

Canoeing Ireland Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

Policy Statement of Canoeing Ireland

CI aims to promote and foster the sport of paddling for young and vulnerable people in all its forms, including canoe polo, freestyle, marathon racing, paddle surf, slalom racing, sprint racing, and wild- water racing.

CI is committed to promoting and organising recreational and competitive paddling activities and events throughout Ireland; and to select and train competitors to represent Ireland at national and international events.

Every individual in CI should show respect and understanding for each member's rights, development, safety and welfare by conducting themselves in accordance with the ethos and principles of CI and this document.

All adults involved in CI should be aware of their responsibility and obligations in protecting and promoting the welfare of children, young and vulnerable people involved in the sport to enable safe participation for fun and in the spirit of fair play.

CI recognises and acknowledges the following documentation as guidance for the CI Safeguarding Policies and Procedures:

Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport (Sport Ireland, 2006)

Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection of Children, (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015).

Legislative notes to this document published 2018:

1. National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2016 –The CI Vetting Policy will be updated in accordance with any legislative requirements.
2. Children First Act 2015 – CI will abide by the responsibilities of organisations dealing with children and young people (Chapter 4 of Children's First, National Guidance for the protection and welfare of children Pg.29).

Failure to observe best practice requirements is a breach of CI rules and would be subject to the CI complaints and disciplinary process; breaches of statutory obligations will be on commencement of legislation, considered a criminal offence and would be dealt with by the justice system.

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Section 1 – Glossary and Abbreviations

Glossary

The glossary explains terms used throughout this document to clarify and set out the meaning of the various terms used.

Adult/Leader/Volunteer – any person, whether paid or unpaid, who acts in a position with responsibility for children/young people; this can include, but not limited to, supervisor, team manager, sports science personnel, chaperone, helpers and/or others who may be acting within the definition of a specified role without the requisite recognised qualification and for the purpose of this document this term may also include all specified roles otherwise referenced here e.g. children's officer, coach, committee member, instructor. Adults are over 18 years of age.

Canoeing Ireland – is the trading name for the Irish Canoe Union; Canoeing Ireland is the term used throughout this document.

Child/Young person – for the purposes of this document an individual under the age of 18 is considered a child/young person. This term is interchangeable with vulnerable person; however, for simplicity, the term child or young person is used throughout this document.

Club – refers to a CI registered club, required to operate under all CI rules and regulations.

Coach – refers to an individual who acts as a coach within the definition of CI with the requisite CI recognised qualification.

Committee member – refers to any person appointed to a club or National Committee.

Discipline – refers to one of the disciplines under the auspices of CI including but not limited to: canoe polo, freestyle, marathon racing, paddle surf, slalom racing, sprint racing, and wild-water racing.

Health Services Executive – is the organisation providing health services in Ireland, formally responsible for the statutory protection of children in Ireland.

Instructor – refers to an individual who holds a CI recognised qualification.

Junior – this term includes any member, canoeist or kayaker involved in the sport participating in events and activities within CI who is under the age of 18.

Leader – see definition under Adult/Leader/Volunteer

Member – any person affiliated to CI or acting as a representative of a member of CI where they are governed by CI rules; categories of membership as defined by the CI Constitution.

Parent/Guardian – refers to an individual who has parental responsibility for a child/young person.

Statutory Authority/Authorities – this refers to the government department/agency tasked with receiving reports or concerns relating to child abuse, including the Child and Family Agency and the Garda Síochána

Training and Development Unit (TDU) – CI national committee comprising of instructors appointed to oversee the technical training and development of the sport under the guidance of CI.

Tusla Child and Family Agency – is the authority with the statutory responsibility for the protection and welfare of children in Ireland since January 1st, 2014.

Volunteer – see definition under Adult/Leader/Volunteer

Vulnerable person – this is any person over the age of 18 years who has a restricted capacity to guard himself or herself against harm by another person. This term is interchangeable with child/young person; however, for simplicity, the term child or young person is used throughout this document.

Working – refers to any individual working within sport whether paid or in a voluntary capacity; for those individuals who are employed the requirements of this document need to be observed in conjunction with any employment contract in place.

Abbreviations

These are commonly used terms that have been abbreviated throughout this document:

CO – Children’s Officer

Code of Ethics – Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children’s Sport (Sport Ireland, 2006) DLP –

Designated Liaison Person

HSE – Health Services Executive

MP – Mandated Person

NCO – National Children’s Officer

NVB – National Vetting Bureau

SI – Sport Ireland, the council governing sports in Ireland

TDU – Training and Development Unit

Section 2 – Safeguarding in CI

Structure of CI

CI understands the importance of creating a child centred environment for children and young people to safely participate in any of the associated paddling disciplines.

CI is recognised by Sport Ireland and the Olympic Federation of Ireland as the National Governing Body for the sport of recreational and competitive canoeing in Ireland. CI is a voluntary membership organisation governed by a Board as laid out in the governing documents. Membership of CI is available to individuals and members of registered clubs. CI also has several employed personnel who are responsible for the day-to-day management of CI operations overseen by a CEO.

CI, clubs, and national committees each appoint a representative with the responsibility to safeguard the welfare of young participants, ensuring that the organisation operates in an environment that welcomes and encourages young people in the sport – this role is carried out by the Children's Officer. CI and registered clubs also appoint a person to liaise and report directly to the Statutory Authorities where there is a concern or allegation of abuse involving a child – this role is carried out by the Designated Liaison Person.

Every club and National Committee acknowledge this document and associated policies within their constitutions and handbooks as a requirement for protecting the welfare of children and young people in CI.

Ethos and Core Values

Sport provides young people an opportunity to be part of a team and to learn and develop skills and can have a powerful and positive influence on their development. Any sporting environment should be regarded by children as a safe place. Adults involved with children and young people in sport must have a basic understanding of their physical, emotional, and personal needs to make sure their chosen sport provides the right balance to meet these needs.

Integrity in relationships

An adult working in sport is often in a position of trust and influence, and their actions should be guided by what is in the best interest of the child and carried out in the context of respectful and open relationships. All young people should be treated with integrity and respect. It is unacceptable to use a position of trust to exploit or undermine children.

Quality atmosphere and ethos

Sport for young people should be fun, and be conducted in a safe, challenging and encouraging atmosphere. Adults should ensure a child-centred ethos that recognises standards of behaviour are as important as standards for performance.

Fair play

All sport for children and young people should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. Ireland has contributed and 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, doping, violence (both physical and verbal), exploitation, unequal opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption.”
(European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics, Council of Europe, 1993)

The importance of participation, best efforts and enjoyment should be stressed. Competition should emphasise the need for being open and fair. Any behaviour by adults or young people which encourages or tolerates cheating must be discouraged.

Equality

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

Participation and competition

A balanced approach to participation and competition can make a significant contribution to the development of a young person, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. Often demands are placed on children too early, resulting in excessive levels of pressure to perform. This can contribute to a high level of drop out from sport.

Participation in competition and specialisation in any sport should be in response to a young person's age, ability, and development, where performance is not the central ethos. Adults should aim to put the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second, finding the balance between the child's desire to win and the right to participate irrespective of ability.

Section 3 – Understanding Confidentiality

The welfare of the child is paramount. No guarantees of secrecy or confidentiality can be given to information regarding a child as the child's welfare and safety supersedes all other considerations. Information should only be passed to individuals who are in appropriate positions to safeguard a child's welfare and safety. Information concerning children and young people should be treated in a respectful, professional, and purposeful manner.

Where there are concerns of abuse about a young person or where a complaint or allegation has been made, the rights of both the child and the person involved should be protected with consideration given to the following points:

- Sensitive information shall be disclosed to certain persons who need to know in order to provide a safe and secure environment for the child. E.g., it is necessary to pass on information about poor practice and/ or an allegation of abuse to the appropriate persons in order to provide protection for a child. Such a person may include a children's officer, designated person, complaints committee, statutory authorities.
- The parent/guardian must be informed where there is a concern for their child unless to do so would endanger that young person. In cases of a concern, allegation, or disclosure of abuse this information is best passed on to a parent/guardian by the statutory authorities. Advice should be taken from the statutory authorities if there is any doubt.

Adults involved with young people in sport may be aware of or be told personal details and/or information relating to a child. It is important for an adult to recognise the difference between sharing information with the aim to safeguard the welfare of a child and sharing information which breaches confidentiality.

Confidentiality means:

- Making sure information that helps protect or safeguard the welfare of a young person is passed on to the right specified individuals who need to know i.e., CO, DLP and/or statutory authorities. (An Garda Síochána, Tusla)
- Do not share sensitive information with other people who have no involvement in safeguarding the welfare of a child or young person i.e., other parents, spectators, general committee members etc.; this is a data protection breach and could be considered a disciplinary offence.

Further advice can be sought from the National Children's Officer and/or the Mandated Person.

Section 4 – Safeguarding Requirements

Safeguarding Requirements

This section sets out the requirements for each area within the structure of CI.

Board

The Board of CI and the CEO shall appoint a Mandated Person (normally the CEO) and a National Children's Officer to safeguard the well-being and interests of young people and children within CI.

The Mandated Person and the National Children's Officer will work together to represent the best interests of young people in CI. Advice should be sought from the National Children's Officer where young people and children are impacted by national policy and for guidance on implementation and monitoring of safeguarding policy.

Board members are required to sign up to adopting this document and abiding by the appropriate code of conduct and undertake the basic child protection training as recommended.

Training & Development Unit

The National Children's Officer shall be an ex-officio member of the TDU to safeguard the interest of young people within the work and training programmes developed by the TDU.

The constitution of the TDU will acknowledge and adopt this document and each member will sign up to the appropriate code of conduct and undertake the basic child protection training as recommended.

National Committees

Each National Committee shall appoint a Children's Officer to represent the interests of young people and children within each of the disciplines. The CO will have the role as described in *Section 4 – People involved in CI* and will liaise with the National Children's Officer for advice and guidance on the implementation of this document.

Each committee will acknowledge and adopt this document and members will sign the appropriate code of conduct and undertake the basic child protection training as recommended.

CI clubs

Each club registered with CI with members under the age of 18 shall appoint a Children's Officer, Designated Liaison Person and Relevant Person (Chair or CO). The description and duties for these roles are described in *Section 4 – People involved in CI*.

Each club will acknowledge and adopt this document within their constitution. All club personnel working or volunteering with children in the club will sign the appropriate code of conduct for their position within the club, undertake the basic child protection training as recommended and be successfully vetted by CI.

Members of CI (outside the above categories)

A member of CI who may not be involved with the board, a committee or as a member of a club is still required to fulfil certain requirements where his/her role involves working with young people and children.

Any person working in this capacity is required to sign a code of conduct for their position as a leader, undertake the basic child protection training as recommended and be successfully vetted by CI.

Awareness of safeguarding requirements (see Table 1 for individual requirements)

All adults should have an awareness of the safeguarding risks and requirements to protect young people and children participating in sport activities. CI is committed to raising such awareness through communication, education and training; and monitoring the implementation of this document.

Communication

It is important that each club communicates to members and potential members the codes of conduct and the safeguarding requirements for young people. These documents should be available to all CI members, either as a printed copy or via the CI website. Clubs should provide a link to these documents on their websites and should be displayed on club noticeboards.

