



code of ethics &
Good Practice
for Children's Sport



Joint Foreword by Ossie Kilkenny, Chairman of Irish Sports Council and Professor Eric Saunders, Chairman of Sports Council for Northern Ireland

Introduction by Dr. Breda McLeavey, Chairperson, Code of Ethics and Good Practice Committee

Members of the Original Committee

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FOREWORD

The Irish Sports Council and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland published a joint Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in 2000. This major joint publication recognised the commitment of both Councils to ensure that young people are safeguarded in their participation in sport in the island of Ireland.

The Code has been adopted and implemented by governing bodies of sports, clubs, local sports partnerships and community/voluntary groups on an on-going basis since 2000. It has been encouraging to see the common sense approach to the adoption of the code at grass roots level, which has resulted in protection for young people and leaders.

If young people are to stay involved in sport throughout their adult life, they need to be equipped with the fundamentals to remain involved with sport and physical activity. Equally we need to ensure that their early experiences are positive and enjoyable, irrespective of their ability, gender, social class, race, etc. It is encouraging to see adults, both volunteers and professionals, contribute to these positive experiences by acting as role models in all dealings with young people. In particular the work of Children's Officers at club and national level is instrumental in implementing the Code. We need to build on this valuable work to ensure that all young people see sport and physical activity as an important and valuable aspect of their lives that they will sustain throughout their adulthood.

The review of the Code in 2005 ensures that the policies and procedures that we implement at all levels in sport are up-to-date and in line with relevant documents, current best practice and legislation throughout the island of Ireland. We thank the committee for its work throughout 2005 and we hope that this will help all sporting organisations to protect and maintain the welfare of all young people through sport.

Mr Ossie Kilkenny
Chairman
Irish Sports Council

Professor Eric Saunders
Chairman
Sports Council for Northern Ireland



INTRODUCTION

The *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* is for the benefit of everyone involved in children's sport - children, parents/guardians and Sports Leaders etc. By following the principles, policy and practice guidelines contained in the Code, adult sport leaders are playing their part in providing an enjoyable and safe environment in which children can learn and thrive.

As citizens, adults have a responsibility to protect children from harm and to abide by government guidelines in responding to and reporting child protection concerns. This responsibility exists wherever such concerns might arise, whether inside or outside sport. Guidelines contained in the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* took account of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and are in accordance with government guidelines in the documents *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (R.O.I.) and *Our Duty to Care* (N.I.). The guidelines contained in the Code are complimentary to, and do not substitute for the government guidelines, which should be available within sports clubs/organisations.

The *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* is built upon a number of core principles relating to the importance of childhood, the needs of the child, integrity and fair play, and relationships and safety in children's sport. It addresses issues relating to the roles and responsibilities of all involved in children's sport, and underpins the importance of policies and procedures in providing quality leadership for children in sport. It outlines principles of good practice and child protection policy and procedures.

The full application of the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* by everyone in sport will help to ensure the promotion of happy, healthy and successful experiences for children and their Sports Leaders.

Dr Breda McLeavey

Committee Chairperson

Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in Ireland





Members of the Committee

In 1995, the Minister for Sport and Youth Affairs at the Department of Education (IRL) appointed an expert committee to prepare a Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport. The Code was first published in 1996.

In 1998, the Minister for Tourism, Sport and Recreation (IRL) reconvened the committee to revise the Code in line with current best practice in children's sport. The Minister appointed an additional number of members to represent the Irish Sports Council and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland in light of the decision to publish the Code on an all-island basis.

