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### **Core Values in Ladies Gaelic Football for Young Players**

Ladies Gaelic Football Association is based on the following principles that will guide the development of our sport for young players. The stages of development of the young person should guide the types of activity provided within the Association. Adults will need to have a basic understanding of the physical, emotional and personal needs of young players.

#### **Integrity in relationships:**

Adults interacting with young players in Ladies Gaelic Football 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 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 Ladies Gaelic Football.

#### **Quality atmosphere and ethos**

Ladies Gaelic Football involving young players should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. A child-centered ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialization are kept in their appropriate place.

#### **Equality**

All children should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, sex, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. Children with disability should be involved 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 and Good Practice for Young Players in Ladies Gaelic Football.

All 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 playing with the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just a way of behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of cheating, gamesmanship, unequal 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 players, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. If competitive demands are placed on children too early, excessive levels of pressure are placed on them and thus contributing to a high level of dropout from sport. Mentors should aim to put the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second

### **Policy Statement**

The Ladies Gaelic Football Association is fully committed to safeguarding the well being of its members. Every individual in the Association 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 Association and the guidelines contained in the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players.

In the Ladies Gaelic Football, one of our first priorities is the welfare of young players and we are committed to providing an environment, which will allow players to perform to the best of their ability, free from bullying and intimidation. As part of our commitment, we have adopted a code to protect our underage players (all persons under 18 years of age) and all mentors and members involved with our underage teams.

In compliance with the Code Ladies Gaelic Football Association will:

- ▣ Ensure that the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players is adopted, agreed to, implemented and signed up to by all members
- ▣ Amend, as necessary, the Constitution to reflect a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting, selecting and managing
- ▣ Appoint a National Children's Officer
- ▣ Ensure that effective disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures are in place
- ▣ Have in place procedures for dealing with a concern or complaint made to the Statutory Authorities against a committee member or mentor
- ▣ Ensure that all clubs are fully affiliated and signed up to the Code
- ▣ Be represented by appropriate personnel at all education/ training workshops dealing with the Code
- ▣ Review child protection procedures regularly through open discussion to its members, Sports Councils and Statutory Authorities
- ▣ Examine and take appropriate action in response to any reports of unusual incidents (high rate of transfers, dropouts) received from clubs

## **3. Guidelines**

### **3.1 Guidelines for Young Players**

Ladies Gaelic Football Association wish to provide the best possible environment for all young players involved in Ladies Gaelic Football. Young players deserve to be given enjoyable, safe sporting opportunities, free of abuse of any kind. These players have rights, which must be respected, and responsibilities that they must accept.

**Young players are entitled to:**

- ▣ Be safe and to feel safe
- ▣ Be listened to and be believed
- ▣ Be treated with respect, dignity and sensitivity
- ▣ Have a voice in the club / organisation
- ▣ Participate on an equal basis
- ▣ 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
- ▣ Protect their own bodies

- ☐ Confidentiality

### **Young players should always:**

- ☐ Treat all mentors (coaches, managers, selectors, club officials etc.,) with respect
- ☐ Play fairly
- ☐ Respect team members - even when things go wrong
- ☐ Respect opponents - be gracious in defeat
- ☐ Abide by the rules set down by team managers when traveling to away events
- ☐ Behave in a manner that avoids bringing the sport of Ladies Gaelic Football into disrepute
- ☐ Talk to children's officer if they have any problems

### **Young players should never:**

- ☐ Cheat
- ☐ Use violence or physical contact that is not allowed within the rules
- ☐ Shout or argue with officials, team mates or opponents
- ☐ 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 / other players
- ☐ Spread rumours

## **3.2 Guidelines for Parents**

Ladies Gaelic Football Association believes that parents should:

- ☐ Be a role model for your child and maintain the highest standards of conduct when interacting with children, other parents, officials and organizers
- ☐ Always behave responsibly and do not seek to unfairly affect the game or a player
- ☐ Never intentionally expose any young players 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 your child. Do not publicly question the judgment or honesty of referees, coaches or organisers. Respect referees, coaches, organisers and other players
- ☐ Encourage your child to play by the rules. Teach your child that honest endeavor is as important as winning and do all you can to encourage good sportsmanship
- ☐ Set a good example by applauding good play on both sides. Encourage mutual respect for teammates and opponents
- ☐ Parents should support all efforts to remove abusive behaviour and bullying behaviour in all its forms
- ☐ Read the Anti-Bullying policy within the club / organisation's
- ☐ Sign up to the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players in Ladies Gaelic Football
- ☐ Ensure that your child's club has adopted and implemented the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players
- ☐ Know the start and finish times of training - ensure that you arrive at the end of training
- ☐ Volunteer to assist with training - helping with equipment, in dressing rooms, at games, when traveling to games