Young people must know how to access help and information concerning their welfare and this is the responsibility of the Children's Officer of each club. The club noticeboard should also display the names and contact details of the Children's Officer and the Designated Liaison Person in a way that is appropriate for young people. Clubs are encouraged to include photographs of people in these roles.

Education and Training

Adults working with children and young people should be suitably qualified for the position they hold. Instructors and coaches must hold the appropriate qualification recognised by the TDU for their position. Any other training/educational qualification required by CI for a specific role must be adhered to.

All adults working with children and young people are also required undertake a suitable child protection course. The specified workshop, mandatory for some roles in CI, raises awareness of sport policy to protect and safeguard young people and children who are involved in our sport. The following child protection training/awareness workshops are accepted by CI:

Children First E-Learning Programme – Tusla – covers Board members and committee members who are not in contact regularly with minors or vulnerable adults.

Safeguarding 1– Sport Ireland

Children in Sport Awareness Workshop (Code of Ethics) – Sport Ireland

Safeguarding Young People in Sport – Sport NI

Advanced workshops

Safeguarding 2– Sport Ireland (Children's Officer's)

Safeguarding 3 – Sport Ireland (Designated Liaison Person's)

Designated Safeguarding Children Officer course – Sport NI

The Sport Ireland training/awareness workshops are available through Canoeing Ireland and locally through the Local Sports Partnership network.

It is important for adults with responsibility for children and young people to have a basic understanding of how to ensure the safety and well-being of all participants in sport. Other courses offered outside sport may be accepted only on application to the National Children's Officer.

Monitoring

CI will monitor the implementation of this document through the registration process and audit checks to ensure the requirements are being met within clubs. For example: clubs will be required to appoint the required roles for safeguarding and these shall be recorded by CI. Any specific requirement for each role, i.e., vetting, child protection training must be checked by the club on appointment. Clubs are required to ensure their club documentation acknowledges this document.

Identifying responsibilities for safeguarding children and young people

It is the responsibility of all adults, including parents and guardians, to ensure that these safeguarding requirements are in place and to respond appropriately to issues of poor practice, breaches of the codes of conduct and concerns or allegations of abuse. Where any of these safeguarding requirements are not being met, they should be reported to the Mandated Person and/or the National Children's Officer as there may be breaches of the codes of conduct requiring disciplinary action.

Advice and guidance on all the requirements for CI clubs and members can be sought from the National Children's Officer.

Table 1 Mandatory requirements for specified roles

Role	Club/ National Requirements	Training - Safeguarding	Vetting	Code of Conduct
Children's Officer	One per club and National Committee & TDU	Basic and Advanced child protection course - Safeguarding 1 + 2	Successful vetting as policy	Leader/Volunteer code of conduct
Designated Liaison Person	One per club – usually chairperson	Basic child protection course	Successful vetting as policy	Committee code of conduct
Club Committee	Chairman Treasurer Secretary Ordinary members	Basic child protection course		Committee code of conduct
Club Instructor/ Coach	As required	Basic child protection course Instructor qualification as required	Successful vetting as policy	Instructor code of conduct
Adult helper/Club helper / Volunteer/ Other officer	As required	Basic child protection course	Successful vetting as policy (If working with children)	Adult code of conduct
Team Manager / Official / Other roles as appointed	As required	Basic child protection course Qualification as required	Successful vetting as policy	Adult code of conduct
Instructors/ Coaches working outside clubs	Individual contract	Basic child protection course Qualification as required	Successful vetting as policy	Instructor code of conduct
National Discipline Committees and TDU	Chairperson Treasurer Secretary Committee	Basic child protection course Qualification as required		Committee code of conduct

Section 5 – Roles and Responsibilities

Introduction

People working in a sporting environment can have wide and varied roles and responsibilities. Some adults have regular contact with children and young people, other roles are responsible for decisions that affect young people, and some adults help on an ad-hoc basis whenever it is needed. The role of any adult involved can depend on the type and nature of the activity, especially in the paddling environment where physical safety is paramount. Paddling is a unique environment where it is the norm for adults and under-18's to participate closely together; clubs need to recognise how to ensure the well-being and safety of young people and children in an environment that accommodate all ages.

Anyone who is appointed to a position in a club must understand the role, their responsibility within that role and abide by the safeguarding measures that are required by CI. The responsibility for meeting the requirements lie with the body making the appointment, e.g., for a club trip, the club committee is responsible for ensuring all the helpers and volunteers for the trip meet the safeguarding requirements.

Safeguarding Roles in CI

The detailed roles described here are specific to safeguarding children and young people within CI:

Mandated Person - CEO
National Children's Officer
Children's Officer – National Committee
Children's Officer – Club
Designated Liaison Person - Club
Relevant Person - Club
Adult helpers – All levels

Other roles with different core responsibilities are briefly described from a safeguarding relevance, e.g., instructor, committee member; however, such roles are fully described in the appropriate documentation e.g., qualification criteria; the club/committee constitution.

National Children's Officer

The National Children's Officer has the responsibility for the development and implementation of the national programme including this document (or updated versions). The NCO will ensure the promotion of values, attitudes and structures for our members for young people to enjoy all levels of participation in CI.

Skills and attributes

The NCO must:

- Understand and promote the ethos of being child centred throughout CI.
- Be able to communicate with young people and to represent their views in an honest and open manner.
- Attend the basic and advanced recommended child protection courses; be successfully vetted and sign the appropriate code of code.

Responsibilities of the National Children's Officer

- Act at all times with the welfare and protection of children as paramount

- Ensure young people have a voice and their views are represented in CI.
- Work directly with the Children's Officers on the national discipline committees, affiliated clubs and bodies to represent young people's views at committee level.
- Review and revise, where required, the CI policies and procedures for safeguarding children on a regular basis.
- Work with the Authorised Signatory for the purposes of vetting members through the National Vetting Bureau.
- Work with the Mandated Person and with his/her agreement be able to carry out the MP role where safeguarding a child or young person is paramount.
- Advise and guide the Board of CI on changes to Irish legislation relevant to children and young people where this has an impact on the structure and provision of safeguarding children's policies and procedures in CI.
- Advise complaints and disciplinary bodies to ensure a safe environment and fair treatment for any child or young person involved in a complaints or disciplinary process.
- Act as the Children's Officer on the TDU committee to ensure the development of national programmes and activities appropriate for young people to encourage participation.
- Guide and advise the TDU committees on the impact of development of training programmes within each discipline on the participation of young people.
- Provide guidance and advice for squads with members under 18 years of age at national level and work in conjunction with the children's officer in each discipline if relevant.
- Be a point of contact for child welfare and protection enquiries generally for CI and members, especially for children's officers in clubs. Provide updated information on relevant safeguarding information and policies for CI members.
- Ensure the safeguarding requirements for clubs and members are being met when affiliating to CI.
- Monitor feedback and changes in membership trends in CI to identify potential issues or concerns for young people, including any unusual trends with the transfer of leaders.
- Understand and advise on confidentiality for all sensitive information concerning young people and their families.

Mandated Person

The Mandated Person is normally the CEO of CI. The MP is responsible for liaising with the statutory authorities regarding any areas of concern that arise at a national level. In the absence of the CEO (during leave periods or any other extended periods of absence) the CI Board will appoint an appropriately qualified Board member as a replacement MP for the duration.

Responsibilities of the Mandated Person

- Be familiar with and carry out the reporting procedure as contained in this CI safeguarding policy document (or updated version).
- Be aware of the local and national contacts and services available in relation to child protection.
- Consult informally with the local social work department to clarify areas of concern regarding children.
- Inform/report concerns about individual children to the local duty social worker in the Child and Family agency or Garda (in emergency) include and follow up communications with the authorities and/or a child's parent/guardian.
- Implement the procedure where a member of CI is required to step aside through concerns regarding the welfare or safety of a child or young person.
- Maintain records of action taken by CI regarding any concern or allegation of abuse made to the statutory authorities.
- Liaise with the National Children's Officer on matters of concern regarding child welfare and safety at national level.
- Support the NCO with the implementation of procedures within CI to deal with persistent poor practice.
- Where required act as an Authorised Signatory for the purposes of vetting members through the National Vetting Bureau.

- Work with the National Children's Officer and with his/her agreement be able to carry out the
- NCO role where required.

Children's Officer - National Committee

The role of the Children's Officer on a national committee recognises the need to ensure activities are appropriately provided for young people in each of the specific disciplines.

Skills and attributes

- Understand the safeguarding requirements contained in this document for the protection of young people and children.
- Be able to relate to and convey the views of young people, being a good listener and approachable – the CO must be comfortable being the link between young people and adults.
- Understand and be dedicated to the creation of a child centred environment.

Role description

- Ensure young people's views within each discipline are represented at committee level in conjunction with the National Children's Officer.
- Make sure the committee includes a programme of activities appropriate for young people to participate in a safe environment.
- Act as guidance for committee members where there are developments within the particular discipline that impact on young people.
- Provide advice to the national committee on activities involving young people in the specific discipline – this should be in conjunction with the National Children's Officer to ensure activities are safe and fun.
- Make sure all the safeguarding requirements for committee members and persons operating at national level on behalf of or selected by the committee are met.
- Report poor practice to National Children's Officer
- Work confidentially with all sensitive information concerning young people and their families.

Children's Officer (CO) – Club

The Children's Officer creates a child centred ethos within a club ensuring young people have a voice in the running of their club. The CO name and contact details must be easily and clearly available for all members. At least one club Children's Officer is required in each club, two are recommended for clubs with large junior sections where one CO may not be able to engage with all the young people. Where the junior members are mixed genders, it is recommended that a CO of each gender is appointed.

Skills and Attributes

- Understand the safeguarding requirements contained in this document for the protection of young people and children.
- Able to relate to and convey the views of young people, being a good listener and approachable – the CO must be comfortable being the link between young people and adults.
- Understand and be dedicated to the creation of a child centred environment.

Responsibilities in the club

The CO should:

- Act at all times in the interests of young people – this includes ensuring the club operates within all CI safeguarding policies and procedures e.g., attendance records, supervision, parent involvement, training, vetting, record keeping, annual sign up to codes etc.
- Attend club committee meetings to guide the committee in putting safeguarding policies in place.
- Make sure the safeguarding requirements for the committee and all adults working in the club on behalf of or selected by the committee are met.

- Ensure young people have a voice in the running of the club by providing ways for young people to express their views and to be represented at all levels within the club. The CO should meet with the young people to get their feedback and comments on the practices in the club.
- Act on any welfare matters affecting the well-being of young people in the club, e.g., behaviour difficulties, bullying, lack of supervision etc.
- Ensure young people know how to raise their concerns or worries. The CO should be available for young people to talk to if needed.
- Ensure parents, leaders and other club volunteers understand to pass on any concerns they may have about a young person.
- Develop relationship with other roles to represent and prioritise children's welfare e.g., DP, committee, instructors and other roles involved with young people in the club.
- Guide and be an advocate for young people, including helping them seek advice they may need, e.g., from instructors, coaches etc.
- Monitor changes in membership where young people have either been absent for a period of time or have left the club completely; the CO should examine the reasons for this and follow up with the committee to address any problems highlighted.
- Ensure the environment is safe and the process is fair for any young person involved in a complaints and disciplinary procedure regardless of the complaint/disciplinary action.
- Act on any concerns of risk or danger to a child, liaising with DP or statutory authorities if required.
- Work confidentially with all sensitive information concerning young people and their families.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP) - Club

The Designated Liaison Person must be an appointed committee member. The DLP may hold another committee role and ideally is one of the officers of the club. The DLP is an essential role responsible for liaising with statutory authorities in the case of suspected or disclosed abuse. The role of the DLP also provides support to the CO and helps link the CO with the committee. The contact details for the DLP must be available with those of the CO for all members.

