

# Code of Ethics

& GOOD PRACTICE FOR YOUTH SPORT  
IN GYMNASTICS IRELAND



*Sport Starts Here.*  
[www.gymnasticsireland.com](http://www.gymnasticsireland.com)

The Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Youth Sport in  
Gymnastics Ireland has been produced with the help and  
advice of the Irish Sports Council and Sport Northern Ireland.

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## Introduction

# To everyone in Gymnastics Ireland

Every Coach, Parent/Guardian and Administrator has a role to play in promoting good practice at all levels of Gymnastics Ireland. The safety and welfare of every young gymnast is paramount.

The existing good practice being applied in Clubs and across all levels of Gymnastics Ireland will be standardised and continue to improve on the guidelines and procedures outlined in this booklet and the various 'Code Sheets' on our website are published.

This booklet is based on the Irish Sports Council's/Sport NI 'Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport' and 'Children First' the National Guidelines for the protection and welfare of children issued by the Department of Health and Children.

I realise that this booklet contains a lot of information and obviously it is not possible for everyone to implement or review all areas immediately. However, as the various guidelines and procedures are gradually incorporated into all levels of Gymnastics Ireland it can only help to create an even safer environment for all involved.

I would encourage everyone associated with Gymnastics Ireland to read this booklet in conjunction with the various 'Code Sheets' available online at [www.gymnasticsireland.com](http://www.gymnasticsireland.com)

You can also download this booklet from the website.

In compiling this booklet I would like to acknowledge the help and advice of the Staff/Board of Gymnastics Ireland, Irish Sports Council, Sports NI/Child Protection in Sport Unit NI and the Health Service Executive.

Regards

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# Policy Statement

## Gymnastics Ireland

'We in Gymnastics Ireland are committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for young people who participate in Gymnastics Ireland activities, which reflects the guidelines, contained in our Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport. We aim to provide gymnastics opportunities for all ages and levels of ability. We aim to develop gymnastics in Ireland from the basic participation, fun and recreational levels through to competitive levels to the highest standards!'

### **All Members of Gymnastics Ireland Will Do This By:**

- Ensuring that the welfare of all gymnasts is everyone's responsibility - that includes Administrators, Club Officials, Coaches, volunteers and Parents/Guardians
- Promoting the rights of the young people including their participation in matters that affect them
- Recognising that all children have the right to be protected from harm irrespective of their race, gender, origin or specific needs
- Responding swiftly and appropriately to protect young people and providing Parents/Guardians/children with the opportunity to voice any concerns they may have
- Ensuring that all our Coaches and volunteers are carefully selected
- Ensuring that Coaches, Volunteers, Club Officers, Parents/Guardians and children have signed up to the Gymnastics Ireland Code of Conduct
- Appointing a Club Children's Officer and Club Designated Person who will take specific responsibility for child safety and act as the main point of contact for Parents/Guardians, children and outside agencies
- Discussing the effectiveness of our Code of Ethics and Good Practice Policy each year through the forum of the Gymnastics Ireland Board of Control (BOC)

# Glossary

## **Access NI**

A disclosure service established by the Government under Part V of the Police Act 1997. It provides access to criminal history information to individuals and, in certain circumstances, to organisations who are recruiting to sensitive positions. Typically this will involve working with children or vulnerable adults. [www.accessni.gov.uk](http://www.accessni.gov.uk)

## **Administrators**

Administrators may not be directly involved in children's sport but involved in organised Club activities and/or committee activities.

## **Basic Awareness Course**

A four-hour educational programme on the Code of Ethics delivered by the Irish Sports Council.

## **Bullying**

Has been recognised and defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or sectarian remarks, threats, name-calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of his peer group). The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm).

## **Child/Young Person/ Young Gymnast**

For the purpose of the Gymnastics Ireland Code a child/young person is any individual under 18 years of age. (The 1991 Child Care Act defines a child as 'any person under the age of 18 years excluding a person who is or has been married).

## **Child Abuse**

### **PHYSICAL**

Any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child, it also occurs when an adult gives children alcohol or inappropriate drugs or fails to supervise their access to these substances.

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

### **SEXUAL**

Occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. It may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexual inappropriate ways.

### **EMOTIONAL**

Normally to be found in the relationship between an adult and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms.

## **Children's First**

National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (issued by Department of Health & Children). See also [www.dohc.ie/publications/children\\_first.html](http://www.dohc.ie/publications/children_first.html)

**Children's Officer** An individual that is appointed (in a Club or nationally) with the aim of establishing a child centred ethos within the Club. They are a resource for children and are the link between children and adults in the Club.

## Glossary (continued)

### Child Protection in Sport Unit (Cpsu)

A partnership between the NSPCC, Sport England, Sport Schotland, Sport Northern Ireland and the Sports Council for Wales. The CPSU work with UK Sports Councils, governing bodies and other organisations to help them minimise the risk of child abuse during sporting activities.

### Coach/Trainer

The person assisting the young gymnast to develop their skills and abilities in a positive way.

### Designated Person

Deals with any concerns about the protection of children within the Club. They will report allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the Statutory Authorities.

### Irish Sports Council

Established on 1 July 1999 under the Irish Sports Council Act and is a statutory authority comprising of eight major divisions: the Anti-Doping Unit; Corporate Services, Finance, High Performance; local Sports Partnerships; National Governing Bodies; National Trials Office and the Irish Institute of Sport. [http://www.irishsportscouncil.ie/About\\_Us](http://www.irishsportscouncil.ie/About_Us)

### Local Sports Partnership

Since 2007 the Irish Sports Council has developed the LSP network with the key strategic objective of increasing participation in sport and physical activity. ISP's are the main provider of Child Protection courses. All LSP email addresses available at [www.irishsportscouncil.ie/participation](http://www.irishsportscouncil.ie/participation)

### Our Duty To Care

Document issued by the Department of Health & Children in ROI and the DHSSPS in NI, aimed at community and voluntary organisations that provide services for children. It offers guidance on the promotion and the development of safe practices when working with children

### Safeguarding Children & Young People In Sport

A three hour educational programme on the Code of Ethics delivered by Sport NI.

### Safeguarding

Previously, the most commonly used phrase to describe this area of work was 'child protection'. However there has been a shift in the last few years to the term 'safeguarding'. Whereas child protection literally means protecting children from abuse and neglect, safeguarding widens practice around their needs so that it is about creating an environment where the welfare of children and young people is actively promoted. Promoting welfare is about helping children and young people achieve their potential and ensuring they are safe and adequately cared for

### Sports Leaders

All adults involved in children's sport, including the following, President, Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Committee Members, General Members and Coach/Assistant

### Sport NI

Sport Northern Ireland.

### Statutory Authorities

The Authorities who promote the protection and welfare of young people and who have the responsibility and/or validation of suspected child abuse (i.e. An Garda Síochána, Health Services Executive, Police Service Northern Ireland PSNI, and the Health and Social Care Trusts).

### U.N. Convention On The Rights Of The Child

A 'bill of rights' for all children. It contains rights relating to every aspect of children's lives. Ireland ratified the U.N. Convention in 1992 and the UK in 1991.

