



**HOCKEY
IRELAND**

Safeguarding Policy

Hockey Ireland is committed to ensuring that we create a culture that all participants can thrive and flourish in a safe environment and that all children and young people have an enjoyable, safe and positive experience within our hockey community.



Foreword

In the vibrant world of hockey, our greatest pride lies not just in the skills honed on the field but in the nurturing of a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for all involved. As we continue to embrace the passion and excitement this sport brings, we recognise our responsibility to safeguard the well-being of every child and young person associated with Hockey in Ireland.

This Safeguarding Policy aims to reflect Hockey Ireland's dedication to fostering an atmosphere where everyone feels valued, respected, and protected, regardless of age, gender, background, or ability. Additionally, it aims to act as a best practice guide for clubs to ensure they can meet their child safeguarding and child protection responsibilities and that the work being undertaken by Children's Officers across the country and National, Provincial and Club level is fully supported and built upon.

This policy document has been compiled using *Sport Ireland's Safeguarding Guidance for Children & Young People in Sport*. Additionally, both Sport Ireland and Sport NI were engaged with during the development process to ensure alignment with current legislation, policies and procedures and best practice.

It is expected that all employees, volunteers and coaches who work with young people through our coaching programmes, at our events/competitions through representative honours will make themselves familiar with this policy so we can ensure all young people within our care have the best possible experience.

This is a living document that will be regularly reviewed and to ensure we uphold the highest standards of safeguarding.



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Glossary

Access NI: This service administers the vetting process in Northern Ireland. Hockey Ireland use this service to apply for checks on relevant criminal history information on individuals applying for a regulated activity role.

Child/Youth/Young Person: A child/youth/young person is any person under 18 years of age unless they are or have been married (Child Care Act 1991 and Children (NI) Order 1995).

Club Committee: The committee/board responsible for governing the club.

Club Children's Officer (CCO): Children's Officers are appointed within hockey clubs to ensure implementation and promotion of the relevant Safeguarding Policy and Guidelines so as to ensure that young people can participate, enjoy and benefit from our sport in a safe and enjoyable surrounding. The Hockey Ireland Safeguarding Policy is the good practice reference and policy document that is central to guiding the Club Children's Officers role.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP): A person who is responsible at club or national level for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse and welfare issues to the Statutory Authorities.

Leaders: For the purpose of this document, all adults involved in youth hockey or who work with and/or facilitate children to learn and compete in hockey are referred to as Leaders. The principal roles include the following: Hockey Ireland staff, Team Managers, any person contracted to deliver coaching/activities for under age players on behalf of Hockey Ireland e.g. Coaches, Strength and Conditioning Coaches etc

Manager: A manager is an individual who takes overall responsibility for a team or a group of sports people and who may often have a direct input into the nature and organisation of the activity itself.

Mandated Person (ROI): (NGB level only) 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 Tusla.

Mentor: A mentor is an individual who undertakes an overseeing role with a group of participants under 18 years of age, often in co-operation with other mentors.

National Children's Officer (NCO): (NGB level only) A nominated person within Hockey Ireland to advise on all matters in relation to safeguarding.

National Vetting Bureau: Hockey Ireland use this service to apply for checks on relevant criminal history information on individuals applying for relevant work. Using disclosures will assist Hockey Ireland in our recruitment decision, helping to protect children and vulnerable persons.



Official: An official is an individual charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the rules of an activity are adhered to in a formal way. This category includes umpires.

Regulated Activity: Regulated activity is something that a person working in Northern Ireland must not do if the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) has “barred” them from working with children and adults. It is an offence for a barred person to do such work or to apply to do such work. Where an individual is working in regulated activity with children or adults, Hockey Ireland requires they apply for an Access NI enhanced check, together with a check of the “barred” lists held by the Disclosure and Barring Service and the Scottish government.

Relevant Person: As defined in the Children First Act 2015 (ROI)*, this means 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.

Relevant Service: As defined in the Children First Act 2015 (ROI), this means any work or activity specified in Schedule 1 of that Act.

Selector: A selector is an individual who has responsibility for the selection of participants under 18 years of age for teams and events.

Services: Could define any of the following, national/provincial underage teams/panels, development services to clubs, any recruitment or retention initiatives involving young people/vulnerable adults.