Responsibilities in the club

The DLP should

- Have attended the Sport Ireland DLP training. (Safeguarding 3)
- Know the local contact details for duty social workers / Guards (statutory authorities)
- Understand statutory reporting procedures and be familiar with the reporting form.
- Consult informally with statutory authorities understanding how to present and act on the information of concern.
- Communicate with parents and/or report concerns to the statutory authorities where young person is at risk from harm.
- Acts as a support to the CO in ensuring best practice operates in the club and those working/volunteering in the club.
- Report persistent poor practice to National DLP and/or the National CO.
- Ensure the club maintains confidentiality when dealing with sensitive information concerning young people and their families, advice on best practice while record keeping and data protection matters involving young people.
- Work confidentially with all sensitive information concerning young people and their families.

Designated Liaison Persons and Children's Officers can seek advice from the National Children's Officer or the Mandated Person. It is not the remit of either role to investigate or validate child abuse concerns originating from within or outside the club and they have no counselling or therapeutic role. These functions are filled by the statutory authorities, as outlined in Children First and Our Duty to Care.

Relevant Person - Club

As defined in the Children First Act 2015 (ROI), this means a person who is appointed by a club to be the first point of contact in respect of the provider's Child Safeguarding Statement. This role is usually filled by the Children's Officer or the Chair.

Adult helpers

The role of the adult helper either by request or through volunteering are very valuable to the running of CI clubs – without these people clubs would find it difficult to provide the activities for young people. However, every adult helping in a club or at national level that has responsibility for or in a supervisory role with young people also has a responsibility to create a safe and fun environment for young people. Adults who help in clubs regularly are required to have Garda Vetting. It is best practice that these individuals would also complete Safeguarding 1.

Skills and attributes

- Understand the safeguarding requirements contained in this document for the protection of young people and children.
- Be dedicated to the creation of a child centred environment within the area of their work.

Role description

- Understand the work that is required and know who to report to if any concern or issue arises.
- Work with the club/committee/CI to implement a safe and fun environment for young people.
- Feedback to the Children's Officer any views or issues raised by young people.
- Report concerns of poor practice to the Children's Officer.
- Understand the need for confidentiality with any sensitive information concerning young people and their families that may come to their attention.

Other roles in CI

There are other roles involved in CI that are described in relevant documentation detailing responsibilities and any criteria required for appointment. This information is not appropriate to detail in this document. However, all roles are bound by a code of conduct and these codes are included here.

Codes of Conduct and Poor Practice

The codes of conduct identify a standard of behaviour to be applied to individuals working with young people and children in sport that is based on recognised best practice for safeguarding young people. Everyone has a duty to behave and work in a safe and responsible manner, including young people, to ensure that the best possible environment is provided, and young people have the opportunity to grow and develop; and to allow their sport to become an integral part of their lives into the future.

Understanding poor practice is important in identifying the extent of any risk to young people and the vulnerability of certain environments. This can provide a basis for training and up-skilling programmes to create an environment safe for young people and children.

Codes of conduct help to create an environment where young people are motivated and encouraged based on their needs and ability. Children should be inspired to establish and achieve their goals, with adults as good role models.

Children First 2015, outlines the responsibilities and requirements in relation to safeguarding and best practice for clubs, this is supported by the accompanying documentation from Sport Ireland.

Poor Practice

Breaches of the code of conduct may be considered issues of poor practice, where the behaviour of leaders towards young people in CI is not acceptable. Poor practice is dealt with through CI's complaints and disciplinary process, either informally or formally and where a young person is involved the Children's Officer must be involved to help resolve the behaviour. If the poor practice behaviour is severe, on-going or becomes a concern of abuse the procedures in Section 9 - Protection for reporting concerns to the statutory authorities for investigation should be followed.

Indicators of poor practice would include the following:

- Bullying behaviour e.g., leader is repeatedly criticising a young person.
- Unfair treatment e.g., an instructor regularly leaving a member out of a squad although reaching the standard.
- No recognition for particular skills/needs e.g., not providing adequate instruction according to young person's ability.
- Lack of supervision e.g., an instructor regularly not attending sessions.
- Lack of encouragement for children with weaker skills.
- Not listening to children's views and opinions.
- Non-compliance to child safeguarding principles and requirements.

It would also be considered poor practice not to address these issues; advice can be sought from the NCO or the Children's Officer as often poor practice behaviour is due to a lack of understanding of a child centred environment. It is important to help and support adults working with young people to ensure they receive the training and up-skilling needed to create a child centred environment. In extreme cases the Designated Person may consider taking an informal consultation with the local Duty Social Worker to help with the determination of the situation (see Section 9 – Protection).

The Codes

The codes of conduct included in this document cover the number of different roles in CI, and anyone working in a number of different roles must sign up to all codes of conduct relevant to their various positions. Each code of conduct, whilst promoting the safe, fun and spirit of fair play ethos in sport, does recognise the different responsibilities each role brings. Adults should strive to create a positive environment for the children in their care. They have an overall responsibility to ensure that sport is positive and healthy experience for young people.

The relevant code of conduct must be signed annually by everyone involved in CI, both nationally and at a club level. The completed declarations should be held by the secretary of the committee/club. It is presumed that by either submitting membership to CI or a club that every member has signed the appropriate code of conduct.

Young people: This code is predominantly for young people under 18, however CI has a number of senior paddlers who are selected for squads and/or competing and whilst adult, the same level of behaviour is expected as with those U18. These senior athletes must sign the Young Person's code and are required to sign up to a similar code of conduct with their athlete agreement. Other adult paddlers who are participating in the sport with no other role should sign up to the Adult code of conduct, as being more appropriate.

Parents/Guardians: Parents/guardians are recognised as those with the primary responsibility for the care and welfare of their own children, and as representatives of their child/children are subject to and should be aware of the rules and procedures of CI and their club. This code is for parents/guardians regardless of their membership status, although they are encouraged to become members of their club whilst also encouraging their children to participate in sport for fun and enjoyment ensuring their child's experience of sport is a positive one.

Adults in CI: This code of conduct is for all other adults, members, helpers and volunteers working in a voluntary or employed capacity within CI with young people including but not limited to club managers, officials, helpers, Children's Officers, Designated liaison Persons, team managers.

Committees: This code of conduct is for a group tasked with the specific responsibility for the management of one of the skill disciplines or clubs in CI; there may be other groups given charge of a particular area i.e., a sub-committee or working group to which this code of conduct should apply.

Instructors/Coaches: This code of conduct applies to all people with the role of instructor or coach who are given the responsibility for training, instructing or coaching young people; the instructor or coach is in a position of trust and authority over young people and children.

Code for Young People

As a young person you have a great deal to gain from sport in terms of your personal development and enjoyment and you have rights which must be respected and responsibilities which you must accept. As part of these rights your sporting environment should be safe, enjoyable and free from harm. Your responsibilities are to treat others with fairness and respect whilst behaving in a safe manner. If you are not sure what this means, ask your parent or your club Children's Officer to explain.

My code of conduct

I should:

- Be able to have fun, be happy and enjoy taking part and being involved in my sport.
- Be treated fairly by everyone, adults and other paddlers.
- Feel safe and secure when taking part in my sport.
- Be listened to and allowed to reply.
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect.
- Have a voice in the decisions that affect me within my club and CI.
- Be comfortable that any personal details about me are treated with confidentiality.

I will:

- Say no to something which makes me feel uncomfortable.
- Have opportunities to train and compete at a level that is suitable for my age, development and ability.
- Be loyal and be part of the team supporting other team members when they do well and when things go wrong.
- Treat teammates, opponents, instructors, leaders, other adults and parents with respect.
- Be fair at all times, do your best to achieve your goals; be gracious if you do not achieve your goals.
- Understand the rules of my sport and not cheat; I will not allow others to force me to cheat.
- Listen to and respect decisions made by others.

I agree to:

- Never behave in a bullying manner or hurt other team members, other people or my opponents by my actions including:
 - Not making or sending upsetting comments or images about others via social media means, e.g., messaging via text or other application, making comments or messaging on social networking sites or pages
 - Not taking/damaging other people's property
 - Not spreading rumours or telling lies about other young people or adults
- Never use violence or bad language; not to shout or argue with others including teammates or opposing participants.
- Never try or take banned substances to improve my performance.

I know I can:

- Talk to my instructor or coach, team captain, children's officer, my parents or a trusted CI member. If I do not understand something or if someone has caused me harm or made me feel upset.

Code for Parents/Guardians

As a parent/guardian I will work in partnership with my child's/children's club to create and support a safe environment promoting good practice and measures stated in this code and safeguarding document to prevent poor practice and all forms of abuse. My child/children will be treated with fairness, respect and understanding.

I understand that as a parent/guardian I will:

- Abide by the safeguarding measures contained in this document, CI/the club rules and constitution, respecting these are in place for the welfare and protection of all young people in the club and CI.
- Be aware of CI and the club's safeguarding policy and requirements attached to this.
- Understand and ensure my child/children abide by The Code for Young People.
- Promote fair play and the positive aspects of sport by being a role model for my child/children and other young people in maintaining the highest standards of personal conduct and respectful behaviour.
- Contribute time and effort in the daily running of the club, have the opportunity to put forward comments and suggestions and be available for specified duties if and when required; clubs need the help of volunteers to operate successfully to ensure the environment is safe and enjoyable for my child/children.
- Be aware of the roles of others in the club and respect their position, including those working in CI, the club committee and understand decisions made are in the best interests of all young people in CI/ the club.
- Understand and respect the process for dealing with complaints and disciplinary measures, ensuring the confidentiality of such process is also respected.
- Be responsible for dropping off and picking up my child/children from training and/or competitions on time. Young people should not be left waiting unsupervised at any time.

In respect to my child/children I will:

- Ensure appropriate leaders/instructors are informed regarding any absenteeism, medical conditions or other relevant matters.
- Ensure the focus is on achieving their goals and ambitions rather than the main objective of success being winning.
- Request an appropriate time for discussing any matter with their instructor or the leader and not to distract from any instruction or supervision of young people.
- Provide an emergency contact number/information and any relevant medical information; I will be reasonably available in case of an emergency.

