

FAI Child Welfare & Safeguarding Policy





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Glossary

- **Affiliated Member** of the Association shall mean all National Bodies, Provincial Associations, leagues, clubs and AGM Members who have affiliated directly to the FAI or to their respective governing body.
- **Board** shall mean the Board of Management of the FAI.
- **Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee** shall mean a Committee of the FAI
- **Children, Child or Young Person** shall mean a person under the age of 18 other than a person who is or has been married.
- **Children First Act (2015)** shall mean the Act for the purposes of making further and better provision for the care and protection of Children and for those purposes to require that preparation, by certain providers of services to Children, of Child Safeguarding Statements; to require certain persons to make reports to the Child and Family Agency in respect of Children in certain circumstances; to require certain persons to assist the Child and Family Agency in certain circumstances.
- **Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017** shall mean the guidance published by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in 2017 which includes information on the statutory obligations for those individuals and Organisations under the Act. It also sets out the best practice procedures that should be in place for all Organisations providing services to Children.
- **Child Risk Assessment** shall mean a Risk Assessment which is carried out to identify whether a Child could be harmed whilst using the service.
- **Child Safeguarding Statement** shall mean a statement that outlines the policies and procedures which are in place to manage the risks that have been identified through the Risk Assessment.
- **Clubs/League Children's Officer** shall mean the person who the Child welfare day to day functions are delegated to. Their remit shall be a key component of the Safeguarding Statement and they shall be the Relevant Person for the Child Safeguarding Statement.
- **Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport** shall mean the Code which was developed by the Irish Sports Council (Sport Ireland) and the Sports Council for Northern Ireland. The Code has been adopted and implemented by governing bodies of sports, clubs, local sports partnerships and community/voluntary groups.
- **Designated Liaison Person** shall mean the person who is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures within the Club/League are followed so that Child welfare and protection concerns are referred promptly to Statutory Authorities and will also liaise with outside agencies. Additionally, they will be a resource person to any employee or volunteer who has Child protection concerns.
- **Deputy Designated Liaison Person** shall mean the person who carries out the duties of the Designated Liaison Person when the Designated Liaison Person is unavailable.
- **Disciplinary Regulations Officer** shall mean the person who is charged with certain responsibilities as set out in the FAI Rule Book.

- **Harm** shall mean, as defined in the Children First Act 2015, in relation to a Child–
 - (a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the Child in a manner that seriously affects, or is likely to seriously affect the Child's health, development or welfare, or,
 - (b) sexual abuse of the Child.

whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions or circumstances or otherwise."
- **Liaison Person** shall mean the registered person(s) with The National Vetting Bureau for the purposes of Garda Vetting on behalf of the Football Association of Ireland
- **Legal and Corporate Affairs Committee** is a Standing Committee of the FAI.
- **Mandated Persons** shall mean, as set out in the Children's First Act 2015, persons who have contact with Children and/or families and who, because of their qualifications, training and/or employment role, are in a key position to help protect Children from harm.
- **National Body** shall mean the Colleges Football Association of Ireland (CFAI), Defence Forces Football Association (DFFA), Football Association of Ireland Schools (FAIS), Football For All (FFA), Irish Soccer Referees Society (ISRS), Irish Universities Football Union (IUFU), Junior Council and Schoolboys Football Association of Ireland (SFAI).
- **Organisation** shall mean all National Bodies, Provincial Associations, Leagues and Clubs who have affiliated directly to the FAI and provide a service to Children.
- **Participants** shall mean a Player, Official, Manager, Match Official, Match Agent, Intermediary and all such persons who are from time to time participating in any activity sanctioned by The Association or by any Affiliated Member.
- **Provincial Associations** shall mean the Connaught Football Association (CFA), Leinster Football Association (LFA), Munster Football Association (MFA) and Ulster Football Association (UFA).
- **Relevant Person-** shall mean the person who is appointed as the Children's Officer within National Bodies, Provincial Associations, Leagues, Clubs, to be the first point of contact in respect of an Organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement.
- **Relevant Service-** shall mean Organisations that have statutory responsibilities under the Children First Act 2015, any work or activity which consists of the provision of educational, research, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities to Children.
- **Service Level Agreement-** Shall mean the agreement in place between the FAI and its Affiliate Members for the purpose of completing Garda vetting applications.
- **Stand Down Order** shall mean an order which is issued to any person who is the subject of a complaint or inquiry by a Statutory Authority in relation to any Child Welfare or Vulnerable Person concern. A Stand Down Order is issued to an individual to immediately refrain from particular activities within the FAI for a specified or indefinite period pending the outcome of an enquiry or investigation in accordance with FAI Rules.
- **Statutory Authorities** shall mean those state bodies which promote the welfare and protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons and have a legal responsibility for the investigation and/or validation of suspected abuse, and these include but are not limited to An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and the Child and Family Agency (Tusla).
- **The Policy** shall mean this FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.

- **Vulnerable Person** means a person, other than a Child, who—
 - (a) is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia,
 - (b) has an intellectual disability,
 - (c) is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age,
 - (d) has a physical disability,Which is of such a nature or degree:
 1. As to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or
 2. That results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing.

Please note- within the Policy where Child/ Children is referred to there may be occasions when it may also be applicable to Vulnerable Persons.

Foreword

The Football Association of Ireland is committed to ensuring that Children, Young Persons and Vulnerable Persons can participate in all football activities in a safe environment. Football provides an excellent opportunity to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise potential as members of teams and as individuals. Participation in football should be fun, enjoyable and provide a platform to learn and develop life skills, make new friends and enhance personal growth. The safety and welfare of all is paramount.

The Children First Act 2015 has provided a great statutory framework for all, supporting Children and Young People, ensuring they are kept safe and their welfare maintained to a high standard whilst participating within the services we provide. Additionally, the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, is a great guidance when introducing measures to fulfil the statutory obligations of the Children First Act 2015.

The FAI acknowledges that all our members and volunteers are playing their part in providing an enjoyable and safe environment in which Children and Vulnerable Persons can play, learn and thrive within football. We thank the countless number of participants, many of whom are volunteers, for their commitment, hard work and dedication which has contributed in no small way to making football one of the biggest participation sports in Ireland today, with over 450,000 participants. The work of Affiliated Members, particularly the Club/League Children's Officers and the Designated Liaison Persons, is of crucial importance to implementing this Policy and their endeavours need to be acknowledged and supported at all levels within the game. Their efforts are deeply appreciated and the full adoption and application of this Policy by everyone in football will help ensure the promotion of happy, healthy and successful experiences.

Football Association of Ireland Board



1. POLICY STATEMENT

1.1. Why do we need a Policy?

The FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy (the “Policy”) aims to set out guidelines and procedures to assist those working with Children within the game and where appropriate those working with Vulnerable Persons. It is the responsibility of all adults involved in football to actively promote best practice standards whilst being ever vigilant and aware of their responsibilities. This policy has been formulated in line with the statutory requirements of the Children First Act 2015, the guidance from the Children First National Guidance of the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 to 2016 –

1.2. Who is the Policy aimed at?

The Policy is aimed at all those working and engaged in football activities in the Republic of Ireland.

The FAI is committed to following the principles and practice guidelines contained in the Policy by:

- Recognising that the safety, protection and welfare of Children and Vulnerable Persons is of paramount importance;

- Obliging all persons engaging with Children and Vulnerable Persons to be Garda vetted;
- Providing appropriate training and education in the area of Child welfare and safeguarding;
- Providing guidance and assistance to all who work with Children and Vulnerable Persons;
- Ensuring Clubs and Leagues appoint a Club/League Children's Officer and Designated Liaison Persons
- Appointing a Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager in the FAI;
- Ensuring all Affiliated Members adhere to statutory obligations relating to Child welfare and safeguarding.
- Providing appropriate rules for the protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons within the FAI Rule Book;
- Appointing a Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee responsible for overseeing the FAI's policy on child protection and its implementation;
- Providing a clear pathway for the investigation of complaints and appropriate disciplinary procedures;
- Providing codes of practice and templates for all members.

1.3. What is contained within the Policy?

In particular the Policy outlines;

- Children's First Act 2015 statutory obligations
- Child Welfare and Safeguarding roles within Clubs and Leagues
- the various types of abuse which can arise;
- the recommended reporting procedures;
- guidance on Garda Vetting
- guidance on confidentiality;
- principles of safe record keeping;
- safe recruitment and management practices;
- procedures for handling allegations and complaints relating to Children;
- the process for involving parents and Children;
- guidelines in respect of away/overnight trips;

1.4. Who approves the Policy?

The Policy is approved by the Board of the FAI. Proposals for additions and/or amendments are considered by the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee of the FAI on an ongoing basis. Once proposed amendments are approved by the Committee they are then put forward to the Board for final approval.

1.5. What are the underlying principles of the Policy?

The Policy follows the principles outlined in relevant guidelines and legislation provided by Statutory Authorities. The Policy is established on a number of core principles: - the needs of the Child or Vulnerable Person, integrity and respect, environment, equality, fair play, welfare and safety in football. These underlying principles underpin the Policy and outline our principles of good practice and Child protection and safeguarding policy and procedures.

1. Safe Environment

The safety and welfare of Children and Vulnerable Persons is of paramount importance and they must feel safe in their surroundings. Unhealthy competitive demands should not be placed too early as this could result in excessive levels of pressure and as a consequence, high levels of dropout from the sport. Those working with Children and Vulnerable Persons should be suitable for their positions, i.e. all should be Garda vetted and should be aware of the principles of Children First Act (2015) and the requirements of the Policy. Administrators should ensure proper procedures are put in place to ensure our Children and Vulnerable Persons can participate in a safe manner and that concerns regarding their welfare are correctly and speedily handled.

2. The Needs of the Child and Vulnerable Person

A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of Children and Vulnerable Persons, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. Participants should put the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second. A Child-centred/ person-centre approach will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.

3. Integrity and Respect

Adults interacting with Children and Vulnerable persons in football should do so with integrity and respect. All adult actions in football should be guided by what is in the best interests of the Child or Vulnerable Person and in the context of quality and open working relationships. Abuse of any kind is unacceptable within football.

4. Equality

All Children and Vulnerable Persons should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, gender, religious, social, or ethnic background or political persuasion. The provisions of equality legislation apply to all involved in football.

5. Fair Play

Fair Play is the guiding principle of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport. It states that "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".



2. CHILDREN FIRST ACT 2015: STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS

Clubs and Leagues are defined in the Children First Act 2015 as providing Relevant Services and as such have specific statutory obligations under the Act.

The requirements include:

- Keep Children safe from Harm while they are using the service
- Carry out a Risk Assessment to identify whether a Child could be harmed whilst receiving your services
- Develop a Child Safeguarding Statement that outlines the policies and procedures which are in place to manage the risks that have been identified
- Appoint a Relevant Person to be the first point of contact in respect of the Organisation's Child Safeguarding Statement.

2.1. Risk Assessment

A Risk Assessment is an exercise where the Club/League examines all aspects of the service from a safeguarding perspective to establish whether there are any practices or features of the service that have the potentials to put Children at risk.