### **Parents Code of Conduct:**

1. I will respect the rules and procedures set down in the Ladies Gaelic Football Association's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Sport
2. I will respect my child's teammates, mentors (e.g. managers, coaches, selectors) and parents, as well as players, parents and coaches from opposing teams. I will encourage my child to treat other players, coaches, selectors, and managers with respect
3. I will give encouragement and applaud positive accomplishments whether from my child, his/her teammates, their opponents or the officials

4. I will respect all officials and their authority during matches

5. I will never demonstrate threatening or abusive behaviour or use foul language.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Child/(ren) \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### 3.4 Guidelines for Mentors

Ladies Gaelic Football Association recognises the key role mentors play in the lives of children in sport. Mentors should strive to create a positive environment for the young players playing Ladies Gaelic Football. Mentors have an overall responsibility to take the steps necessary to ensure that positive and healthy experiences are provided.

#### Mentor Behaviour ·

- ☐ Mentor must act as a role model and promote the positive aspects of Ladies Gaelic Football and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct - your behaviour to players, other officials, and opponents will have an effect on the players in your care
- ☐ Mentors should respect the rights, dignity and worth of every player and treat each player equally, regardless of ethnic origin, religion or ability
- ☐ Encourage the development of respect for opponents, officials, selectors and other coaches and avoid criticism of mentors and officials
- ☐ Avoid working alone at all times. 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
- ☐ The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco must be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity. Mentors should avoid the use of alcohol, before coaching, during events and on trips with young players
- ☐ When travel/overnight stays are involved, the mentors traveling with child must sign a separate agreement. Parents and players will also be asked to sign permission forms in these instances

#### Dealing with Players

Be generous with praise and never ridicule or shout at players for making mistakes or for losing a game

Remember that young players play for fun and enjoyment and that skill development and personal satisfaction have priority over highly structured competition. Never make winning the only objective - see Player Pathway

Set realistic goals for the players and do not pressurize young players

Be careful to avoid the "star system". Each player deserves equal time and attention

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

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

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

All mentors should keep an attendance record of all training sessions and matches

All mentors should ensure that parents are aware of training start and finishing times

All parents should be encouraged to assist with training or to assist in dressing rooms

All mentors should keep a brief record of injury(s) and action taken both during a training session and during a game. For convenience it is recommended that an injury report form is kept in the first aid bag at all times

When young players 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

Mentors should communicate and co-operate with medical and ancillary practitioners in the diagnosis, treatment and management of their players' 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 player requires the passing on of this information

Keep a brief record of problem/ action/ outcomes if behavioural problems arise

## **Relationship with Players ·**

Mentors are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with players. It is advisable for coaches not to involve young players in their personal life i.e. visits to coaches home or overnight stays  
When approached to take on a new player, ensure that any previous coach-student relationship has been ended by the student/others in a professional manner  
Mentors who become aware of a conflict between their obligation to their players and their obligation to the governing body must make explicit the nature of the conflict and the loyalties and responsibilities involved to all parties concerned  
The nature of the relationship between mentor and a player can often mean that a mentor will learn confidential information about a player or player'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 permission of the player/family  
Parents should always be informed when problems arise except in situations where informing parents may put the player at risk

## **Mentor's Code of Conduct**

1. I will respect the rules and procedures set down in the Ladies Gaelic Football Association's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players
2. I will act as a role model and promote the positive aspects of sport and of Ladies Gaelic Football
3. I will respect all players and treat all players equally
4. I will encourage fair play and praise effort as well as results
5. I will not use any form of punishment (verbal or physical) on a player
6. I will not exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward
7. I will respect the officials and their authority during matches
8. I will never demonstrate threatening or abusive behaviour or use foul language

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

Name of Club: \_\_\_\_\_

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

### **3.4 Guidelines for Club Children's Officers**

The Club Children's Officers should be player centred in focus and should have as his/ her primary aim the establishment of a player centred ethos within the club. S/he is the link between the young players and the adults in the club. S/he also takes responsibility for monitoring and reporting to the Club Management Committee on how club policy etc. impacts on young players and their mentors.

Each club must elect a Children's Officer. Appointment of this person should be done in consultation with the juvenile members of the club and their parents/ guardians. The Children's Officer should be a member of the Club Management Committee.

