

# Code of Ethics & Good Practice For Children in Athletics





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# Foreword

The publication of *Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children in Athletics* recognises the commitment of Athletics Ireland to ensure that young people are safeguarded in their participation in athletics in Ireland. It is essential that we as an organisation take steps to ensure that the early experiences of young athletes in our sport are positive and enjoyable, irrespective of their ability, gender, social or ethnic background.

This document aims to outline the fundamental principles and policies and address issues relating to the roles and responsibilities of people involved in athletics with children. It outlines best practice with regard to working with children to provide a safe and enjoyable environment for all.

We hope that everyone involved in athletics will take the time to read this document and that together we can work to develop a child-centred approach to athletics for young people in Ireland.

**Brendan Hackett**  
**CEO Athletics Ireland**

The guidelines in this document are based on the national guidelines as outlined in the following documents.

*Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*, Irish Sports Council and Sports Council Northern Ireland, 2000 (Reviewed in 2006).

*Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*, Dept. of Health & Children 1999.

*Our Duty to Care*, Dept. of Health & Children 2002

For Northern Ireland clubs and organisations reference should also be made to Children (NI) Order 1995

*Co-operating to Safeguard Children*, 2003

*Area Child Protection Committee Regional Policy and Procedures*, 2005



# Core Values

## Sport for Young People

The Sport of Athletics is based on the following principles that will guide the development of sport for young people in Athletics Ireland, as outlined in page 9, *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*. Young People's experience of sport should be guided by what is best for the young person. The stages of development and the ability of the young person should guide the types of activity provided within the club. Adults will need to have a basic understanding of the needs of young people, including physical, emotional and personal.

## Integrity in Relationships

Adults interacting with young people in sport should do so with integrity and respect for the child. There is a danger that sporting contexts can be used to exploit or undermine children. All adult actions in sport should be guided by what is best for the child and in the context of quality, open working relationships. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind is unacceptable within sport.

## Quality atmosphere and ethos

Sport for young people should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, sex, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. Children with a disability should be involved in sports activities in an integrated way, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children.

## Fair Play

Fair play is the guiding principle of the Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport.

All children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. Ireland has contributed and is committed to the European Code of Sports Ethics, which defines fair play as:

*"much more than playing within the rules". It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always participating with the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption.*

(European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics, Council of Europe, 1993)

## Competition

A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of young people, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. However, often competitive demands are placed on children too early which results in excessive levels of pressure on them. This can contribute to a high level of drop-out from sport. Leaders should aim to put the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second. A child-centred approach will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.



# Policy Statement

Athletics Ireland is fully committed to safeguarding the well being of all of its members. Every individual in Athletics Ireland should at all times, show respect and understanding for members rights, safety and welfare and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the organisation and the guidelines contained in the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*.

*It is recommended that the above statement is written into the Constitution of the Clubs affiliated to Athletics Ireland*

In Athletics Ireland our first priority is the welfare of the young people and we are committed to providing an environment which will allow participants to perform to the best of their ability, free from bullying and intimidation.

*A more detailed policy statement may be drawn up for an individual club, See Appendix 1, page 47 of the Code, also Section 2.6 and 2.7, pages 14 – 15 of the Code.*

Once the policy statement is approved and put into the constitution it can guide all other rules and regulations for sport for young people within Athletics Ireland The following pages provide sample codes of conduct, rules for travelling away, supervision of young people, recruitment and selection and reporting procedures for child welfare and protection. The pages overleaf can be modified to suit each club and should be approved by the Board and each club's legal advisors.

Every individual in Athletics Ireland should at all times show respect and understanding for members rights, safety and welfare and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the organisation and the guidelines contained in the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*.

The above statement is written into the Constitution of Athletics Ireland. It acts as a guide for all other rules and regulations for sport for young people within the organisation.





# Guidelines and Codes of Conduct

1



## Code of Conduct for Young Athletes

Athletics Ireland wishes to provide the best possible environment for all young people involved in the sport. Young people deserve to be given enjoyable, safe sporting opportunities, free of abuse of any kind. These participants have rights, which must be respected, and responsibilities that they must accept. Young people should be encouraged to realise that they have responsibilities to treat other participants and sports leaders with fairness and respect.

### **Young athletes are entitled to:**

- Be listened to
- Be believed
- Be safe and to feel safe
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- Have a voice in the club / organisation
- Participate on an equal basis
- Be happy, have fun and enjoy sport
- Experience competition at a level at which they feel comfortable
- Make complaints and have them dealt with
- Get help against bullies
- Say no
- To protect their own bodies
- Confidentiality

### **Young athletes should always:**

- Treat Sports Leaders with respect, (list appropriate people in your sport, e.g.: coaches, managers, selectors, club officials etc).
- Play fairly at all times, do their best
- Respect team members, even when things go wrong
- Respect opponents, be gracious in defeat
- Abide by the rules set down by team managers when travelling to away events.
- Behave in a manner that avoids bringing the sport of Athletics into disrepute
- Talk to children's officer if they have any problems.