The Risk Assessment process is intended to enable the organisation to;

- Identify potential risks
- Develop policies and procedures to minimise risk by responding in a timely manner to potential risks
- Review whether adequate precautions have been taken to eliminate or reduce these risks

Further guidance and a sample of a Risk Assessment can be found within appendix 2 and 3 of this Policy.

2.2. Child Safeguarding Statement

This is a written statement that specifies the Relevant Service being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed in order to ensure, as far as practicable, that a Child availing of the service is safe from Harm.

- (a) The statement must include both the written Risk Assessment and the procedures that are in place to;
 - Manage any risk identified
 - Investigate an allegation against any volunteer or staff member about any act, omission or circumstance in respect of a Child availing of the service
 - Select and recruit volunteers and staff who are suitable to work with Children
 - Provide information and training to volunteers and staff on Child protection and safeguarding issues
 - Enable volunteers or staff members, whether Mandated Persons or otherwise, to make a report to Tusla in accordance with the Act or any guidelines issued by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
 - Maintain a list of persons in the Organisation who are Mandated Persons under the Act
 - Appoint a Relevant Person in the Organisation for the purposes of the Act.
- (b) The Child Safeguarding Statement should provide an overview of the measures that the Club/League has put in place to ensure that Children are protected from Harm
- (c) It may also refer to more detailed policies which can be made available on request
- (d) The Club/League must circulate the Child Safeguarding Statement to all volunteers and employees.
- (e) The Club/League must also display the Child Safeguarding Statement publicly and make it available to parents and guardians, Tusla and members of the public upon request. This may be done by displaying it on the Club/League website.
- (f) The Child Safeguarding Statement must be reviewed every two years, or sooner if there has been a material change in any of the issues to which it refers to.

A sample of a Child Safeguarding Statement can be found on the FAI website at <https://www.fai.ie/domestic/safeguarding/documents>.

A copy of The Football Association of Ireland's Child Safeguarding Statement can also be found on the FAI website at <https://www.fai.ie/domestic/safeguarding/documents>.

2.3. Appointing a Relevant Person

The Relevant Person for Clubs/ Leagues and other Affiliated Members will be under the roles and responsibilities of the Children's Officer. See section 3 of the policy Child Welfare and Safeguarding Roles.

2.4. Register of Non-compliance

There is a provision in the Children First Act 2015 for Tusla – Child and Family Agency to establish and maintain a register of non-compliance for service providers who fail to provide a copy of the Child Safeguarding Statement to

Tusla when requested to do so.

Non-compliance could also lead to disciplinary action against a Club, League or other Affiliated Member as this would be a breach of Part B Rule 40.1 C) of the FAI Rules.

"It is mandatory that all Members and Participants shall comply with all legislation and guidelines issued by any Statutory Authority in respect of Child Protection, the protection of Vulnerable persons and the Welfare of both".

2.5. Mandated persons

The Children First Act 2015 places a legal obligation on certain people, many of whom are professionals, to report Child protection concerns at or above a defined threshold to Tusla - Child and Family Agency. These Mandated Persons must also assist Tusla, on request, in its assessment of Child protection concerns about Children who have been the subject of a mandated report.

Guidance with a full list of people who are classified as Mandated Persons under the Act can be found within the appendix 4 along with the Mandated Persons thresholds for reporting in appendix 5.

Please note that individual must fulfil one of the roles detailed in appendix 4 of this policy within the Organisation to be classified as a Mandated Person for that Organisation.



3. CHILD WELFARE AND SAFEGUARDING ROLES

All Clubs/Leagues and other Affiliated Members are required to have two key roles in place in order to fulfil the Child welfare and safeguarding roles and responsibilities within the Organisation. These two roles are Club/League Children's Officer and Designated Liaison Person.

3.1. Club/League Children's Officer

- (a) The appointment of a Club/League Children's Officer is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere in any club.
- (b) They act as a resource to members with regard to Children's issues and also ensure that Children have a voice in the running of the club and can freely talk about their experiences.
- (c) The Children's Officer should be a member of or have access to, the Club/League Management Committee.
- (d) To undertake the role of Children's Officer, the individual must have completed the Safeguarding 1 and Safeguarding 2 courses. Please see the training section within section 11 for further details.

- **(e) The Club/League Children’s Officer roles and responsibilities are;**
 - Be familiar with the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding policy, Complaints and Disciplinary procedures, Social Media Policy and any other relevant guidelines
 - Implement Child centred policies and procedures within the football organisation
 - Ensure safe recruitment procedures are in place
 - Have completed the Risk Assessment and Child Safeguarding Statement
 - Promotion of Child Safeguarding Statement and be the first point of call for it
 - Host regular information meetings and get parental involvement
 - Ensure that Club/League members are adequately trained and adhere to the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy
 - Ensure that there are accurate and up to date records of coaches and volunteers training and Garda Vetting Clearance
 - Monitor movement and drop out of players and volunteers.
 - Handle any complaints received regarding poor practise.
 - Make contact with League, Affiliate and National roles.
 - In addition to the functions outlined above, all Affiliate League Children’s Officers should ensure that all affiliated clubs with members under the age of eighteen have at least one Club Children’s Officer appointed, that the clubs have completed a Risk Assessment and have a Child Safeguarding Statement in place. The League Children’s Officer should also maintain a database with all of this information, along with training records of all the Club’s Children’s Officers which should be forwarded to the Football Association of Ireland’s Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager on an annual basis.

Children’s Officers do not have the responsibility of investigating or validating Child protection concerns within the Club/League and have no counselling or therapeutic role. This responsibility lies with the Gardaí, Tusla or the HSE.

3.2. Designated Liaison Person

- (a) The Clubs, Leagues, Provisional Associations and other football bodies Designated Liaison Person shall be the Chairperson who will be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of Children.
- (b) The Designated Liaison Person is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of Child abuse to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána,
- (c) Support and advice is available from the Football Association of Ireland’s Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager, who is also the Mandated Person.
- (d) To undertake the role of Designated Liaison Person, the individual must have completed the Safeguarding 1 and Safeguarding 3 course. Please see the training section within section 11 of the Policy for further details.
- (e) Clubs, Leagues, Provisional Association and other football bodies should make the name and contact details of the Designated Liaison Person available to all staff and volunteers working within the Organisation. It may also be useful to appoint a Deputy Liaison Person who can fulfil the role when the Designated Liaison Person is not available.
- **(f) The Designated Liaison Person Roles and Responsibilities are;**
 - Have knowledge of the Code of Ethics, and statutory requirements
 - Have a knowledge of categories and indicators of abuse
 - Be familiar with and able to carry out reporting procedures using the correct forms, (see appendix 6 for forms).
 - Communicate with parents and/or agencies as appropriate
 - Assist with the ongoing development and implementation of Child protection training needs

- Liaise with the League Officers and FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager in relation to Child protection training needs.
- Be aware of local contacts and services in relation to Child protection, i.e. principal and duty social workers and their contacts.
- To inform duty social worker in Tusla – Child and Family agency and/ or An Garda Siochana of relevant concerns about individual Children, using the Reporting Form, keep a copy of this form and ensure acknowledgement of receipt of this form.
- Reporting poor practise to their relevant governing body having ensured that any concerns regarding Child protection issues have been reported to the relevant Statutory Authority.
- Advise Administrators on issues of confidentiality, record keeping and data protection.

Designated Liaison Persons do not have the responsibility of investigating or validating Child protection concerns within the Club/League and have no counselling or therapeutic role. This responsibility lies with the Gardaí, Tusla or the HSE.



4. CHILD ABUSE

4.1. Reasonable grounds for concerns

Individuals should always inform Tusla when they have **reasonable grounds for concern** that a Child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected.

It is not necessary for the individual to prove that abuse has occurred to report a concern to Tusla. All that is required is that the individual have reasonable grounds for concerns. It is Tusla's role to assess concerns that are reported to it.

Reasonable grounds for a Child protection or welfare concern include:

- Evidence, for example of an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse
- Consistent signs that a Child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect
- A Child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused
- Admission or indication by an adult or a Child of an alleged abuse they committed
- An account from a person who saw the Child being abused

4.2. What is Child Abuse

Child Abuse can be categorised into four main types: **neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse**. Other forms of abuse include **bullying**. A Child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Abuse and neglect can occur within the family, in the community or in an institutional setting. The abuser may be someone known to the Child or a stranger, and can be an adult or another Child. In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another Child, you should consider it a Child welfare and protection issue for both Children and you should follow Child protection procedures for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

The important factor in deciding whether the behaviour constitutes abuse or neglect is the impact of that behaviour on the Child rather than the intention of the parent/carer/alleged abuser.

The definitions of neglect and abuse presented in this section are not legal definitions nor are they exhaustive. They are intended to describe ways in which a child might experience abuse and how this abuse may be recognised.

4.3. Neglect

- **(a) Neglect is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a Child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety.**
- (b) The following are features of Child Neglect:
 - Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision
 - Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding
 - Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture
 - Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger, or lack of supervision appropriate to the Child's age
 - Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation
 - Failure to provide adequate care for the Child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation
- **(c) A reasonable concern for the Child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the Child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the Child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the Child once.**

4.4. Emotional Abuse

- **(a) Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a Child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a Child. Abuse occurs when a Child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver.**
- **(b) Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:**
 - Rejection
 - Lack of comfort and love
 - Lack of attachment
 - Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play)
 - Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned)
 - Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the Child

- Bullying
 - Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a Child depends on his or her behaviours or actions
 - Extreme overprotectiveness
 - Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking Child in bedroom)
 - Seriously inappropriate expectations of a Child relative to his/her age and stage of development
- (c) There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A Child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour.
- **(d) A reasonable concern for the Child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the Child and the parent or carer.**

4.5. Physical Abuse

- **(a) Physical Abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a Child physically, or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents**
- **(b) Physical abuse can include the following:**
 - Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking
 - Pushing, shaking or throwing
 - Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling
 - Use of excessive force in handling
 - Suffocation
 - Physical punishment
 - Fabricated/induced illness
 - Female genital mutilation
 - Deliberate poisoning
- (c) The Children First Act 2015 includes a provision that abolishes the common law defence of reasonable chastisement in court proceedings. This defence could previously be invoked by a parent or other person in authority who physically disciplined a Child. The change in the legislation now means that in prosecutions relating to assault or physical cruelty, a person who administers such punishment to a Child cannot rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the legal proceedings. The result of this is that the protections in law relating to assault now apply to a Child in the same way as they do to an adult.

A reasonable concern exists where the Child's health and/or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

4.6. Sexual Abuse

- **(a) Sexual abuse occurs when a Child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. It includes the Child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the Child to sexual activity directly or through pornography**
- (b) Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and in some instances, occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members.
- (c) It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a Young Person may be sexual abuse even if the Young Person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive.

- **(d) Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:**
 - Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a Child
 - An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a Child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
 - Masturbation in the presence of a Child or the involvement of a Child in an act of masturbation
 - Sexual intercourse with a Child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
 - Sexual exploitation of a Child, which includes:
 1. Inviting, inducing or coercing a Child to engage in prostitution or the production of Child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means]
 2. Inviting, coercing or inducing a Child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act
 3. Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse
- Exposing a Child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person

- (e) An Garda Síochána will deal with any criminal aspects of a sexual abuse case under the relevant criminal justice legislation. The prosecution of a sexual offence against a Child will be considered within the wider objective of Child welfare and protection. The safety of the Child is paramount and at no stage should a Child's safety be compromised because of concern for the integrity of a criminal investigation.

