unusual dropout, absenteeism or club transfers by children or Sports Leaders
- To ensure that the children have a voice in the running of their club and ensure that there are steps young people can take to express concerns about their sports activities/experiences.
- Establish communication with other branches of the club, e.g. facilitate parent's information sessions at the start of the season
- Keep records on each member on file, including junior members, their contact numbers and any special needs of the child that should be known to leaders
- Ensure each member signs an annual membership form that includes signing up to the code of conduct for sports leaders and children and young people.

Ensure that the club rules and regulations include:

- complaints, disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- an anti-bullying policy.
- safety statement.
- rules in relation to traveling with children.
- supervision and recruitment of leaders.

Relevant Person

- For Clubs /organisations that operate in Republic of Ireland they must appoint a Relevant Person. Defined in the Children First Act 2015 (ROI) as a person who is appointed by a provider of a relevant service to be the first point of contact in respect of the provider's Child Safeguarding Statement.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

Each NGB/Club must appoint a Designated Liaison Person (DLP). This person may or may not also fulfil the role of Children's Officer.

- The DLP is a resource for volunteers /coaches and should ensure that the clubs reporting procedures are followed. The DLP reports any suspected cases of child neglect or abuse to the Duty Social Worker in Child and Family Agency/Túsla or An Garda Síochána/Gateway team or PSNI.

The DLP should also inform the NCO that a report has been submitted without identifying details

- The DLP should be knowledgeable about child protection and undertake any training considered necessary i.e. Safeguarding 3

- The DLP should familiarise themselves with the statutory and support services within their locality
- Have knowledge of the Safeguarding Code and relevant child protection legislation (Children First Act 2015 (ROI)/National Vetting Bureau Act 2012-2016 (ROI) and Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017.

Mandated Person

The Mandated person is a person named under schedule 2 of Children First Act 2015 (ROI). They have a legal responsibility to report concerns or allegations that reach or exceed the threshold of harm of abuse to the Tusla (refer to National Governing Body/Club for list of mandated persons). A person must be employed in a Safeguarding Role to be a Mandated Person.

Legal Obligations of a Mandated Person:

Mandated persons have two main legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015 (ROI). These are:

- To report the harm of children above a defined threshold to Tusla;
- To assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.

Role of Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland

Sport Ireland and Sport NI will ensure the widest possible dissemination of the safeguarding guidance and ask that this guidance is adopted and implemented by all sports clubs / organisations. This approach is based on the need for All- Island consistency in advice offered to clubs, Sports Leaders, parents /guardians, children, and in particular, National Governing Bodies of Sport who are responsible for the administration of their sports. Sport Ireland and Sport NI have jointly agreed that a common approach is essential in promoting good practice in children's sport.

This approach is based on the following underpinning principles:

- children's involvement in sport should be an enjoyable experience.
- the safety of children should always be the paramount concern of those adults responsible for providing sporting opportunities at whatever level an individual adult is involved.
- the appropriateness of the experience provided for children should be determined by and based on a child-centred ethos which place the needs and interests of the child as paramount.
- all adults have a responsibility to be aware of child protection as an issue.
- Sports Leaders should be properly recruited and managed and that appropriate training should be made available to them.

The provision of support by Sport Ireland and Sport NI will be subject to the adoption and implementation of this Safeguarding Code by Hockey Ireland.

Adult-child relationships involved in sport

The trust implicit in adult-child relationships in sport places a duty of care on all adults, voluntary or professional, to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the child while engaged in their sporting activity. Adults have a crucial leadership role to play in sport. Whether they are parents / carers or Sports Leaders or teachers, they can contribute to the creation of a positive sporting environment for young people. The unique nature of sport allows Sports Leaders to develop positive and special relationships with children. Such relationships have tremendous potential to help children to develop and express themselves in an open and secure way.

Safe recruitment practices and selection of Sports Leaders should be in place, including vetting, seeking references, confirming identity and checking adequacy of qualifications. Effective management of Sports Leaders is also equally central to the promotion of good practice in the club/ organisation. This should include support, supervision, and access to training and effective communication between members of the club/organisation.

Adult-child relationships in Sport

Adult-child relationships in Sport should be:

- open, positive and encouraging.
- entered into by choice.
- Meets the need of the child and not the adult.
- defined by a mutually agreed set of goals and commitments.
- respectful of the creativity and autonomy of children.
- carried out in a context where children are protected and where their rights are promoted.
- free from physical, emotional or sexual abuse and neglect or any threat of such harm.
- respectful of the needs and developmental stage of the child.
- aimed at the promotion of enjoyment and individual progress.
- governed by a code of ethics and good practice in sport that is agreed and adhered to by all members of the sports club/organisation.
- mindful of the fact that some children may be more vulnerable than others.
- mindful of appropriate boundaries.
- mindful of the importance of equality of relationships with children and the potential for favouritism/special treatment.

Child to child relationships

Interaction between children should be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect, equality and non-discrimination and with a spirit of fair play. In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, you should consider it a child welfare and protection issue for both children and you should follow safeguarding procedures for both the victim and the alleged abuser.