### **Young athletes should never:**

- Cheat
- Use violence or physical contact that is not allowed within the rules
- Shout or argue with officials, team mates or opponents (list appropriate in your club)





## Guidelines & Codes of Conduct

- Harm team members, opponents or their property
- Bully or use bullying tactics to isolate another player
- Use unfair or bullying tactics to gain advantage
- Take banned substances
- Keep secrets, especially if they have been caused harm
- Tell lies about adults / young people
- Spread rumours

## Guidelines for Parents

### **Athletics Ireland believes that parents should:**

Be a role model for their child and maintain the highest standards of conduct when interacting with children, other parents, with officials and organisers.

Always behave responsibly and do not seek to unfairly affect the competition or training their child is participating in.

Never intentionally expose any young participant to embarrassment or disparagement by the use of flippant or sarcastic remarks.

Always recognise the value and importance of the volunteers who provide sporting / recreational opportunities for their child. Do not publicly question the judgement or honesty of officials, coaches, organisers, or other athletes.

Encourage their child to participate within the rules. Teach their child that honest endeavour is as important as winning and do all they can to encourage good sportsmanship.

Set a good example by applauding other participants. Encourage mutual respect for individual competitors, team mates and all participants in specific events.

Parents should support all efforts to remove abusive behaviour and bullying behaviour in all its forms.

## Parents Code of Conduct

- I will respect the rules and procedures set down in Athletics Ireland's Code of Ethics for Children's Sport.
- I will respect my child's team-mates, leaders (e.g. Manager, Coaches, Officials, Judges), and parents, as well as all athletes, parents and coaches. I will encourage my child to treat other participants, coaches, selectors, officials and managers with respect.
- I will give encouragement and applaud only positive accomplishments whether from my child, his/her team-mates, their opponents or the officials.
- I will respect my child's leader(s) and support his/her efforts.





## Guidelines & Codes of Conduct

- I will respect the officials and their authority during sessions and events
- I will never demonstrate threatening or abusive behaviour or use foul language.

# Guidelines for Sports Leaders, Coaches, Team Managers, Administrators

Leaders in children's sport should strive to create a positive environment for the children in their care. They have an overall responsibility to take the necessary steps to ensure that positive and healthy experiences are provided.

Athletics Ireland recognises the key role leaders (coaches, selectors and team managers etc) play in the lives of children in sport.

All Leaders e.g. coaches, officers, administrators, team managers should have as their first priority the children's safety and enjoyment of the sport and should adhere to the guidelines and regulations set out in the Code of Ethics.

Leaders must respect the rights, dignity and worth of every child and must treat everyone equally, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability.

Leaders working with young people in Athletics Ireland should be suitable and appropriately qualified. Leaders will be expected to go through appropriate recruitment and selection procedures, (see application and reference forms overleaf), that apply to all persons with substantial access to young people, whether paid or unpaid. References will be needed and will be followed up.

There will be a 'sign-up' procedure, whereby the appointed/reappointed leaders agree to abide by the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Sport* and to their policies.

Leaders will be given a copy of the Athletics Ireland Code of Ethics and they should be made aware of the procedures contained within the Code.

Once appointed the leader must act as a role model and promote the positive aspects of sport and of Athletics Ireland and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct.

The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco must be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity.

Remember your behaviour to athletes, other officials, and opponents will have an effect on the athletes in your care.

Be generous with praise and never ridicule or shout at athletes for making mistakes or not performing as expected. All young athletes are entitled to respect.

Be careful to avoid the "star system". Each child deserves equal time and attention, at all times during his/her involvement in athletics.

Care must be taken not to expose a child intentionally or unintentionally to embarrassment or disparagement by use of sarcastic or flippant remarks about the child or his/her family.

Physical punishment or physical force must never be used. Never punish a mistake by verbal means, physical means, or exclusion.



# 1

## Guidelines & Codes of Conduct

Insist that athletes in your care respect the rules of athletics. Insist on fair play and ensure young athletes are aware you will not tolerate cheating or bullying behaviour.

Remember that young athletes compete for fun and enjoyment and that skill development and personal satisfaction have priority over highly structured competition. Never make winning the only objective.

Encourage the development of respect for opponents, officials, selectors and other coaches and avoid criticism of fellow coaches.

When travel/overnight travel is involved, the Managers / Coaches / Leaders travelling with young athletes must sign a separate agreement. Parents and participants will also be asked to sign permission forms in these instances.

Leaders are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with athletes. It is advisable for coaches not to involve young athletes in their personal life i.e. visits to coaches home or overnight stays.

All Leaders should avoid working alone and ensure there is adequate supervision for all activities. It is important to realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted by the participant or by outsiders.

When approached to take on a new athlete, ensure that any previous coach – athlete relationship has been ended by the athlete / others in a professional manner.