### **Functions of the Children's Officer ·**

To promote awareness of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players within the club and particularly among the young players and their parents/ guardians and mentors. This could be achieved by the production of information leaflets, the establishment of age-group specific or underage team noticeboards and by regular information meetings for the young players, their parents/ guardians and mentors  
To influence policy and practice within the club in order to prioritise young players' needs  
To provide an accessible resource to young players through the creation of forums  
To ensure that young players know how to make concerns known to appropriate adults or agencies. Information disclosed by a player to the Children's Officer should be dealt with accordingly (see Section 5.2) ·

To encourage the involvement of parents/ guardians in the club activities and co-operate with parents/ guardians in ensuring that each player enjoys her involvement in Ladies Gaelic Football ·

To act as an advisory resource to mentors on best practice in Ladies Gaelic Football

To report regularly to the Club Management Committee ·

To monitor changes in membership and follow up any unusual dropout, absenteeism or club transfers by young players or mentors

#### **Recommendations At start of club year it is recommended to:**

Hold a registration day (for example first Sunday of month) - as each under-age player registers they are informed of the Code and Bullying Policy. The player and their parent/s sign up to the Code on registration

Hold a Code of Ethics information night, inviting youth members, parents and mentors - it is important that the young players are aware of who the Children's Officer is and how to contact them, e.g. mobile number of Children's Officer is placed in dressing rooms or club noticeboard

Distribute an information sheet on training times, pick up times, club rules and regulations, codes of conducts, safety policies, guidelines for away trips

Distribute a list of games/ fixtures planned for the year to parents and young players

Provide one permission slip for parents signature at the beginning of the year containing all games and fixtures, both home and away

Hold an information night or sign up night for mentors - inform mentors of guidelines in Code and good practice procedures

### **4. General Guidelines**

#### **4.1 Mentor Recruitment and Selection Policy**

Ladies Gaelic Football Association will take all reasonable steps to ensure that players working with young players are suitable and appropriately qualified. All mentors will be expected to go through appropriate recruitment and selection procedures.

##### **Recruitment**

The decision to appoint a mentor is the responsibility of the Club/ County and not of any one individual within it. The Club/County committee should ratify all recommendations for appointment.

Responsibilities of the role and the level of experience/ qualifications required should be drawn up and clearly stated beforehand - it is recommended that all mentors hold appropriate qualifications

Each mentor should undergo a 'sign-up' procedure, whereby the appointed/ reappointed mentors agree to abide by the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young People and to the policies of the club and the Association.

All mentors, new and existing, should fill in an application form, giving names of two referees that may be contacted (Appendix 6.1) and where possible all new mentors should be interviewed and a probationary period is advisable.

Existing mentors should not be excused from either the 'sign-up' or application form procedure. If is not necessary for existing mentors to undergo an interview.

No exceptions should be made in relation to the recruitment procedures.

All forms should be filed as a matter of record.

All mentors should be given a copy of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young People and they should be made aware of good practice procedures contained within the Code.

Every effort should be made to manage and support appointed mentors. Adequate supervision should always be provided - a mentor should not have to work alone.

#### **4.2 Travelling with Young Players**

There is extra responsibility taken on by mentors when they travel with young players to games/

tournaments.

**When traveling with young players you should:**

Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover  
Not carry more than the permitted number of passengers  
Ensure use of safety belts at all times  
Avoid traveling alone with one player, put player in the back seat, drop off at central locations or seek parental permission to transport the player on a regular basis and clearly state times of pick-up and drop off  
Ensure all mentors, parents and players have signed Traveling Permission forms (Appendix 6.2) - these forms should include emergency contact numbers for players' parents  
Each Club/ County should remind all players of Code of Conduct when traveling to games

**4.3 Supervision**

Make sure there is an adequate adult : child ratio. This will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the players and any special needs of the group. As a recommended guide a ratio of \*1:8 for under 12 years of age and \*1:10 for players over 12 years of age. \*This is only a guide and will change depending on the circumstances, e.g. very young players, players with special needs or during away trips  
All teams should have at least one female mentor  
Avoid being alone with any player, 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  
Mentors should not need to enter changing rooms unless the players are very young or need special assistance and such supervision should be done by parents or in pairs by appropriate gender  
Mentors should remain in pairs until all players have been collected at the end of training or matches § Keep attendance records and record any incidents / injuries that arise

**4.4 Away trips / Overnight stays**

When a game requires an overnight stay a separate permission form should be signed by parents and players, containing emergency contact number for parents  
All players should sign a Code of Conduct agreement  
Appoint a mentor who will make a report on returning home  
A meeting with parents and players is useful to communicate travel times, competition details, other activities, gear requirements, medical requirements, special dietary needs and any other necessary details  
Rooming arrangements - adults should not share rooms with young players, players share rooms with those of same age and gender and adults should knock before entering rooms  
All group socialization 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 players  
At least one female should travel with each team  
There should be a good adult-player ratio, 1:5/6, and proper access to medical personnel  
Lights out times should be enforced  
Players should be under reasonable supervision at all times and should never leave the venue or go unsupervised without prior permission  
Parents should be encouraged to travel to assist with supervision especially with young players

**4.5 Safety**

All clubs should have a safety statement, including specific and potential risks attached to Ladies Gaelic Football. They should also have procedures in place for safeguarding against such risks.

