

Inniscarra Sailing and Kayak Club

Child protection policy

Inniscarra sailing and Kayak Club is fully committed to safeguarding the well being of its members. Every individual in the organisation should at all times, show respect and understanding for members rights, safety and welfare and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the organisation and the guidelines contained in the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in Ireland.

The guidance given in this code of conduct is based on the principles set out in the following publications:

"Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport", Irish Sports Council.

"Children First" National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

The aim of this code is to promote good practice by everyone involved in the sport of Sailing and Kayaking to provide a safe, healthy, enjoyable environment for young members.

Core Values in Young People's Sport

Integrity in relationships:

Adults interacting with children in sport should do so with integrity and respect for the child. There is a danger that sporting contexts can be used to exploit or undermine children. All adult actions in sport should be guided by what is best for the child and in the context of quality, open working relationships. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind is unacceptable within sport.

Fair Play:

All children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. Ireland has contributed, and is committed, to the European Code of Sports Ethics, which defines fair play as: "much more than playing within the rules. It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing with the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption.(European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics, Council of Europe, 1993).

Quality atmosphere and ethos:

Children's sport should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. A Child centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place. Too often competitive demands are placed on children too early and results in excessive levels of pressure on them and as a consequence, high levels of dropout from sport.

Equality:

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

Adoption of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport

At Inniscarra Sailing and Kayaking club we believe that Children in sport are entitled to;

- Be listened to
- Be believed
- Be safe and to feel safe
- Participate in sporting activities on an equal basis, appropriate to their ability and stage of development
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- Be happy, have fun and enjoy sport
- Experience competition at a level at which they feel comfortable and the desire to win as a positive and healthy outcome for striving for best performance
- Comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner
- Make a complaint in an appropriate way and have it dealt with through an effective complaints procedure
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality
- Be represented at decision making bodies/meetings within their sports club/organisation
- Have a voice in the running of their club
- Approach the Children's Officer/Designated Person with any questions or concerns they may have

To ensure that the best practice is followed by this club we shall work closely with our Governing Body the Irish Sailing Association. In order to promote the best practice in children's sport, we shall comply with the guidelines of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport; as set out in Section 2.7 which are:

- Adopt and implement the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport as an integral part of its policy on children in the club
- Have its constitution approved and adopted by club's members at an AGM or EGM
- Promote the voice of the child, in particular through meetings and the AGM. One parent/guardian should have one vote for all their children under 18 years of age, where relevant
- Ensure that the Club Management Committee is elected or endorsed by registered club members at each AGM
- Adopt and consistently apply a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting and selecting Sports Leaders
- Clearly define the role of committee members, all Sports Leaders and parents/guardians
- Appoint at least one Children's Officer as outlined at 2.8.1 in this Code. In the event that a club caters for both boys and girls, one Children's Officer of each gender would ideally be appointed
- Have a Designated Person to act as liaison with the Statutory Authorities in relation to the reporting of allegations or suspicions of child abuse. (See 5.12) Any such reports should be made according to the procedures outlined in this Code
- Ensure best practice throughout the club by disseminating its code of conduct, including the disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures in operation within the club to all its members. The club's code of conduct should also be posted in all facilities used by the club
- Have in place procedures for dealing with a concern or complaint made to the Statutory Authorities against a committee member or Sports Leader or other members of the club. Regulations should stipulate that a Sports Leader who is the subject of an allegation, which has been reported to the Statutory Authorities, should stand aside, while the matter is being examined. *s/he should be invited to resume full duties when and if appropriate internal disciplinary procedures are completed*
- Ensure that relevant Sports Leaders report to the Club Management Committee on a regular basis
- Encourage regular turnover of committee membership while ensuring continuity and experience

- Develop effective procedures for responding to and recording accidents
- Ensure that any unusual activity (high rate of drop-out, transfers, etc.) is checked out and reported by the Club Chairperson to the Governing Body of Sport
- Ensure that all club members are given adequate notice of AGMs and other meetings
- Ensure that all minutes of all meetings (AGMs/EGMs/, Committee) are recorded and safely filed.

Protection of Children at Inniscarra sailing and kayaking club

Leaders in children's sport should strive to create a positive environment for the children in their care. They have an overall responsibility to take the steps necessary to ensure that positive and healthy experiences are provided.

Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions & Allegations

The Inniscarra sailing and Kayaking club accepts that organisations, which include children as members, are vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse and therefore there is a need for policies and procedures to deal with this issue. The safety of young people is everyone's responsibility. False allegations of abuse can occur.