When young athletes are invited into adult groups/squads, it is advisable to get agreement from a parent/carer. Boundaries of behaviour in adult groups are normally different from the boundaries that apply to junior groups/squads. Athletics Ireland will set out a policy document reflecting this.

Leaders who become aware of a conflict between their obligation to their athletes and their obligation to Athletics Ireland must make explicit the nature of the conflict and the loyalties and responsibilities involved, to all parties concerned.

Leaders/Coaches should communicate and co-operate with medical and ancillary practitioners in the diagnosis, treatment and management of their athlete's medical or related problems. Avoid giving advice of a personal or medical nature if you are not qualified to do so. Any information of a personal or medical nature must be kept strictly confidential unless the welfare of the child requires the passing on of this information.

The nature of the relationship between leader/coach and a participant can often mean that a leader will learn confidential information about an athlete's family. This information must be regarded as confidential and except where abuse is suspected, must not be divulged to a third party without the express permission of the player/family.

Set realistic goals for the participants and do not push young athletes. Create a safe and enjoyable environment.

Do not criticise other leaders, (officials, coaches, and selectors). You are the role model for the children in your care.

Leaders should avoid the use of alcohol, in any activity involving young athletes.



## Leader's / Coaches Code of Conduct

Leaders / Coaches should familiarise themselves with the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* and with the Athletics Ireland Code of Conduct and follow the procedures if they suspect or receive complaints of abuse of any sort.

### **Leaders should:**

- Be positive during session, praise and encourage effort as well as results.
- Plan and prepare appropriately.
- Put welfare of young person first, strike a balance between this and winning/results.
- Encourage fair play, treat participants equally.
- Recognise developmental needs.
- Be qualified and up-to-date with knowledge and skill of sport and athletics for young people.
- Involve parents where possible and inform parents when problems arise.
- Keep record of attendance at training.
- Keep a brief record of injury(s) and action taken.
- Keep a brief record of problem/action/outcomes, if behavioural problems arise

### **Where possible Leaders should avoid:**

- Spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others.
- Taking sessions alone.
- Taking children to their home.
- Taking children on journeys alone in their car.

### **Sports Leaders should not:**

- Use any form of punishment or physical force on a child.
- Exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward.
- Engage in rough physical games, sexually provocative games or allow or engage inappropriate touching of any kind, and/or make sexually suggestive comments about, or to a child.
- Take measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adult.
- Undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc) in the training of children.



# Policies

2

## Disciplinary Procedures

Each club/organisation should ensure that it has adequate disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures in place. It is important to note that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the Statutory Authorities and should not be undertaken by Children's Officers/ Designated Persons or other club/organisation Sports Leaders.

The standard reporting procedure outlined in the Statutory Authorities guidelines should be followed by each sports club/organisation and adhered to by its members.

## Recommended Procedures

A quality sports club/organisation will operate on the basis of good practice to include a complaints/ appeals procedures similar to the following:

- a code of conduct reflecting a child centred ethos should be drawn-up, widely disseminated and returned from and applied to all Sports Leaders and members
- each club/organisation, on receiving a complaint, should appoint a disciplinary committee to resolve problems relating to the conduct of its members. This should include bullying. The complaint should be in writing to the secretary or Children's Officer and should be responded to within 5 working days. The committee should consist of a representative from the Management Committee, the Children's Officer and ordinary registered members of the club.
- If the complaint involves suspected abuse or a criminal offence the children's officer/ designated person should be consulted and the disciplinary committee disbanded. The statutory authorities will then be informed
- the disciplinary committee should review any relevant paper work and hold any necessary meetings with all parties to proceed with complaints into any incident of suspected misconduct that does not relate to child abuse. It should, as soon as possible, inform the Management Committee of the progress of the disciplinary process. This should be done within 10 working days
- the disciplinary committee should furnish the individual with the nature of the complaint being made against him/her and afford him/her the opportunity of providing a response either verbally or in writing, but usually at a meeting with the disciplinary committee
- written confidential records of all complaints should be safely and confidentially kept and club procedures should be defined for the possession of such records in the event of election of new officers
- where it is established that an incident of misconduct has taken place, the disciplinary committee should notify the member of any sanction being imposed. The notification should be made in writing, setting out the reasons for the sanction. If the member is under 18 years of age, correspondence should be addressed to the parents/guardians

- if the member against whom the complaint was made is unhappy with the decision of the disciplinary committee s/he should have the right to appeal the decision to an appeals committee (independent of a disciplinary committee). Any appeal should be made in writing within an agreed period after issue, usually 10 days of the decision of the disciplinary committee. The chairperson of the appeals committee should be a member of the Management Committee. The appeals committee should consult with the Children's Officer in relation to issues of child welfare and codes of conduct
- the appeals committee should have the power to confirm, set aside or change any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee
- if any party is not satisfied with the outcome the matter can be referred to the Governing Body. However efforts to resolve the issue at local level should be exhausted before the Governing Body is engaged in attempts to resolve the matter

## Recruitment and Selection Policy

Athletics Ireland will take all reasonable steps to ensure that leaders are appropriately qualified and suitable to work with young people. These procedures apply to all persons with access to young people, whether paid or unpaid. These procedures apply to Athletics Ireland itself as the national organisation and to all its affiliated clubs.