### Vetting and Barring Scheme (Svg)

A new scheme introduced in the UK in October 2009 to reduce the risk of unsuitable individuals getting access to children (or vulnerable adults) either via employment or as a volunteer. Those who work with children must be members of the scheme.

# Section 1

## Principles & Fair Play

### 1.1

#### Dignity and Rights of Young People

It is important that all young gymnasts are valued and treated with the highest level of respect. Their personal dignity and physical integrity are paramount and participation in gymnastics should enable them to have fun, make friends and become better gymnasts.

**Gymnastics Ireland recognises that it has a responsibility to:**

- Safeguard and promote the interests and wellbeing for all those under 18 years who are involved in activities by placing the needs of the gymnast first and winning/ competition second
- Take all reasonable steps to protect every gymnast from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment
- Respect the rights, wishes and feelings of all young gymnasts
- Ensure that the guiding principle of 'FAIR PLAY' is adopted by all

**In 1999 the Department of Health & Children issued 'Children First' - the rOI National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. These National guidelines and procedures have been designed to:**

- 'Improve the identification, reporting, assessment, treatment and management of child abuse, clarify the responsibilities of various professionals and individuals within organisations and enhance communication and co-ordination of information between disciplines and organisations'
- The following principles govern the development of these Guidelines:
- The child's welfare is paramount
- All children, whatever their age have a right to protection from harm
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously, responded to swiftly and appropriately

(The above principles are enshrined in the Children (NI) Order 1995)



## 1.2

### What is the Principle of 'Fair Play'

**'Fair Play' is defined as a way of thinking, not just of behaving. It is the cornerstone of implementing and applying the principles of the Code of Best Practice. It incorporates issues such as:**

- Elimination of cheating e.g. not using over-age gymnasts/or making biased decisions when officiating
- Creating and maintaining respect
- Unequal opportunities e.g. catering for better gymnast(s) only
- Drugs misuse/substance abuse
- Learning from mistakes and being prepared to adapt to change
- Endeavouring to do one's best
- Acknowledging good or superior performance by other gymnasts

It is important to remember that Ireland and the UK are signatories to the UN Convention in the Rights of the Child, which acknowledges the rights of the child to protection from all harm. The Convention is basically a 'bill of rights' for all children. It contains 52 Articles relating to every aspect of children's lives.

## Section 2

# People

Everyone involved in Gymnastics Ireland should accept the role and responsibilities that they undertake to maintain a safe and enjoyable environment. There is a duty to care by all adults to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of our young gymnasts whilst they are participating in competition or training. Adults have a crucial leadership role within their Club and can contribute greatly to the positive atmosphere for all.

Relationships between adults and children in Gymnastics Ireland should be open, positive, and respectful and governed by our Code of Ethics and Good Practice.

In every Club it is paramount that best practice is being followed. Each Club should appoint a Children's Officer(s) and a Designated Person to help and encourage a youth centred ethos.

### 2.1

## Club Children's Officer

The Club Children's Officer should be child centred in focus and have as their primary aim the establishment of a youth centred ethos within the Club. They are the link between the children and the adults in the Club. They also take responsibility for monitoring and reporting to the

Club Management Committee on how Club Policy & Procedures impact on the young people and Coaches. Both male and female Children's Officers are required where both genders are catered for in the Club.

### **The Club Children's Officer will have the following functions:**

- To ensure that Gymnasts, Coaches, Parents/Guardians, Officials and Spectators are aware of and adhere to the 'Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Youth Sport in Gymnastics Ireland'
- To attend a 'Basic Awareness Workshop' (organised by GymnasticsIreland or a local Sports Partnership) or a 'Safeguarding Children in Sport in NI workshop' (organised by Sport NI)
- To promote awareness of 'Basic Awareness' and 'Safeguarding Children in Sport' courses for all adults
- To influence policy and practice within the Club in order to prioritise children's needs
- To encourage the involvement of Parents/Guardians in organising Club activities and to co-operate with Parents in ensuring that every young person enjoy their involvement with the Club

- To establish good links with local schools involved in the promotion of Gymnastics
- To ensure that all Coaches have the relevant level of coaching accreditation appropriate to the level of the gymnast
- Take responsibility for on-going education of the Code within the Club (hold information sessions during the year)
- To ensure that age appropriate equipment is available
- To attend any internal information sessions and seminars organised by Gymnastics Ireland for Children's Officers.

## 2.2

### Club Designated Person

The Designated Person will be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children. The Designated Person is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the Health Service Executive (rOI) or Health and Social Care Trust (NI) and/or An Garda Síochána/PSNI.

#### **The Club Designated Person should:**

- Have knowledge of the Irish Sports Council 'Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Youth Sport' and 'Children First' (rOI guidelines) or Co-operating to Safeguard Children (NI guidelines)
- Have knowledge of categories and indicators of abuse
- Undertake a 'Basic Awareness Workshop' provided by Gymnastics Ireland or a local Sports Partnership Be familiar with and able to carry out reporting procedures as outlined in section five of this booklet Communicate with Parents/Guardians and/or external agencies as appropriate
- Assist with Code of Best Practice training needs within the Club
- Liaise with Club and National Children's Officer in relation to Code of Best Practice training needs
- Be aware of local contacts and services relating to child protection
- Advise Club Administrators on issues of confidentiality, record keeping and data protection
- Keep a log of any issues raised
- To attend any internal information sessions and seminars organised by Gymnastics Ireland for Designated Persons

It is important to remember that the Children's Officer or Designated Person do not have the responsibility of investigating or validating child protection concerns within their Club and have no counselling or therapeutic role. These roles are filled by the Statutory Authorities as outlined by 'Children First' and 'Our Duty to Care'.

It is however possible that child protection concerns will be brought to the attention of the Children's Officer (or Designated Person) and it is essential that they discuss all concerns with the Designated Person and follow the correct procedures as outlined in 'Children First/ Co-operating to Safeguard Children'.

The Gymnastics Ireland National Children's Officer will work with Club Officials to further develop a quality atmosphere within Clubs.

(If there are difficulties identifying individuals for these roles, the Children's Officer can be appointed as the Designated Person once the individual and Club are clear about the responsibilities of each role).

## Section 3

# Policy & Procedures

The purpose of creating and adhering to policies and procedures at every level of Gymnastics Ireland is to facilitate good practice for all. The creation of the following procedures by Gymnastics Ireland will enable all in Gymnastics Ireland to achieve this.

### 3.1

## Disciplinary, Complaints and Appeals Procedures

Disciplinary, Complaints and Appeals procedures are dealt with under the Gymnastics Ireland Complaints & Disciplinary rules and Procedures with the exception of Garda Vetting and AccessNI Vetting which have separate rules and procedures.

The Gymnastics Ireland Complaints & Disciplinary Rules and Procedures are not an appropriate mechanism for dealing with certain complaints such as allegations of physical or sexual abuse or other child abuse issues for which other procedures exist using the appropriate statutory authorities. These procedures are outlined in Section 5 "Protection" of the "Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Youth Sport in Gymnastics Ireland" document.

Each Club should refer to the Gymnastics Ireland Complaints and Disciplinary Rules & Procedures and ensure that correct structures exist within their Club.