However, if a young person says or indicates that he/she is being abused, or information is obtained which gives concern that a young person is being abused, you should react immediately.

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse "**reasonably and in good faith**" to the Health Board or the Gardai (See 5.13.1 – ISC. Code). The act also covers the offence of "**false reporting**". This Act came into operation on 23rd January 1999.

The main provisions of the Act are:

1. The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to designated officers of Health Boards or any member of An Garda Síochána;
2. The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse.

These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including, dismissal;

3. The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities “knowing that statement to be false”. This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

Everyone involved in child protection matters should be aware of their responsibility to work in co-operation with the statutory child protection authorities.

The term “**Sports Leader**” means all adults, in a paid or voluntary capacity e.g. club helpers, tournament officials, coaches, team managers, camp managers.

REPORTING OF SUSPECTED OR ACTUAL CHILD ABUSE

If a Sports Leader or a parent/guardian is uneasy or suspicious about a child’s safety or welfare the following response should be made:

RESPONSE TO A CHILD REPORTING ANY FORM OF ABUSE

The following Actions should be taken:

- React calmly.
- Listen compassionately and carefully –keep the questions to an absolute minimum,
- Facilitate the child to tell about the problem.
- Take what the child is saying seriously.
- Remember the child has decided to tell about something very important and has taken a risk to do so.
- Reassure the child.
- If the nature of what the child is saying is unclear, use open, non-specific questions such as "Can you explain to me what you mean by that";
- The child should be given some indication of what happens next - informing parents/guardians, health board 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.

The following actions should be avoided:

- Do not make promises of confidentiality – it may not be possible to keep that promise.
- Do not make a judgement or make negative comments about the alleged abuser
- Do not speculate or make assumptions
- Do not interview the child – do not probe for more information than is offered
- Do not approach the alleged abuser
- Do not allow your shock or distaste to show.

Reporting Child Abuse

It is not the responsibility of anyone working under the auspices of Inniscarra Sailing and Kayaking club, in a paid or voluntary capacity, or those working in affiliated organisations, to take responsibility or decide whether or not child abuse is taking place.

However, there is a responsibility to protect children in order that appropriate agencies can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the young person.

Actions to Take:

- Observe and note 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 person designated for reporting abuse (*the senior office holder, normally the Chairperson*).
- If the Chairperson has reasonable grounds (See 5.13.1 of ISC code) for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, s/he will make a report to the health board/social services who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse.
- 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.**

Make a record of the report.

- If the designated person is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist or not, s/he should informally consult with the local health board/social services. S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report;
- A designated person reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities should first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, **unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation;**
- A report should be given by the designated person to the Statutory Authorities in person or by phone, and in writing;
- It is best to report child abuse concerns by making personal contact with the relevant personnel in the Statutory Authorities.

ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST SPORTS LEADERS

If such an allegation is made, two procedures should be followed:

- The reporting procedure as outlined in “Reporting Child Abuse”.
- The procedure for dealing with the Sports Leader (below)

The following points should be considered:

The safety of the child making the allegation and any others who are/may be at risk should be ensured and this should take precedence over any other consideration. In this regard, the sports club/organisation should take any necessary steps that may be

immediately necessary to protect children If a Sports Leader is the subject of the concern s/he should be treated with respect and fairness

Steps to be taken within the Sports Organisation

Where reasonable grounds for concern exist the following steps should be taken by the club/organisation:

Advice should be sought from the local health board/social services with regard to any action by the club deemed necessary to protect the child/children who may be at risk

The matter should be reported to the local health board/social services following the standard reporting procedure outlined above In the event that the concern is connected to the actions of a Sports Leader in the club, the Sports Leader involved in the concern should be asked to stand aside pending the outcome of any investigation by the Statutory Authorities. *It is advisable that an appointed committee member other than the Chairperson, who takes the responsibility for reporting, undertakes this task.*

The Sports Leader should be informed, in private,

- That an allegation has been made against him/her,
- The nature of the allegation,

S/he should be afforded an opportunity to respond. His/her response should be noted and passed on to the health board/social services personnel. *All persons involved in a child protection process (the child, his/her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family, Sports Leaders) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure.*

Confidentiality.

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.

Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. Information should be stored in a secure place, with limited access to designated people.

The requirements of the Data Protection laws should be adhered to. Breach of confidentiality is a serious manner.

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 Chairperson. The information should be checked out and handled in a confidential manner.

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 Chairperson and checked out without delay.