- (f) In relation to Child sexual abuse, it should be noted that in criminal law the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. Any sexual relationship where one or both parties are under the age of 17 is illegal. However, it may not necessarily be regarded as Child sexual abuse. Details on exemptions for **mandated reporting** of certain cases of underage consensual sexual activity can be found in appendix 5 under reporting for Mandated Persons.

4.7. Other forms of 'Abuse'

- **(a) Bullying**
 - Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it is verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among Children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyberbullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of abuse based on gender identity, sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, Children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices.
 - While bullying can happen to any Child, some may be more vulnerable. These include: Children with disabilities or special educational needs; those from ethnic minority and migrant groups; from the Traveller community; lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) Children and those perceived to be LGBT; and Children of minority religious faiths.
 - There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying among Children with special educational needs. This is particularly so among those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some Children with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such Children may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour.
 - **In cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, you may need to make a referral to Tusla and/or An Garda Síochána.**

■ (b) Cyber, text and social media bullying

- Cyber bullying can involve unwanted text messages, phone calls, video chats/ recordings or web posts being used to threaten abuse or harm someone. It is similar to physical or verbal bullying, but it uses technology instead. Cyber bullying, like all bullying, is difficult for the victim. It can be hard to prove and difficult to get the courage to report it. Text bullying or harassment can be texts that frighten, insult, threaten or make the recipient feel uncomfortable. Email, social networks like Facebook/Twitter and phone calls can be used to harass in the same way.
- The FAI Social Media Policy 2018 provides guidance on the appropriate use of social media. A copy of The FAI Social Media Policy can be found within Appendix 11.

■ (c) Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons

- All adults have the right to be safe and to live a life free from abuse. All persons are entitled to this right, regardless of their circumstances. It is the responsibility of all service providers, statutory and non-statutory, to ensure that, all adults using the services provided are treated with respect and dignity, have their welfare promoted and receive support in an environment in which every effort is made to promote welfare and to prevent abuse.
- Vulnerable Persons may need extra support when accessing clubs. Please see the FAI Support Guidance for Children with Additional Needs and Vulnerable Persons 2018, for help and advice which can be found within Appendix 12.

4.8. Vulnerable Children

- (a) Certain Children are more vulnerable to abuse than others. Such Children include those with disabilities, homeless Children and those who, for one reason or another, are separated from their parents or other family members and who depend on others for their care and protection. The same categories of abuse - neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse - are applicable, but may take a slightly different form. For example, abuse may take the form of deprivation of basic rights, harsh disciplinary regimes or the inappropriate use of medications or physical restraints.
- (b) It is important to remember that the presence of any of these factors does not necessarily mean that a Child in those circumstances or settings is being abused.
- (c) Vulnerable Children and Children with additional needs may need extra support when accessing our services within the Organisation please see the FAI Support Guidance for Children with Additional Needs and Vulnerable Persons 2018, for help and advice which can be found within Appendix 12.

4.9. Recognising Child Abuse

Child abuse can often be difficult to identify and may be present in many forms, therefore it is necessary to follow some general guidelines.

- (a) **There are commonly three stages in the identification of child abuse:**
 - Considering the possibility;
 - Looking out for signs of abuse;
 - Recording of information.
- (b) **Stage 1: Considering the possibility**

The possibility of Child abuse should be considered if a Child appears to have suffered a suspicious injury for which no reasonable explanation can be offered. It should also be considered if the Child

seems distressed without obvious reason or displays persistent or new behavioural problems. The possibility of Child abuse should also be considered if the Child displays unusual or fearful responses to parents/carers.

■ (c) Stage 2: Looking out for signs of abuse

Signs of abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental. They can exist in the relationships between Children and parents/carers or between Children and other family members/other persons. A cluster or pattern of signs is likely to be more indicative of abuse. Children who are being abused may hint that they are being harmed and sometimes make direct disclosures. Disclosures should be believed.

Some signs are more indicative of abuse than others. These include:

- Disclosure of abuse and neglect by a Child or Young Person;
- Age-inappropriate or abnormal sexual play, language or knowledge;
- Specific injuries or patterns of injuries;
- Absconding from home or a care situation;
- Self-harm;
- Attempted suicide;
- Underage pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease;
- Signs in one or more categories at the same time may together indicate a pattern of abuse.

Most signs of abuse are non-specific and must be considered in the Child's social and family context with the aid of professionals. Football clubs are often the places where appropriate trusting relationships with adults outside the family or formal education sector are developed. However, it can also provide opportunities for adults to target and groom a Child or Young Person through their role as a volunteer or paid employee. Grooming can be seen as the process by which an individual manipulates those around them – particularly, but not exclusively, the Child – to provide opportunities to abuse and reduce the likelihood of being reported or discovered.

■ (d) Stage 3: Recording and reporting of information

If abuse is suspected, it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much detailed information as possible. Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information that may be relevant. **Please refer to section 5- reporting procedures of the Policy for more information.**

■ (e) Points to remember

- The severity of a sign does not necessarily equate with the severity of the abuse. Severe and potentially fatal injuries are not always visible. Emotional and/or psychological abuse tends to be cumulative and effects may only be observable in the longer term.
- Neglect is as potentially fatal as physical abuse. It can cause delayed physical, psychological and emotional development, chronic ill-health and significant long-term damage. It may also precede, or co-exist with other forms of abuse and must be acted upon.
- Child abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture. All signs must be considered in the wider social and family context.
- Challenging behaviour by a Child should not render them liable to abuse. Children in certain circumstances may present management problems. This should not leave them vulnerable to harsh disciplinary measures or neglect of care. Please refer to the FAI Support Guidance for Children with Additional Needs and Vulnerable persons 2018, for help and advice with how to deal with Challenging behaviour which can be found within Appendix 12.

- It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between indicators of Child abuse and other adversities suffered by Children and families. The advice of professionals should always be sought.

4.10. Distinguishing between 'Child abuse' and 'Poor Practice'

- (a) Concerns identified as child abuse will fall within the following categories:
 - Physical Abuse
 - Neglect
 - Sexual Abuse
 - Emotional Abuse
 - Bullying
- (b) Incidents of poor practice occur when the needs of Children and Vulnerable Persons are not afforded the necessary priority, so their welfare is compromised. Examples of poor practice are likely to be once off incidents and these might include but are not limited to:

1. Coach

- Giving preferential treatment to individuals and unfairly rejecting others (e.g. singling out and only focusing on the talented children and failing to involve the full squad).
- Giving preference to winning games over Children's development, participation and satisfaction.
- Encouraging Children to play while injured.
- Using inappropriate language, gestures or comments to motivate Children or provoke a reaction.
- Using inappropriate language, gestures or comments with other coaches or parents
- Delivering a coaching session alone, without another responsible adult present.
- Coaching alone when their own child is part of the team.
- Entering the field of play as a coach/manager when their own child is involved in an on-field incident.

2. Parent/Guardian

- Placing too much pressure on their Child to perform to a high standard and win games.
- Criticising their Child's performances instead of highlighting the positives of their game and where improvements were made.
- Failing to ensure that their Child is appropriately dressed for weather conditions.
- Making derogatory comments about their Child, or another Child during a game or training session.
- Failing to bring their Child to training on time, or collect them promptly at the end of the session.

3. Supporters

- Using inappropriate language towards Children, coaches, referees or other supporters.
- Making inappropriate comments about the performance of Children, coaches or referees.
- Entering the field of play during a match or training session without being asked to do so.

4. The Club

- Failing to implement FAI Rules on the protection and welfare of Children and Vulnerable Persons, the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy and other supporting documents.
- Placing undue pressure on a coach or team of Children to win games or competitions.
- Allowing poor practice to go unreported (e.g. a coach who ridicules and criticises Children who make a mistake during training or a match).
- Failing to create an environment that encourages player development and enjoyment over winning games and trophies.
- Failing to provide appropriate safeguarding education for their coaches and members.
- Not having procedures in place to ensure a parent does not coach their child's team alone and to ensure that they do not enter the field of play as the coach or manager when their own child is involved in an on-field incident.

5. General

- Shouting at or ridiculing Children when they make a mistake. Children should be given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and develop.
- When insufficient care is taken to avoid injuries (e.g. by excessive training or inappropriate training for the age, maturity, experience and ability of players).
- Allowing Children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Placing Children, Young People or Vulnerable Persons in potentially compromising and uncomfortable situations with adults (e.g. changing in a 1:1 situation with a coach).
- Ignoring health and safety guidelines (e.g. allowing Children or Vulnerable Persons to set up goal posts unsupervised by adults).
- Failing to adhere to the Club's codes of practice.

4.11. Points to remember

- Judgement about whether an incident is one of Child abuse or poor practice may not be possible at the point of referral, but only after the collation of relevant information.
- The majority of poor practice concerns should be dealt with directly by the Club in the first instance. Further support and guidance should be sought from the League, the National Body/Provincial Association and then the FAI where appropriate. Please following the FAI Concern/Complaint procedure which can be found in Appendix 9 of this policy and within the FAI Concern/Complain policy 2018 which can be found in Appendix 10 of the Policy.
- Please refer to the FAI Concern Complaint Policy 2018, Section 3 for guidance on how to deal with an example of Poor Practice.
- In some cases, poor practice may amount to Child abuse, e.g. where the actions of a coach/manager put a Child at unacceptable risk of injury and accordingly must be reported to the Statutory Authorities.
- All Child abuse investigations will be dealt with by the Statutory Authorities with the support of the FAI.
- The role of the FAI is to also report any allegations of abuse to the Statutory Authorities. Any action taken by the FAI will not interfere with or impede any statutory investigation.
- The FAI Player Development Plan offers a workshop for Clubs and League who would like to highlight poor practices to coaches and parents. Please see the FAI website for information on the Coach/Parent Education Workshop at www.fai.ie/domestic/player-development-plan/parent-education.



5. REPORTING PROCEDURES

The FAI shall treat all concerns reported under the Policy in a serious manner and in line with the following principles.