Statutory Authorities: The authorities who promote the protection and welfare of young people and who have the responsibility for the investigation and/or validation of suspected child abuse, i.e. in the ROI it is Tusla & An Garda Síochána and in NI it is the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Health and Social Care Trusts.

Statutory Authority Guidelines on Child Protection: In the Republic of Ireland - *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Department of Health and Children 2017 (ROI)*. Northern Ireland - *Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People (NI) 2017 (NI)*.

Volunteers/Assistants: Volunteers/Assistants are those people who provide back-up to any of the roles above and often such assistants are involved on an intermittent basis (e.g. supervision, provision of lifts to matches or competitions; checking equipment, etc.).

Youth Hockey: Hockey for any person under 18 years of age.

***Though the Children First Act 2015 is legally only applicable in ROI, Hockey Ireland as an all-Ireland NGB expected all our clubs to work the highest standards. Therefore, NI clubs are expected to complete a safeguarding risk assessment and produce a safeguarding statement based to the sample produced by Hockey Ireland.**

Introduction

Hockey Ireland believes everyone should be able to enjoy hockey in a safe environment and that each person within the organisation either in a paid or voluntary position has a responsibility to protect and safeguard children and vulnerable adults. This policy aims to highlight these responsibilities and provide clear guidelines to all involved.

All sections of this policy are supported by detailed appendices referenced throughout the policy, which should be referred to while reading the relevant section.

In addition, Hockey Ireland is committed to:

- Respecting the rights of children as paramount.
- Providing opportunities for every child interested in playing hockey to gain a positive experience.
- Including and involving children in decision making, providing opportunities for children to be heard.
- Promoting and implementing policies and procedures that:
 - safeguard the wellbeing of children and protect them from harm or abuse, ensuring that everyone knows what to do and who they can speak to.
 - prevent and respond to bullying behaviour, ensuring that everyone knows what to do and who they can speak to.
- Requiring members of staff and volunteers to adopt and abide by this safeguarding policy.
- Training, supporting and supervising members of staff and volunteers to adopt best practice.
- Regularly monitoring and evaluating the implementation of this policy.

National Policy & Legislation

Hockey Ireland's principles (outlined below), along with this safeguarding policy document are underpinned by national policy and legislation, in ROI Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, and the requirements under The Children First Act 2015, and in Northern Ireland – the Children (NI) Order 1995 and Cooperating to Safeguarding Children and Young People 2017.

This guidance is also informed by Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, The Child Care Act 1991, The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 and the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016. In Northern Ireland guidance is also from Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 and Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.



Hockey Ireland Safeguarding Core Values and Principles

Participation in hockey plays a crucial role in the development of children and young people due to the range of skills learned through their involvement in activities that contribute towards the holistic development of children. Whether at grassroots level or elite performance, Hockey Ireland want to create a safe, positive and nurturing environment where all children can learn important values including honesty, teamwork and fair play. In addition, children involved in hockey can learn to respect themselves and others, adhere to rules, and develop a healthy relationship with competition at whatever level they are participating at.

The following are our core values and principles:

- **Importance of childhood** - The importance of childhood should be understood and valued by everyone involved in hockey.
- **Fun and Healthy** – Hockey Ireland will try to make hockey activities a fun and healthy experience for all involved.
- **Needs of the child** - All youth experiences should be guided by what is best for children. This means that adults should have a basic understanding of the emotional, physical and personal needs of young people.
- **Integrity in relationships** - Adults interacting with children in hockey are in a position of trust and influence and must never abuse this position of trust. They should always ensure that children are treated with integrity and respect, and the self-esteem of young people is enhanced
- **Fair Play** - All youth hockey should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. Hockey Ireland will promote fair play, respect, ethics, integrity and safety throughout our organisation
- **Quality atmosphere & ethos** – Youth hockey should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere.
- **Competition** - Competition is an essential element of hockey and should be encouraged in an age appropriate manner. A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of children, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. However competitive demands are often placed on children too early which results in excessive levels of pressure on them. Hockey leaders should aim to put the welfare of young people first and competitive standards second.
- **Equality** - All children should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of ability, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion.



Role and Responsibilities of Hockey Ireland in Child Safeguarding

A central goal for Hockey Ireland is to provide a safe, positive and nurturing environment where children can develop and enhance their physical and social skills from grassroots to elite performance. Promoting a child centred ethos goes hand in hand with identifying and eliminating practice that impact negatively on safe and enjoyable participation in youth hockey.