**In addition clubs should:**

Ensure activities are suitable for age and stage of development of players

Keep a record of any specific medical conditions of the players  
Keep a record of emergency contact numbers for parents / guardians - such records should be readily attainable  
Ensure any necessary protective gear is used  
Keep First Aid kit stocked up and ensure it is close at hand with access to qualified first-aider  
Know the contact numbers of emergency services and easy access to medical personnel if needed is recommended. All clubs should have an emergency plan, which all club members are aware of  
If an incident occurs, make a brief record of injury and action taken. Note the problem, action and outcome. Contact the players parents and keep them informed of all details  
Officials (umpires, referees, etc.) should ensure the conduct of the game  
All players should know and keep the rules of their sport, keeping in mind that many rules are in place for safety  
Ensure there is adequate insurance cover for all activities

#### **4.6 Touching**

Coaching, at certain times, may require a 'hands on approach', e.g., it may be necessary to support a child learning a new skill but the following should be taken into consideration

Avoid unnecessary physical contact  
Any necessary contact should be in response to the needs of the player and not the mentor  
It should be in an open environment with the permission and understanding of the player  
It should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the player - do not do something that a player can do for themselves  
Never engage in inappropriate touching

#### **4.7 Use of Photographic and Filming Equipment**

*Ladies Gaelic Football Association has adopted a policy in relation to the use of images of players on their websites and in other publications as there have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to young players through the use of photographs on sports websites and other publications. Where possible we will try to use models or illustrations when promoting an activity and avoid the use of the first name and surname of individuals in a photograph. This reduces the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from players within and outside the sport.*

Rules to guide use of photography involving underage players

If the player is named, avoid using their photograph  
If a photograph is used, avoid naming the player  
Ask for the player's permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. A player's permission form is one way of achieving this  
Ask for parental permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. A parental permission form is one way of achieving this.  
Only use images of players in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child  
Create recognised procedure for reporting the use of inappropriate images to reduce the risks to players. Follow the child protection procedures, ensuring either the designated officer or the social service and/or Garda Síochána are informed.

Amateur photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the Children's Officer or mentor of session. This club / organization will display the following information prior to the start of an event to inform spectators of the policy:

*"In line with the recommendation in the Ladies Gaelic Football Association's Code of Ethics and Good Practice, 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. On no account should children be photographed or filmed without their permission and the permission of their parents".*

When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to an activity or event we will aim to ensure they are clear about our expectations of them in relation to child protection. Professional photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the Children's Officer or event organiser by producing their professional identification for the details to be recorded.

We will then:

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour
- Issue the photographer with identification which must be worn at all times
- Keep a record of accreditations
- Inform players and parents that a photographer will be in attendance at an event and ensure they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs
- Not allow unsupervised access to players or one to one photo sessions at events
- Not approve/allow photo sessions outside the events or at a player's home

### **Videoring as a coaching aid**

Video equipment can be used as a legitimate coaching aid. However, permission should first be obtained from the player and the player's parent/carer.

Anyone concerned about any photography, taking place at events or training sessions, can contact the Children's Officer in relation to the matter.

## **5. Child Protection Procedures**

*Ladies Gaelic Football Association accepts that organisations, which include young people among its members, are vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. Child welfare and the protection of young people is the concern of all adults at all times, irrespective of their role within the organisation.*

Below are the procedures for dealing with any welfare or protection issue that may arise.

A report may be made by any member in the club or County 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 Ladies Gaelic Football Association 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 young players by assisting the appropriate agencies so that they can take any necessary action to protect the young person.

All members should follow both procedures outlined below, firstly the procedure for responding to a young person in distress and secondly the procedure for reporting a concern.

### **5.1 Dealing with a Complaint**

- 5.1.1. Forming a complaint
- 5.1.2. Appointment of Disciplinary Committee
- 5.1.3. Complaint Procedure
- 5.1.4. Sanctions
- 5.1.5. Appeal Procedure

#### **5.1.1 Forming a Complaint**

All\*complaints should be submitted in writing either to the Children's Officer or to the Chairperson.

Club/ County Chairperson should be notified of the complaint Written records of all complaints should be safely and confidentially kept. If, in the opinion of the Chairperson/ Children's Officer, there are grounds for concern, the Statutory Authorities should be contacted. (See section 5.2)

\*If complaint is submitted at Club level it is the responsibility of the Club to deal with the complaint. \*If the complaint is submitted at County Board Level the County Board must take responsibility to deal with the complaint.

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to deal with the complaint.

### **5.1.2 Appointment of Disciplinary Committee**

The Disciplinary Committee should consist of a representative from the Management Committee (e.g. the Chairperson), the Children's Officer and an ordinary registered member of the club. Regular turnover of this committee is recommended. The issue of confidentiality is important. Information is on a need to know basis.

