

A young woman in a blue and white athletic uniform is captured mid-air, jumping over a hurdle. She is smiling and looking down. The background is a bright, clear sky. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

Chapter 3

***Policy &
Procedures***

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Everyone taking part in sport, irrespective of his or her role, should be able to do so in a safe environment. The purpose of creating and adhering to policies and procedures is to facilitate and encourage best practice.

3.1 CONSTITUTION

A quality sports club/organisation will operate on the basis of a Constitution, which directs its ethical approach and promotes good practice. The Constitution should include a policy statement, which reflects good practice and relates to the divisional structure of the sports club/organisation. The Constitution should also reflect a commitment to providing quality leadership for children in the sports club/organisation by having a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting, selecting and managing Sports Leaders. See Sample Policy Statement in Appendix 1. It should make provision for regulations in respect of effective disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures. The convening and conduct of an AGM should also have a constitutional basis.

3.2 STRUCTURE

Membership of the Management Committee of sports clubs/organisations should be for a fixed period to encourage regular turnover of committee membership. Each organisation should work out its own system of rotation to ensure that continuity and a level of experience are maintained. Effective methods of communication within the organisation are vital to the successful implementation of the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*. Within each sports club/organisation a system of record keeping should be established and adhered to in the interests of confidentiality and good practice. A current mailing list and a schedule of meetings, including the AGM, are the two most basic requirements. Any organisation unable to reach its membership will struggle to implement good practice.

All sports clubs with child members should be fully affiliated to the Governing Body and therefore bound by the guidelines enshrined in the constitution of the Governing Body. Each member of a club/organisation should sign up to the Constitution. They should also sign an agreement to adhere to the rules and regulations of the club/organisation which includes a commitment to upholding the Code and all of the agreed complaints, disciplinary and appeals procedures within the club/organisation. This commitment should form part of the annual membership / affiliation process to avoid adding to the administrative burden of officials in organisations.

3.3 REGULATIONS

The regulations adopted by a Sports Club/ Organisation should clearly define the tasks to be undertaken by Sports Leaders and parents/guardians. The regulations should define the roles and responsibilities of elected officials. This information should be widely disseminated within the club/organisation. Regulations, based on the constitution, should legislate for effective disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures. Guidance on the use of sanctions could also be outlined in the regulations.

3.4 DISCIPLINARY, COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURES

Each club/organisation should ensure that it has adequate disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures in place. **It is important to note that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the Statutory Authorities and should not be undertaken by Children's Officers/Designated Persons or other club/organisation Sports Leaders.** The standard reporting procedure outlined in the Statutory Authorities guidelines should be followed by each sports club/organisation and adhered to by its members (See 5.12).

3.4.1 Recommended procedures

A quality sports club/organisation will operate on the basis of good practice to include a complaints/appeals procedures similar to the following:

- a code of conduct reflecting a child centred ethos should be drawn-up, widely disseminated and returned from and applied to all Sports Leaders and members
- each club/organisation, on receiving a complaint, should appoint a disciplinary committee to resolve problems relating to the conduct of its members. This should include bullying. The complaint should be in writing to the secretary or Children's Officer and should be responded to within 5 working days. The committee should consist of a representative from the Management Committee, the Children's Officer and ordinary registered members of the club.
- If the complaint involves suspected abuse or a criminal offence the children's officer/designated person should be consulted and the disciplinary committee disbanded. The statutory authorities will then be informed
- the disciplinary committee should review any relevant paper work and hold any necessary meetings with all parties to proceed with complaints into any incident of suspected misconduct that does not relate to child abuse. It should, as soon as possible, inform the Management Committee of the progress of the disciplinary process. This should be done within 10 working days
- the disciplinary committee should furnish the individual with the nature of the complaint being made against him/her and afford him/her the opportunity of providing a response either verbally or in writing, but usually at a meeting with the disciplinary committee
- written confidential records of all complaints should be safely and confidentially kept and club procedures should be defined for the possession of such records in the event of election of new officers
- where it is established that an incident of misconduct has taken place, the disciplinary committee should notify the member of any sanction being imposed. The notification should be made in writing, setting out the reasons for the sanction. If the member is under 18 years of age, correspondence should be addressed to the parents/guardians
- if the member against whom the complaint was made is unhappy with the decision of the disciplinary committee s/he should have the right to appeal the decision to an appeals committee (independent of a disciplinary committee). Any appeal should be made in writing within an agreed period after issue, usually 10 days of the decision of the disciplinary committee. The chairperson of the appeals committee should be a member of the Management Committee. The appeals committee should consult with the Children's Officer in relation to issues of child welfare and codes of conduct
- the appeals committee should have the power to confirm, set aside or change any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee
- if any party is not satisfied with the outcome the matter can be referred to the Governing Body. However efforts to resolve the issue at local level should be exhausted before the Governing Body is engaged in attempts to resolve the matter