### 3.2

## Recruitment Guidelines

Gymnastics Ireland values the contribution made by every volunteer. Without this commitment there would be limited opportunities for young people to participate. Each Club should undergo a recruitment process for any person willing to work with young people so that young people are protected and the adult placed in a role which they are suited to carry out.

All Clubs affiliated to Gymnastics Ireland should ensure that they follow best practice and shall closely work with the National Governing Body. In order to promote the 'Code of Best Practice for Youth Sport in Gymnastics Ireland' the following procedures will apply:

Ensure that all adults with substantial access to young people (whether paid or unpaid) in the Club will undergo a recruitment process. These procedures will assist in placing volunteers in the position to which they are best suited and also help in the protection of young people and adults.

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

## Section 4

# PRACTICE & CODES OF CONDUCT

Everyone associated with Gymnastics Ireland has an important role to play in promoting good practice. The first priority is the welfare of our young gymnasts. Everyone must operate with the highest integrity under the Gymnastics Ireland agreed Codes of Conduct, which emphasises fun, enjoyment, participation, equality and fair play for all.

Gymnastics Ireland recognises the key roles that Coaches, gymnasts, Parents/Guardians, Administrators and Club members' play and the various Codes of Conduct will help in creating a positive atmosphere for all.

### PARTICIPANTS FIRST - WINNING SECOND!

In Gymnastics Ireland the primary concern should be the general health and future of every individual gymnast and only secondary the optimisation of their performance.

Competition should be used as a basis to encourage young people to develop their full potential. Winning or striving to win is essential for enjoyable competition but must not be seen as an end in itself. Each gymnast will be motivated by a range of internal and external factors e.g. prove to themselves or significant others – Parents/Guardians, Coaches, teachers, etc.

The following Codes of Conduct are a model of good practice and thus ensure the protection of all in Gymnastics Ireland. The Codes of Conduct are written for Clubs to adopt. There is a 'sign-up' procedure, whereby an individual, agrees to abide by the 'Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Youth Sport in Gymnastics Ireland'. Each individual Code is available as a download 'Code Sheet' and should be printed off as required for signing and the signed form retained by the Club.

See Codes of Conduct 'Code Sheets' No's 1-6 for more information

## 4.1

### CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COACHES

Coaches/Team Officials working with young people in every Club should be suitable and appropriately qualified. All adults working with young gymnasts will be expected to go through appropriate recruitment and selection procedures, (see Recruitment Guidelines on page 9), that apply to all persons with substantial access to young people, whether paid or unpaid.

Coaches are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with their performers. This is particularly important when the Coach and performer are of the opposite sex. The Coach must realise that certain situations or friendly actions/telling jokes could be misinterpreted, not only by the performer but also by outsiders motivated by jealousy, dislike or mistrust and could lead to allegations of serious misconduct or impropriety.

A key element in a Coach relationship is the development of independence. Gymnasts must be

encouraged to accept responsibility for their own behaviour and performance in training, in competition and in their social life. Coaches must not encourage performers to violate the rules of their competition, and should actively seek to discourage such action. Coaches should encourage gymnasts to obey the spirit of FAIR PLAY.

Coaches can ensure that sport has a beneficial impact when they adhere to the following guidelines:

Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every young gymnast and treat each one equally regardless of age, gender or ability

Ensure that nobody involved with Gymnastics Ireland acts towards, engages in any conduct or speaks to another person in a manner which threatens, disparages, vilifies or insults another person on the basis of that persons' race, religion, colour, descent, national, ethnic or socio-economic background

Be generous with praise and be positive during coaching sessions so that all young gymnasts always leave with a sense of achievement and an increased level of self-esteem

Promote a culture that ensures all young people are listened to and respected. Coaches must not train skills above their level of ability

The activity being undertaken should be suitable for the age, experience and ability of the gymnast.

Gymnasts should have been systematically prepared for the activity being undertaken and made aware of their personal responsibilities in terms of safety

Recognise and accept when to refer a gymnast to other Clubs or Coaches. It is the responsibility of the Coach as far as possible, to verify the competence and integrity of the person to whom they refer the gymnast

Be punctual and properly attired and display high standards of appearance

Ensure you never consume alcohol before, during coaching/events or on trips with young people

Plan appropriately for each session and ensure proper levels of supervision until the gymnast leaves the Club venue or event with an appropriate adult

Don't shout at or lecture any young gymnast or reprimand/ridicule them when they make a mistake.

(Young people learn best through trial and error. They should not be afraid to risk error to learn)

Don't equate losing with failure and do not develop a preoccupation with winning. (The level of improvement made by the young gymnast is the best indicator of the Coach's effectiveness)

Never use physical punishment or physical force.

Never use foul or provocative language/gestures to gymnasts, opponents or Officials

Adhere to Gymnastics Ireland guidance on the use of mobile phones – see guidelines on page 16

Never undertake any form of therapy – hypnosis etc, in the training of young people

Ensure gymnasts are safely attired (check their personal equipment) and that proper insurance arrangements are in place

Set realistic but achievable performance goals ensuring a safe enjoyable environment

Avoid taking coaching sessions on your own or avoid a situation where you are alone in a car or changing room with a gymnast

Whenever the Club travels away, please refer to 'Gymnastics Away Guidelines', page 15

Avoid any inappropriate touching when assisting any gymnast to perform a technique or when First Aid is being administered. Physical contact should only occur when necessary and in an open and appropriate way and always be intended to meet the health and safety needs of the gymnast

When supporting be certain the child and the Parents/Guardians/carers know what you are doing and why

The support being provided must be for the specific needs of the young gymnast

The use of weights when conditioning is not permitted until gymnasts have reached full maturity. Skills and exercises used for a gymnasts' physical preparation are only to be done using a gymnasts own body weight. Coaches will not overload gymnasts beyond their limits

Make adequate provision for First Aid and do not encourage or allow gymnasts to perform while injured.

(Keep an adequate record of each injury and ensure that another Official /Team Official is present when a gymnast is being attended to and can corroborate the relevant details – see Code Sheet No. 12 - Accident/ Incident form

Ask Parents/Guardians or nominated Club Officials to be responsible for young people in changing rooms

Never take measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of other adults

Ensure appropriate confidentiality to all gymnasts, as you may be privy to information about that young person or their family

Challenge bullying in any form i.e. physical or emotional. Bullying is not an accepted behaviour towards anyone in Gymnastics Ireland - be they child, Coach, volunteer or Parents/Guardians

For more detailed advice on best practice with technical matters of coaching, please refer to Gymnastics Ireland Coaching resources

Please refer to Gymnastics Ireland Code Sheet No.1 – Coaches Code of Conduct:

## 4.2

### CODE OF CONDUCT FOR YOUNG GYMNASTS

Gymnastics Ireland recognises the important role that young people play in our organisation. Every young gymnast should be encouraged to realise that they also have responsibilities to treat others with fairness and respect. Each Club should provide the Code of Conduct to young members.