Code for Adults in CI

I understand that as a leader/volunteer I will:

- Abide by the safeguarding measures contained in this document, the club rules and constitution, respecting these are in place for the welfare and protection of all young people in the club and CI.
- I will be familiar with the CI Safeguarding Policy and related documents including the requirements under the Children First Act 2015 and have undertaken Garda Vetting on a 3-yearly basis.
- Promote fair play and the positive aspects of sport by being a role model for young people in maintaining the highest standards of personal conduct and respectful behaviour.
- Avoid the use of alcohol at all times whilst responsible for young people e.g., training sessions, events and on trips with young people acknowledging the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco is incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity and must be discouraged.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every child and treat everyone equally, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability.
- Be aware of the roles of others in CI/the club and respect their position, including those working nationally for CI, the club committee and that decisions made are in the best interests of all young people in CI/the club.
- Understand and respect the process for dealing with complaints and disciplinary measures, ensuring the confidentiality of such process is also respected.
- Not allow any child or young person to be subject to favouritism, criticism, hostility or sarcasm nor allow others to swear at, unnecessarily shout, at, ridicule or argue with a child or young person.
- Not use or allow verbal or physical punishment or physical force to be used on young people and children; not allow such actions or exclusion to be used where a child or young person has makes mistakes.
- Not allow or engage in bullying behaviour, rough physical games, sexually provocative games, inappropriate physical contact of any kind or make sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person or child.
- Ensure that parents/guardians and young people are aware of and given consent for the activities being undertaken within CI/the club.

In respect of my position, I will:

- Understand the role I have been selected for and contribute my time and effort as agreed with the club and/or CI.
- Ensure I have obtained the required qualifications and specified safeguarding requirements for my position and only work in the areas I am qualified to do so.
- Carry out my duties and responsibilities understanding that the welfare of children is paramount.
- Ensure any conflict of obligation or interest is set aside and the welfare of any child is placed first.
- Ensure, where relevant, the activities are adequately planned and prepared for, inclusive and age appropriate.
- Ensure activities are safely supervised and attendance records are kept.
- Inform the parent/guardian where an issue or problem arises with their child/children.
- Keep any personal or medical information relating to a young person or child strictly confidential unless the welfare of the child requires passing the information on.
- Never exert undue influence over a participant for personal benefit or reward including abusing the trust of my position with young people.

Code for Committees

Committee members will:

- Promote fair play and the positive aspects of sport by being role models for young people in maintaining the highest standards of personal conduct and respectful behaviour.
- I will be familiar with the CI Safeguarding Policy and related documents including the requirements under the Children First Act 2015 and have undertaken Garda Vetting on a 3-yearly basis.
- Ensure the club ethos respects the rights, dignity and worth of every child and treat everyone equally, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability.
- Not allow any child or young person to be subject to favouritism, criticism, hostility or sarcasm including comments on their height or weight; nor allow others to swear at, unnecessarily shout, at, ridicule or argue with a child or young person.
- Not use or allow verbal or physical punishment or physical force to be used on young people and children; not allow such actions or exclusion to be used where a child or young person makes mistakes.
- Not allow or engage in bullying behaviour, rough physical games, sexually provocative games, inappropriate physical contact of any kind or make sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person or child.
- Ensure the safeguarding measures contained in this document are adopted by club/committee and any governing constitution and rules for the welfare and protection of young people and children; club or committee rules should not contravene those of CI.

The committee shall particularly:

- Ensure and approve the appointment of a Children's Officer(s) and Designated Liaison Person as required (see Table 1 for specific requirements) and make sure Children's Officer Reports regularly to committee meetings.
- Ensure all other safeguarding requirements (see Table 1) including proper recruitment and induction process for those working and volunteering on the committee and in the club
- Ensure all the policies and practices are in place for activities for young people and children, e.g., supervision, away trips, photography etc.
- Put in place effective communication methods for making members aware of club activities and ensure parental consent is obtained.
- Understand and follow the process for dealing with complaints and disciplinary measures, ensuring the confidentiality of such process is also respected.
- Ensure rumours are not ignored and they are dealt with appropriately, taking action where there is a risk to young people and children.
- Keep and store securely all documentation with respect to young people and children, especially where sensitive information is obtained e.g., medical records and or personal contact details.
- Monitor, with the Children's Officer, any changes in membership and any unusual dropout, absenteeism or movement of people in and out of the club; ensure these are followed up to determine any trend.

Code for Instructors/Coaches

As an Instructor/Coach I will:

- Abide by the safeguarding measures contained in this document, the club rules and constitution, respecting these are in place for the welfare and protection of all young people in the club and CI.
- Promote fair play and the positive aspects of sport by being a role model for young people in maintaining the highest standards of personal conduct and respectful behaviour.
- Avoid the use of alcohol at all times whilst responsible for young people e.g., training sessions, events and on trips with young people acknowledging the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco is incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity and must be discouraged.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every child and treat everyone equally, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability.
- Be aware of the roles of others in CI/the club and respect their position, including those working nationally for CI, the club committee and that decisions made are in the best interests of all young people in CI/the club.
- Understand and respect the process for dealing with complaints and disciplinary measures, ensuring the confidentiality of such process is also respected.
- Not allow any young person to be subject to favouritism, criticism, hostility or sarcasm including comments on their height or weight; nor allow others to swear at, unnecessarily shout, at, ridicule or argue with a young person.
- Not use or allow verbal or physical punishment or physical force to be used on young people; not allow such actions or exclusion to be used where a young person makes mistakes.
- Not allow or engage in bullying behaviour, rough physical games, sexually provocative games, inappropriate physical contact of any kind or make sexually suggestive comments about or to a young person.

In respect of my position, I will:

- Understand the role I have been selected for and contribute my time and effort as agreed with the club and/or CI.
- Ensure I have obtained the required qualifications and specified safeguarding requirements for the areas in which I work and, if not qualified, refrain from any medical testing, giving advice of a personal or medical nature or undertaking any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.).
- Carry out my duties and responsibilities understanding that the welfare of children is paramount and recognising the developmental needs of children and how a child may be psychologically or physically affected by their involvement in the sport.
- Ensure any conflict of obligation or interest is set aside and the welfare of any child is placed first
- Ensure activities are adequately planned and prepared for, inclusive and age appropriate and with positive encouragement, praise and feedback for young people; skill development and personal satisfaction takes priority over highly structured competition.
- Ensure activities are safely supervised and attendance records are kept.
- Inform the parent/guardian where an issue or problem arise with their child/children.
- Keep any personal or medical information relating to a young person strictly confidential unless the welfare of the child requires the passing on of information.
- Never exert undue influence over a participant for personal benefit or reward including abusing the trust of my position with young people.
- Co-operate with the recommendations from medical and ancillary practitioners in the management of a child's medical or related problems and request a certificate of medical fitness to ensure safe continued participation.
- Ensure that parents/guardians and young people are aware of and given consent for the activities being undertaken within CI/the club.

Code of Conduct Annual Declaration

Young Person and Parent/Guardian

I have read, understood and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct for Young People and the rules for participating in CI and my club _____ (club name).

Signature of Young person: _____ Date: _____

Please print name: _____

I have read, understood and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct for Parents/Guardians, this document and the rules for participating in CI and my child's/children's club and give my permission for my child to be involved in club activities. My child understands the Code of Conduct for Young People.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

Please print name: _____

Adult role

Adult/Leader/Volunteer – this includes members who may help out on committees or as Instructor/Coach.

I have read, understood and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct for the role(s) indicated above, this document (or latest updated version) and the Rules of Canoeing Ireland and
_____ (Enter club and/or committee name)

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

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a caution, a Bound-Over Order and/ or are you at present the subject of criminal investigations? Yes No

(If you have answered yes to either questions above, we will contact you in confidence)

If an allegation of abuse is made against me, I agree to step aside until the results of the investigation are completed.

Signature of Adult: _____ Date: _____

Please print name: _____

Position: _____

For all codes of conduct visit the Canoeing Ireland website: www.cano.canoe.ie

Section 6 – Policies

Introduction

CI has a number of policies setting out the structure and regulations for our sport. These policies guide members and club to implement the best practices in relation to keeping children safe. Some policies are published as separate documents and may be subject to review and update at different times. Each of these are summarised below with reference given to the full documentation and where it can be located. The summaries are a brief outline and should not be relied on in the event of putting any of these policies in place. It is not the intention here to replace or alter anything that might be contained currently or in the future within any of the detailed policy documents. The full policy and procedure should always be referenced and used.

Anti-Bullying Policy

This Anti-Bullying policy sets out the definition and types of behaviour seen in incidences of bullying. Bullying behaviour can occur between anyone, child to child, adult to child, child to adult and adult to adult. This document is mainly concerned with bullying behaviour that involves young people and children, either between child and child or between adult and child. Adult to adult bullying behaviour may be regarded as poor practice and a breach of the code of conduct but will be dealt with by the either CI or the club through a complaints/disciplinary process.

Definition of bullying

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

Bullying Behaviour

Bullying behaviour is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and can occur in any social environments where groups of people interact. It includes behaviour such as teasing, taunting, threatening, and hitting and extortion by one or more persons against a victim or target. The target of the bullying behaviour may be an individual or a group of people.

Bullying can occur and will continue in an environment where codes of conduct are not implemented, and the target of the bullying behaviour does not feel able to tell someone who can help, or they are in a situation where it is not safe to do so. Each case of bullying must be dealt with as soon as the symptoms are apparent, or bullying is suspected.

Preventing bullying behaviour

Bullying behaviour can be prevented by making sure everyone is aware of their code of conduct and breaches of behaviour are dealt with as soon as possible. It is also important to ensure young people know who they can talk to and be taken seriously where they have any concerns. The CO should be aware of any times that might be cause for difficulty between young people and others e.g., where team selections occur; the CO can intervene and help the group deal with such situations.

The full Anti-Bullying Policy is available from the CI website.

Anti-Doping and Substance misuse

CI's policy is that any form of substance misuse is contrary to the spirit of sport and every member has a duty to ensure that the sport is free from the use of alcohol, drugs and tobacco.

General considerations

The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco is forbidden as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activities. Any sporting activities should take place where possible in a non-alcoholic environment and adults should be encouraged to act as role models for young people.

Promote fair competition through sound training to actively discourage the use of any substance to improve or enhance performance. Young people should be educated regarding the effects of long and short-term effects of substances taken to enhance performance and the charges that may occur with the use of illegal or banned substances. Sponsorship from alcohol and/or tobacco companies should be avoided.

Further information can be found in the Sport Ireland Anti-Doping Programme available at www.sportireland.ie.

Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures

CI has a comprehensive complaints and disciplinary procedure – these form part of the rules of CI and therefore are required to be implemented for dealing with all complaints and disciplinary matters.

General

The complaints and disciplinary process are detailed in a separate document entitled The CI Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure.

Any complaint or issue concerning suspected child abuse is not covered by the complaints and disciplinary procedures and must be referred to the relevant authorities in accordance with the reporting procedure detailed in this document – see Section 9 – Protection.

The various Disciplines Committees, e.g., Freestyle, Sprint, etc. must follow the CI Complaints and Disciplinary procedures and deal with any complaint or discipline issue through their own complaints and disciplinary committee.

Disciplinary process

The disciplinary process for young people and adults (who are not employed by CI or a club) are suggested within the procedures to ensure fair and consistent measures for issues such as breaches of rules or codes of conduct. The procedures clearly state the circumstance under which these may be imposed in order to ensure a process that recognises natural justice and fairness for young people involved.

Complaints process

Complaints should be raised within the jurisdiction of where they occurred. There are certain matters that fall outside the scope of any complaints and disciplinary committee, e.g., technical breaches of rules, competition rules, or suspected abuse. Guidance is given in the full procedures to determine whether the nature of the complaint is within the CI process.

