

Sport Ireland Ethics Unit

National Children Officer Information Pack

INTRODUCTION

The role of the Sport Ireland Ethics Unit is to consider what the meaning or purpose of sport is to different individuals. We recognise different areas in sport such as inclusivity, empowerment, safeguarding, fairness, and the spirit of sport. We recognise the difference between winning and succeeding in sport and upholding the values, principles, and legislation that are most commonly associated with sport.

The Sport Ireland Safeguarding Unit provides guidelines and codes of practice promoting best practice for the protection of children in sport consistent with child protection guidance and legislation.

Further information around the role of Sport Ireland:



[Sport Ireland Ethics | Sport Ireland](#)

Sport Ireland Safeguarding Guidance Document

Sport Ireland are committed to ensuring that the best interests of children and young people attending our services are of paramount importance. Our guiding principles and the guidance document are underpinned by national policy and legislation in ROI Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, and the requirements under The Children First Act 2015, and in Northern Ireland – the Children (NI) Order and Cooperating to Safeguarding Children and Young People 2017.

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

This guidance document aims to help sporting bodies create a safety culture that promotes the welfare of children and young people engaged in sporting activities. This guidance document supports National Governing Bodies to meet their child safeguarding and child protection responsibilities which are cognisant of, and in line with, requirements under policy/legislation and with best practice. It does this through the provision of guidance and information in relation to the carrying out of a risk assessment, the development of a Child Safeguarding Statement and the development and implementation of policies and procedures for safeguarding and protection of children and young people.



[Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People in Sport | Sport Ireland](#)

SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

Sport Ireland's remit is to develop and disseminate guidelines and training standards that promote best practice for the protection of children in sport consistent with child welfare and protection guidance and legislation. Sport Irelands Safeguarding 1, 2 & 3 workshops must be recognised across all sporting organisations.

National Childrens Officers are required to have completed all safeguarding workshops as part of their role. Upon commencement of the role, NCOs (National Children s Officers) will have 6 months to complete the workshops.



[Safeguarding Training | Sport Ireland](#)

For information on workshop delivery, the Local Sports Partnership network would deliver workshops for the section, a full contact list can be found here;



[LSP \(Local Sports Partnerships\) Contact Finder | Sport Ireland](#)

COMPLIANCE CHECKS – CORE AND MID-YEAR REVIEW

In order for each organisation to be compliant for funding or as part of the compliance for recognition, they must adhere to the requirements set out by Sport Ireland's Ethics Unit.

Each organisation that is working with young people or vulnerable adults must have a person in the position of National Children's Officer, Designated Liaison Person, Liaison Person and Mandated Person (where applicable to organisations under the Children First Act 2015).

- **National Children's Officer (NCO):** should complete all three Safeguarding courses within a 6-month period of taking up this role within your organisation.
- **Designated Liaison Person (DLP):** should complete the Safeguarding 1 and Safeguarding 3 courses within a 6-month period of taking up this role within your organisation.
- **Liaison Person:** should complete the Safeguarding 1 and Safeguarding 3 courses within a 6-month period of taking up this role within your organisation. There is also a safe recruitment workshop offered by Sport Ireland which we would recommend the Liaison Person also attends.
- **Mandated Person(s):** The Children First Act 2015 places a legal obligation on certain people, many of whom are professionals, to report child protection concerns at or above a defined threshold to Tusla - Child and Family Agency. Mandated Person(s) are people who have contact with children and/or families and who, because of their qualifications, training and/or employment role, are in a key position to help protect children from harm.

Compliance checks occur twice annually, during Core Compliance and Mid-Year Review. If at any point during the process your organisation is not compliant with these checks, the Sport Ireland Ethics Unit may withhold funding until all relevant checks are completed and adhered too.

PROJECTS AND CAMPAIGNS

Annual Safeguarding Campaign

The annual Safeguarding Campaign is highlighted on the Sport Ireland website and socials media platforms through digital posts and concludes with a Networking Event at the Sport Ireland Campus Conference Centre. The idea is for the campaign to celebrate the positive work the National Children's Officers and Safeguarding teams are completing as part of their roles within the sporting sector.



[Safeguarding Campaign | Sport Ireland](#)

Young Voices in Sport Toolkit

Young members of sporting organisations have a right to participate in the decisions that affect their sporting lives. Volunteers and members of staff in sporting organisations can support the long-term engagement of their young members in the sports they love by listening to their views and acting on them. Sporting organisations that involve young members in decision-making are more relevant to them, more sustainable and more likely to thrive.

The purpose of this toolkit is to give volunteers and members of staff in sporting organisations a clear understanding of what they need to do to involve their young members in decision-making from club level to national governing body. Although many of the activities are suitable for children of any age, those aged between 10 and 18 are the focus of this toolkit.

By using the activities in the toolkit, it will be possible for sporting organisations to find out what is important to their young members, to support their involvement in on-the-spot decision-making and to consult with them in more depth on any topic.



[Young Voices in Sport | Sport Ireland](#)

National Code of Conduct Template

In response to several high-profile incidents, Sport Ireland partnered with representatives from the Irish sports sector, including referees and officials, to develop a template for a code of conduct for sport in Ireland.

This initiative aims to foster a culture of respect, integrity, and fairness within the sporting community by addressing and eliminating abuse towards referees, officials, coaches, players, and all participants involved. The newly created code of conduct template sets forth a set of guidelines and principles that promotes the behaviour and conduct expected from athletes, coaches, parents/guardians, supporters, referees/officials, and club members, regardless of the sporting environment.

While different sports organisations may have their own customised versions of a code of conduct based on their unique needs and values, this National Code of Conduct Template serves as a valuable reference for sports organisations that do not have an existing framework in place.

Sport Ireland recommends that National Governing Bodies use the code of conduct template as an opportunity to review their existing policies and procedures for handling code breaches.



[National Code of Conduct Template](#)

NATIONAL GOVERNING BODIES - NATIONAL CHILDRENS OFFICERS

Each Governing Body of Sport should appoint a National Children's Officer. The National Children's Officer should be a member of the Executive Committee or have access to the committee and its accompanying documents, to ensure that children's interests are kept on, and influence the decisions of, the agenda of the Governing Body.

The role of the National Children's Officer involves:

- Have knowledge of the Safeguarding Code and relevant child protection legislation (Children First Act 2015 (ROI)/National Vetting Bureau Act 2012-2016, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017).
- Commitment to attendance at appropriate training as required in order to act as a resource to members in relation to children's needs.
- Co-ordination of Child Safeguarding training.
- The promotion of the values, attitudes and structures which make sport enjoyable for children.
- Circulation of all relevant information and resource materials on children's sport to clubs and affiliates of sports organisations.
- Communication with Club Children's Officers to ensure the distribution of the Code and the promotion of related education programmes, materials events and governing body related codes.
- Liaison with all clubs to examine the rules, regulations and structures to ensure that they are child centered, e.g., equal playing time, appropriate competition structures, modified equipment to allow sense of achievement and success, use of protective gear, bullying policy etc.
- Liaison with clubs, to ensure drop-out rates and transfers are monitored so that unusual developments or trends can be addressed, including transfer of sports leaders.
- Assisting in the development of a system of record keeping which maintains confidentiality while allowing for appropriate information to be passed to relevant authorities where necessary.
- Ensuring that the Governing Body develops an appropriate sport specific policy, which includes a policy statement, codes of conduct, disciplinary procedures, bullying policy, safety statement, recruitment and selection policy and reporting procedures.



[List of National Children Officers | Sport Ireland](#)