Young Gymnasts Should Undertake To:

Participate fairly, do their best and enjoy themselves

Represent themselves, their family and Club with pride and dignity

Shake hands before and after events/competitions irrespective of the result or performance

Respect Officials and accept their decisions gracefully

Respect fellow team members giving them support whether they do well or not so well

Respect opponents and be modest in victory and gracious in defeat



Improve and develop their skills

Set high standards of fair play for others to follow

Adhere to proper standards of behaviour that avoid bringing Gymnastics Ireland into disrepute

Let the Coach know when you are unavailable for training and competition

Approach the Club Children's Officer with any concerns or questions you may have

Young Gymnasts Should Not:

Cheat – always participate by the rules

Use abusive language

Shout at or argue with an Official

Spread rumours

Bully or use bullying tactics to isolate/upset another young person

Tell lies about adults or other young people

Take banned substances

Harm team members, opponents or their property

Young Gymnasts Are Entitled To:

Be safe and to feel safe

Be happy, have fun and experience a sense of enjoyment and fulfilment

Be treated with respect and dignity

Comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner

Be afforded appropriate confidentiality

Make a complaint appropriately and be listened to

Be believed

Experience competition at a level at which they feel comfortable yet challenged

Get help against bullies

Say No

Protect their own bodies

Please refer to Gymnastics Ireland Code Sheet No.2 – Young Gymnast Code of Conduct:

## 4.3

### CODE OF CONDUCT/GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS/ GUARDIANS

Parents/Guardians should encourage their children to participate in sport for fun and enjoyment. Parents/Guardians should not attempt to meet their own needs for success and achievement through their children's participation in gymnastics.

The following guidelines will be of assistance in this regard:

Be a role model for your child and maintain the highest standards of conduct when interacting with young people, other Parents/Guardians, Coaches and Officials

Encourage your child to participate by the rules of gymnastics

Don't ask 'Did you win or lose?' Ask 'Did you enjoy yourself?'

Don't just show approval when your child is victorious. Always show approval for effort! Don't criticise their performance – seek to identify areas where they can improve respect Officials' decisions and encourage young people to do likewise

Never use any flippant or sarcastic remarks towards any gymnast

Do not seek to unfairly affect any gymnasts' performance

Show appreciation for volunteers, coaches and club officials

Respect the rights dignity and worth of every young person regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion

Try attending training and events on a regular basis and assisting in Club activities.

Do give advice on the importance of maintaining a balanced lifestyle with regard to exercise, food, rest, work, play etc

Do listen to what young people have to say

Try to appreciate the strength of a young persons emotions – positive and negative

Do realise the power of example

Please refer to Gymnastics Ireland Code Sheets No's 4-5 – Parents/Guardians Code of Conduct:

## 4.4

### CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ADMINISTRATORS

Gymnastics Ireland recognises the important role that Administrators at all levels play in our organisation. Every Administrator is encouraged to realise that they have responsibilities to treat others with fairness and respect. The following should be adopted by all Club Administrators.

Every Club should adopt a child centred approach and philosophy in the running of the Club to ensure that those working with young people are at all times provided a quality sporting and social programme, by working to an agreed philosophy and set of standards. Enforcement of this conduct is the responsibility of every member and any queries about the Code should be referred to the

Club Children's Officer. All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure a safe working environment.

Administrators Within The Club Should:

Make the Club environment user-friendly by providing equal opportunities

Create pathways for young people to participate in gymnastics not just as a gymnast e.g. as an Official, Coach etc. refer to Gymnastics Ireland long Term Gymnast Development model (ITGD)

Ensure that the types of programmes, rules, equipment, and training schedules are modified to suit the age, ability and maturity level of young gymnasts

Provide quality supervision and instruction for all gymnasts and ensure Coaches/Team Officials have the appropriate level of coaching accreditation

Ensure that everyone emphasises FAIR PLAY and not 'winning at all costs'

Where accessible ensure all internet-enabled computers are equipped with 'content control software to prevent children accessing inappropriate online material

Ensure that Coaches, gymnasts, Parents/Guardians, Club members and spectators are aware of the 'Code of Best Practice for Youth Sport in Gymnastics Ireland'

Ensure that all child protection policies are in place, a Club Designated Person/Children's Officer(s) are appointed and that all Club members know what to do in relation to child protection and welfare issues. The Designated Person, Children's Officer, Committee Members, Administrators, Coaches and any other members involved with gymnasts, should undertake Irish Sports Council & Sports NI Code of Ethics training

Remember as a Club Administrator you set the example for the Club - your behaviour and comments should always be positive and supportive

Implement policies and practices and lead by example in relation to the responsible use of alcohol and in relation to recreational and performance enhancing drugs

Listen to young people and involve them in decisions, leadership and planning of the Club

Respect the rights, dignity and worth of all gymnasts regardless of their gender, ability, cultural background or religion

Please refer to Gymnastics Ireland Code Sheet No. 3 - Administrators Code of Conduct:

## 4.5

### TRANSPORT, SUPERVISION & SAFETY GUIDELINES

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

Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover on their car and follow the rules of the road, including legal use of seat belts and booster seats when required

Not carry more than the permitted number of passengers

Avoid being alone with one young person, put passengers in the back seat, have central drop off locations or seek parental permission to transport an individual participant on a regular basis and clearly state times of pick-up and drop off. Parents/Guardians should check with their child/ren about the plans and be happy with the transport arrangements

#### SUPERVISION GUIDELINES

Make sure there is an adequate adult : child ratio. Leaders should try to have more than one

adult present. The number of adults needed will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the participants and any special needs of the group. As a guide, acceptable ratios are 1:8 for participants under 12 years of age and 1:10 for participants over 12 years of age.

Where there are mixed groups there should be leaders of both genders.

Avoid being alone with one participant, if you need to talk confidentially or individually, do so in an open environment, in view of others

Clearly state the times for start and end of training sessions or competitions - leaders should not be left alone with young people at the end of sessions. If there are late collections leaders should remain in pairs until participants have left.

Keep attendance records and record any incidents / injuries that arise.

Ask Parents/Guardians to help supervise sessions (for safety and supervision only - not for 'technical' input)

#### SAFETY GUIDELINES

All Clubs should have a safety statement, including specific and potential risks attached to our sport. They should also have procedures in place for safeguarding against such risks. In addition Clubs should:

Ensure activities are suitable for the age and stage of development of participants

Keep a record of any specific medical conditions of the participants

Keep a record of emergency contact numbers for Parents/Guardians

Ensure any necessary protective gear is used

Ensure first aid kits are close at hand with access to a qualified first-aider

Know the contact numbers of emergency services are kept and have access to a phone

Keep first aid kits stocked up with in-date stock

Ensure easy access to medical personnel if needed and have an emergency plan

If an incident/accident occurs, make a brief record of it along with the action taken (see Code Sheet No. 12:

Make a brief record of the problem / action /

outcome. Contact the participants Parents/Guardians and keep them informed of all details

Ensure there is adequate insurance for all participants in all activities

Ensure Parents/Guardians are aware of the finishing time of training sessions or events Officials should ensure they maintain appropriate conduct during events/training Coaches should hold appropriate qualifications required by Gymnastics Ireland

## 4.6

### GYMNASTICS AWAY/OVERNIGHT TRIPS GUIDELINES

Taking part in gymnastics provides opportunities for young people to travel and stay away from home for a period of time. This policy applies to all Gymnastics Ireland members who are involved in arranging or participating in a residential activity/event (or travelling to a one day event).