The Complaints and Disciplinary Procedure should be regarded as part of the safeguarding requirements within this document recognising the need for all young people to be treated fairly and consistently.

The full Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures are available on the CI website.

Inclusion Policy

CI operate an inclusion policy that means that no child or young person should be discriminated because of their age, ability, sex, religion, social or ethnic background, sexual orientation or political persuasion. The safeguarding and welfare procedures for all children are the same regardless of any vulnerability.

Consideration should be given to young people who may have increased needs relating to a physical, sensory, cognitive and/or communication impairment, and attention to promoting and maintaining the highest standards of care and training.

Vulnerability

There may be barriers that contribute to some young people being more vulnerable to abuse than others, e.g., lack of language or cognition skills, cultural differences or previous experience of abuse. Leaders may not be aware of particular vulnerabilities in a child but should be open to the possibility. Young people with a disability may be more vulnerable to abuse due to their increased needs with a greater dependency on adults and additional barriers to communicating with others. Young people with specific needs may experience a further level of vulnerability, adults, volunteers and committee members should be aware of this in ensuring the safeguarding of these young people.

Inclusion in CI activities for vulnerable young people is guided by education and recommendations within Instructor and Coach training – see CI website for details.

Recruitment Policy - summary

Most opportunities for young people to participate in sport require the time and commitment of volunteers; such volunteers are often motivated by a desire to give something back to a sport. In order to ensure the experience is positive and safe for young people volunteers wishing to take on a role and responsibility for all children should undergo a clear and consistent recruitment procedure. This is required for all positions within CI and registered clubs as good practice.

This policy sets out the recruitment of existing persons and the recruitment of new volunteers into positions responsible for young people.

Renewal of Existing Leaders/Volunteers

An annual self- declaration must be completed for all adults in existing positions or for those that have in the previous year held a position working with young people. If the adult is working or volunteering in a club it is the club's responsibility to ensure the annual requirement is met; registration is an ideal time to ensure this is done. Where an adult is working for CI or one of the associated discipline committees it is the responsibility of the NCO or the relevant committee respectively. The responsibility for the club, the discipline committees and CI extends to ensuring all other aspects of safeguarding requirements e.g., vetting, child protection training and relevant qualifications are met. Sport Ireland's Safeguarding Self-Assessment Audit Tool will gather and collate the required information.

New Leaders/Volunteers

All adults working as volunteers or employed with access to or involved in the management of policies concerning children should be recruited and selected for their position. Such positions would include, but not limited to:

Club Children's Officer

Designated Person

Instructor/Coach

Team Manager/Club helpers

Committee members

Adults only seeking membership of CI should complete a membership application form and code of conduct with the self-declaration which should be held in the club or CI, depending on where the application is made.

The full recruitment and selection policy is available on the CI website.

Safety and Risk Assessment Policies - summary

Sport should provide a safe, positive nurturing environment for children to develop and enhance physical and social skills. A child centred ethos will assist in identifying and eliminating practices that impact negatively on safe and enjoyable participation for young people. By being aware of safety requirements and identifying risks to young people their sporting environment will provide a better experience.

CI and clubs should have a safety statement that includes specific and potential risks and the procedures put in place for safeguarding against such risks. This is a legal requirement under the Children First Act 2015.

Sport Ireland's Safeguarding Self-Assessment Audit Tool will gather and collate the required information.

General Safety considerations

General safety considerations are:

- All instructors and leaders must have the required qualifications for the activity.
- Access to emergency numbers for each child must be readily available.
- Any medical condition that might affect the participation of a young person must be recorded. (It is the responsibility of parent/guardian to notify club/organiser).
- Adequate supervision must be provided for all activities.
- Activities should be suitable for age and stage of development of participants.
- Any necessary protective gear is used.
- A First Aid kit, kept well stocked, is close at hand with access to qualified first aider.
- All events should be run safely including an awareness of the codes of conduct.
- Participants should know the rules and any safety requirements.
- Adequate insurance cover for the activity/event must be provided/covered by CI.
- Parents/guardians must be aware of session start and finish times to collect their children.

Sensitive information i.e., emergency number and medical information should be kept confidential and available to those that need it. All forms are accessible from the Canoeing Ireland website:

<https://canoe.ie/child-protection/> .

General Risk considerations

An awareness of some of the risks young people are exposed to within sports is required to ensure protection against harm. Such risk areas for young people:

- Lack of supervision and understanding of the safe use of equipment and/or facilities.
- Abuse e.g., constant criticism, sarcasm, rejection, threatening behaviour or pressure to perform or achieve, any non-accidental injury or other form of significant harm.
- Bullying e.g., lack of awareness, understanding and interaction from adults resulting in poor intervention and resolution.
- Poor practice e.g., allowing poor practices to continue may be a potential risk to young people's well-being.
- Young people's own vulnerabilities e.g., young people who are vulnerable for a number of reasons: parental separation, children with a disability, social isolation or exclusion.
- Level of participation may lead to psychological stress, burn out and dropouts, where the expectations of others is overwhelming.
- Substance misuse e.g., lack of education on the risks of drugs, tobacco and/or alcohol.

In the event of an incident

If an incident or injury occurs the details must be recorded together with the problem or issue, any action taken and the final outcome or resolution. This should be recorded in a hard copy book and the details notified to CI. For any incident or injury concerning a young person contact should be made with their parent/guardian who should be kept informed of all details. For other individuals their nominated emergency contact person should be informed.

For further guidance on safety and risk assessments contact CI head office.

Rules within CI

All CI members are bound by and must comply with the rules as set down by the Board of CI. Where safeguarding requirements are not mandatory it is expected that members of CI will use their best endeavours to abide by best practices with respect to the welfare and protection of children and young people.

General Information

CI's constituent documents are contained in the Constitution located at: <https://canoe.ie/constitutionrules/>. The CI Constitution deals primarily with the functioning of CI as a legal entity (i.e., as a company) but does not necessarily provide the level of detail required for the day-to-day operating of the organisation. The Board of Management and the CEO oversee the general aspects of the day-to-day operations of the organisation and will require certain practices to be satisfied, e.g., a club must appoint a committee. Alleged breaches of such requirements by anyone who is subject to the rules of CI will be dealt with through the CI Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures.

Specific Safeguarding Rules

All members must comply with the mandatory sections of this document (as amended from time to time) and sanctions will be applied where these mandatory requirements are not adhered to (see Table 1, this document).

An individual convicted of any charges relating to the abuse of a child will be immediately and permanently excluded from membership of CI in any capacity (see Vetting Policy for full details).

An individual not convicted of alleged child abuse, but where the offences are considered by the Director of Public Prosecutions to be chargeable this is above the threshold of risk considered acceptable by CI. This outcome will result in immediate and permanent exclusion of that individual from membership of CI in any capacity (see Vetting Policy for full details).

Where the Garda Vetting process indicates that an individual is 'a person of concern' (although they may not have a conviction CI will deem this to be sufficient grounds to exclude the individual from membership of CI.

Vetting Policy - summary

The CI Vetting Policy is concerned with the provision of Garda vetting for those in CI. The Vetting Policy requires any personnel working children to undergo a check against convictions and prosecutions to ensure suitability for their role or position.

Garda Vetting alongside a robust safeguarding policy, codes of conduct and commitment to ensuring the paramountcy of the welfare of the child is vital to ensure children are appropriately safeguarded.

General Information

The policy requires that all existing and new personnel in identified positions undergo a check. The positions requiring vetting are (also see Table 1):

- CI employees.
- National instructors, coaches and other adults involved in national events, e.g., Team Managers.
- Children's Officers.
- Designated Liaison Persons.
- All people instructing or coaching.
- All club team managers, helpers or volunteers with roles involving young people.
- Volunteers working with children.

Garda vetting is an important part of a recruitment process. The responsibility for ensuring the relevant people are vetted is as follows:

- People appointed to positions in a club are the responsibility of the club CO and committee.
- Instructors, coaches and other qualified roles are the responsibility of CI prior to awarding the certificate of qualification.
- National discipline committees and appointed people e.g., team managers, coaches etc. are the responsibility of the CO and the discipline committee.

The full Vetting Policy is available on the CI website

Section 7 – Full Procedures

Introduction

Some of the Procedures listed in this section are summaries of the full procedure – please read the relevant document in full available on the CI website. Each summary document is clearly indicated and should not be used without reference to the full document.

Changing facilities

CI and clubs need to inform members, including young people, about any changing facilities provided, whether this is in a club house, open area or in a pool facility. The parent/guardian should discuss the various changing facilities with their child/children ensuring their child has the opportunity and is aware of who to talk to if any issues arise in unsupervised areas.

If supervision is provided in a specific changing area this must be by adults in pairs of the appropriate gender, i.e., only adult males can supervise male only changing areas and only adult females can supervise female only changing areas. Club helpers should not have to enter the changing rooms unless part of the supervision rota. There may be circumstances where children need extra assistance or there is an issue, in which case supervision in pairs of the appropriate gender should be provided where this is a regular occurrence. In an emergency circumstance the safety and well-being of a child is paramount, and a common-sense approach should be taken, i.e., this may mean entering a changing area when helping a child at risk.

Use of club house.

CI and some clubs have dedicated club house facilities for members' use. The extent of the facilities may include providing changing and showering areas, lecture/classrooms and equipment storage areas. Where such facilities are provided CI and clubs must inform members that young people will be present at certain times. Adult members need to be aware of making sure young people are able to use the club facilities safely and without risk. Solutions may involve dedicating a changing area to young people separate from the adult's areas or specifying certain times for use. Adults should avoid using changing areas at the same time as under 18 members of the club to avoid putting the young people in a vulnerable position.

Open changing areas

Often the water courses used for paddling are only accessible from public areas i.e., the roadside or a layby, in which case members will not have access to a club house or changing facilities. In these cases, young people may be changing on the roadside, or in parking areas in public view. In these instances, it is important to ensure the safety of young people with regard to other traffic. Again, young people and their parents must be made aware of the absence of changing facilities in order to ensure they are fully aware of the circumstances. It would be usual for a parent/guardian to be present, given that most young people will not have the means to transport themselves or their equipment and therefore clubs and CI expect the parent/guardian to be responsible for the well-being of their child/children.

Pool sessions

Parents/guardians should be made aware by the club that pool changing areas may be shared by the general public; it therefore may not be possible to provide specific supervision in these areas or to prevent other adults from entering the changing areas as these are public areas. Best practice is to avoid one on one contact. Always have a second adult or minor present.

If the changing area is open to the public, parents can choose to remain with their child in the appropriate (gender dependant) changing area; usually the facility's rules will only allow adult males in the male changing area and adult females in the female changing area. Where family or communal rooms are provided parents/guardians should check their use with the facility. A club must decide on their changing room policy in

a pool environment and clearly communicate this to all members and parents/guardians who should ensure their children are aware of it also.

Mixing Junior and Senior paddlers

Sport is an ideal environment for fostering long term friendships regardless of age, race, community background, ability or gender. This includes ages under 18 and over 18 mixing and taking part in sport for the benefit of each other. Some consideration should be given to all athletes in recognising the times where ages may be mixed e.g., during training sessions; under 18's selected for a senior team; under 18's gaining an instructor qualification.