3.5 RECRUITMENT OF SPORTS LEADERS

Sport relies heavily on the time and commitment freely given by volunteers and without this the opportunities for children and young people to participate in sport may not exist. In order to make these opportunities a positive experience it is recommended that all adults taking responsibility for young people in sport should undergo a recruitment process. The following recruitment steps will help to protect young people and assist in placing leaders in the position to which they are suited and supported.

- List tasks that Sports Leaders need to perform and the skills needed for those tasks
- Make all vacancies openly available to interested and qualified applicants
- Each applicant should complete an application form. This should include a self-declaration section/ form. (See Appendices 2-5)
- In Northern Ireland coaches who work with under 18's are deemed to be 'regulated positions' regardless of whether they are paid or not. SCNI recommend that coaches should be checked by the Protection of Children (NI) Service, formally known as the Pre-Employment Consultancy Service (PECS). See Appendix 4
- In the Republic of Ireland the ISC recommend that coaches who work with young people should be checked by the Garda vetting service **when** this becomes available to sports organisations.
- It is not the responsibility of any one person to recruit a leader. References should be verified by the club/organisation Management Committee and should be kept on file as a matter of record. See Sample Form and/or Appendix 10
- All recommendations for appointment should be ratified by the sports club's/organisation's management committee. The decision to appoint a Sports Leader is the responsibility of a sports club/organisation, and not of any one individual within it
- Once recruited into the sports club/organisation, all Sports Leaders should be adequately managed and supported and any statutory guidelines should be adhered to
- A probationary period is advisable and should be established, ideally through an informal interview, which can be used to assess the leader's commitment to promoting good practice in relation to young people
- Verify qualifications, experience and gaps in employment history
- Confirm identity of leader by checking formal identification
- When storing information in relation to applicants information should be treated as highly sensitive and confidential. It should be kept in a locked cupboard that is accessible only to a nominated officer and a deputy nominated officer.
- After making a final decision about the applicant, the original information sent to vetting authorities must be destroyed immediately by shredding or burning. Organisations may, however, include a note on any personnel file stating that a check was carried out and that the person's conditional offer of appointment was confirmed/withdrawn as a result.
- For further information on how to use the vetting service in Northern Ireland see Appendix 4.

3.6 EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Sports clubs/organisations that take responsibility for children in sport should ensure that Sports Leaders are competent to provide safe and rewarding experiences for those in their care and that Sport Leaders are provided with the appropriate training for their activity. Training and education opportunities should also be made available to parents/guardians as appropriate.

Both sports councils have established support to assist sports organisations in implementing the Code and child protection training.

The ISC have appointed a project leader to assist and liaise with governing bodies and local sports partnerships and to implement the code at national and local level through workshops and training sessions. Some training is delivered in conjunction with the local health services executive area boards.

It is important that National Children's Officers/Designated Persons and Club Children's Officers/Designated Persons receive appropriate training for their role. In addition all leaders working with young people should be updated with the code by attending the 'Child Protection in Sport' Awareness training, which includes information on codes of conduct, recruitment and selection and awareness of the appropriate club response to allegations of child abuse. Club Children's Officers/Designated Persons can then complete the 6-hour Children's Officer training.

In Northern Ireland The Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) has been created through a partnership between the Sports Council and the NSPCC to promote the rights of children along with ensuring their protection and continued enjoyment of sport.

In Northern Ireland Child Protection training is available by contacting Coaching Northern Ireland, (028 90 686940) who offer the following workshops:

- Children's/Designated Officer Workshop
- Child Protection Awareness Workshop for Coaches/Leaders/Volunteers