- 5.1.** Members of the FAI who have reasonable grounds for concerns that a Child or Vulnerable Person may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected are advised, to immediately inform the relevant Designated Liaison Person of their Affiliated Member body. If this is not possible the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager should be informed. The priority in all cases is the safety and wellbeing of the Child. The Statutory Authorities should also be advised where appropriate and all necessary steps taken to protect the Child.
- 5.2.** The Designated Liaison Person should record all concerns or allegations brought to his or her attention.
- 5.3.** If, as a Designated Liaison Person, you decided not to report a concern to Tusla, the following steps should be taken;
 - The reasons for not reporting should be recorded
 - Any actions taken as a result of the concern should be recorded
 - The employee or volunteer who raised the concern should be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported to Tusla

- The employee or volunteer should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to make a report to Tusla or An Garda Síochána.
- 5.4. If there are concerns about a Child but the Designated Liaison Person is unsure if it should be reported to Tusla, it may be useful to contact Tusla to informally discuss the concern. This provides an opportunity to discuss the query in general and to decide whether a formal report of the concern to Tusla is appropriate at this stage.
 - 5.5. Employees or others engaged by the FAI who are advised, suspect or are concerned that a Child may be at risk of abuse are obliged to immediately inform the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager. The priority in all cases is the safety and wellbeing of the child. The Statutory Authorities should also be advised and all necessary steps taken to protect the Child.
 - 5.6. In the event of an emergency where a Child is believed to be in immediate danger and Tusla cannot be contacted then the Gardai should be contacted.
 - 5.7. In cases where there is deemed to be a serious risk to Children the Designated Liaison Person may issue a temporary Stand Down Order in line with the Policy.
 - 5.8. Reports can be made to Tusla in person, by telephone or in writing - including by email- to the local duty service in the area where the Child lives. Detail can be found on the Tusla website (www.tusla.ie)
 - 5.9. To help Tusla staff assess the reasonable concern, they need all relevant information. Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information that may be relevant. **It is not the role of the Designated Liaison Person to investigate the circumstances of an allegation of abuse prior to informing the Statutory Authorities.** It should be ensured that all relevant information is recorded and provided to the Statutory Authorities. The reporting form can be found in Appendix 6 of the Policy.
 - 5.10. Parents/carers of a Child who is a suspected victim of abuse should be advised that a report is being made unless doing so is likely to endanger the Child.
 - 5.11. Reports received anonymously should be taken seriously and relevant enquiries made to establish if there is any substance to the complaint. The welfare of the Child is a priority in all cases.
 - 5.12. Children who are being abused may hint that they are being Harmed and sometimes make disclosures. Disclosures should always be believed and reported to the relevant Designated Liaison Person without delay.
 - 5.13. Any request to keep information anonymous cannot be guaranteed.

5.14. Missing Children

If a Child is believed to be missing, efforts should be made to first establish the Child's whereabouts by contacting the parents/carers. If the Child's location cannot be established and/or the parents/carers are not available and reasonable efforts have been made to contact them the matter should be reported to the Gardai urgently.

5.15. Protection from civil liability for persons reporting concerns of child abuse in good faith:

- **(a) Section 16 (3) of the Children First Act, 2015:** If a Mandated Person furnishes any information (including a report), document or thing to the Agency pursuant to a request made under subsection (1), the furnishing of that information, document or thing **shall not give rise to any civil liability in contract, tort or otherwise and nor shall the information, document or thing be admissible as evidence against that person in any civil or criminal proceedings.**

- (b) Section 3 Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998: Legislation makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have communicated Child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of Tusla or to any member of An Garda Síochána. This protection applies to Organisations as well as to individuals. This means that even if a communicated suspicion of Child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

5.16. How Reports shall be managed

- (a) Once a report is received it shall be reviewed by the relevant Designated Liaison Person. The Designated Liaison Person shall determine if an enquiry is required and the nature and extent of enquiries and/or reports to be made to the relevant Authorities following the above information.
- (b) If the report is not reported to the relevant Authorities but the Designated Liaison Person feels a breach of this Policy has occurred then the matter may be delegated to the Club Children's Officer in line with the Concerns\Complaint Policy 2018.
- (c) Any enquiry is not to proceed if a Statutory Investigation is under way. Once any Statutory Investigation is completed then the Designated Liaison Person shall follow the above step.
- (d) It is a matter for the Designated Liaison Person and Children's Officer to determine if a report falls under the remit of the Policy.
- (e) Any report made directly to the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager shall be assessed and if deemed more appropriate it shall be remitted to the Designated Club Children's Officer of the Affiliated Member for consideration as per FAI Concern \ Complaint Policy 2018.
- (f) If a report is made to the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager and it meets the thresholds for abuse for a Mandated Person to report, as a Mandated Person, the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager will complete a Mandated report and submit it to Tusla. Please see appendix 5 for further information on Mandated reporting.

5.17. False/Malicious Allegations

False or malicious allegations are deemed to be a serious breach of the Policy and the FAI Rules. This may result in disciplinary action been taken and may constitute an offence under relevant legislation.



6. THE FAI CHILD WELFARE AND SAFEGUARDING COMMITTEE

The Policy shall be monitored by the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee (the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee). The Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee is constituted in accordance with FAI Rules and shall conduct itself in accordance with the provisions of the Policy, FAI Rules and any relevant guidelines or legislation. The Committee has the following general remit:

- 6.1. To monitor and oversee compliance with the Policy, FAI Protection and Welfare of Children (Person's under the age of 18) and Vulnerable Persons Rules (Part B, Rule 40 of FAI Rules), statutory provisions, legislation and all regulations, codes, policies and guidelines in respect of Child protection and welfare.
- 6.2. To consider matters referred to it by the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager in accordance with the Policy.
- 6.3. To review decisions made by the FAI regarding vetting disclosures in accordance with the Policy.
- 6.4. To review all Stand Down Orders issued by FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager and Affiliated Members, pertaining to Child Welfare and Safeguarding.

- 6.5. To issue automatic bans where necessary.
- 6.6. To take all appropriate action in relation to breaches of the Policy, FAI Protection and Welfare of Children (Person's under the age of 18) and Vulnerable Persons Rules, statutory provisions, legislation and any regulations, codes, policies and guidelines in respect of Child protection, welfare and safeguarding.
- 6.7. Advise the Statutory Authorities of any concerns pertaining to Child protection and welfare
- 6.8. To report concerns pertaining to Child protection and welfare regarding any FAI employee or independent contractor to the FAI Human Resources Department.
- 6.9. To prepare reports for the Board and for the Legal and Corporate Affairs Committee on its activities.
- 6.10. To consider complaints regarding the Policy or practices and to make recommendations to the Board.
- 6.11. To partake where necessary in disciplinary investigations and hearings instigated by the Disciplinary Regulations Officer (the "DRO") in accordance with FAI Rules.
- 6.12. To work closely with the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager.
- 6.13. To consider such other matters as it and/or the Board consider appropriate to fulfil its aims as the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee.



7. STAND DOWN ORDERS

7.1. The Stand Down Order may be issued to an individual directly by the FAI itself or by an Affiliated Member. A Stand Down Order is an order made for the immediate protection and safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable Persons and is not a determination of wrongdoing by any individual. Stand Down Orders may be issued in a number of circumstances including but not limited to the following:

- (a) Any person who is the subject of a complaint or inquiry by a Statutory Authority in relation to any Child welfare or Vulnerable Person concern shall be issued with a Stand Down Order from all football activities. This order shall be issued by the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager of the FAI or the Designated Liaison Person of any Affiliated Member, pending the outcome of any inquiry and any subsequent internal disciplinary proceedings. Terms of a Stand Down Order must be complied with.
- (b) Affiliated Members shall immediately notify the FAI of any Stand Down Order issued.
- (c) The FAI may also issue a Stand Down Order in circumstances where concerns are raised with the FAI outside of a Statutory Authority investigation. An Affiliated Member may also issue a Stand Down Order in these circumstances, however the issuance of such order must be notified to the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager immediately as per clause 7.3.
- (d) Stand Down Orders shall be issued, managed and lifted in accordance with FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.

- (e) Any person wishing to continue to engage within football who is the subject of a vetting disclosure, which in the opinion of the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee or the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager deems them unsuitable to work with Children or Vulnerable Persons, shall be issued with an immediate Stand Down Order.
- (f) Where it is determined that urgent action is required for any reason an immediate Stand Down Order shall be issued by the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager or by an Affiliate Member. A written explanation as to why such order was issued must be included when notifying the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager in line with clause 7.3 below.

7.2. In the case of a Stand Down Order issued, the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager shall inform the individual of the issuance of a Stand Down Order. The FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager shall also inform all persons/bodies who are engaging/employing the individual within the game including but not limited to the person's Club, the League to which the Club belongs and any other party deemed necessary to protect Children or Vulnerable Persons. Failure of any person or body to comply with the terms of such an order once notified shall be a disciplinary matter and subject to further sanction.

7.3. Where a Stand Down Order has been issued directly by an Affiliated Member, that member must immediately inform the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager to determine if such a stand down should be applied to all FAI football related activity. The notification must include a written explanation as to why the Stand Down Order was issued.

7.4. The Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee shall monitor all Stand Down Orders issued and may be requested to review a Stand Down Order on request from the individual concerned. This is a review process, not an Appeal, and the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee shall make all such final determinations as it deems necessary for the protection and welfare of Children and Vulnerable Persons.

7.5. If the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee considers that any breaches of FAI Rules or the Policy are deemed to have occurred it shall refer such matters to the Disciplinary Regulations Officer (DRO) for disciplinary action where necessary.

8. AUTOMATIC BAN FROM FAI MEMBERSHIP

8.1. The FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee may also issue an automatic ban from membership of the FAI where deemed necessary for the protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons in line with the FAI rules.



9. DISCIPLINARY ACTION

- 9.1. If, following an investigation, a person is found to have breached the FAI Rules or committed an offence in relation to Child protection and welfare they shall be subject to disciplinary action. Such disciplinary action may be at Affiliate level if appropriate or submitted to the FAI Disciplinary Bodies in accordance with the below procedure. Disciplinary action by the FAI may proceed notwithstanding any action by Statutory Authorities, however the FAI reserve the right to liaise with the Statutory Authorities in respect of any action and to take instruction from them in respect of same. Any delay in the initiating of disciplinary charges at the request of Statutory Authorities shall not prejudice later disciplinary action.
- 9.2. It should be noted that any action taken by the FAI under the Policy is under football rules and policy and not indicative of any criminal or civil liability.
- 9.3. **Disciplinary Procedure:**
- All disciplinary procedures shall be carried out in accordance with the disciplinary procedures outlined in FAI Rules and in line with the Policy.
 - The Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager, in consultation with the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee, shall notify the DRO in writing of the alleged offence.

- For the avoidance of doubt vetting determinations and decisions relating to Stand Down Orders or automatic bans shall be handled in accordance with sections 7, 8 and 10 of the Policy and not within the remit of the Disciplinary Bodies of the FAI.
- The Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager shall provide the DRO with all relevant information from the investigation.
- The DRO shall empanel a Disciplinary Committee to hear the charge and notify all parties of the venue, date and time of the hearing and the constitution of the panel. All notified parties are entitled to attend the hearing.
- Any party specifically requested to attend by the Disciplinary Committee shall do so. Failure to attend when requested to do so may result in disciplinary sanction.
- All parties involved in the hearing must confirm to the Disciplinary Control Unit (the "DCU") in writing the name and role within, or relationship to the party, of all persons who will be attending the hearing on their behalf, or at their request within the time limits as stated in the notification. The Disciplinary Committee shall have discretion to permit the attendance of any persons not confirmed within the stated deadlines.
- The Disciplinary Committee, once appointed, can issue directions to the parties in respect of the hearing prior to proceedings commencing.
- All parties shall be notified by the DCU within three days by fax and/or electronic mail and/or registered post, of the decision of the Disciplinary Committee. In urgent matters the Chairperson may issue or direct the DCU to issue an oral decision in advance of the written notification
- A hearing can be postponed if the appointed Disciplinary Committee requires additional information prior to proceedings commencing or to allow technical or other issues to be addressed.
- The Disciplinary Committee may adjourn or suspend proceedings for further deliberation, or to seek further or additional evidence or expert advice or where it is otherwise considered necessary to do so, provided an adjournment does not unduly prejudice any party.
 1. The Disciplinary Committee shall consider all evidence that it deems relevant to the case.