Any supervising adult should ensure that a young person is comfortable in their role and environment. It is also important that all athletes know to raise any issues or queries with their Children's Officer or other such trusted adult. Best practice is to avoid one on one contact. Always have a second adult or minor present.

Dos and don'ts of mixing juniors and seniors

Athletes under 18 and athletes over 18 should not share bedrooms.

Over 18 athletes should not be responsible for driving under 18 athletes unless this is a separate arrangement with parental permission.

Over 18 athletes should not be expected to act in a supervisory role in the absence of the appointed supervisor.

Over 18 athletes must not be expected to share a room with an instructor/coach or person in authority (unless this is with a parent).

These measures are to protect both the under 18's and the adult in these circumstances and to make sure there is clarity around the differences between athletes and adults.

Guidance can be sought from CI's National Children's Officer

Monitoring movement of young people

All movements, transfers and dropouts must be recorded and notified to CI who can then monitor any trends and identify any unusual movements that may indicate a developing issue or unusual movement of adults and/or young people between clubs.

General considerations

Clubs are required to register members each year with CI. Any members who do not re-register with a club should be contacted by the children's officer to enquire as to the reason for leaving or moving clubs. In the majority of cases the reasons are clear; in some cases, knowing the reason may help a club provide a better environment for young people.

All dropouts, resignations or volunteers/staff that have been let go or any member that has had their membership revoked by a club throughout the year must be notified to CI at the time.

Causes for dropping out of sport.

There are various reasons why people leave sport, e.g., financial restraints, move away from the area, dislike the sport. Some of the reasons for drop-out, especially in young people may be a cause for concern and this must be monitored, e.g., bullying, schoolwork, not feeling included in activities or competitions, not achieving their own goals within the sport, being shouted at, their friends left etc.

Athletes can 'burnout' when an activity that was once a source of fun and enjoyment becomes associated with progressive physical and psychological distress. This is often a result of the time involved in training, high expectations, and pressure from adults manifesting with signs of anxiety and stress. The young person no longer has fun and becomes overwhelmed by the demands of the training and competition leading to a desire to drop-out of the sport.

There are a number of practices that are considered harmful and contribute to young people seeking to drop out of their sport. Such practice causes psychological stress and burnout which may show as sleep disturbance, irritability and a lack of energy. Young people will often show a change in behaviour becoming frequently absent from their sport and/or showing signs of illness.

Good instructor and parent education should include the following:

- Never exert pressure on or have expectation for a young person to perform at a level beyond their capacity based on age or development – a young person's capability is best assessed by their instructor in line with athlete development.
- Ensure children are not over training or do not have increased demands placed on them to perform.
- A young person with a known injury should be given time to recover, and medical advice should be sought to ensure the young person is fit to resume the activity.
- Creating a safe environment for the child.
- Recognising the weak areas of a young person's ability and making sure these are not the main focus of training.
- The importance of participation, where there is not an over-emphasis on winning.
- Ensure the use of sanctions are appropriate.
- Recognising the benefits for young people who are supported, encouraged and included, and that criticism, use of inappropriate language or exclusion can cause psychological stress.
- All performances should be encouraged, and disapproval will have a negative impact on a young person.

A healthy environment and attitude to sport can be fostered in young people by ensuring their views are listened and heard, there is an emphasis on the development of their skills rather than winning and effort is rewarded whilst being allowed to participate in age-appropriate activities.

Travelling

Travelling procedure deals with the everyday transport arrangements that parents and clubs may encounter and describes the basic transport regulations that should be observed for the safety of children.

Any transport provided for young people must:

- Be adequately insured.
- Have sufficient seats.
- Obey all road traffic laws.
- Provide booster seats where required by law.

Some general points to note are:

- It is best to arrange for central collection and drop-off points. Parents/guardians must be aware of the times and arrive promptly to avoid a child being left on their own.
- Leaders should avoid travelling with a single child. There may be an occasion where this is unavoidable for the child's safety e.g., in an emergency situation. In this instance the adult should contact the parent/guardian to inform them of the situation, and the child should be seated in the rear seat.
- Leaders should avoid offering regular journeys or lifts to a child; this can only be arranged by the parent/guardian and the Club/CI must receive written permission from the parent/guardian taking responsibility for their decision.

The general points are guidance for adults to reduce the chances of young people being in a vulnerable situation.

Section 8 – Summary Procedures

Introduction

Some of the Procedures listed in this section are summaries of the full procedure – please read the relevant document in full available on the CI website. Each summary document is clearly indicated and should not be used without reference to the full document.

Away trips

The involvement of young people at camps, competitions and other team or group activities helps with their motivation and supports their prolonged participation in sport. Travelling and staying together for an event or activity helps develop a team spirit that fosters an open, honest and inclusive team atmosphere.

There are a number of options for clubs to consider when staying away. The options are dependent on clear boundaries of responsibility for the trip arrangements for young people involved, as follows:

- Parent responsibility – parents are responsible solely for their own children
- Club responsibility – whereby the club agrees to undertake all the arrangements
- Parent and club responsibility – a combination of club and parent responsibilities
- * Use of host families – where local families are used for accommodating young people
*subject to a robust safeguarding check.

The CI procedure for Away Trips covers the requirements for groups travelling away together whereby the arrangements are made either in conjunction with or solely by the club. The protocol provides detailed procedures for all young people, instructors, team managers and associated helpers to adopt and adhere to for away events including all camps and competition (for both day and overnight trips) in order to safeguard the well-being of all participants.

Further details for general considerations and away trip options are contained in the CI Away Trip Protocol on the CI website.

Communication and Social Media

The aim of communication and Social Media Policy is to convey messages and information safely and securely to intended recipients and to give guidance on the safe use of social media without exposing children to risk of harm. It also ensures that children have the means to communicate with adults without needing to seek help from other or use technology. The procedure also specifies the safe use of social media sites for young people and what is considered acceptable interaction between adults and children.

General Considerations

Communication is a valuable tool and the types of communication available today are wide and varied. Adults need to be aware of the effect and power of communication between children and adults. Good communication tools ensure interaction with children is in an open environment, and an individual conversation takes place in public surroundings. Individual communications are open to exploitation and can cross the boundary between a person in authority and a young person. Therefore, it is important for clubs to consider the effective means of communication between members ensuring that everyone has access to the chosen method, reflecting that several ways of getting messages and information to people may be the more effective.

Communication with people under 18

Adults should be aware of communication directly with young people and all such contact should be open and honest. Any individual communication should be at the request of the child or be planned and expected i.e., club news, regular training session updates. Information can be conveyed through various means – for general information this can be a mass communication sent to groups of children or for more specific individual information this can be copied openly to another responsible person.

The important point to remember is that any individual communication should be instigated by the child and/or in response to their needs.

Whilst we recognise the benefits of technology as a means to send easy, cost effective mass communications we also need to recognise that these forms of contact may be open to misinterpretation and exploitation, in some cases used to cross personal boundaries and cause harm to young people. Within clubs there is a need to encourage responsible and secure use of communication by adults and young people.

Types of Communication available

Clubs have a variety of communication options available, and they should consider the most appropriate methods that cater for young and old members.

Such options are:

Club house/pool noticeboards

Post

Email

Phone/mobile phone including the use of text.

Internet and websites including the interactions on social media sites.

For further information see the full Communication and Social Media Policy on the CI website

Photography and Media images

CI try to ensure only those who have a right to take images of young people do so and thus protect the young people who are the focus of attention. CI does not seek to prevent adults or parents from taking pictures or video within the procedure.

Parental/guardian permission is required for young people appear in individual or group photographs and/ or in video footage taken for training, competition and/or promotional purposes. CI have adopted a policy where at national events and activities it is accepted that by being a member young people may be filmed or photographed. Clubs should ensure that young people are aware of the policy within the club – permission should be sought at membership registration.

It is the responsibility of CI and/or the club to ensure that any person wishing to take images of young people is registered to do so.

The procedure contains the following:

Announcement/Notice to be made at Events.

Registration/Accreditation process for photographers at CI events/training

Taking appropriate photographs

Use of images for CI, club and media.

Videoring/filming for training/competition purposes

Safe storage and/or disposal of photographic images and video

Further details of the full policy can be found on the CI website.

Physical contact

It is important that sport promotes appropriate physical contact between adults and young people. Misleading or inaccurate information relating to what is acceptable physical contact can undermine the confidence of

adults working with our young people and in some instances, there may be serious safety implications for children.

Physical contact should be in response to the needs of a child in accordance with the child's age and stage of development; in other words, adults should not do what a child can do for themselves. Any physical contact should be in an open environment and preferably with the permission of the young person.

Adults and young people need to feel comfortable working together and therefore the following areas of the full document should be available:

- What is appropriate physical contact?
- Showing respect for a young person
- Dealing with distress and success situations
- Being a medical or sport science practitioners

The detailed description of Physical Contact procedure is available from the CI website.

Supervision requirements

Young people participating in their sport expect to be safe; this requires everybody to work together to put safeguards in place for everyone's protection. Adequate supervision is required for all other activities in accordance with best practice; this is described fully in the procedure. No adult should be alone with a child and all training sessions with instructors must be supervised.

Clubs and instructors must ensure they have assessed any risk, especially in our sport where training and practice sessions can take place away from others on waterways and taken steps to minimise the risk, and young people know the environment they will be paddling in. Parents/ guardians have an important role in implementing safe practices for their children by being willing to help.

The role of the COs and JOs can help ensure young people know how to raise concerns or issues that may arise.

Supervision procedure details the following areas/activities:

Supervision for activities.

Training supervision

Duties of the supervisor

Club house and other changing areas

Further information on the Supervision Policy can be found on the CI website

Section 9 – Protection

Understanding poor practice

Breaches of the code of conduct may be considered issues of poor practice, where the behaviour of leaders towards young people in CI is not acceptable. If the poor practice behaviour is severe, on-going and reaches a level where there is a concern the behaviour is becoming abusive the procedures in this section for reporting concerns to the statutory authorities for investigation should be followed.

Definitions and recognising abuse.

This section outlines the principal types of child abuse and offers guidance on how to recognise such abuse. Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Children may be abused by someone other than an adult in the immediate family. This may happen where the child is in contact with a member of the extended family, a friend, an acquaintance or a person whose professional activity brings them into contact with the child. More detail on each type of abuse can be found in the Children First Act 2015 and the Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Health and Children, 2017).

Significant Harm

Any assessment of abuse is determined by the significant harm suffered by that child. Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by the child's health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age.

Definition of 'Neglect'

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child 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, and/or medical care. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For example:

- Wears soiled clothing or clothing that is significantly too small or large, or is often in need of repair
- Seems inadequately dressed for the weather.
- Always seems to be hungry, hoards, steals or begs for food, comes to school with little or no food.
- Demonstrates poor hygiene, smells of urine or faeces, has dirty or decaying teeth.
- Seems emaciated or has a distended stomach (indicative of malnutrition), often appears listless and tired, with little energy.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

Definition of 'Emotional abuse'

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a parent/carer and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's developmental need for affection, approval, consistency, and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.

Emotional abuse can be identified by the following examples:

- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming.
- Conditional parental-level of care contingent on child's behaviours or actions.
- Emotional unavailability of parent or carer.
- Premature imposition of responsibility on child.
- Unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child.

The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

Definition of 'Physical abuse'

Physical abuse is that which results in actual or potential physical harm from an interaction or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power, or trust.