A decision to appoint a Sports Leader is the responsibility of the club/organisation and not of any one individual within it. The club/organisation's committee should ratify all recommendations for appointment. This applies to all clubs affiliated to Athletics Ireland. A report of all such decisions must be kept secure.

The responsibilities of the role and the level of experience/qualifications required should be drawn up and clearly stated beforehand.

Applicants should complete an application form which should include a self-declaration section / form.

Formal vetting procedures should be availed of when and if available.

References should be verified by Athletics Ireland or the relevant club, as appropriate.

A probationary period is advisable and should be established through an informal interview, which can be used to assess the leader's commitment and interest to the club.

Every effort should be made to manage and support appointed Sport Leaders, including awareness of the code of conduct. Adequate supervision should be provided; a leader should not have to work alone.

When storing information in relation to applicants, information should be treated as sensitive and confidential. It should be kept in a secure place that is only accessible to nominated officers. Each club must have appropriate administration procedures in place to ensure this.





ATHLETICS  
IRELAND

**VOLUNTEER/COACH APPLICATION FORM  
FOR THOSE WITH SUBSTANTIAL ACCESS TO CHILDREN**  
All information received in this form will be treated confidentially

Name:  Maiden Name (if applicable):

Current Address:

Previous Address over the last 5 years:

How long have you lived at this address?

List any address outside of NI on additional sheet (Northern Ireland only)

Place of birth(Town/City)

Telephone No:  Mobile  DOB:

PPS Number (R.O.I only):  NI Number (N.I only):

Previous work/voluntary experience & relevant qualifications

Do you agree to abide by Athletics Ireland's Code of Conduct?  Yes  No

Have you ever been asked to leave a sporting organisation in the past? Yes  No

*(If you have answered yes we will contact you in confidence)*

Any other relevant information?

Please supply the names of two responsible people whom we can contact and who from personal knowledge are willing to endorse your application. If you have had a previous involvement in a sports club one of these names should be that of an administrator / leader in your last club / place of involvement.

Name:  Name:

Address:  Address:

Tel:  Tel:

Position:  Position:

**FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY:**

Date application received:  Date of Interview:

Interviewed by: 1.

2.

References received and are satisfactory: Yes  No

Comments:

Statutory check completed & returned (if appropriate): Yes  No  N/A

Proof of applicants identification received: Yes  No

Recommendation:  Approved Reasons  Not Approved Reasons:

Signed:  Dated:



ATHLETICS  
IRELAND

### CONFIDENTIAL REFERENCE FORM

This form can be used as a telephone reference or used  
as a written reference

#### Confidential Reference Form

*(this form can be used as a telephone reference or used as a written reference)*

The following person: Name:  expressed an interest in working  
with:  (name club / organisation) as  (list position)

*If you are happy to complete this reference, any information will be treated with due confidentiality and in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance. Information will only be shared with the person conducting the assessment of the candidate's suitability for the post, if he/she is offered the position. We appreciate you being extremely candid, open and honest in your evaluation.*

1. How long have you known this person?

2. In what capacity?

3. What attributes does this person have that would make them suited to this work?

4. Please rate this person on the following-please tick one box for each statement:

	Poor	Average	Good	V Good	Excellent
Responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Maturity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Self-motivation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can motivate others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Energy	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Trustworthiness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reliability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This post involves substantial access to young people. As an organisation committed to the welfare and protection of young people, we are anxious to know if you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children and young people

YES  NO

*If you have answered YES we will contact you in confidence*

Signed:  Date:

Position in organisation:

Name of club / organisation:



## General Guidelines

3



## Transport

There is extra responsibility on leaders when they transport young people to events.

### Adults should:

- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover on their car and they follow the rules of the road, including legal use of seat belts.
- Not carry more than the permitted number of passengers.
- Avoid being alone with one participant. Put a single passenger in the back seat. Have central drop off locations. Seek parental permission to transport an individual participant on a regular basis and clearly state times of pick-up and drop off. Parents should check with young people about the plans and be happy with the transport arrangements.
- Occasions may arise where a leader/coach may have no option but to transport participants / athlete alone. The leader/coach should before commencing make phone contact with athlete's parent, guardian, or older sibling to advise of the reason for transporting the athlete. If none of the athlete's family are available through contact then the leader/coach must advise a fellow coach/leader in advance.