9.4. Appeals

All Disciplinary Committee decisions are subject to appeal in accordance with the FAI Rules.



10. GARDA VETTING

10.1. The FAI is registered in the register of relevant Organisations with the Garda Central Vetting Unit for the purposes of Garda vetting. Garda vetting is a process which involves an individual giving consent for An Garda Síochána to furnish the FAI with a statement that there are no convictions recorded in the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere or a statement of all convictions and / or prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed in the State or elsewhere as the case may be. Garda vetting must be completed prior to the commencement of any position for those who will be working with Children and/or Vulnerable Persons in any capacity. This is a Statutory requirement under the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 to 2016. The Act creates offences and penalties for persons who fail to comply with its provisions. Garda vetting is not a substitute for safe recruitment but provides another element in determining a person's suitability to work with Children or Vulnerable Persons.

The FAI recommends that Affiliated Members **do not** solely rely upon vetting checks but should also seek to determine an individual's suitability for a position through normal recruitment processes including interviews and reference checks.

10.2. FAI Vetting Obligations:

- (a) All those engaging with persons under the age of 18 and Vulnerable Persons shall be Garda Vetted.
- (b) All Children's Officers, Designated Liaison Person, Chairpersons and Secretaries of each Affiliated Member involved with teams that are competing in any age group up to and including Under 18's and Vulnerable Persons shall be Garda Vetted.
- (c) All coaches or those involved with the management of any team that are competing in any age group up to and including Under 18 or have Vulnerable Persons on their team shall be Garda Vetted.
- (d) Any other person working or volunteering with Children or Vulnerable Persons in any capacity on behalf of the FAI or an Affiliated Member shall be Garda Vetted. It is the responsibility of the football body concerned to determine the persons within their organisation who this applies to subject to the relevant legislation and guidelines.
- (e) Failure to ensure that persons are vetted in accordance with the Policy, FAI Rules and/or legislation may result in disciplinary action against the individual and/or Affiliated Member and may also constitute a legal offence under relevant legislation.
- (f) Affiliated Members shall not accept confirmation of the Garda vetting status of any individual prior to confirmation being received by the individual from the FAI that the Garda vetting of the individual is in order, which the individual will receive in the form of written correspondence. It is the responsibility of each Club, League and Provincial Association who engage individuals to ensure that they have received a copy of a completed vetting application letter issued by the FAI from the individual. No letter other than that issued by the FAI can be accepted.

10.3. Vetting Applications:

- (a) The FAI shall provide a Garda vetting service to all Members in line with the Service Level Agreement. Applications for vetting may be made by contacting the Children's Officer of the relevant football body or the person responsible for the vetting application with the relevant football body or directly through the FAI.
- (b) The FAI shall be solely responsible for the approval of all vetting applications and final determination on disclosures provided by the National Vetting Bureau in accordance with the Policy.
- (c) All persons shall complete their vetting application in good faith and shall ensure all information provided is accurate, complete and up to date. Providing false or incorrect information also carries penalties and is detailed clearly within the National Vetting Bureau Act 2012 to 2016.
- (d) All matters disclosed as part of the Garda vetting application shall remain confidential to FAI authorised personnel, the applicant, the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee Members and Statutory Authorities, and stored in line with General Data Protection Regulations. However, approvals and rejections shall be notified to all relevant football personnel in accordance with the Policy.

10.4. Vetting Application Process:

- (a) The relevant application forms can be found on the website www.fai.ie/domestic/safeguarding/garda-vetting. If the applicant is between the ages 16-17 the NVB3 Parent/Guardian form will also need to be completed and attached to the application form. When the applicant has obtained the relevant application form the below steps should be followed. Please note all forms received must be dated

within 5 months of submission or they will be returned to the applicant. Incomplete forms or forms with errors on them will also be returned and may delay applications.

Step 1

Once a vetting application form has been fully completed all forms should be sent by the Club, League, Provincial Association or National Body to the Child Welfare Department, all forms must be sent to the FAI for processing and not to An Garda Síochána. When the application is received by the FAI, if correctly completed, an email will be sent from the National Vetting Bureau to the applicant requesting that they complete the next part of the process. This involves the applicant providing further personal details such as their previous address history, any criminal convictions, changes in names, passport numbers and place of birth. After the applicant has completed the online part of the process, the National Vetting Bureau e-vetting system will request that the Liaison Person for the FAI review the application data. If the Liaison Person is satisfied with the data it will be submitted to the National Vetting Bureau to conduct the relevant checks. The National Vetting Bureau will keep the applicant up to date with each part of the online process.

Step 2

When the relevant checks have been completed a Garda vetting disclosure will be returned to the FAI, the disclosure will contain a statement which will include either that;

1. there are no convictions recorded against the individual in the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere, or
2. a statement of all convictions and/or prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed, in the State or elsewhere as the case may be.

It may also contain specified information in relation to the applicant. This means information concerning a finding or allegation of Harm to another person received by the Bureau from An Garda Síochána or a scheduled Organisation pursuant to section 19 of the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 to 2016. Please note the National Vetting Bureau will notify the applicant before disclosing specified information to the Relevant Organisation.

A copy of the vetting disclosure will be made available to the applicants on request.

Step 3 – No Convictions or Specified Information

Should the vetting disclosure contain no convictions recorded against an individual, correspondence shall be sent to the applicant advising them of this. This correspondence should be provided to the relevant football body as proof of a completed vetting application by the individual.

Verbal assurances should never be accepted.

Step 4 – Vetting Disclosures with Convictions or Specified information

In some instances, disclosure of convictions and/or other information will be provided to the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager of the FAI by the National Vetting Bureau. In many cases these disclosures may not prevent an individual from receiving a completed vetting application letter. A decision regarding an individual's receipt of the completed vetting application letter will be assessed. This decision is made at the sole discretion of the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee as a sporting body which determines the suitability of its own members, employees and independent contractors to work with Children and Vulnerable Persons. All cases are treated individually and confidentially and are assessed as per the requirements of the post/role and the work that it entails. Disclosures which are of a serious nature may deem a person unsuitable to work with Children or Vulnerable Persons in the FAI.

Applicants will be given an opportunity to comment on any disclosures before any decision is made to ensure fairness and transparency at all times. In some cases, it may be necessary to meet and interview the applicant before a decision is made.

Applicants will then be advised of the decision which has been made in respect of any vetting disclosures. If the decision is negative and if the applicant is not being recommended as being suitable to

work with Children or Vulnerable Persons, a letter informing them of this decision will be sent to them.

If an applicant is currently engaged within football due to a previous completed Garda vetting application, and if following a vetting application is subsequently deemed unsuitable to work with Children or Vulnerable Persons, they may also be issued with an immediate Stand Down Order in accordance with the Policy. The FAI shall advise all relevant football bodies who are known to be associated with the applicant of the outcome of any negative vetting application.

Step 5 – Review

Unsuccessful applicants will be afforded an opportunity for a negative decision made against them to be reviewed by the Legal and Corporate Affairs Committee. The applicant will be invited to make any written submissions to support their position. In some situations, it may be necessary to meet and interview the applicant if the Legal and Corporate Affairs Committee deems this appropriate in any given case. This is a review process conducted at the sole discretion of the Legal and Corporate Affairs Committee and they shall determine what further information they may require for any particular review. Decisions made by the Legal and Corporate Affairs Committee regarding vetting applications are final and not subject to appeal.

- (a) If the recommendation of rejection is confirmed, the applicant and football bodies involved will be duly informed.
- (b) In the case of rejection of an applicant the Legal and Corporate Affairs Committee may also issue an automatic ban from membership of the FAI where vetting disclosures deem it necessary for the protection of Children, Young People or Vulnerable Persons.

10.5. Vetting Enquiries

- (a) The FAI shall keep a secure central database of all vetting applications in accordance with data protection legislation for the duration of the individual's Garda vetting application clearance. Vetting information shall be passed to Affiliated Members seeking information on applicants where the applicant has indicated their consent to such information being disclosed. Affiliated Members **shall not** engage any person to work with Children or Vulnerable Persons without such information being provided either by way of production of a letter confirming the vetting status of an individual or an enquiry being made to the FAI with the consent of the individual concerned.

10.6. Length of Vetting Status

- (a) An individual's criminal record may change at any time hence the importance of general practices being put into place around safe recruitment, references and safe practices in working with Children and Vulnerable Persons. The current recommended vetting period is every 3 years. Notwithstanding this if any person has a concern that an individual should be re-vetted at an earlier interval this should be requested. Additionally, if the individual's role changes within the Organisation they should complete a new Garda vetting application.

10.7. Convictions

- (a) Any member charged with or convicted of an offence in any jurisdiction for an offence which may raise significant concerns regarding their appropriateness to work with Children or Vulnerable Persons may be issued with a Stand Down Order if previously received clearance and/or Automatic Ban as referred to in the Policy.
- (b) If any individual does not comply with providing the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee or the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager, with any additional information that is requested, then a letter will be issued to the individual informing them that the process has now ended and the application will not proceed.



11. SAFE RECRUITMENT PRACTICES

11.1. FAI Recruitment

- (a) The FAI shall ensure that all employees, independent contractors and persons working directly with Children and Vulnerable Persons have completed a Garda vetting application and have received the relevant training. The Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager shall work closely with Human Resources and relevant employees, independent contractors and Affiliated Members to ensure best practice and procedures are adopted at all times.
- (b) The following principles shall be adopted by the FAI in recruitment for positions involving work with Children and Vulnerable Persons;
 - Roles shall provide a clear description to ensure employees, independent contractors and volunteers understand the extent and nature of their role.
 - Persons applying for a role or for an event shall complete an application form which shall include a section allowing the individual to self-declare any convictions.
 - Two references shall be requested. As part of the reference check the referee will be asked if there is any reason to be concerned about the potential employee contact with, Children or Vulnerable Persons.

- Those roles shall involve an interview or meeting with at least two representatives of the Organisation face to face or otherwise.
- A probationary/trial period (usually 6 months) shall be included for employee positions.
- All contracts shall be dependent on Garda vetting and persons will be advised of the process pending record checks being completed.

11.2. FAI Induction and Training

- (a) The recruitment and selection process for those engaged by the Association shall be followed up with relevant training for those working with Children and Vulnerable Persons. In particular new employees, independent contractors and those engaged to work with Children or Vulnerable Persons should be;
 - Brought through the policy and made aware that abuse can occur.
 - Made aware of how to recognise abuse.
 - Made aware of the reporting procedures.
 - Made aware of the importance of listening to Children and Vulnerable Persons and taking their concerns seriously.
 - Complete a basic awareness training course in Child protection as part of their induction.

11.3. Affiliated Members Recruitment and Training

- (a) Affiliated Members should ensure they encompass the above principles into their recruitment of employees, independent contractors and volunteers where appropriate.
- (b) Please note it is a legal requirement under the National Vetting Act 2012 to 2016, that all individuals, volunteers or paid, working with Children and Vulnerable Persons have completed Garda vetting clearance before engaging with an Organisation or services.
- (c) Also under the Children First Act 2015 the following **must** be adhered to ensure Children are safe from Harm:
 - The selection and recruitment of individuals who are suitable to work with Children
 - Provide information and training to individuals on Child protection and safeguarding issues.
- (d) Additionally, more guidance and support can be found in the Club Management Guide which can be found on the FAI website.