Examples of physical abuse are:

- Severe physical punishment.
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking.
- Pushing, shaking or throwing.
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling.
- Terrorising with threats.
- Observing violence.

Physical abuse can occur in single or repeated incidents.

Definition of 'Sexual abuse'

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

- Exposure of sexual organs/any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child
- Sexual intercourse with the child
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes inciting, encouraging, propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in, prostitution

It should be noted that the definition of child sexual abuse presented in this section is not a legal definition and is not intended to be a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault.

Grooming

Ensuring robust safeguarding policies and procedures will assist in creating safer environments for young people. However, sporting environments may be used to gain the trust of a young person and adults. A potential abuser will, as part of the grooming process, create credibility with people in the club, including children, the adults and parents. The potential abuser will give the impression of being the best, the most helpful and accommodating volunteer, creating an aura of being indispensable without seeming to push into a front position in the club. The final stage of the grooming process is to create an environment where there is a justifiable reason for this person to be alone with the young person, thus providing an opportunity to abuse.

Clubs must ensure children are protected in a club environment against grooming by:

- Appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are in place.
- Ensuring a recruitment, selection and disciplinary process is in place for all adults involved with children.
- Provide adequate supervision of activities involving children.
- Supporting new volunteers and supervising them in their role.
- Avoid circumstances where an adult is alone with a child.
- Providing appropriate safeguarding training.

Recognising child abuse

Indicators or signs of abuse

Child abuse can often be difficult to identify and may present in many forms. There may be developmental, physical or behavioural indicators and any signs that cause concern should be noted. It is important to remember also that there may be different reasons for such changes e.g., change in

behaviour could be an indication of having difficulty with schoolwork or upset about a family bereavement. The concern should still be noted, remembering as well that no one indicator should be seen as conclusive evidence of abuse.

The Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 outlines 'reasonable grounds' to assist in the identification of abuse. Tusla provides an informal advice service that is available through the 'duty social worker'.

Concerns should be passed to the Children's Officer who may speak with the child and/or parents. The Children's Officer, in conjunction with the Designated Liaison Person, may consider seeking an informal consultation with a social worker on the basis that the list of indicators is not exhaustive and some indicators may not be obviously apparent. Any information passed to the duty social worker will be examined in the total context of the child's situation and family circumstances.

Guidelines for recognition of abuse

The ability to recognise child abuse can depend as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on their knowledge and information.

There are commonly three stages in the identification of child abuse:

- (i) Consider the possibility.
- (ii) Looking out for signs of abuse.
- (iii) Recording of information.

Stage 1: Considering the possibility

The possibility of child abuse should be considered if a child appears to have suffered a suspicious injury for which no reasonable explanation can be offered. It should also be considered if the child seems distressed without obvious reason, displays persistent or new behavioural problems or unusual or fearful responses to parents/carers or older children.

Stage 2: Looking out for signs of abuse.

Signs of abuse can show as physical injuries or behavioural or developmental changes. It is also important to consider that abuse is more common in relationships between children and parents/ carers or between children and other family members/other persons known to a child. A cluster or pattern of signs is likely to be more indicative of abuse. Children who are being abused may hint that they are being harmed or can make a direct disclosure. Disclosures from a young person should always be believed and acted on.

Some signs are more indicative of abuse than others including:

- Disclosure of abuse and neglect by a child or young person.
- Age-inappropriate or abnormal sexual play or knowledge.
- Specific injuries or patterns of injuries.
- Absconding from home or a care situation.
- Attempted suicide.
- Underage pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease.
- Signs in one or more categories at the same time, e.g., developmental delay, physical injury and behavioural signs together may indicate a pattern of abuse.

Most signs of abuse are non-specific and will be considered in the child's social and family context. It is important to always be open to alternative explanations for physical or behavioural signs of abuse. Sometimes, social workers will request a specialist assessment to clarify if particular concerns constitute

abuse. Care should be taken as to how such information is stored concerning a child and to whom it is made available.

Stage 3: Recording of information

If abuse is suspected, it is important to establish the grounds for concern by recording as much detailed information as possible. Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information that may be relevant.

Children with additional vulnerabilities

Certain children are more vulnerable to abuse than others including young people with disabilities, who are homeless and those who, for one reason or another, are separated from their parents or other family members and depend on others for their care and protection. The same categories of abuse – neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse are applicable, but clubs may need to consider what extra measures are required to safeguard these children.

Points to remember.

- The severity of a sign does not necessarily equate with the severity of the abuse.
- Neglect is as potentially fatal as physical abuse.
- Child abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture.
- Challenging behaviour by a child or young person should not render them liable to abuse.
- It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between indicators of child abuse and other adversities suffered by children.
- The child's welfare must be the primary consideration.
- The aim of child protection services is to promote positive and enduring change in the lives of children and families.
- Society has a duty of care towards children.

Basis for reporting concerns and Standard Reporting Procedure

This section offers guidance to all people, both professional and voluntary, working with or in direct contact with children who may be concerned or who suspect that children are being abused or at risk of abuse. It outlines the standard reporting procedure to be used in passing information to the statutory authorities about child protection concerns. The Children First Act 2015 and the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 are key supporting and reference documents.

Responsibility to report child abuse.

Anyone working with young people should be alert to the possibility that children may be being abused and be aware of their responsibility to report these concerns to a Duty Social Worker in Tusla the Child and Family Agency. This responsibility is particularly relevant to adults in clubs who have regular contact with children, i.e., coaches, instructors, volunteers, children's officers and the Designated Liaison Person.

Concerns about an adult whose behaviour appears to be a potential risk to children, even if the children are unidentifiable, should also be reported to the Child and Family Agency. Any reasonable suspicion of abuse must be reported, ignoring the signals or failing to intervene may result in on-going or further harm to the child. Children can suffer long-lasting emotional and/or psychological harm as a result of abuse. Physical abuse and neglect can be fatal, and some children may be permanently harmed as a result of such child abuse.

In Ireland Section 176 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 introduced the criminal charge of reckless endangerment of children. It states:

'A person, having authority or control over a child or abuser, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by:

- causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse, or

- failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation, is guilty of an offence.'

The penalty for a person found guilty of this offence is a fine (no upper limit) and/or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

Tusla the Child and Family Agency has a statutory obligation to identify children who are not receiving adequate care and protection, to provide family support services and, where necessary, to take children into their care. People who report concerns need to be assured that their information will be carefully considered with any other information available, and a child protection assessment will only proceed where sufficient risk is identified. Where concerns are passed on in 'good faith' and 'in the best interests of the child' there are number of legal protections available.

The guiding principles for reporting child abuse is summarised as follows:

- The safety and well-being of the child must take priority.
- Reports should be made without delay to Tusla, the Children and Family Agency.
- Where there is an immediate risk of harm to a child, a report should be made to An Garda Síochána.

Grounds for concern

Tusla, the Child and Family Agency should always be informed when there are reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- A specific indication from the child that he or she was abused (disclosure).
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused.
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in another way.
- An injury or behaviour that is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation, but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse e.g., a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, and other indications of abuse and/or dysfunctional behaviour.
- Consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

(reasonable grounds for concern can be found in the Children First National Guidance)

A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern.

The responsibility of deciding if a child has been abused lies with the Tusla, not with the people working in our clubs or in CI. However, all adults have a responsibility to protect children by reporting grounds for concern so that Tusla can undertake any relevant investigation and take any necessary action to protect the young person.

How to respond to a child making a disclosure

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

- Be sensitive, listen and allow the child to tell you the problem, you should not question or attempt to interview the child, rather let them tell you the details of what happened. It is important that the child is not questioned as this could impact on the credibility of any subsequent formal interview processes.
- Stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying.
- Take what the child is saying seriously.
- Understand that the child has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk in doing so.
- Be honest with the child and tell them that it is not possible to keep that information a secret.
- Make no judgmental statements about the person against whom the allegation is made.
- Do not question the child unless what she or he is saying is unclear; any questions should be open and non-specific such as "Can you explain to me what you mean by that" and should only be asked where absolutely necessary.
- Give an indication of what would happen next, such as speaking to someone else. The child may have been threatened and feel vulnerable, if you are not sure do not say anything about what will happen next.
- Carefully record the details, ensuring what you record is factual, use the child's own words where possible. Do not give your opinion.
- Discuss the situation with the Designated Liaison Person of Children's Officer. If you are unsure if the information meets 'Reason Grounds', you can have an informal consultation with Tusla. Pass the information on to Tusla, Child and Family Agency, this can either be directly or through the Designated Person. If you believe the child is at immediate risk, contact An Garda Síochána.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- It may be appropriate to speak to the child's parent's/carer's depending on the situation and if you believe that by telling them this will not endanger the child further.

Reporting Procedure

Any person reporting a child abuse concern should do so without delay to the Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. A report can be made in person, by telephone or in writing. You can find contact details for the Tusla social work teams on the Tusla website (www.tusla.ie).

Recording information

Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred, or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information. It is important that the information recorded is factual and where possible the child's own words are recorded. You should not record interpretations of the situation or opinion unless you specify... 'in my opinion....'

Informing the Designated Liaison Person

Report the matter as soon as possible to the Designated Liaison Person with responsibility for reporting abuse. If the Designated Person has reasonable grounds for suspecting that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, the report should be submitted to the Child and Family Agency, who has statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse. If there is a belief that the child is at immediate risk of harm An Garda Síochána should be contacted.

Informal Consultation

If the Designated Liaison Person is unsure whether there are reasonable grounds for concern s/he can informally consult with the duty social worker in Child and Family Agency giving an outline of the concerns (it is not necessary to give the details of those involved at this stage). The duty social worker will advise if a formal report is required. This advice is available during working hours, outside these times or in an emergency the local Gardai should be contacted.

Making the report

If a formal report is required then it should be given by the Designated Liaison Person to the statutory authorities in person or by phone and always followed up in writing, on the standard Reporting Form. (see Appendix 1) or via the Tusla hub, a copy of any referral or notes should be kept securely by the Designated Liaison Person.

Emergency Situations

Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or to risk of harm. In the event of an emergency where you think a child is in immediate danger you should contact the local Gardaí. The information can be passed on to Tusla subsequently.

Informing the family

The Designated Liaison Person is required to let the social worker know if the family have been made aware of the report being submitted.

As part of the investigation by Tusla, the social worker will inform the parents/carers if a report has been submitted directly to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency or to An Garda Síochána.

The Child and Family Agency cannot guarantee that someone who makes a report concerning a child will remain anonymous. The information may be sought and given within judicial proceedings. There is some privacy under the Data Protection Acts, however if the information is sought directly within legal proceedings there is no guarantee of remaining anonymous. There are several pieces of legislation that provide protection for the person reporting, as long as this is done 'in good faith' and in the 'best interests of the child'.

Submitting the Reporting Form

The standard Reporting Form (Appendix 1), or the Tusla Hub, should be used by all volunteers when reporting child welfare and protection concerns to the Child and Family Agency. If the report is made by

telephone, this form should be completed and forwarded subsequently to the appropriate local Child and Family Agency. A copy must be kept securely by the Designated Liaison Person.

Information required when completing a Reporting Form.