## General Supervision

- Make sure there is an adequate adult: child ratio. Leaders should try to have more than one adult present. The number of adults needed will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the participants and any special needs of the group. As a guide a ratio of 1:8 for under 12 years of age and 1:10 for participants over 12 years of age. This is only a guide.
- Where there are mixed groups there should be leaders of both genders.
- Avoid being alone with one participant, if you need to talk separately do so in an open environment, in view of others.
- In changing rooms, ask parents to take responsibility and supervise in pairs of appropriate gender.
- Leaders should not need to enter the changing rooms unless children are very young or need special assistance, where supervision should be in pairs of appropriate gender.
- Clearly state time for start and end of training sessions or competitions, leaders should not be left alone with young people at the end of sessions. If there are late collections, leaders should remain in pairs until participants have all departed.
- Keep attendance records and records of any incidents/injuries that may arise.
- Ask parents/guardians to stay and supervise sessions, (for safety and supervision, not necessarily for their 'technical' expertise). Do this through formal meeting process and encourage parents/guardians to sign up formally to a roster arrangement, subject to the normal vetting procedures.

## Overnight & Away Trips

- Separate permission forms should be signed by parents/guardians and participants, containing emergency contact number(s).
- Young participants should sign a behaviour agreement.
- Appoint a team manager who will make a report on returning home.
- A meeting with parents/guardians and participants is useful to communicate travel times, competition details, other activities, gear requirements, special dietary needs and any other necessary details. This is where possible and practicable.
- Rooming arrangements – adults should not share rooms with children. Children should share rooms with those of similar age and same gender. Adults should knock before entering rooms. If possible place male and female rooms in separate sections/quarters.
- Medical requirements (information will be kept confidential)
- All group socialisation should take place in communal areas (i.e. no boys in girls rooms and vice versa)
- Alcoholic drink, smoking or other illegal substances are forbidden to young athletes. Leaders should act as role models in this respect.
- Team leaders must be very vigilant in this regard at all times on overnight and away trips. To achieve this, a team leader roster involving at least two leaders/managers on duty at the same time should be drawn up.
- There must be at least one adult of each gender with a mixed party, there should be a good adult:child ratio, 1:5/6, and proper access to medical personnel.
- Lights out times should be enforced.
- Young athletes should be under reasonable supervision at all times and should never leave the venue or go unsupervised without prior permission.
- It is important that arrangements are outlined as above, and are agreed with the management team leaders in advance of actual event, and at a formal meeting at the commencement of the travel to include everyone.

## Physical Contact

Physical contact during sport should always be intended to meet the child's needs, NOT the adults. The adult may use appropriate contact when the aim is to assist in development of the skill or activity or for safety reasons, e.g. to prevent or treat an injury. This should be in an open environment with the permission and understanding of the participant. In general:

- Contact should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the participant – don't do something for a child that they can do for themselves.
- Never engage in inappropriate touching such as touching of groin, genital areas, buttocks, breasts or any other part of the body that might cause a child distress or embarrassment.

## Use of Photographic and Mobile Equipment

Each club within Athletics Ireland should adopt a policy in relation to the use of images of athletes on their websites and other publications, as there have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people. Adults and sports leaders need to work together to prevent those wishing to cause such harm to young people. Remember having photographic and filming guidelines is not about preventing parents from taking pictures, it is to ensure that only those who have a right to take photographs do so. Anyone concerned about photography taking place at events or training sessions can contact the Children's Officer/Designated Person and ask them to deal with the matter.

The purpose is to reduce the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and outside the sport. Group photographs where the club is identified rather than individuals are good for publicity without creating a risk to those in the photographs. As a guide try to remember the following:

- If the athlete is named, avoid using their photograph.
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the athlete.
- Ask for the athlete's permission to use their image to ensure that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport.
- Ask for parental permission to use the athlete's image to ensure that parents are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. A permission form could be used or an announcement made at the start of an event.
- To reduce the risk of inappropriate use, only use images of athletes in suitable dress. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child.
- Talk to Children's Officer/Designated Person if you are worried about use of images.

Amateur photographers and film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the children's officer, event organiser or leader of session. Permission forms should be available on site.

To ensure spectators and participants are informed of the policy, the club/event/organisation



### 3

## General Guidelines

should display the following information prior to the start of an event and where possible make an announcement over a tannoy.

“In line with the recommendation in the Athletics Ireland Code of Conduct, the promoters of this event request that any person wishing to engage in any video, zoom or close range photography should register their details with the organisers. It is not advisable that children are photographed or filmed without their permission and/or the permission of their parent/guardian”.

## Working in Partnership to Protect Young People

Photographs, when used with personal information, can be used as a means of identifying children. This practice can make a child vulnerable to an individual who may wish to “groom” that child for abuse. Furthermore the content of the photo can be used or adapted for inappropriate use. There is evidence of this adapted material finding its way onto child pornography sites. Adults and sports leaders need to work together to prevent those wishing to cause such harm to young people.

### **As a Leader remember;**

Use group texts for communication among athletes and teams, and inform parents of this practice at the start of the season.