11.4. FAI training

The Association offers three safeguarding courses which have been developed by Sport Ireland. Each course is targeted at certain roles within a Club/League

Safeguarding 1- Basic awareness:

- This course is targeted at all volunteers, coaches, committee members and staff within a service for Children. It provides a good basic understanding of Child protection legislation and educates participants on the implementation of best practice in protecting the welfare of children involved in football.
- The course should be refreshed every 3 years. The initial course should always be a face to face course.
- After 3 years the individual can complete the Sport Ireland online refresher. Once the individual completes this online course they should print off the completion certificate and attached it to the certificate obtain during the face to face course.
- The individual will need to present both as evidence for the next 3 years. After the total 6-year period has completed then the individual will need to attend the face to face course again.

Safeguarding 2- Children's Officer

- This course is targeted at all volunteers who undertake the role of Children's Officer. It provides a more in depth look at Child protection and also helps Clubs to have a child centre approach with their services.
- It also helps explain the role of the Children's Officer
- The Children's Officer should do a refresher course within a 3-year period to ensure they are aware of any relevant legislation.
- The course must to be completed by all Children Officers.

Safeguarding 3- Designated Liaison Person

- This course is targeted at the Designated Liaison Person's with Clubs/Leagues. It provides an in depth look at the Child protection legislations and the categories for abuse and reporting procedures.
- It also helps explain the role of the Designated Liaison Person.
- The Designated Liaison Person should do refresher the course within a 3-year period to ensure they are aware of any relevant legislation.
- The course must to be completed by all Designated Liaison Persons.

More information on booking the courses or contacting tutors who can deliver the courses can be found on the FAI website at <https://www.fai.ie/domestic/safeguarding/training>.



12. GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTION BETWEEN ADULTS AND CHILDREN

12.1. Conduct and Behaviour towards Children

- (a) All adults involved in football have an important role to play in promoting good practice. Their first priority has to be the Children's welfare, safety and enjoyment of the game.
- (b) Adults should be aware of the emotional, physical and personal needs of Children and should ensure that Children are treated with integrity and respect.
- (c) The trust implicit in adult Child relationships in sport places a duty of care on all adults, voluntary or professional to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the Child while engaged in football.
- (d) Adults have a crucial leadership role to play and contribute to the creation of a positive sporting environment for Children. This allows the Child to develop and express themselves in an open and secure way.
- (e) The principles referred to in Section 1 of this Policy should always be emphasised in football and Children should be given clear guidelines regarding acceptable standards of behaviour.

- (f) The importance of participation for each Child, best effort and enjoyment rather than winning should be stressed. All Children should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner and every Child, irrespective of ability, should be involved in football in an integrated and inclusive way where possible.
- (g) In particular all adult-Child relationships in football should be:
 - open, positive and encouraging;
 - defined by a mutually agreed set of goals and commitments;
 - respectful of the creativity and autonomy of Children;
 - carried out in a context where Children are protected and where their rights are promoted;
 - free from any abuse or any threat of such abuse;
 - respectful of the needs and developmental stage of the Child;
 - aimed at the promotion of enjoyment and individual progress;
 - in accordance with FAI policies and codes;
 - respectful but not unquestioning of authority;
 - aware that Children with disabilities or additional needs may be more vulnerable.

12.2. General Supervision of Children

It is important to create a safe and enjoyable environment in which to play and train and to ensure any risks in relation to premises, training facilities and equipment are minimised with the implementation of appropriate safety rules. Children need to be supervised at all times as the likelihood of accidents happening increases when adequate supervision is not in place.

In particular the following should be adhered to;

- (a) Ensure adequate Adult: Child ratios.
- (b) There should be at least one adult of each gender with mixed parties.
- (c) Children should be supervised at all times.
- (d) Adults should avoid being left alone with Children. Clearly state times for start and finish of training and/or competitions. If late collections occur, participants should remain in pairs until all players have left.
- (e) If a coach/manager needs to talk separately to a player this should be done in an open environment, in view of others.
- (f) Respect the privacy of Children while changing, coaches/managers may only need to enter changing rooms where the Participants are very young or require special assistance. When necessary, Participants should supervise in pairs or seek assistance, it is the safety and welfare of the Participants that is of paramount importance.
- (g) If a Child suffers an injury or accident the parents/guardians should be informed and necessary reports completed.
- (h) Activities being undertaken should be suitable for the ability, age, and experience of the participants.
- (i) Equipment and facilities should meet the highest possible standards and be appropriate to the maturity of the participants.
- (j) All FAI Goalpost Safety Guidelines must strictly be adhered to and enforced.
- (k) Where protective equipment is deemed necessary it should be used.

- (l) First Aid should be available for all training sessions and matches.

12.3. Transport of Children

- (a) Children being transported should have the express permission of parents/guardians to do so.
- (b) Appropriate insurance should be in place by the transporter and duties conducted in accordance with relevant legislation including the use of seat belts.
- (c) Only the permitted number of passengers should be allowed in specific transport.
- (d) Clear itineraries for transport arrangements including collection and drop off details and contact details for the appropriate adults in charge should be provided.
- (e) Personnel shall not allow themselves be alone with any one Child when assisting with transport arrangements.
- (f) The use of private cars may be necessary from time to time but where possible this should be avoided.
- (g) Parents/guardians have a responsibility to ensure that they are fully aware of any transport arrangements and that they are happy with them.
- (h) Children should be collected promptly and it is a matter for parents/guardians to make any necessary arrangements.
- (i) In the event that a parent/guardian is late for collection or drop off immediate contact should be made with the contact person involved.
- (j) In the event a Child is late being collected efforts should be made to contact the parent/guardian to make whatever other appropriate arrangements can be made.
- (k) It is a matter for parents/guardians to arrange transport to events for Children unless specific arrangements are made.
- (l) If a private arrangement is made between parents/guardians they should be aware that there are extra responsibilities placed on persons who transport players to events.

12.4. Overnight and away trips

All FAI employees, independent contractors and Affiliated Members have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the players with whom they work as far as possible within the limits of their control. There are additional responsibilities placed on adults accompanying teams in relation to the organisation of away trips and overnights.

The following general guidelines should be followed:

- (a) Trips away should be covered within the Clubs/Leagues Risk Assessment and Child Safeguarding Statement
- (b) All adults who travel on away trips with Children should be carefully chosen and appropriately vetted.
- (c) Written permission of parents/guardians shall be required for all overnight trips. Parents/Guardians should complete the Parent/Guardian Medical Consent Form as attached in Appendix 7 disclosing any medical conditions or special needs of their Child/Children.
- (d) A meeting with parents and Participants is useful to communicate travel times, competition details, other activities, gear requirements, medical requirements, special dietary needs and any other necessary details. Ground rules and behavioural expectations can also be discussed.
- (e) Participants should sign a behaviour agreement.
- (f) Any group socialisation should take place in communal areas (i.e. no group gatherings in bedrooms at all).
- (g) Alcoholic drink, smoking and other illegal substances/activities shall be forbidden and adults are

expected to act as appropriate role models in this respect.

- (h) Lights out times should be enforced.
- (i) The roles and responsibilities of adults participating in away trips should be clearly defined.
- (j) The organising body should appoint a team manager/head of delegation for all away trips having overall responsibility for the Children's wellbeing, behaviour and sleeping arrangements. Children should be informed at the outset to whom they can report any concerns they might have and shall be clearly encouraged to tell anybody if they should have a concern.
- (k) On away trips, coaches should be accountable to the appointed team manager/head of delegation in all non-performance related matters.
- (l) Where there are mixed teams there should be at least one female in the management/coaching structure.
- (m) The team manager/head of delegation should submit a report as soon as possible after the trip recording any incidents/accidents or simply recording that no incidents arose.
- (n) Adults should never share a room with a Child. Where the presence of an adult is absolutely necessary due to accommodation arrangements this should be agreed with parents/guardians in advance and arrangements made to ensure there should be an agreed number of children in the room with the adult.
- (o) If Children are sharing rooms, it should be with those of the same age and sex, this should be agreed with parents/guardians in advance and should be strictly supervised
- (p) Adults should respect Children's privacy and knock before entering rooms.
- (q) Adults should avoid being alone with one Child. If talking separately, do so in an open environment, in view of others.
- (r) Best practice is to ensure two coaches are on site for each team. Adequate Child ratios should always be maintained (this can depend on the ages of the Children, the nature of the activity involved or any special needs of the group) Sport Ireland provide a general guidance of 1:8 for under 12 years of ages and 1:10 for over 12 years of age. Ensure at least one adult of each gender with mixed parties and that there is adequate supervision at all times.
- (s) Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover for the trip and that any incidents are correctly reported.
- (t) Parents/Guardians should be informed as soon as possible if their Child suffers any significant injury, accident or becomes unwell.

12.5. Hosting Children

Being a host family or being hosted is an integral part of many sports and, if handled appropriately, can add to a Child's enjoyment and experience at a competition. Hosting can be a challenging role but also very rewarding. Special care should be taken in the selection of homes for overnight stays. A host should be provided with as much information about the Child/Children staying with them and details of the competition.

- (a) Where practicable, more than one child should be placed with each host family. The host family should agree to provide references and be vetted. In addition, clubs should follow recommended recruitment and selection procedures.

- (b) When arranging hosting for events/trips abroad, Clubs, Leagues, Provisional Associations and other football bodies will be dependent on the ability of the host organisation to access vetting services and obtain appropriate references. It is the responsibility of the trip organiser to provide the hosts with the relevant information on the Child and details of what is expected.
- (c) Host families' arrangements and procedures should be included and considered within the Risk Assessment and Child Safeguarding Statement for the Club, League and Provincial Association.
- (d) Host families should:
 - Agree to abide by the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.
 - Consent to appropriate vetting checks and references.
 - Attend host family meetings before competitions or events.
 - Provide a safe and supportive environment for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Persons.
 - Should not ask a Child to share a bed or room with an adult.
- (e) Organisers shall:
 - Provide a travel pack to hosting families, including sleeping arrangement guidance set out in point 12.4 of the policy
 - Check out vetting and references with hosting families.
 - Provide an itinerary of the trip.
 - Gather information on destination and venue.
- (f) Children and Vulnerable persons:
 - Should sign an age appropriate behaviour agreement
 - Should be happy with the arrangements.
 - Should show respect to the host families.
- (g) Parent and Guardians should:
 - Receive information on the host family
 - Be happy with the arrangements
 - Give consent to the arrangements
 - Be provided with an itinerary of the trip

12.6. Changing facilities

- (a) Where possible Children should have sole use of changing facilities and all efforts should be made to try and secure separate facilities for Children. As many Children are self-conscious about changing in front of others it may become more suitable to ask Children to change at home before and after activities. A common-sense approach should be adopted as to what the parents/guardians may prefer.
- (b) Where facilities are being used by Children proper supervision is required and careful consideration should be given to who should be supervising.
- (c) Those persons should be suitable for such supervision, being vetted and recruited in line with the safe procedures outlined in this Policy.
- (d) Adults in such supervisory roles should balance the need of supervision with respect of the privacy of Children at all times.
- (e) It is recommended that more than one adult supervise at any time and supervisors are of the same gender as the Children involved.
- (f) Contact between other adults and Children should be avoided by careful timing of the changing facilities and adequate notices being put in place. Where mixed changing facilities with adults and Children are unavoidable proper adult supervision is even more important.