Making arrangements for the proper supervision of young people is one of the most effective ways of minimising opportunities for young people to suffer harm of any kind whilst in your care. In order to minimise these opportunities the following should be adhered to:

The welfare and safety of the young people is paramount at all times during any trip. Where one gymnast under 18 years of age is travelling, two adult members should accompany them. Where a group of gymnasts are of mixed sex there must be adult members of each sex.

Parental consent must be obtained in writing to join an organised trip

- (Permission Form should be completed – see Code Sheet No 13).

A detailed trip programme should be approved by the Clubs Management Committee and the Trip

Organisers and issued to the participants Parents/Guardians. This programme should include:

- A definition of the roles and responsibilities of the Officials/Coaches in charge
- Name(s) of group leader(s) who will hold all official travel documentation
- A time schedule of departure/arrival
- Transport details
- A code of conduct/ground rules for the trip/event
- Full details of accommodation being provided on the trip. (Adults should not share rooms with children, children share rooms with those of the same age and gender and adults should knock before entering rooms)

Appoint a Children's Officer for the trip/event

Provide opportunities for young people to contact Parents/Guardians when away

All Officials/Coaches in charge should have taken the Child Protection Basic Awareness course within the

previous 3 years

All group socialisation should take place in communal areas (i.e. no boys in girls' rooms & vice versa)

There must be access to medical personnel and an individual with first aid qualifications must be available on the trip

Young people must be supervised at all times

Young people must respect the authority of the Officials/Coaches and abide by the code of conduct

Alcoholic drinks and smoking will be avoided in the presence of children. Use of illegal substances must NEVER be undertaken

'lights out' times should be enforced

The Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Youth Sport in Gymnastics Ireland will be followed and implemented where necessary to safeguard and care for all young gymnasts attending the event

Please refer to Codes of Conduct pages 10-14 and Code Sheets No's 1-6:

## 4.7

### HOSTING GUIDELINES

Hosting another Club can be a very challenging but also rewarding experience. Special care must be taken in the selection of homes in which young people reside.

It is the responsibility of the Club to provide suitable accommodation so that young people are not put at risk. The following guidelines should be adhered to:

Appropriate checks must be carried out prior to making use of any home by the Club

The Club should seek references on hosting families

Formal vetting procedures will apply to any hosting family

Host families must provide a safe and caring environment for young people

The Club should provide an itinerary of events to the host family

Parents/Guardians and the young people should have both a contact number for the host and an Official in charge

Young people should sign a behaviour agreement and show respect to host families and Officials

More than one child should stay at any one home

Young people should not be asked to share a room with an adult

Young people should not be asked to share a room with a member of the opposing gender

The Club should make host families aware of any special needs required by the young people

## 4.8

### MOBILE PHONE GUIDELINES

Mobile phones are often given to children for security, enabling Parents/Guardians to keep in touch and make sure they are safe. Gymnastics Ireland believes it is not wise to ban young people from having mobiles as young people value their phones highly as it offers them a sense of independence. In addition mobile phones allow quick and easy contact, which can make a safe and efficient way to carry out Club business.

However such technology has also allowed an increase in direct personal contact with young people, 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 mobile phones by adults and young people.

As A Young Person remember:

If you receive an offensive photo, email or message, do not reply, save it, make a note of times and dates and tell a Parents/Guardians or Children's Officer/Designated Person within the Club

Be careful about who you give your phone number to and don't respond to unfamiliar numbers

Change your phone number in cases of bullying or harassment

Don't use the phone in certain locations; inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person, e.g. changing rooms

Treat your phone as you would any other valuable item so that you guard against theft, loss or misuse

As A Coach/Official remember:

When using group texts for communication among young gymnasts please inform Parents/ Guardians of this from the outset

It is not appropriate to have constant communication with individual young gymnasts

It is not appropriate to use a mobile phone in certain situations (i.e. camera phone in changing rooms – including their use by young people)

## 4.9

### PHOTOGRAPHY AND FILMING GUIDELINES

The following guidelines should be applied in relation to the use of images of gymnasts on websites and in other publications, as there have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people through the use of photographs on sports websites and other publications. All Club members need to work together to prevent those wishing to cause such harm to young people. Remember having photographic and filming guidelines is not about preventing Parents/ Guardians from taking pictures, it is to ensure that only those who have a right to take photographs do so. Anyone concerned about photography taking place at events or training sessions can contact the Children's Officer/Designated Person and ask them to deal with the matter. Where possible

we will try to use models or illustrations when promoting an activity and avoid the use of the first name

and surname of individuals in a photograph. This reduces the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and outside the sport.

#### Guidelines for the Use of Photography/Video:

Professional/amateur photographers/video operators wishing to record an EVENT should seek accreditation with the event organisers by producing their professional identification and completing Code Sheet No.14

Spectators attending an Gymnastics Ireland event and who wish to operate cameras/filming equipment should seek permission with the event organisers (members should produce their Club registration card)

In a day to day context it is important to note that on Club websites, if the gymnast is named then avoid using their photograph and if a photograph is used then avoid naming the gymnast

Ask for the gymnast's permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. A Gymnast/Parents/Guardians permission form is one way of achieving this. See Code Sheet No.9 Sample Youth Member Application Form:

Only use images of gymnasts in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child

Recognised procedures for reporting the use of inappropriate images to reduce the risks to gymnasts should be in place and observed. Follow the child protection procedures, ensuring either the Designated Person or, if necessary, Social Services and/or police are informed

#### VIDEOING AS A COACHING AID

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



## Section 5

# PROTECTION

### 5.1

## CHILD WELFARE & PROTECTION PROCEDURES

The primary goal for all involved in children's sport is to provide a safe and positive environment where young people can develop as individuals.

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

Everyone involved in the promotion of youth sport should be familiar with the signs and behaviours that may prompt a concern for the safety of the young person. There are four categories of abuse types, neglect, emotional, physical and sexual. For more detailed information on these categories, (including the possible signs and behaviours) please refer to Children's First (National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (rOI) and Co-operating to Safeguard Children (NI).

If there are grounds for concern about the safety or welfare of a young person in the Club you should discuss your concerns with the Designated Person who will contact the duty social worker in the local Health Service Executive or Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCT) where they will receive advice. Grounds for concern include information from a child, a statement from a person who witnessed abuse or an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse.

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

Everyone should follow both procedures outlined below, firstly the procedure for responding to a child disclosing a potential or actual abuse concern and secondly the procedure for reporting the concern.

Anyone who has a concern about any child's welfare or safety outside of the Club context can make a report directly to the local HSE Social Work Department/HSCT or An Garda Síochána /PSNI (note this is a different procedure than within the Club).