It is not appropriate to have constant communication with individual athletes. Don't use the phone in certain locations; inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person e.g. in changing rooms.







## Child Protection Procedures

4



# Child Welfare and Protection Procedures

Athletics Ireland accepts that organisations, which include young people among its members, are vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. Below are the procedures for dealing with any welfare or protection issue that may arise. Child welfare and the protection of young people is the concern of all adults at all times, irrespective of their role within the organisation.

If there are grounds for concern (Code, page 44) about the safety or welfare of a young person, you should react to the concern. Persons unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive and therefore reportable, should contact the duty social worker in the local health service executive or social services department where they will receive advice. Grounds for concern include a specific indication from a child, a statement from a person who witnessed abuse or an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse.

A report may be made by any member in the club but should be passed on to the Children's Officer who may in turn have to pass the concern to the local Statutory Authorities. It is not the responsibility of anyone working within Athletics Ireland in a paid or voluntary capacity, or those working in affiliated organisations, to take responsibility or decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. That is the job of the local statutory authorities. However, there is a responsibility to protect children by assisting the appropriate agencies so that they can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect young people.

Everyone should follow both procedures outlined below, firstly the procedure for responding to a child in distress and secondly the procedure for reporting the concern.

## Response to a Child Disclosing Abuse

### **When a young person discloses information of suspected abuse you should:**

- (a) Deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened.
- (b) Stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the child is saying seriously.
- (c) Understand that the child has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation.
- (d) Be honest with the child and tell them that it may not be possible to keep information a secret.
- (e) Make no judgemental statements about the person against whom the allegation is made
- (f) Not question the child unless the nature of what she/he is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as "can you explain to me what you mean by that?".
- (g) Give the child some indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents/guardians, health service executive or social services. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.





## Child Protection Procedures

- (h) Check out the concerns with the parents/guardians before making a report unless doing so would endanger the child or compromise an investigation.
- (i) Carefully record the details
- (j) Pass on this information to the Children's Officer/Designated Person
- (k) Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you

## Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse

### The following steps should be taken in reporting child abuse to the statutory authorities:

- (a) Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information
- (b) Report the matter as soon as possible to the designated person with responsibility for reporting abuse. If the Children's Officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, she/he will make a report to the Health Service Executive/Social Services who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse
- (c) In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Children's Officer is unable to contact a duty social worker, the police authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities
- (d) If the Children's Officer is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist she/he can informally consult with the local health board/social services, (see code page 47). She/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

A Children's Officer reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities will first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998, provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the Health Service Executive or the Gardaí (See 5.13.1 - ISC Code). The act also covers the offence of 'false reporting'. The main provisions of the Act are:

1. The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to designated officers of Health Service Executive or any member of An Garda Síochana;
2. The provision of significant protection for employees who report child abuse. This protection covers all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including, dismissal;





## Child Protection Procedures

3. The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities “knowing that statement to be false”. This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

This law does not exist in Northern Ireland, but an individual who reports concerns in ‘good faith’ is not deliberately attempting to slander another person’s name. In Northern Ireland there is legislation, the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967 which places the responsibility on everyone to report offences or to forward information to the police by emphasizing the, *‘duty of every other person, who knows or believes, (a) that the offence or some other arrestable offence has been committed: and (b) that he has information which is likely to secure, or to be material assistance in securing, the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of any person for that offence’*

## Allegations Against Sports Leaders

Athletics Ireland has agreed procedures to be followed in cases of alleged child abuse against Sports Leaders. If such an allegation is made against a Sports Leader working within the club, two procedures should be followed:

- (1) The reporting procedure in respect of suspected child abuse (reported by the Children’s Officer), as on the previous page.
- (2) The procedure for dealing with the Sports Leader will be carried out by a nominee of the Board of the Athletics Ireland.

The safety of the child making the allegation should be considered and the safety of any other children who may be at risk. The club should take any necessary steps that may be necessary to protect children in its care

The issue of confidentiality is important. Information is on a ‘need to know’ basis and the Sports Leader should be treated with respect and fairness.

## Reporting Procedure

If the Children’s Officer has reasonable grounds for concern, (page 44, Section 5.10, Code), the matter should be reported to the local health board / social services, following the standard reporting procedure, (Section 5.12.1, page 45).

### The Sports Leader

While the Children’s Officer makes the report to the local health board, at national level the nominee should deal with the Sports Leader in question. At club level the club nominee should deal with the Sports Leader in question.

- The nominee should privately inform the Leader that (a) an allegation has been made against him / her and (b) the nature of the allegation. He / she should be afforded an opportunity to respond. His / her response should be noted and passed on to the health board / social services.
- The Leader should be asked to step aside pending the outcome of the investigation. When a person is asked to step aside it should be made clear that it is only a precautionary measure and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings.





## Child Protection Procedures

The governing body should be informed by the Children's Officer that the Leader has been asked to stand aside.