- (g) Parents may be of valuable assistance but should also be suitable for undertaking this responsibility.
- (h) Where mixed gender teams are involved arrangements should be made to allow for separate changing facilities. This can be accomplished through timing arrangements, changing at home only, allocating rooms or areas which are screened off

12.7. Accidents/Incidents

- (a) Any accidents or incidents involving Children should be reported in full to the Children's Officer by completion of the appropriate report in Appendix 8.
- (b) If a Child is referred for medical treatment contact should immediately be made with the Child's parent/guardian and the relevant consent form located for medical treatment.
- (c) The Child should be accompanied by the person in charge of the Child, if for any reason enquiries should be made regarding any diagnosis or treatment.
- (d) An incident report form should be completed in all cases whether medical treatment is required or not.
- (e) In all cases insurers should be notified of the incident and the report form submitted for their records.

12.8. Insurance

- (a) Appropriate Insurance must be in place to cover organised activities and programmes undertaken with Children or otherwise.
- (b) Away trips must be included in such cover and your insurance company must be informed in advance of such trips.
- (c) In relation to away trips, parents/guardians must be advised of the need for comprehensive personal insurance to cover the Child, to include but not limited to medical or health insurance.
- (d) Adults transporting Children in their personal vehicles should be aware of the extent and limits of their own motor insurance cover, particularly in relation to acceptable numbers and liability.
- (e) Further guidance on insurance can be found within the Club Management Guide on the FAI website.



13. COMPLAINTS

13.1. Complaints regarding the Policy

- (a) Should any person wish to make a complaint regarding the application of the Policy by the FAI the complaint should be made in writing and addressed to the Chief Executive Officer or the Company Secretary. All relevant information should be included regarding the subject of the complaint. On receipt, the complaint shall be reviewed and a response shall be issued as soon as possible.

13.2. Child Welfare Complaints

- (a) Complaints relating to Child Welfare matters should be reported in accordance with the Reporting Procedure as outlined in section 5 of the Policy.

13.3. Complaints relating to FAI Employees/Independent Contractors

- (a) Complaints relating to FAI employees or independent contractors should be reported to the FAI for review. Employees shall be advised of any complaints made against them and afforded the opportunity to respond in line with relevant HR policies.



14. CONFIDENTIALITY

14.1. All matters relating to the welfare and protection of Children shall be managed in accordance with the Policy and the following principles shall be adhered to;

- (a) All complaints, concerns and allegations shall be handled in the best interests of the child concerned and in a careful and sensitive manner. It is a matter for the Designated Liaison Person to determine the persons to be advised in such circumstances.
- (b) No undertakings regarding secrecy shall be given to any party.
- (c) All information regarding concerns relating to Child protection and welfare shall be shared on 'a need to know' basis in the interests of the Child. This shall not be deemed a breach of confidentiality.
- (d) The exchange of information with the Statutory Authorities for ensuring the protection of Children is not a breach of confidentiality.
- (e) Any information gathered for one purpose will not be used for any another purpose without consultation with the persons who provided that information.
- (f) All FAI employees and independent contractors working with Children and Vulnerable Persons shall be trained in respect of the confidentiality and how information shall be disseminated to the parties involved. At all times, the protection of a Child shall determine decisions made by FAI employees to share and exchange relevant information.
- (g) All breaches of confidentiality shall be considered extremely serious and dealt with accordingly.



15. RECORD KEEPING

- 15.1. All information gathered by the FAI shall be stored in a secure location with access only by the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Department or other relevant departments i.e. for employees of the FAI the Human Resources department will have access, Statutory Authorities and where necessary Authorised Signatories.
- 15.2. All records shall be maintained in an accurate manner so as to ensure the protection of children and all information shall be recorded.
- 15.3. Records shall be presented so that clear information may be accessed by the Statutory Authorities if necessary.
- 15.4. Child Welfare and Safeguarding casework such a complaint or investigation will be held for 5 years from when the casework began plus one year.
- 15.5. Garda Vetting applications are stored and kept as detailed in section 10 of the Policy.



16. DATA PROTECTION

- 16.1. The FAI holds all information in accordance with data protection legislation and in line with the FAI Data Protection Policy.
- 16.2. Information shall not be passed to third parties unless by consent or deemed necessary for the protection and welfare of Children or otherwise in line with the Policy and the data protection policy.

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APPENDIX 1 Club/League Checklist

- Does your Club /League have a Child Safeguarding Statement?
- Is this clearly displayed, this may be on the Club /League website or at training/playing venues?
- Is the Child Safeguarding Statement readily available from the Club/League if requested?
- Does the Child Safeguarding Statement clearly state who the Mandated Persons are for the League/Club and how to contact them?
- Has your club completed a Risk Assessment in relation to Child Welfare concerns?
- Do you know when is it due to be reviewed and which risks need improvement?
- Does the Club/ League have a Children's Officer, to handle all Child Welfare concerns?
- Has your Children's Officer completed both Safeguarding One and Two Workshops and are they Garda Vetted?
- Is your Children's Officer aware of how to handle any Child Welfare Concerns which are raised to them or the League/Club in line with the Concern/ Complaint Policy?
- Does your Club/ League know who the Designated Liaison Person is?
- Has the Designated Liaison Person completed both the Safeguarding One and Three Workshops and are they Garda Vetted?
- Is your Designated Liaison Person fully aware of how to report concerns to the relevant statutory authorities?
- Do all your coaches have valid, in date Garda Vetting Clearance?
- Do all your staff/volunteers and relevant committee members have valid in date Garda Vetting Clearance?
- Is your club aware of the enforceable penalties for engaging with staff or volunteers without Garda Clearance from the FAI?
- Have all your coaches completed the Safeguarding One Workshop?
- Have you followed the safe recruitment practise within the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy when taking on staff or Volunteers? Such as obtaining reference?
- Is the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy easily accessible to all your members?



As part of the Risk Assessment process, the Club/League should reflect on what specific risks arise as a result of the service you provide and how these risks can be managed. The following steps are a guide to help the Club/League consider where the potential for risk lies and how these risks can be managed.

Step 1- Identify potential risks

Think about who or what might cause Harm to Children using your service. Make sure all persons in the service, including Children, are involved in this process. Different people will have different perceptions of what is a risk.

Step 2- Rank each risk

Rank each risk in terms of low, medium and high risks. To help rank each risk, consider the likelihood of the risk occurring and how serious the consequences could be.

Step 3- Control and manage the risk

Who owns the risk? Assign risk owners. What current controls are in place to reduce the risk? What future actions must be done to reduce the risk? What else do you need to do about the risk?

Step 4- Monitor and review

Are the controls effective? Are the actions effective?

A sample template of the Risk Assessment format can be found in Appendix 3 and the full sample template can be found at <https://www.fai.ie/domestic/safeguarding/documents>. The list of risks in the sample template is not exhaustive and it must be tailored to the specific Organisation as appropriate.



APPENDIX 3

Sample Risk Assessment Document for *(insert Club/Region/NGB)*

This risk assessment considers the potential for harm to come to children whilst they are in *(insert Club/Region/NGB)*'s care. This Risk Assessment precedes the Child Safeguarding Statement (Section 11 (1b) Children First Act 2015) which is developed following this risk assessment process. In accordance with the requirements of *Section 11 (1) of the Children First Act 2015 the risk is of abuse and not general health and safety risk (covered under a separate H&S policy and risk assessment)*.

Section 11 (1) of the Children First Act 2015 states that where a person proposes to operate as a provider of a relevant service, he or she shall, within 3 months from the date on which he or she commences as such a provider —

- (a) Undertake an assessment of any potential for harm to a child while availing of the service (in this section referred to as a "risk").

Potential risk of harm to children	Likelihood of harm happening L-M-H	Required Policy, Guidance and Procedure document	Responsibility Club/Region/National	Further action required
CLUB & COACHING PRACTICES				
Potential risk of harm to children	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coach education policy ■ Recruitment policy 		Proof of qualification to be confirmed
Supervision issues		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supervision policy ■ Coach education policy 		Ongoing review
Unauthorised photography & recording activities		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Photography and Use of Images policy 		Ongoing review
Behavioural Issues		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Code of Conduct ■ Safeguarding Level 1 (min) ■ Complaints & Disciplinary policy 		Ongoing review
Lack of gender balance amongst coaches		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Coach education policy ■ Supervision policy 		Ongoing review



SCHEDULE OF MANDATED PERSONS UNDER THE CHILDREN FIRST ACT 2015

Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015 specifies the following classes of persons as Mandated Persons for the purposes of the Act:

1. Registered medical practitioner within the meaning of section 2 of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007.
2. Registered nurse or registered midwife within the meaning of section 2(1) of the Nurses and Midwives Act 2011.
3. Physiotherapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
4. Speech and language therapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
5. Occupational therapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
6. Registered dentist within the meaning of section 2 of the Dentists Act 1985.
7. Psychologist who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in the register (if any) of members of that profession.
8. Social care worker who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in accordance with Part 4 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 in the register of that profession.
9. Social worker who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in accordance with Part 4 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 in the register (if any) of that profession.
10. Emergency medical technician, paramedic and advanced paramedic registered with the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council under the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (Establishment) Order 2000 (S.I. No. 109 of 2000).
11. Probation officer within the meaning of section 1 of the Criminal Justice (Community Service) Act 1983.
12. Teacher registered with the Teaching Council.
13. Member of An Garda Síochána.
14. Guardian ad litem appointed in accordance with section 26 of the Child Care Act 1991.
15. Person employed in any of the following capacities:
 - (a) manager of domestic violence shelter;
 - (b) manager of homeless provision or emergency accommodation facility;
 - (c) manager of asylum seeker accommodation (direct provision) centre;
 - (d) addiction counsellor employed by a body funded, wholly or partly, out of moneys provided by the Oireachtas;
 - (e) psychotherapist or a person providing counselling who is registered with one of the voluntary professional bodies;
 - (f) manager of a language school or other recreational school where children reside away from home;
 - (g) member of the clergy (howsoever described) or pastoral care worker (howsoever described) of a church or other religious community;

- (h) director of any institution where a child is detained by an order of a court;
- (i) safeguarding officer, child protection officer or other person (howsoever described) who is employed for the purpose of performing the child welfare and protection function of religious, sporting, recreational, cultural, educational and other bodies and organisations offering services to children;
- (j) child care staff member employed in a pre-school service within the meaning of Part VIIA of the Child Care Act 1991;
- (k) person responsible for the care or management of a youth work service within the meaning of section 2 of the Youth Work Act 2001.

16. Youth worker who—

- (a) holds a professional qualification that is recognised by the National Qualifications Authority in youth work within the meaning of section 3 of the Youth Work Act 2001 or a related discipline, and
- (b) is employed in a youth work service within the meaning of section 2 of the Youth Work Act 2001.