As the national governing body, Hockey Ireland will:

- promote our Safeguarding Policy and procedures that support it
- support our Provinces and Clubs. This will include producing template policies and procedures and good practice guidance and providing regular access to training and education.
- directly challenge any conduct that may be harmful to young people within the hockey community. This may include instigating proceedings under our Safeguarding Disciplinary, Complaints and Appeals procedure (see section 6) where concerns or complained are raised, (either internally or externally to hockey) relating to the safety and welfare of young people.

Additionally, Hockey Ireland promote the principles of safeguarding children by:

- Carrying out a risk assessment and producing a Child Safeguarding Statement
- Reviewing our policy and procedures every three years or whenever there is a major change in legislation.
- Undertaking appropriate recruitment processes to include vetting checks and references.
- Attending safeguarding training to raise knowledge and awareness of the standards that are expected when working with children and how/when to report a concern.
- Implementing Codes of Conduct for all those working with young people
- Appointing a National Children's Officer, Designated Liaison Person and Mandated Person
- Communicating safeguarding procedures/guidelines to staff, coaches, volunteers, parents, and young people.
- Ensuring that the Sport Ireland Safeguarding audit process is completed by all affiliated clubs, including those in Northern Ireland.

By implementing the above it ensures:

- Hockey Ireland, the Provinces and Clubs fulfil legal and moral obligations for the protection of children
- a positive message is sent to children and their parents/guardians about the value placed on children and their participation in Hockey
- a positive message is sent to staff, leaders, volunteers, provinces and clubs that they will be supported and guided when they are working with children and safeguards will be in place to minimise risk to all
- the risk of legal action against the organisation is reduced, by ensuring that all legal duties have been fulfilled and that all reasonable steps have been taken to safeguard and promote the health, welfare and development of children.



Safeguarding Risk Assessment and Child Safeguarding Statement

Safeguarding Risk Assessment

In line with our requirements under Children First National Guidance 2017 (ROI) and Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People 2017 (NI) where we must ensure that we prevent, as far as practicable, deliberate harm or abuse to the children while availing of our services, Hockey Ireland have carried out a safeguarding risk assessment where we examined all aspects of our services from a safeguarding perspective. Hockey Ireland's Risk Assessment document indicates the areas of potential risk of harm, the likelihood of the risk occurring and gives the required policy, guidance and procedures required to alleviate or minimize these risks.

Child Safeguarding Statement

The Child Safeguarding Statement is a written statement that specifies the service being provided by Hockey Ireland and the principles, that a child availing of our services is safe from harm by managing any risk identified as follows:

- Responding appropriately to any allegation against any leader/staff member/volunteer about any act, omission or circumstance in respect of a child availing of our service.
- Selecting and recruiting leaders/staff/volunteers who are suitable to work with children.
- Providing information and training to leaders/staff/volunteers on child protection and safeguarding issues.
- Enabling leaders/staff/volunteers in ROI, whether mandated persons or otherwise, to make a report to Tusla in accordance with the Act or any guidelines issued by the statutory authorities. In NI reports are made to either the Health and Social Care Trust in accordance with their guidance or the Police Service if a crime is suspected.
- Maintaining a list of persons in Hockey Ireland who are mandated persons under the Act.
- Appointment of a relevant person in Hockey Ireland for the purposes of the Act.
- Although the Children First Act does not apply as a legal requirement in Northern Ireland, these documents and the principles of best practice to safeguard children are relevant to all clubs and should be adhered to as we seek to adopt the highest possible standards and practices on an all-Ireland basis.

See appendix one for more details on the risk assessment and child safeguarding statement.



Safeguarding Audit Framework

Hockey Ireland are responsible for ensuring that the audit process (outlined below) is completed by their affiliated clubs and that any improvement actions arising from this process are implemented within an agreed period of time. Hockey Ireland will evaluate, quality assure and endorse submissions of their affiliated clubs.

On request, Hockey Ireland will also provide an analysis of returns from their respective clubs to Sport Ireland/Sport NI. Sport Irelands Safeguarding Audit Framework's main focus is to assist National Governing Bodies of Sport across Ireland strengthen the way that children and young people are safer and have a positive experience in their chosen sport.

The Audit Framework is:

- Focused on safeguarding children.
- Easy to access and simple to understand.
- Designed to support the whole sporting community.
- Configured to reflect the voices of children, young people, parents, carers, staff and volunteers.
- Focused on a more detailed analysis of safeguarding arrangements.
- Compliant with relevant legislation and guidance, including Children First 2015 and Cooperating to safeguarding Children and Young People 2017.