The ability of the duty social worker to assess suspicions or allegations of child abuse will depend on the amount and quality of information conveyed to them by the people reporting concerns. As much detail on the form should be provided without needing to search out information or interview the child or family or others e.g., the child's school. It is sufficient to give the details available to the club at the time. It is not the role of the person reporting the concern to investigate in any way.

Responding to concerned party

If CI or a club cannot find reasonable grounds for reporting a concern, the person who raised the concern should be given a clear written statement outlining the reasons why no action is being taken. If the person remains concerned about the situation, they are free to consult with or report matters of concern to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency or the Gardaí.

Allegations against leaders within CI

If an allegation of abuse occurs within CI or against a member of CI against a CI member or leader these procedures should be followed. Employees of CI are subject to the conditions within their employment contract.

The same reporting process must be followed. The welfare of the young person is paramount, and consideration must be given to all other young people that the individual may have been in contact with. All young people should be protected. Whilst the Designated Liaison Person is responsible for reporting the concerns, a senior member of the committee/board should contact the adult concerned who should confidentially be informed of (a) that an allegation has been made against him/her and (b) the nature of the allegation. The leader should be afforded an opportunity to respond, and this response should be passed on to the Child and Family Agency. The leader should be asked to step aside from any involvement with children pending the outcome of the investigation as a precautionary measure. This action will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings. All matters involving this case can only continue once the statutory authorities' investigation into the concern/ complaint is complete.

The National Mandated Person should be informed in confidence by the Designated Liaison Person of the club that a member has been asked to stand aside. They should keep in touch until there is a definite outcome from the statutory authorities. The MP will inform the Board of CI regarding the nature of the allegations only.

The issue of confidentiality is particularly important. Information should only be shared on a need-to-know basis, informing only those people for the necessity of protecting young people. The accused leader should be treated with respect and fairness. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the allegation has been made are protected. It is vital that due process is followed in such situations.

Following the outcome of the investigation by the statutory authorities CI will need to follow up with a formal procedure depending on the outcome of the investigation. If there is no further action by the statutory authorities, then the matter should be considered under poor practice and be subject to a disciplinary process. If the statutory authorities proceed with action the position of the person within CI will be guided by the terms of the Vetting Policy.

All contact with the leader throughout the process must be confirmed in writing and all information should be stored in a secure place, with access restricted to authorised personnel.

External Allegations of Abuse against CI members

If an allegation of abuse/concern is made against a CI member where matter is external to CI, the person will still be required to step aside from their position within CI. The following points should be considered:

- The details must be passed on to the NCO or the MP. It will be the responsibility of the NCO/MP to liaise and verify the information with the organisation/body responsible for raising the concern.
- The adult against whom the allegation has been made will be contacted by the MP and asked to step down in accordance with above process.
- In order to safeguard and protect children the Designated Liaison Person of the club in which the person is working should be informed that the member is stepped aside, to ensure the club do not engage the adult until the matter has been resolved.
- Vigilance should be observed in any group that the adult may have been in contact with, to ensure there has been no impact.

As with the procedure above all contact with the individual should be confirmed in writing and any information should be stored in a secure place with access restricted to authorised personnel.

Exclusion from CI membership

If a person is expelled from any position in a club or in CI due to child protection concerns, the Designated Liaison Person should make a report of the action taken and the concerns reported to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. The matter would be determined by the rules at the time for the expulsion of a member; however, any child welfare or protection concern must be reported.

Retrospective disclosures by adults

The term retrospective disclosure refers to an adult who has experienced abuse as a child. It is essential to establish whether there is any current risk to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser where a disclosure has been made. If there is a concern that there is a possible risk to any child, the disclosure must be reported to the Child and Family Agency.

The HSE National Counselling Service is available for adults who have been abused in childhood. The service is a professional, confidential counselling and psychotherapy service and is available free of charge in all regions of the country (see www.hse-ncs.ie/en). The service can be accessed either through healthcare professionals or by way of self-referral (Freephone ROI 1800 477 477). Details about counselling services are also available in Appendix 2.

Common impediments to adults reporting child abuse.

Adults remain disbelieving at times that abuse towards young people actually occurs and there may be some reluctance to report:

- There is a disbelief that a parent/guardian or person given the responsibility to care for children would actually hurt or neglect them.
- The family or alleged perpetrator is known to you.
- There is an uncertainty or fear around the reporting process or repercussions
- Lack of confidence in the services to provide for the child
- An allegation of abuse has been made against a member of CI staff or a volunteer.

Confidentiality

The effective protection of children depends on the timely and constructive sharing and exchange of relevant information. It is therefore critical that there is a clear understanding of the responsibilities identified in the Children First National Guidance with regard to confidentiality and the exchange of information.

All information regarding a concern or disclosure of child abuse should be shared on 'a need to know' basis in the best interests of the child.

No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given. Those working with a child and family should make this clear to all parties involved, although they can be assured that all information will be handled confidentially taking full account of legal requirements.

Ethical and statutory codes concerned with confidentiality and data protection provide general guidance. The provision of information to the statutory agencies for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.

It must be clearly understood that information that has been received for one purpose (i.e., concerning the abuse of a child) must not be used for another without consulting the person who provided that information.

Legal protection

Protections for Persons reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have communicated child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of the Child and Family Agency or to any member of An Garda Síochána. This protection applies to organisations as well as to individuals, meaning that even if a communicated suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a complainant who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

A person who makes a report in good faith and in the child's best interests may also be protected under common law by the defence of qualified privilege. A full list of the relevant legislation concerning child welfare and protection is provided at this link: [Relevant Legislation](#)

Freedom of information

There is a requirement in child welfare and protection cases to share relevant information, records are nevertheless confidential. This information does not belong to individuals (except for independent practitioners) and is the property of the organisations that keep them. Under the Freedom of Information Act, 1997, members of the public have a right to request access to records concerning them held by any public body and a right to have official information about themselves amended where it is incorrect, incomplete or misleading. Members of the public also have a right to be given reasons for decisions made concerning them. Requests to see records are processed in the first instance through the public body that holds the records. In the event of refusal of access, the decision may be appealed, and the ultimate arbiter is the Information Commissioner.

The Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003 afford similar rights to individuals to access personal data held about them by any entity whether in the public or private sector. The right to access applies to records held by An Garda Síochána. However, the right to access does not apply in a range of circumstances that may be relevant in a child welfare context. Equally, the right of access does not extend to any information that identifies a third party where that third party had an expectation of confidence. Accordingly, it would not be necessary to provide any information that would identify a person making a child welfare report in response to a request under the Data Protection Acts.

A full list of the relevant legislation concerning child welfare and protection is provided at this link: [Relevant Legislation](#)

Concerns or cases not reported.

In those cases where CI or a club cannot find reasonable grounds for concern and decides not to report to matter to the statutory authorities, the individual who raised the concern should be given a clear written statement of the reasons why the organisation or club is not taking such action. The person should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free as individuals to consult with, or report to the statutory authorities. The provisions of the Protections for Persons

reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 apply once they communicate 'reasonably and in good faith' where applicable (i.e., in Ireland). It is important that clear and comprehensive records are held regarding the decision-making process. These records should be held by the DLP in the relevant club.

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 Designated Liaison Person. The information should be checked out (not an investigation) and handled in a confidential manner. It is advisable that an informal consultation with Tusla occurs in such situations.

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 Designated Liaison Person who should decide whether there is substance to the rumours or not and whether it should be reported to Tusla or CI (Informal consultation with the duty social worker can be sought if required). Adherence to the codes of conduct can be used to address the issue of rumour if they are deemed to be baseless but continue to persist.

Appendix 1– Standard Reporting Form

N.B. This form is also available directly from the Tusla Website at this link <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/publications-and-forms/>.

Child Protection Report Form

1. Date of Report:	
2. Details of Child	
Name:	
Male/Female/Other:	
Address:	
DOB:	
Age:	
Alias:	
Correspondence address (if different):	
Telephone:	
3. Details of Persons Reporting Concern(s)	
Name:	
Telephone No:	
Address:	
Occupation:	
Relationship to client:	
Reporter wishes to remain anonymous:	
Reporter discussed with parents/guardians:	
4. Parents Aware of Report Yes/No	
5. Details of Report:	
Details of concern(s), allegation(s) or incident(s):	

Dates and times:	
Who was present?	
Description of any observed injuries:	
Child's view(s) if known:	
Parent's view(s):	

6. Relationships	
Details of Mother:	
Name:	
Address: (if different to child):	
Telephone No's:	
Details of Father:	
Name:	
Address: (if different to child):	
Telephone No's:	
7. Details of person(s) allegedly causing concern in relation to the child:	
Relationship to child:	
Age:	
Male/Female/ Other:	
Name:	
Occupation:	
Address:	
8. Details of Persons filling in form:	
Name:	
Telephone No:	
Address:	
Occupation:	
Relationship to client:	
Signed:	
Date:	

Appendix 2 – Useful Contacts

Sport Ireland Top Floor, Block A West End Office Park

Blanchardstown, Dublin 15

Tel No. 01-8608800 <https://www.sportireland.ie/>

Child and Family Services

<https://www.tusla.ie/>

ISPCC

20 Molesworth Street

Dublin 2

01 6794944 ispcc@ispcc.ie

ISPCC Childline 1800 666666 (Freephone)

Anti-Bullying Centre DCU

<https://antibullyingcentre.ie/>

Volunteering Ireland

Coleraine House Coleraine Street Dublin 7

01 8722622 info@volunteeringireland.com

Ombudsman for Children

Millennium House

52-56 Great Strand Street

Dublin 1

1890 654 654 / 01 865 6800 oco@oco.ie

Child Protection in Sport Unit NSPCC

Jennymount Business Park North Derby Street Belfast BT

15 3HN

02890 351135 www.thecpsu.org.uk

NSPCC Helpline 0808-8005000 (Freephone) Child Line (UK) 0800 1111

Protection of Children Service Child Care Policy Directorate Health and Social Care Trust

Room D1.4, Castle Buildings, Stormont Estate Belfast BT4 3SQ,

Tel No. 028 90-522559 www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children & Young People,

Millennium House,

17-25 Great Victoria Street, Belfast, BT2 7BA. Telephone (028) 9031 1616

www.niccy.org

The National Adults Counselling Service

Freephone 1800 477 477

NI 00800 477 477 77

www.connectcounselling.ie

Appendix 3 – References and sources

Be Safe Online: Ireland’s Official Online Safety Hub [Government of Ireland]

Child Protection for the Youth Work Sector, (Department of Education & Science) 2003

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children [DCYA 2017]

Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice [Tusla 2017]

Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children’s Sport (Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland, 2006)

Getting it Right (Volunteer Development Agency supported by the Department of Health Social Services and Public safety, August 2005) – Northern Ireland

Guidance on Developing a Child Safeguarding Statement [Tusla 2017]

Our Duty to Care (Volunteer Development Agency supported by the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety, 2007) – Northern Ireland

Our Duty to Care (Department of Health and Children, 2001) - Ireland

Safeguarding Disabled Children – Practice Guidelines (2003)

Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003

Sportscheck - Child Protection in Sport Unit 2002

The Children’s Act, 2001

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989

www.webwise.ie

www.hotline.ie

www.watchyourspace.ie

Version	Author	Date	Changes
V03	CEO/CO	28/05/2021	Update GV Requirements & Links