The committee then was:

- Dr Breda McLeavey, **Chairperson**
Senior Clinical Psychologist, Health Services Executive. Lecturer, Department of Psychiatry, University College, Cork
- Mr John Treacy, Chief Executive, Irish Sports Council
- Ms Miriam McAtackney, Development Officer, Child Protection/Education, Sports Council for Northern Ireland
- Ms Nuala Curley, Fellow of the Institute of Swimming Coaches
- Michael Darmody, Physical Education Inspector, Department of Education and Science
- Dr Pat Duffy, Director, National Coaching and Training Centre
- Mr Paul Gilligan, Chief Executive, Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children
- Ms Patricia Gosch, Parent Representative
- Dr Deirdre McIntyre, Director of Child Abuse Prevention Programme, Eastern Health Board
- Ms Gina Menzies, Former International Squash Player
- Mr Jim O'Leary, Senior Social Worker, Family Centre, St Finbarr's Hospital, Cork
- Mr Tom Potts, Member of GAA and Underage Team Mentor
- Ms Helen Raftery, Irish Sports Council
- Mr Marc Howard, Secretary
- Irish Sports Council

The Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport was published in November 2000 by the Irish Sports Council and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland.

In 2005 a small committee was convened to review the Code on behalf of the Sports Councils. This committee comprised of professional staff and volunteers representing the Councils, NSPCC, HSE as well as Sports Leaders, Child Protection Tutors, Children's Officers, Governing Bodies of Sport and Local Sports Partnerships. The aim of the committee was to ensure that the Code was in line with current legislation, publications, policies and practices with regard to the protection of all those working with young people.

Acknowledgements

The original committee that prepared the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* wishes to acknowledge the very helpful contribution made by the following:

The Department of Tourism, Sport and Recreation
The National Coaching and Training Centre
Northern Ireland Institute of Coaching
The Governing Bodies of Sport
The Child Care Unit, Department of Health and Children
The Domestic Violence Unit, Dublin Metropolitan Area, An Garda Síochána
Dr Roderick Murphy, SC
The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
The Department of Education and Science
Beauchamps Solicitors, Dublin
Dr Helen Buckley, Department of Social Studies, University of Dublin
Mr Barry Murray, Child Care Manager, Health Services Executive
Ms Dee Kelly, Northern Ireland Volunteer Development Agency
Ms Liz Campbell, Department of Health and Social Services
Ms Kate McKnight, M/s Conn & Fenton, Solicitors, Lisburn

The committee would also like to thank all those who contributed submissions both oral and written during the course of the work of the committee.



GLOSSARY

- 1. Child:** For the purpose of this Code a child is any person under 18 years of age
- 2. Sports Leaders:** For the purpose of this Code all adults involved in children's sport are referred to as Sports Leaders. All have a role to play in ensuring that procedures as described in the Code are put in place, agreed, followed and reviewed on a regular basis. The principal leadership roles (some of which overlap) include the following:

Club/Organisation Officers: President, Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and Committee members are appointed to oversee club activities and the development of the club/organisation.

Administrators: While administrators may not be actively involved in children's sport, they may be involved in organising activities and events.

Coach/Trainer: A coach is a person who assists the young participant to develop his or her skills and abilities in a progressive way.

Instructor/Sports Teacher: Instructors are involved in the systematic development of the core skills and abilities of an activity, sometimes in a non-competitive context.

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

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

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

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

Assistants: Assistants are those people who provide back-up to any of the roles outlined in this section and often such assistants are involved on an intermittent basis (e.g. provision of lifts to matches or competitions; checking equipment, etc.).
- 3. Children's Officers:** Children's Officers are appointed within clubs to act as a resource for children and to represent them at Committee level.
- 4. Designated Person:** A person who is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the Statutory Authorities. This person will also be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of young people.
- 5. Statutory Authorities:** the authorities who promote the protection and welfare of young people and who have the responsibility for the investigation and/or validation of suspected child abuse, i.e. in the ROI it is An Garda Síochána and the Health Services Executive and in NI it is the PSNI and the Social Services.
- 6. Statutory Authority Guidelines on Child Protection:** *In the Republic of Ireland - Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Department of Health and Children 1999 (IRL). Northern Ireland - Co-operating to Safeguard Children (NI) 2003.*