## 5.2

### RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE

When a Young Person Discloses Information of Actual or Suspected Abuse You Should:

Deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened

Stay calm and do not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the child is saying seriously

Understand that the child has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation

Be honest with the child and tell them that it is not possible to keep the information a secret, but that only those who need to know will be informed

Make no judgmental statements against the person whom the allegation is made

Not question the child unless the nature of what they are saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as 'Can you explain to me what you mean by that'

Check out the concerns with the Parents/Guardians before making a report unless doing so would endanger the child or compromise an investigation (advice from the Social Work Department can be sought by the Designated Person in relation to this)

Give the child some indication of what will happen next, such as informing Parents/Guardians, Health Service Executive or Social Services. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage

Carefully record the details

Pass on this information to the Designated Person

Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you

## 5.3

### REPORTING PROCEDURES

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

Observe and record in writing dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information

Report the matter as soon as possible to the Designated Person with responsibility for reporting abuse. If the Designated Person has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, they will make a report to the Health Service Executive/HSC who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse

In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Designated Person is unable to contact a Duty Social Worker, the police authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory

## Authorities

If the Designated Person is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist they can informally consult with the local HSE/HSCT who will advise whether or not the matter requires a formal report. This report will be made on a standard Reporting Form – see page 22 for ROI and page 25 for NI

A Designated Person reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities will first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation (advice from the Social Work Department should be sought in relation to this).

In the ROI, the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the Health Service Executive or the Garda (See 5.11 pages 44/45– ISC. Code). The Act also covers the offence of 'false reporting'. The main provisions of the Act are:

- (a) The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of Health |Service Executive or any member of An Garda Síochána;
- (b) The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including, dismissal;
- (c) The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities 'knowing that statement to be false'. This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

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

## 5.4

### ALLEGATIONS AGAINST ADULTS

Gymnastics Ireland has agreed procedures to be followed in cases of alleged child abuse against Coaches/ Officials. If such an allegation is made against those named working within the Club, two procedures should be followed:

The reporting procedure in respect of suspected child abuse (reported by the Designated Person/ Children's Officer), see previous page

The procedure for dealing with the Sports Leader (carried by out by the Club Chairperson or Senior Officer, or a person not already involved with the child protection concern)

The safety of the child making the allegation should be considered and the safety of any other children who may be at risk. The Club should take any necessary steps to protect children in its care. The issue of confidentiality is important. Information should only be shared on a need to know basis and the Sports Leader should be treated with respect and fairness.

## THE REPORTING PROCEDURE

If the Designated Person has reasonable grounds for concern, the matter should be reported to the local HSE/HSCT, following the standard reporting procedure.

While the Designated Person makes the report to the HSE/HSCT, the Chairperson of the Club should deal with the Coach/Official in question.

The Chairperson should privately inform the accused that (a) an allegation has been made against them and (b) the nature of the allegation. They should be afforded an opportunity to respond and their response should be recorded in writing and forwarded to the HSE/HSCT

The person accused should be asked to refrain from duties/volunteering pending the outcome of the investigation. It should be made clear to the accused that this action is a precautionary measure and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings

The Club should be informed by the Designated Person that the person has been asked to take leave of duties (Gymnastics Ireland National Children's Officer may be informed by the Club Designated Person).

The Club can consider disciplinary action against the accused, but should ensure that this does not interfere with the investigation of the Statutory Authorities. The Chairperson/Designated Person should maintain links with the Statutory Authorities while any investigation is ongoing. It is important that the Club consider the outcome of the investigation and any implications it might have. In the event the alleged person is not found guilty or prosecuted, this does NOT mean that they are appropriate to work with young people in the future. If an individual is disqualified by the Club the NGB must be informed of this. In NI the NGB will take lead responsibility for referring the information to the Independent Safeguarding Authority.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

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

The following points should be kept in mind:

A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the child will supersede all other considerations

All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know

Information should be conveyed to the Parents/Guardians of the child in a sensitive way. Discussion with the Statutory Authorities should take place in relation to information sharing with all parties when ongoing investigations are taking place

Giving information to others on a 'need to know' basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality

All persons involved in a child protection process (the child, the Parents/Guardians, the alleged offender, their family, Coaches) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure

Information should be stored in a secure place, with limited access only by designated people. The requirements of the Data Protection laws should be adhered to

Breach of confidentiality is a serious matter

## ANONYMOUS COMPLAINTS

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but should not be ignored. In all cases, the safety and welfare of the child/children is paramount. Any such complaints relating to possible child protection concerns should be brought to the attention of the Designated Person. The information should be investigated and handled in a confidential manner.

#### RUMOURS

Rumours should not be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to possible child protection concerns should be brought to the attention of the Designated Person and investigated out without delay.

For details of Health Service Executive (HSE) and Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCT) contacts, please refer to Code Sheets 15 & 17

## 5.5

# SAMPLE RECORDING ALLEGATIONS/SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE FORM – ROI

### RECORDING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

This form is based on standard reporting form used by the Health Services Executive in ROI.

The form can be filled out in consultation with the statutory authorities. Complete as many questions as possible.

#### 1 DETAILS OF CHILD

Name of Child:

Male/Female:

Address:

Age:

School:

1a Name of Mother:

Address: (if different to above)

Telephone No:

Name of Father:

Address: (if different to above)

Telephone No:

1b Care/Custody arrangements regarding child (if known):

1c Household Composition:

Name:

Relationship:

Date of Birth:

Additional Information:

RECORDING ALLEGATIONS OR SUSPICIONS OF ABUSE

Sample standard reporting form continued...

2 DETAILS OF CONCERN(S), ALLEGATION(S) OR INCIDENT(S), DATES, TIMES, WHO WAS PRESENT, DESCRIPTION OR ANY OBSERVED INJURIES, PARENT'S VIEW(S), CHILD'S VIEW(S) (IF KNOWN):

3 DETAILS OF PERSON(S) ALLEGEDLY CAUSING CONCERN IN RELATION TO THE CHILD:

Name:

Age:

Male/Female:

Address:

Relationship to child:

Occupation:

4 NAME AND ADDRESS OF OTHER PERSONNEL OR AGENCIES INVOLVED WITH THIS CHILD:

Social workers:

School:

Public Health Nurses:

Gardai:

G.P:

Hospital:

Pre-School crèche/youth group/ after school groups:

5 ARE PARENTS/LEGAL GUARDIANS AWARE OF THIS REFERRAL TO THE SOCIAL WORK DEPART. Y/N:

If yes, what is their attitude?:

6 DETAILS OF PERSON REPORTING CONCERNS (PLEASE SEE GUIDANCE NOTES BELOW):

Name:

Occupation:

Address:

Telephone:

Nature & extent of contact with child/family:

7

DETAILS OF PERSON COMPLETING FORM:

Name:

Date:

Occupation:

Signed:

GUIDANCE NOTES:

Health Service Executives have a statutory responsibility under the Child Care Act, 1991, to promote the welfare and protection of children in their area. Health Service Executives at local level therefore have an obligation to receive information about any child who is not receiving adequate care and/or protection.