### **5.1.3 Complaint Procedure**

It is the responsibility of the Disciplinary Committee to resolve problems relating to the conduct of its members. A complaint of any incident of suspected misconduct, including bullying, but does not relate to child abuse should be dealt with by the Disciplinary Committee.

The Disciplinary Committee should inform the individual with details of the complaint being made against him/ her and afford him/ her the opportunity of providing a response either verbally or in writing.

It is recommended that the Disciplinary Committee meet with all parties involved, affording each party the same rights and opportunities. The Disciplinary Committee should form a written report outlining the procedure followed, findings, conclusions and any disciplinary actions to be taken. All parties should receive a copy of this report. This report should also be kept on record. The Disciplinary Committee should, as soon as possible, inform the Management Committee of the progress and conclusions of the disciplinary process.

### **5.1.4 Sanctions**

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 parents/ guardians.

### **5.1.5 Appeal Procedure**

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 the Disciplinary Committee). Any appeal should be made in writing within 7 days after issue of the decision of the Disciplinary Committee. The Chairperson of the Appeals Committee should be a member of the Management Committee or elected by the members at an AGM.

The Appeals Committee 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 National Children's Officer. However efforts to resolve the issue at local level should be exhausted before the National Children's Officer is engaged in attempts to resolve the matter. Any Appeal submitted at National level will be heard by the Management Committee, with their decision being final.

## **5.2 Dealing with Suspected Abuse**

- 5.2.1 Reporting abuse
- 5.2.2 Response to a young player
- 5.2.3 Allegation against Mentors
- 5.2.4 Steps within Organisation
- 5.2.5 False Reporting
- 5.2.6 Confidentiality
- 5.2.7 Anonymous Report
- 5.2.8 Rumours

### **5.2.1 Reporting Abuse**

If there are grounds for concern (Appendix 6.4) about the safety or welfare of a young player you should react to the concern. If unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive (Appendix 6.5) and therefore reportable, you should contact the duty social worker in the Local Health Board or Social Services Department where you will receive advice. Grounds for concern include a specific indication from a player, a statement from a person who witnessed abuse or an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse.

Steps for reporting suspected abuse

- (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 officer within the club/County

responsible for reporting abuse, e.g. Children's Officer. If the Children's Officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the player has been abused or is at risk of abuse, s/he will make a report to the Health Board/Social Services who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse

**(c)** In cases of emergency, where a player appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Children's Officer is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Garda Authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a player 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 s/he can informally consult with the local health board/social services. S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

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

### **5.2.2 Response to a Young Player**

#### **When a young player 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 player to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing about details of what happened

**(b)** Stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the player is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the player is saying seriously

**(c)** Understand that the player 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 player will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation

**(d)** Be honest with the player and tell them that it is not possible to keep this information a secret

**(e)** Make no judgmental statements against the person whom the allegation is made **(f)** Not question the player unless the nature of what she 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)** Check out the concerns with the parents/guardians before making a report unless during so would endanger the player

**(h)** Give the player some indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents/guardians, Health Board or Social Services. It should be kept in mind that the player may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.

**(i)** Carefully record the details

**(j)** Pass on this information to the designated officer within the Club, the Children's Officer.

Always reassure the player that they have done the right thing in telling you

### **5.2.3 Allegations against Mentors**

If an allegation of alleged child abuse is made against a mentor working within the club/County or Association, the following procedures should be followed:

[The reporting procedure in respect of suspected child abuse \(5.2.1\)](#)

[The procedure for dealing with the mentor \(5.2.4\)](#)

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

The issue of confidentiality is important - the mentor should be treated with respect and fairness.

### **5.2.4 Dealing with the Mentor**

While the designated Children's Officer makes the report to the local Health Board, the Chairperson of the club should deal with the mentor

[The Chairperson should privately inform the mentor that](#)

[\(a\) an allegation has been made against him / her](#)

(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 mentor should be asked to step aside pending the outcome of the investigation.  
When a mentor 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

The club/County Children's Officer should inform the National Children's Officer that the mentor has been asked to stand aside.

It is also the duty of all Association members to inform the National Children's Officer of a mentor who is under investigation by a Statutory Authority.

Ladies Gaelic Football Association can consider disciplinary action on the mentor but should ensure that this does not interfere with the investigation of the Statutory Authorities - the outcome of the investigation and any implications it might have will be considered during the Disciplinary procedure.

It should be noted that 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.