Sport Ireland's Safeguarding Audit Framework has been developed for use by all sporting organisations that work with children and young people, from grassroots to the national level. This includes individual hockey clubs and Hockey Ireland.

Sport Ireland's Safeguarding Audit Framework is underpinned by current legislation and the principles set out in this document. It has a fundamental focus on the context of children and young people in sport and the creation of safe spaces where they can be seen, heard and helped.

This safeguarding framework is a self-assessment framework where organisations and clubs will self-assess adherence to safeguarding policies and procedures and the idea is to ensure all our clubs are adhering to consistent minimum standards and possibly identify any gaps and action to help improve a clubs practice and child's experience.

It is compulsory to complete this framework. Individual hockey clubs will be responsible for the timely completion of the safeguarding audit process. Clubs will be responsible for responding to any improvement actions that are identified through the Safeguarding Audit process and co-operating fully with any review that is commissioned in respect of their club.



Safeguarding Policies, Procedures and Practices for Hockey Ireland

By carrying out a risk assessment and producing a Child Safeguarding Statement Hockey Ireland have in place detailed policies and procedures outlining how we safeguard children and young people.

These policies and procedures include the roles and responsibilities of the people within Hockey Ireland, safe recruitment and selection of people, and the procedures to follow in relation to identifying and reporting child welfare or child protection concerns and responding to allegations against someone within Hockey Ireland.

Safe Recruitment Procedures

The vast majority of leader, coaches, staff and volunteers will help out through a genuine desire to see children develop within hockey and with the aim of providing a fun and positive experience for the children. Hockey Ireland will take all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with children by adopting and consistently applying a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting staff and volunteers.

The implementation of thorough recruitment and selection procedures will help to keep children and young people safe within Hockey Ireland. Good practice in management and supervision of workers and volunteers after appointment is a further essential safeguard to help keep children/young people safe.

Hockey Ireland endeavour to ensure that all volunteers and staff working with children and young people are appropriate and suitable to do so and they have all the information they require to undertake their job effectively.

This will mean that all individuals who occupy these roles undertake:

- the appropriate vetting checks (**must** be renewed every three years)
(**vetting checks will also be carried out for the following roles if the person is attending U18 events, Championship Chairperson, Umpires, Technical Officials**)
- safeguarding training (**must** be updated every three years)
- the signing of codes of conduct (**must** be signed annually)
- the responsibility to read and become familiar with Hockey Ireland's Safeguarding Policy

See appendix two for more details on Hockey Ireland's safe recruitment process.

Safeguarding Training

All staff and volunteers will receive safeguarding training appropriate for their role. Training **must** be updated every three years.

See appendix three for more information on Hockey Ireland's safeguarding training.



Roles and Responsibilities

All those working with children (including parents/carers) should accept the role and responsibilities that they undertake in their commitment to maintaining an enjoyable and safe environment and the vital role they play in the development of individuals and of youth hockey as a whole.

Guided by this Safeguarding Policy, Hockey Ireland ensure that the work of all those working with young people and interaction between children, their peers and adults, is conducted in a spirit of mutual respect, equality and non-discriminatory with a spirit of fair play.

Adults including parents /carers, who create an environment in which meaningful, open relationships are valued and where the integrity of everyone is respected, can promote such interaction.

Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities within Hockey Ireland

- Designated Liaison Person
- Children's Officer
- National Children's Officer
- Relevant Person
- Mandated Person

See appendix four for the roles and responsibilities of the above roles.

Reporting & Protection

All those involved in hockey have a moral duty of care to report child protection concerns in order to help create a safer environment for children. The procedure in ROI for reporting child protection or welfare concerns to Tusla is a specified procedure under the Children First Act 2015 (ROI) and should be done online following a discussion with Tusla staff. In NI there is a standard UNOCNI¹ form for statutory agencies to use. It is recommended best practice that any telephone referral is followed up in writing.

Hockey Ireland have a duty to promote the welfare and safety of children. Staff and volunteers should be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be being abused or at risk of being abused. They should know how to recognise and respond to the possibility of abuse or neglect, so as to ensure that the most effective steps are taken to protect a child and to contribute to the ongoing safety of children.