The reporting form is for use by: Health Service Executive personnel

Professionals and individuals in the provision of child care services in the community who have service contracts with the health services executives

Designated persons in a voluntary or community agency

Any professional, individual or group involved in services to children who become aware of a child protection or welfare concern, or to whom a child protection or welfare concern is reported

Please fill in as much information and detail as is known to you, (health executive personnel should do this in consultation with their line manager). This will assist the Social Work Department in assessing the level of risk to the child, or support services required. If the information requested is not known to you, please indicate by putting a line through the question. It is likely that a social worker will contact you to discuss your report. Health Service Executives aim to work in partnership with parents. If you are making this report in confidence you should note that the Health Service Executive cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality as (a) a court could order that information be disclosed or (b) under the freedom of information act the commissioner may order that information be disclosed. You should also note that in making a bona fide report you are protected under the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998.

The form should be sent to your local duty social worker in the local Health Service Executive.



SAMPLE INCIDENT FORM – NI INCIDENT FORM

Club name:

Your name:

Your position:

Child's name:

Child's address:

Parent/Guardian name & address:

Child's D.O.B:

Date & time of incident:

Your observations:

Exactly what the child said and what you said:

(Remember; do not lead the child, record actual details. Continue on separate sheet if necessary)

Action taken so far:

Designated officer informed: Y/N

EXTERNAL AGENCIES CONTACTED (DATE & TIME):

Police: Y/N      If yes – which:

Name and contact number:

Social Services: Y/N

If yes – which:

Name and contact number: Details of advice received:

Gymnastics Ireland Governing Body: Y/N

If yes – which:

Name and contact number:

Details of advice received:

Local Council/ Education Dept: Y/N

If yes – which:

Name and contact number:

Details of advice received:

Other (e.g. NSPCC)

If yes – which:

Name and contact number:

Details of service/advice received:

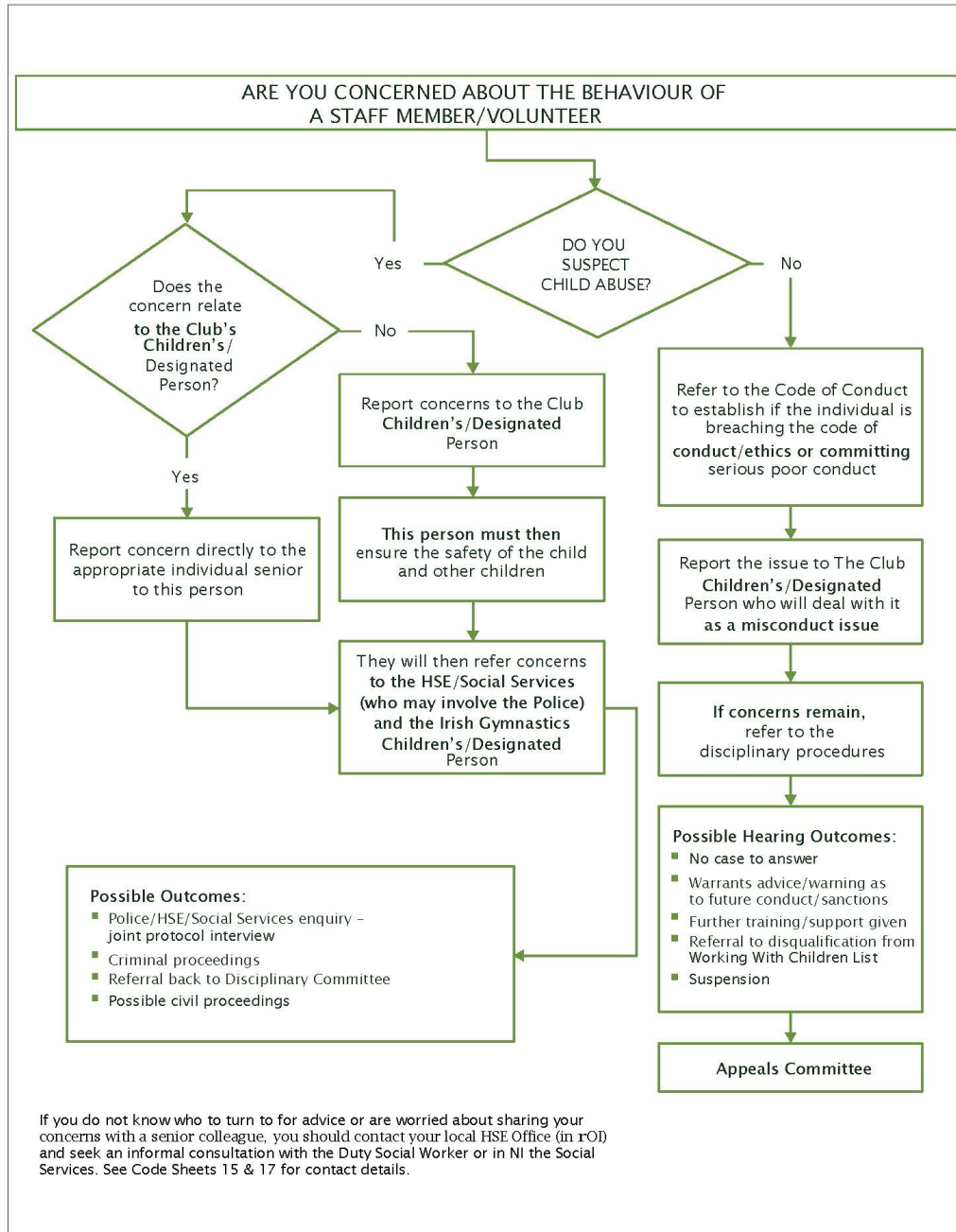
Signature

Print Name

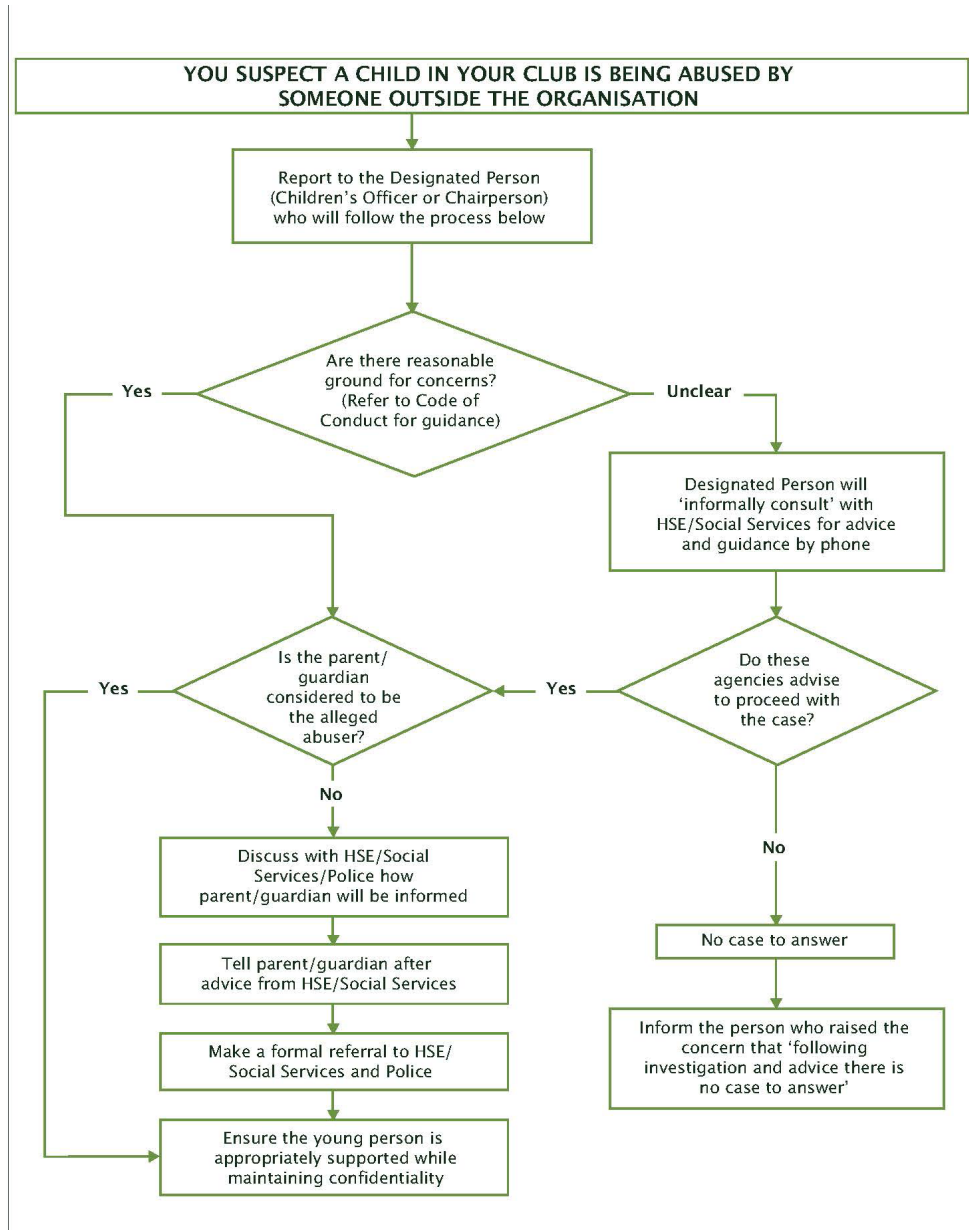
Date

Remember to maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis – only if it will protect the child. Do not discuss this incident with anyone other than those who need to know. NB: A copy of this form should be sent to the HSCT after.

## 5.6 INTERNAL CONCERNS



# EXTERNAL CONCERNS



## 5.7

### BULLYING POLICY

Bullying is a conscious act that affects everyone and can take place in any part of our organisation. All involved within Gymnastics Ireland have a role to play in countering bullying. For the purpose of the Code of Best Practice for Youth Sport in Gymnastics Ireland, bullying can happen from:

Young person to young person

Young person to adult

Adult to young person

The following strategies, which are embodied in the Gymnastics Ireland Code of Best Practice, will support a Club's attempt to prevent bullying:

Encourage an ethos of mutual respect throughout the Club

Give positive encouragement and promote the value of self and others raise awareness of all to the possible cause and effect of bullying

Make it clear that bullying will not be tolerated and is unacceptable, but that both the target and perpetrator of the bullying will be given the necessary support

Enable gymnasts, Coaches and Administrators to understand that the Club will tolerate no form of bullying be it physical, psychological or verbal

Enable members to feel confident that their concerns will be listened to and taken seriously

This bullying policy has been adopted by Gymnastics Ireland and is based on the one developed by the Scout Association of Ireland.

#### WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, Clubs and organisations working with children and young people. Bullying includes such behaviours as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting, extortion and exclusion behaviour by one or more children against a victim. The newest method bullying to emerge is 'E-Bullying' through the use of emails, text messaging etc.

#### HOW WOULD YOU KNOW IF A CHILD IS BEING BULLIED?

All bullies operate using furtiveness, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so. The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied:

Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities

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

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

Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to a meeting, going different routes, asking to be driven) Frequent loss of, or shortage of money with vague explanations

Having few friends

Changes in behaviour (withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed, crying) Not eating

Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide

Anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics)

There are other possible reasons for many of the above.

#### WHO SHOULD DEAL WITH BULLYING?

While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reported to the HSE/HSCT or An Garda Síochána/ PSNI, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of all Coaches/Officials/Parents/Guardians within each Club.

#### HOW CAN IT BE PREVENTED?

Ensure all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member

Deal with any incidents as they arise

Use a whole group policy or 'no-blame approach', i.e., not 'bullying the bully' but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing and so make the problem a 'shared concern' of the group (see below)

Reinforce that there is 'a permission to tell' culture rather than a 'might is right'

Encourage young people to negotiate, co-operate and help others, particularly new or different children

Offer the victim immediate support and put the 'no blame approach' into operation

Never tell a young person to ignore bullying, they can't ignore it, it hurts too much

Never encourage a young person to take the law into their own hands or beat the bully at their own game

Tell the victim there is nothing wrong with them and it is not their fault

#### WHAT IS THE 'NO BLAME APPROACH'?

Step 1 – Interview with the victim

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

Was it verbal or physical intimidation?

How hurt is the victim

Was it within their own peer group?

Ensure the victim that their name will not come out in the investigation

Actively listen

### Step 2 – Meet with all involved

Arrange to meet with all those involved; this should include any witnesses/bystanders, those who joined in and those who initiated the bullying:

Have a maximum of six to eight in the group – keep the number controllable

Make a point of calling a 'special' meeting

Ensure the severity of the topic is understood by all

Speak only of the hurt caused and distressed suffered in general terms with no reference to the victim  
Play on the conscience of all – ask questions like: How would you feel? Would you like it done to you?  
Someone here in this group was bullied by someone within the group, what could we do to see it does not happen again?'

Listen, watch out for reactions, and pick up on any without isolating anyone

### Step 3 – Share the responsibility

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

### Step 4 – Ask the group for their ideas

At this stage the group is encouraged to suggest ways that would make the victim feel happier.

All positive responses are noted. Use phrases 'if it were you' to encourage a response. listen to all suggestions and note them.

### Step 5 – Leave it to them

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

### Step 6 – Meet them again

Meet again with everyone involved to discuss how things are going, who is doing what, what resolutions have been put in place and if there have been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and also keeps all involved in the process.

The Child Protection in Sport Unit (NI) have also developed a resource for Sports Leaders to help them address bullying through using a variety of different short exercises with young people. This is available under the resources section of their web site [www.thecpsu.org.uk](http://www.thecpsu.org.uk)

## REFERENCES

- Children First - National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (1999)
- Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport: Irish Sports Council and Sports Council Northern Ireland (1999 & 2006)
- Our Duty to Care (DHSS) 2000, Child Care NI
- Our Duty to Care (DOHC) rOI, 2002

For Clubs based in Northern Ireland reference should also be made to:

- Children (NI) Order, 1995.
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children, 2003.
- Area Child Protection Committee regional Policy and Procedures, 2005.
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 (operative from October 2009).
- Our Duty to Care, DHSSPS 2007
- Getting It right, DHSSPS 2004
- Protection of Children And Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order Information Notes 1-3

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## HSE & USEFUL CONTACT DETAILS – ROI

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