Governing bodies can consider disciplinary action on the Leader but should ensure that this does not interfere with the investigation of the Statutory Authorities. It is important that governing bodies consider the outcome of the investigation and any implications it might have. The fact that the alleged abuser has not been prosecuted or been found guilty does not mean that they are appropriate to work with young people in the future.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in cases of abuse, welfare or bad practice. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected.

The following points should be kept in mind:

- A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the child will supersede all other considerations.
- All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know.
- Information should be conveyed to the parents / guardians of the child in a sensitive way.
- Giving information to others on a 'need to know' basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.
- All persons involved in a child protection process (the child, his/her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family, sports leaders) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure.
- Information should be stored in a secure place, with limited access only to designated people.
- The requirements of the Data Protection laws should be adhered to.
- Breach of confidentiality is a serious matter.

## Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but should not be ignored. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child/children is paramount. Any such complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Children's Officer or the CEO of Athletics Ireland. The information should be checked out and handled in a confidential manner.





## Child Protection Procedures

### Rumours

Rumours should not be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Children's Officer and checked out without delay.

### Bullying

The risk of bullying and harassment by adults and by children should be anticipated by taking active steps to prevent it occurring. A prompt and decisive response should be made to any indications that it is taking place.

#### What is Bullying?

Bullying is repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical, which is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour, which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools, sports clubs and other organisations working with children. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting or extortion by one or more children against a victim. It is the responsibility of Sports Leaders to deal with bullying that may take place in the organisation. Each club/organisation should have a clear policy on bullying which is known to members and implemented by Sports Leaders. Incidents of bullying should be dealt with immediately and not tolerated under any circumstances.

Many children are reluctant to tell adults that they are being bullied. Older children are even more reluctant. This underlines the need for constant vigilance and encouragement to report bullying.

#### Combating Bullying

All clubs/organisations should have an anti-bullying policy, which includes the following measures:

- raising awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour
- creating a club ethos which encourages children, Sports Leaders and parents/guardians to report bullying and to use the procedures of the complaints mechanism of the organisation to address this problem
- providing comprehensive supervision of children at all sporting activities
- providing a supportive environment for victims of bullying
- obtaining the co-operation of parents/guardians to counter bullying

For further information see [www.irishsportscouncil.ie/code](http://www.irishsportscouncil.ie/code) under 'Training' and [www.sportni.net/childprotection](http://www.sportni.net/childprotection)





## Appendices

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**NEW LEADER INFORMATION FORM***Applicants should also complete Appendix 2*

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Any surname previously: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

List all other previous addresses: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No(s): \_\_\_\_\_ National Insurance/ PPSI No.: \_\_\_\_\_

List previous experience / involvement in any other Athletic or Sports Club. Include experience of working with young children in a voluntary or professional capacity.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sporting Qualifications: Athletics: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Sports: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you read and agree to abide by the guidelines contained in the Code of Ethics for Athletics? Yes  No Have you ever been asked to leave a sporting organisation?  
(if you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence) Yes  No **References:***Please supply the name and address of two people who we can contact and who, from personal knowledge, are willing to endorse your application. One of these names should be, where possible, the name of an administrator / leader in your last club / place of involvement.*Name and Address of Referee 1: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_Name and Address of Referee 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**DISCLOSURE OF CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS & PERMISSION FOR STATUTORY  
CHECKS FOR THOSE WORKING WITH CHILDREN  
(please read this information carefully)**

**Statement of non-discrimination:**

Athletics Ireland is committed to equal opportunity for all applicants including those with criminal convictions. Information about criminal convictions is requested to assist the selection process and will be taken into account only when the conviction is considered relevant to the post. Any disclosure will be seen in the context of the job criteria, the nature of the offence and the responsibility for the care of existing clients\customers and employees.

**For the purposes of your application for the post of:** \_\_\_\_\_,

it is our policy to ask for a check to be carried out by the statutory organisation responsible for this task in the jurisdiction in which you are working/volunteering

**Advice to Applicants:**

Please complete this form as accurately as possible and return it marked "Confidential" in the envelope provided. An arrangement will be made with you to discuss any clarification if required.

Thank you for your co-operation.

You **should** tell us now if you have a case pending or if you have ever been convicted of a criminal offence, or cautioned by the police, or bound over. You **should** include all offences, even minor matters such as motoring offences, and 'spent' conviction, that is, things which happened a long time ago. If you leave anything out it may effect your application. The disclosure of a criminal record or other information will not debar you from registration / appointment unless the Athletics Ireland considers that the conviction renders you unsuitable. In making this decision the sport will consider the nature of the offence, how long ago it was committed and what age you were at the time and other factors which may be relevant.

**Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a caution; a Bound Over Order; or are you at present the subject of criminal investigations?**

Yes

No

**If so, please state below the nature, date(s) and sentence of the offence(s)**

**Please provide any other information you feel may be of relevance such as:**

- the circumstances of the offence
- a comment on the sentence received
- any relevant developments in your situation since then
- whether or not you feel the conviction has relevance to this post.