### **5.3 False Allegations**

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 Board 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 Boards or any member of An Garda Síochána
- 2.** The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including dismissal
- 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 offences 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'

## 5.4 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 player 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 player 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 player in a sensitive way about whom there are concerns
- Giving information to others on a 'need to know' basis for the protection of a player is not a breach of confidentiality
- All persons involved in a protection process (the player, her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, her family, mentors) 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 to designated people
- The requirements of the Data Protection laws should be adhered to
- Breach of confidentiality is a serious matter

## 5.5 Anonymous Complaints

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

## 5.6 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.

## 6. Appendices

### Appendix 6.1

#### Mentor Application Form

Position applied for: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Any Surname previously \_\_\_\_\_

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

Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No(s) \_\_\_\_\_

List previous experience/ involvement in this or any other club. Include experience of working with young children in a voluntary or professional capacity

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Sporting NGB Qualifications

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Do you agree to abide by the guidelines contained in the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport?

**Yes**

**No**

Do you agree to abide by the rules of the Ladies Gaelic Football Association and (name your club)? **Yes** **No**

Have you ever been asked to leave a sporting organisation? **Yes** **No**  
(If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence)

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 you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence)

**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/ mentor in your last club/ place of involvement.***

Name and Contact Details of Referee 1

Name and Contact Details of Referee 2

I agree to abide by the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players in Ladies Gaelic Football and the club's Code of Conduct and policies

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

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

**Appendix 6.2**

**Permission Form for Traveling with Underage Players**

EVENT: \_\_\_\_\_

VENUE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATES: \_\_\_\_\_

**Travelling Volunteer**

I hereby agree to abide by the guidelines and regulations contained in the Ladies Gaelic Football Association's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players

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

Role: \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Parent / Guardian of Participant**

I have read and accept the conditions and rules set down by the Ladies Gaelic Football Association for young players traveling to matches and events.

Name of Child(ren): \_\_\_\_\_

Parents/Carers Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Emergency Contact Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

## Young Player

I have read and accept the conditions and rules set down by the Ladies Gaelic Football Association for young players traveling to matches and events. I agree to abide by the rules of my Club and Association

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

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

### Appendix 6.3

#### Format for Disciplinary Committee's Report

Below is a suggested outline of how to write up a report following a complaint. Additional information may be added to the format.

#### Complaint:

State the nature of the complaint and individuals involved

#### Procedure:

State

1. Who the Disciplinary Committee consisted of
2. Who the Disciplinary Committee met with
3. Any additional parties who the Disciplinary Committee met with/ spoke to, for example the Health Board may have been contacted

#### Conclusion:

Summarize the main findings from the above meetings and the final decision met by the Disciplinary Committee following these meetings

#### Sanctions:

State any sanctions, which the Disciplinary Committee have imposed on any individuals as a result of the complaint

#### Recommendations:

State any recommendations which the Disciplinary Committee feel are necessary to prevent such a complaint occurring again e.g. all club members involved with underage players attend a Child Protection course

#### Signature:

All members of the Disciplinary Committee should sign and date the report

### Appendix 6.4

#### Anti-Bullying Policy

*This is adapted from the Scout Association of Ireland's Child Protection Policy*

#### What is Bullying?

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with young people. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion behaviour by one or more players against a victim.

#### How would you know if a player is being bullied?

All bullies operate using furtiveness, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so.

The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied.

Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities

Physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings)

Stress-caused illness - headaches, and stomach aches which seem unexplained

Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to a meeting, going different routes, asking to be

driven)  
Frequent loss of, or shortage of, money with vague explanations  
Having few friends  
Changes in behaviour (withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed)  
Not eating  
Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide  
Anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics)  
*There are other possible reasons for many of the above*

### **Who should deal with bullying?**

While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reported to the health board or An Garda Síochána, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of all Mentors within this club / organisation.

### **How can it be prevented?**

Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.  
Deal with any incidents as they arise.  
Use a whole group policy or 'no-blame approach', i.e., not 'bullying the bully' but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a 'shared concern' of the group, (see below)  
Reinforce that there is 'a permission to tell' culture rather than a 'might is right'  
Encourage young people to negotiate, co-operative and help others, particularly new or different people  
Offer victim immediate support and put the 'no blame approach' into operation  
Never tell a young person to ignore bullying, they can't ignore it, it hurts too much  
Never encourage a young person to take the law into their own hands and beat the bully at their own game  
Tell the victim there is nothing wrong with them and it is not their fault

### **'No Blame' Approach**

#### **Step 1 - Interview with the victim**

If you find that there has been an incident of bullying, first talk to the victim. At this stage find out who was involved and what the victim is now feeling. Try asking the following questions:

Was it verbal or physical intimidation?  
How hurt is the victim  
Was it within his/her own peer group?  
Ensure the victim that his/her name will not come out in the investigation  
Actively listen

#### **Step 2 - Meet with all involved**

Arrange to meet with all those involved; this should include some bystanders, those who may have colluded, those who joined in and those who initiated the bullying.