The guiding principles on reporting child abuse or neglect is summarised as follows:

- The safety and wellbeing of the child must take priority over concerns about adults against whom an allegation may be made.
- Reports of concerns should be made without delay to the DLP, and/or (ROI) Tusla/Gardaí or (NI) Health and Social Care Trust Gateway Teams/Police
- It is not the responsibility of anyone working in a paid or voluntary capacity in Hockey Ireland to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child abuse is taking place.

¹ UNOCINI (Understanding the Needs of Children and Young People in NI)



However, there is a responsibility on individuals (paid or voluntary) to protect children, which means if you have a concern you **must** report in order for the appropriate agency to make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the young person.

- Under no circumstances should any individual be left with a worry or concern about a child. Individuals should feel free to discuss any concern(s) with Hockey Ireland's Designated Liaison Person where all concerns will be treated in confidence.
- Details should only be shared on a "need to know" basis with those who can help with the management of the concern.

In addition, individuals in ROI can:

- Contact TUSLA to discuss or report a child protection/welfare concern (www.tusla.ie/children-first/contact-a-social-worker3)
- If you think the child is in immediate danger and you cannot contact Tusla or HSCT Gateway Team, you should contact the Police Service/Gardaí without delay (999/112)
- For individuals in Northern Ireland you should contact **Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) Gateway Team. Visit gateway contacts:** <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/gateway-service-teams-contact-details>
- You can also contact the NSPCC helpline at any time to discuss any concern about a child (Telephone: 0808 800 5000, Text: 88858, Email: help@nspcc.org.uk)
- If you think the child is in immediate danger, contact the **Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) (999)**

See appendix five for more information on Hockey Ireland's reporting procedures.

Disciplinary, Complaints & Appeals

Hockey Ireland has developed a robust disciplinary, complaints and appeals process specifically for Safeguarding. It is important to note that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the Statutory Authorities and will not be undertaken by National Children's Officers/ Designated Liaison Persons or other staff/volunteers. Our decision-making process will be based on the civil threshold of balance of probability that an event occurred or not.

See appendix six for more detail on the disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedure.

Safeguarding Good Practice Guidelines

A central goal for all involved in youth hockey is to provide a safe, positive and nurturing environment where children can develop and enhance their physical and social skills. Promoting a child centred ethos should go hand in hand with identifying and eliminating practice that impacts negatively on safe and enjoyable participation in youth hockey.

This section of Hockey Ireland's safeguarding policy provides guidance to provide a safe environment for children and young people:

- Supervision
- Transport
- Film & Photography
- Social Media
- Mobile Phones



- Physical Contact
- Late Collection
- Adults and Youth Playing together
- Changing Rooms
- Away Trips/Overnight stays
- Accidents & Incidents
- Safety
- Anti-Bullying Policy

See appendix seven for more detailed guidelines.

Codes of Conduct

Codes of conduct are an integral part of Hockey Ireland. Hockey Ireland believe that adopting a Code of Conduct will ensure that all adults are familiar with what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when working with children. Adults who work with children are placed in a position of trust and therefore it is important they behave appropriately and provide a strong positive role model for children, both to protect children and those working with children from allegations of poor practice. HI have also established sample codes of conduct for young people. But at club level we would encourage all clubs to discuss sample code of conduct and consider what it specifically means in practice for the young people in the club.

The code of conduct sets a standard of behaviour that help build Hockey Ireland's culture and make it easier to deal with conduct and behaviour issues as they arise and form the basis for challenging and improving practice. These can be many and varied, ranging from on-course incidents, spectator abuse and mismanagement, to inappropriate social media posts, unfair treatment, poor sportsmanship and more. Codes of conduct set expectations for everyone and Hockey Ireland have a code of conduct in place for leaders/coaches, young people, parents and representative players.

See appendix eight for the young person, leaders/coaches and parents code of conduct.

Hockey Ireland Representative Players

Representative players are ambassadors for our game. It is important that this is recognised as both an honour and a great achievement. When playing representative hockey, athletes are acting as an ambassador for the entire game. In that role, there is an expectation that they will always conduct themselves in a way that reflects the standards of the game for showing respect to others and playing in accordance with the rules.

See appendix nine for representative players agreement form.

Legislation

There are a number of key pieces of legislation and guidance that relate to child welfare and protection.

See appendix ten which outlines the legislation and guidance that is applicable in the area of Safeguarding and Child Protection.