**I declare that all answers are complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and I will inform the designated person of any future convictions or charges. I consent to the check being made via the statutory authorities in which I intend to work/volunteer. I am also aware that the umbrella organisation carrying out the check may, following discussion with me, share the information returned with the designated person.**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please return completed forms to: \_\_\_\_\_

### EXISTING LEADERS INFORMATION FORM

Leaders should familiarise themselves with the Code of Conduct, in particular the code of conduct, page 9. Leaders should read below and agree to abide by these terms. Leaders should update the self-declaration questions annually.

#### As a Leader in Athletics I agree that I should

- Be positive during sessions and competitions, praise and encourage effort as well as results
- Put welfare of young person first, strike a balance between this and winning / results
- Encourage fair play and treat participants equally
- Recognise developmental needs, ensuring activities are appropriate for the individual
- Plan and prepare appropriately
- Have experience relevant to working with young people or hold up-to-date qualifications and be committed to the guidelines in this Code
- Involve parents where possible and inform parents when problems arise
- Keep a record of attendance at training and competitions
- Keep a brief record of injury(s) and action taken
- Keep a brief record of problem/action/outcomes, if behavioural problems arise
- Report any concerns in accordance with this Code's reporting procedures

#### Where possible I will avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others
- Taking sessions alone
- Taking children on journeys alone in my car

#### Sports Leaders should not:

- Use any form of physical punishment or physical force on a child
- Exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward
- Take children to their home
- Engage in rough physical games, sexually provocative games or allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind.
- Make sexually suggestive comments about, or to a child. This includes innuendo, flirting or inappropriate gestures and terms
- Take measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adult
- Undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.) in the training of children

#### Self Declaration

Do you agree to abide by the guidelines contained in the Athletics Ireland Code Of Ethics & Good Practice for Children in Athletics?

Yes  No

Have you ever been asked to leave a sporting organisation?  
(If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence).

Yes  No

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a caution; a Bound Over Order; or are you at present the subject of Criminal investigations?  
(If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence)

Yes  No

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**CONFIDENTIAL REFERENCE FORM**

*(This form can be used as a telephone reference or used as a written reference)*

The following person: \_\_\_\_\_ (list name) has expressed an interest in working with \_\_\_\_\_ (name club/organisation) as \_\_\_\_\_ (list position).

*If you are happy to complete this reference, any information will be treated with due confidentiality and in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance. Information will only be shared with the person conducting the assessment of the candidate's suitability for the post. If he/she is offered the position. We appreciate you being extremely candid; open and honest in your evaluation.*

How long have you known this person? \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity?

What attributes does this person have that would make them suited to this work?

Please rate this person on the following (tick one box for each statement)

	Poor	Average	Good	Very Good	Excellent
<b>Responsibility</b>					
<b>Maturity</b>					
<b>Self-motivation</b>					
<b>Can motivate others</b>					
<b>Energy</b>					
<b>Trustworthy</b>					
<b>Reliability</b>					

This post involves substantial access to young people. As an organisation committed to the welfare and protection of young people, we are anxious to know if you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children and young people.

(If you answer yes, we will contact you in confidence).

Yes  No

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Position in organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Club / Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_



## Appendix 5

### APPLICATION FORM FOR NEW JUVENILE MEMBERS

#### CONTACT INFORMATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Male  Female

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: Home: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: Mobile (in case of emergency) \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

#### MEDICAL HISTORY INFORMATION (details of any known allergies, conditions etc).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

In the event of illness, having parental responsibility, I give permission for medical treatment to be administered where considered necessary by a nominated first aider, or by suitably qualified medical practitioners. If I cannot be contacted and my child needs emergency hospital treatment, I authorize a qualified medical practitioner to provide emergency treatment or medication.

#### Other Information

Any other special needs, requirements or directions that would be helpful for leaders to know about:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT

I am the Parent/Guardian of: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Photographs

I understand that photographs will be taken during, or at, sport related events and may be used in the promotion of the sport.

#### Drug Testing (for elite athletes only)

I give permission for my child(ren) to be tested for prohibited substances in accordance with the Irish Sports Council anti Doping Rules (where applicable).

I hereby consent to the above child(ren) participating in activities of the organisation in line with the Code of Ethics for Young People. I will inform the leaders of my children's activities of any changes to the information above.

I confirm that all details are correct and I am able to give parental consent for my child(ren) to participate in and travel to all activities.

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_





Athletics Ireland  
Unit 19, Northwood Court  
Northwood Business Campus  
Santry, Dublin 9  
Ireland

Tel: + 353 (0)1 8869933  
Fax: + 353 (0)1 8421334  
Email: [admin@athleticsireland.ie](mailto:admin@athleticsireland.ie)

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