Have a maximum of six to eight in the group - keep the number controllable  
Make a point of calling a 'special' meeting  
Ensure the severity of the topic is understood by all  
Speak only of the hurt caused in general terms with no reference to the victim  
Play on the conscience of all - ask questions like: How would you feel? Would you like it done to you?

#### **Step 3 - Explain the problem**

The distress being suffered as a result of the bullying incident is explained. At this stage the details of the incident or the allocation of the blame is not discussed. Explain the feelings of loneliness, feeling left out, rejected, laughed at. Try asking questions:

Would they like it if it happened to them

"Someone here in this group was bullied by someone within the group, what could we do to see it does not happen again?"  
Listen, watch out for reactions, and pick up on any without isolating anyone

#### **Step 4 - Share the responsibility**

Explain what steps / controls may have to be introduced to prevent further incidents and how everyone will loose out as a result

#### **Step 5 - Ask the group for their ideas**

At this stage the group is encouraged to suggest ways that would make the victim feel happier. All positive responses are noted. Use phrases "if it were you" to encourage a response. Listen to all suggestions and note them

#### **Step 6 - Leave it to them**

Now the problem has been identified, solutions suggested, the problem is now handed over to the group to solve. Arrange to meet again in a week's time. Pass responsibility over to the group and give a time frame within which something must be done

#### **Step 7 - Meet them again**

Each member of the group, including the bully, discuss how things are going, who is doing what and have there been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and also keeps all involved in the process.

Again enforce the idea of the 'team' looking after each other at regular intervals to ensure it is known that bullying or intimidating behaviour will not be tolerated.

### **Appendix 6.5 Grounds for Concern**

Examples of reasonable grounds are:

1. a specific indication from a player that she has been abused
2. a statement from a person who witnessed abuse
3. an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse
4. a symptom which may not itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is supported by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence
5. consistent signs of neglect over a period of time

In some cases of child abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a young person and it is important that behaviour of this nature is not ignored. Grounds for concern will exist in cases where there is an age difference and/ or difference in power, status or intellect between the children involved. However, it is important to distinguish between normal sexual behaviour and abusive behaviour. Persons unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive and therefore reportable, should contact the duty social worker in the local Health Board or Social Services department where they will receive advice.

### **Appendix 6.6 Categories of Abuse**

1. Neglect
2. Emotional Abuse
3. Physical Abuse
4. Sexual Abuse

#### **1. Neglect**

Neglect is normally defined in terms of omission, where a young person suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care. It may also include neglect of a young person's basic emotional needs.

Neglect usually becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For instance, a young person who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having her needs for supervision and safety met. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the young person's needs are neglected to the extent that her well being and/or development is severely affected.

#### **2. Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between an adult and a young person

rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms.

Examples of emotional abuse include ·

- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming
- Where the level of care is conditional on her behaviour
- Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or unrealistic expectations of a young person
- Premature imposition of responsibility on the young person
- Over or under protection of the young person
- Failure to provide opportunities for the child's education and development
- Use of unrealistic or over-harsh disciplinary measures
- Exposure to domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse

### 3. Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a young person, including:

- Shaking, hitting or throwing
- Use of excessive force in handling
- Deliberate poisoning
- Suffocation or drowning
- Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where parents/ guardians fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness)
- Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a young person
- For young people with disabilities it may include confinement to a room or cot, or incorrectly given drugs to control behaviour
- Burning or scalding

### 4. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a young person is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others.

For example:

- Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a young person
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a young person whether by person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- Masturbation in the presence of a young person or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation
- Sexual intercourse with the young person, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- Sexual exploitation of a young person
- It may include non-contact activities, such as involving young people in looking at pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

### SIGNS OF ABUSE

Physical Indicators		Behavioural Indicators	
-	Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas	-	Unexplained changes in behaviour
-	Repeated Injury	-	becoming withdrawn or aggressive
-	Black eye(s)	-	Regressive behaviour
-	Injuries to mouth	-	Difficulty in making friends
-	Torn or bloodstained clothing	-	Distrustful of adults or excessive attachment to adults
-	Burns or scalds	-	Sudden drop in performance
-	Bites	-	Change in attendance pattern
-	Fractures	-	Inappropriate sexual awareness, behaviour or language

-	Marks from implements	-	Unusual reluctance to remove clothing
-	Inconsistent stories, excuse relating to injuries	-	Reluctance to go home

## 7. List of Useful Contact Numbers

### EASTERN HEALTHBOARD

#### Area Child Care Manager

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No
Area 1	Tivoli RoadDun Laoghaire Co. Dublin	01 2808403
Area 2	Vergemount Hall Dublin 6	01 2698222
Area 3	The Malting Business Park54/55 Marrowbone LaneDublin 8	01 4544733
Area 4	Old County Road Crumlin Dublin 12	01 4542511
Area 5	The LodgeCherry OrchardBallyfermotDublin 10	01 6268101
Area 6	Rathdown RoadDublin 7	01 8385034
Area 7	Rose CottageFairview Dublin 15	01 8575431
Area 8	Cromcastle RoadCoolock Dublin 5	01 8476122
Area 9	Popular HousePopular SquareNaasCo. Kildare	045 876001
Area 10	Glenside RoadWicklow	0404 60800

### MIDLAND HEALTHBOARD

#### Area Child Care Manager

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No
Longford/ Westmeath	Social Work Dept, Longford Mullingar Athlone Health Centre	043 50584 044 44877 0902 75301
Laois/ Offaly	Child and Family Centre, Portlaoise Social Work Dept, Tullamore	0502 62300 0506 22488

### MIDWEST HEALTHBOARD

#### Area Child Care Manager

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No
Limerick	Unit 3Camillus Hospital Shelbourne Road Limerick	061 483711
Clare	Tobartaoiscaín Ennis Co. Clare	065 23921
North Tipperary	General Hospital Nenagh Co. Tipperary	067 31491

### NORTH EASTERN HEALTHBOARD

#### Area Child Care Manager

Community Care Area	Address	Phone No
Cavan/ Monaghan	Community Care Office Lisdarn Cavan	049 61822
Louth	Community Care Office Dublin Road Dundalk Co. Louth	042 9332287

Meath	Family Resource Centre Commons Road Navan Co. Meath	046 9021595
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#### **NORTH WESTERN HEALTHBOARD**

##### **Area Child Care Manager**

<b>Community Care Area</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone No</b>
Donegal	Ballybofey Co. Donegal	074 9131391
Sligo/ Leitrim	Markievicz House Co. Sligo	071 9155133

#### **SOUTH WESTERN HEALTHBOARD**

##### **Area Child Care Manager**

<b>Community Care Area</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone No</b>
South Lee	Abbey Court House Georges Quay Cork	021 923814
North Lee	Abbeycourt House Georges Quay Cork	021 965511
North Cork	Gouldshill Mallow Co. Cork	021 21484
West Cork	Hospital Grounds Skibbereen Co. Cork	028 21722
Kerry	18 Denny Street Tralee Co. Kerry	066 23400

#### **SOUTH EASTERN HEALTHBOARD**

##### **Area Child Care Manager**

<b>Community Care Area</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone No</b>
Carlow/ Kilkenny	Community Care Centre Carlow Community Care Centre Kilkenny	0503 36520 056 52208
Waterford	Community Care Centre Cork Road Waterford	051 842800
Wexford	South Eastern Health Board Ely House Wexford	053 47718/9
South Tipperary	Community Care Centre Western Road Clonme ICo. Tipperary	052 22011

#### **WESTERN HEALTHBOARD**

##### **Area Child Care Manager**

<b>Community Care Area</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone No</b>
Galway	Community Care Offices 25 Newcastle Road Galway	091 523122 ext 6330
Mayo	Hill House Castlebar Co. Mayo	094 22333 ext 2183
Roscommon	Community Care Offices Ardsallagh Roscommon	0903 27089

### **Northern Ireland**

Contractor Bureau (Out of hours)		028 9066 8247
NSPCC 24hr Protection Helpline	0808 800 5000	
EHSSB Belfast	028 9032 1313	
Down/ Lisburn H&SST	028 9266 5181	
North & West Belfast H&SST	028 9032 7156	
Ulster Community & Hospitals Trust	028 9181 6666	
South & East Belfast H&SST	028 9079 0673	
NHSSB Ballymena	028 2565 3333	
Home First H&SST	028 2563 3700	
Causeway H&SST	028 7066 6000	
SHSSB Portadown	028 3833 6611	
Craigavon & Banbridge H&SST	028 3833 1983	
Armagh & Dungannon H&SST	028 3752 2262	
Newry & Mourne H&SST	028 3026 0505	
WHSSB Londonderry	028 7186 0086	
Foyle H&SST	028 7126 6111	
Sperrin Lakeland H&SST	028 8224 4127	

### **National Counselling Service**

Northern Area HB	1800 234 110
East Coast Area HB	1800 234 111
South Western Area HB	1800 234 112
Midland HB	1800 234 113
Western HB	1800 234 114
Mid-Western HB	1800 234 115
Southern HB	1800 234 116
North Eastern HB	1800 234 117
South Eastern HB	1800 234 118
North Western HB	1800 234 119

**Confidential Garda Line** 1800 666 111 (24 hour)

### **8. References**

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, 2000.](#)  
[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 Act NI and Safeguarding Children](#)  
[www.sportprotects.org.uk](http://www.sportprotects.org.uk)