17. Foster carer registered with the Agency.

18. A person carrying on a pre-school service within the meaning of Part VIIA of the Child Care Act 1991.



Thresholds and Criteria of Abuse for Mandated Persons

Mandated persons have two main legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015. These are:

1. To report the harm of children above a defined threshold to Tusla;
2. To assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.

As a mandated person, under the legislation you are required to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed. The Act defines harm as assault, ill-treatment, neglect or sexual abuse, and covers single and multiple instances.

If you are in doubt about whether your concern reaches the legal definition of harm for making a mandated report, Tusla can provide advice in this regard. You can find details of who to contact to discuss your concern on the Tusla website (www.tusla.ie). If your concern does not reach the threshold for mandated reporting, but you feel it is a reasonable concern about the welfare or protection of a child, you should report it to Tusla under the guidance given within the Policy.

NEGLECT

Neglect is defined as 'to deprive a child of adequate food, warmth, clothing, hygiene, supervision, safety or medical care'. The threshold of harm, at which you must report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015, is reached when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child's needs have been neglected, are being neglected, or are at risk of being neglected to the point where **the child's health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.**

EMOTIONAL ABUSE/ILL-TREATMENT

Ill-treatment is defined as 'to abandon or cruelly treat the child, or to cause or procure or allow the child to be abandoned or cruelly treated'. Emotional abuse is covered in the definition of ill-treatment used in the Children First Act 2015.

The threshold of harm, at which you must report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015, is reached when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being ill-treated to the point where **the child's health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.**

PHYSICAL ABUSE

Physical abuse is covered in the references to assault in the Children First Act 2015. The threshold of harm, at which you must report to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015, is reached when you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being assaulted and that as a result **the child's health, development or welfare have been or are being seriously affected, or are likely to be seriously affected.**

SEXUAL ABUSE

If, as a mandated person, you know, believe or have reasonable grounds to suspect that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being sexually abused, then you must report this to Tusla under the Children First Act 2015. Sexual abuse to be reported under the Children First Act 2015 [as amended by section 55 of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017] is defined as an offence against the child, as listed in Schedule 3 of the Children First Act 2015.

A full list of relevant offences against the child which are considered sexual abuse is set out in Appendix 3 of Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.

As all sexual abuse falls within the category of seriously affecting a child's health, welfare or development, you must submit all concerns about sexual abuse as a mandated report to Tusla. There is one exception, which deals with certain consensual sexual activity between teenagers, which is outlined below;

Exemptions from requirements to report

UNDERAGE CONSENSUAL SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Under the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2006 the legal age of consent is 17 years. While a sexual relationship where one or both parties is under 17 years of age is illegal, when making a mandated report to Tusla, it might not be regarded as child sexual abuse.

There are certain exemptions from reporting underage consensual sexual activity under section 14(3) of the Children First Act 2015. If you are satisfied that all of the following criteria are met, you are not required to make a report to Tusla:

- The young person(s) concerned are between 15 and 17 years old
- The age difference between them is not more than 24 months
- There is no material difference in their maturity or capacity to consent
- The relationship between the people engaged in the sexual activity does not involve intimidation or exploitation of either person

The young persons concerned state clearly that they do not want any information about the activity to be disclosed to Tusla. In effect, this means that if all of the above criteria are met, you as a mandated person do not have to report consensual sexual activity between older teenagers as sexual abuse to Tusla.

Joint reporting

As a mandated person you can make a report jointly with another person, whether that person is also a mandated person or not.

There is nothing in the Act to prevent you from either making a mandated report jointly with a designated liaison person or providing a copy of the mandated report you have submitted to Tusla for the information of the designated liaison person.

As a mandated person, you should be aware that the legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015 to report mandated concerns rest with you and not with the designated liaison person.

Where mandated persons share the same concern or information, only one person is required to report, or they can report jointly.

What if my concern does not meet the threshold for a mandated report?

If your concern does not reach the threshold for mandated reporting, but you feel it is a reasonable concern about the welfare or protection of a child, you should report it to Tusla under Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

Reporting forms can be found in Appendix 6.

Dealing with a retrospective allegation

Some adults may disclose abuse that took place during their childhood. Such disclosures may come to light when an adult attends counselling, or is being treated for a psychiatric or health problem. If you are, for example, a counsellor or health professional, and you receive a disclosure from a client that they were abused as a child, you should report this information to Tusla, as the alleged abuser may pose a current risk to children.

The reporting requirements under the Children First Act 2015 apply only to information that you, as a mandated person, received or became aware of since the Act came into force, whether the harm occurred before or after that point. However, if you have a reasonable concern about past abuse, where information came to your attention before the Act and there is a possible continuing risk to children, you should report it to Tusla under Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

Forms for Retrospective abuse report can be found at https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Retrospective_Abuse_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf

Further details on Mandated persons roles and responsibilities and reporting can be found within the Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.



Use block letters when filling out this form. Fields marked with an * are mandatory.

1. Tusla Area (this is where the child resides)*	
2. Date of Report*	

3. Details of Child

First Name*		Surname*	
Male* <input type="checkbox"/>	Female* <input type="checkbox"/>	Date of Birth*	
Address*		Estimated Age*	
		School Name*	
		School Address*	
Eircode			

4. Details of Concerns*

Please complete the following section with as much detail about the specific child protection or welfare concern or allegation as possible. Include dates, times, incident details and names of anyone who observed any incident. Please include the parents and child's view, if known. Please attach additional sheets, if necessary

Please see *'Tusla Children First – A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns'* for additional assistance on the steps to consider in making a report to Tusla

5. Type of Concern

Child Welfare Concern	<input type="checkbox"/>	Neglect	<input type="checkbox"/>	Sexual Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>
Emotional Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Details of Reporter

First Name		Surname	
Address If reporting in a professional capacity, please use your professional address		Organisation	
		Position Held	
		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
Eircode		Email Address	

Is this a Mandated Report made under Sec 14, Children First Act 2015?* Yes No

Mandated Person's Type

7. Details of Other Persons Where a Joint Report is Being Made

First Name		Surname	
Address If reporting in a professional capacity, please use your professional address		Organisation	
		Position Held	
		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
Eircode		Email Address	

First Name		Surname	
Address If reporting in a professional capacity, please use your professional address		Organisation	
		Position Held	
		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
Eircode		Email Address	

8. Parents Aware of Report

Are the child's parents/carers aware that this concern is being reported to Tusla?* Yes No

If the parent/carer does not know, please indicate reasons:

9. Relationships

Details of Mother			
First Name		Surname	
Address		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
		Email Address	
Eircode			
Is the Mother a Legal Guardian?*		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

Details of Father			
First Name		Surname	
Address		Mobile No.	
		Telephone No.	
		Email Address	
Eircode			
Is the Father a Legal Guardian?*		Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

10. Household Composition

First Name	Surname	Relationship	Date of Birth	Estimated Age	Additional Information e.g. school, occupation, other

11. Details of Person(s) Allegedly Causing Harm

First Name*	<input type="text"/>	Surname*	<input type="text"/>
Male* <input type="checkbox"/>	Female* <input type="checkbox"/>	Date of Birth	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>	Estimated Age	<input type="text"/>
		Mobile No.	<input type="text"/>
		Telephone No.	<input type="text"/>
		Email Address	<input type="text"/>
		Organisation	<input type="text"/>
		Occupation	<input type="text"/>
Eircode	<input type="text"/>	Position Held	<input type="text"/>
Relationship to Child		<input type="text"/>	
Address at time of alleged incident		<input type="text"/>	
If name unknown please indicate reason		<input type="text"/>	

First Name*	<input type="text"/>	Surname*	<input type="text"/>
Male* <input type="checkbox"/>	Female* <input type="checkbox"/>	Date of Birth	<input type="text"/>
Address	<input type="text"/>	Estimated Age	<input type="text"/>
		Mobile No.	<input type="text"/>
		Telephone No.	<input type="text"/>
		Email Address	<input type="text"/>
		Organisation	<input type="text"/>
		Occupation	<input type="text"/>
Eircode	<input type="text"/>	Position Held	<input type="text"/>
Relationship to Child		<input type="text"/>	
Address at time of alleged incident		<input type="text"/>	
If name unknown please indicate reason		<input type="text"/>	

12. Name and Address of Other Organisations, Personnel or Agencies Known to be Involved Currently or Previously with the Family

Profession	First Name	Surname	Address	Contact Number	Recent Contact e.g. 3/6/9 months ago
Social Worker					
Public Health Nurse					
GP					
Hospital					
School					
Gardaí					
Pre-school/ crèche					
Other					

13. Any Other Relevant Information, Including any Previous Contact with the Child or Family

Please ensure you have indicated if this is a mandated report in section 6.
Thank you for completing the report form.

In completing this report form you are providing details on yourself and on others. Details such as name, address and date of birth fall under the definition of 'Personal Data' in the Data Protection Acts, 1988 & 2003. Tusla has a responsibility under these Acts in its capacity as a Data Controller to, amongst other things, obtain and process this data fairly; keep it safe and secure; and to keep it for a specified lawful purpose. That purpose is to fulfil our statutory responsibility under the Child Care Act 1991 to promote the protection and welfare of children. Tusla may, during the course of the assessment of this report disclose such Personal Data to other agencies including An Garda Síochána. Further details about Tusla's responsibilities as a Data Controller and your rights as a Data Subject can be found on our website, www.tusla.ie. As you are providing Personal Data on others, you are a Data Processor. We ask that you only provide those details that are necessary for the report and that you keep this report and the Personal Data contained in it secure from unauthorised access, disclosure, destruction or accidental loss.

14. For Completion by Tusla Authorised Person on Receipt of Report

Report Received by

First Name

Surname

Date

Mandated Report Acknowledgement by

First Name

Surname

Date Sent

Authorised Person Signature*

Date*

Child Previously Known

Yes

No

Allocated Case No



CLUB NAME	
------------------	--

Parent/ Guardian Medical Consent Form

Name of Athlete	
------------------------	--

Address	
----------------	--

Date of Birth	
----------------------	--

Parent/Guardian Contact Tel. Number	
--	--

Parent/Guardian Alternative Tel. Number	
--	--

Club	
-------------	--

Medical Information

Any specific medical requirements?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
---	---

Any specific medical requirements?	<hr/> <hr/>
---	-------------

Any specific medical requirements?	<hr/> <hr/>
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In the event of a medical emergency, I/We authorise the Football Association of Ireland's nominated Event Leader to consent to emergency medical treatment as may be deemed necessary on appropriate professional medical advice.

Signed (Parent/Guardian)	
---------------------------------	--

Please print name	
--------------------------	--

Date	
-------------	--



CLUB NAME	
-----------	--

Accident/Incident Report Form (Please use block capitals or type this form)

Name of person completing this form	
-------------------------------------	--

Title/Role	
------------	--

Address	
---------	--

Tel. Number	
-------------	--

Mobile Number	
---------------	--

Accident Details

Date and Time	
---------------	--

Venue	
-------	--

Name of person completing this form	
-------------------------------------	--

Name of person completing this form	
-------------------------------------	--

Name of person completing this form	
-------------------------------------	--

Witness 1 Contact Details	
---------------------------	--

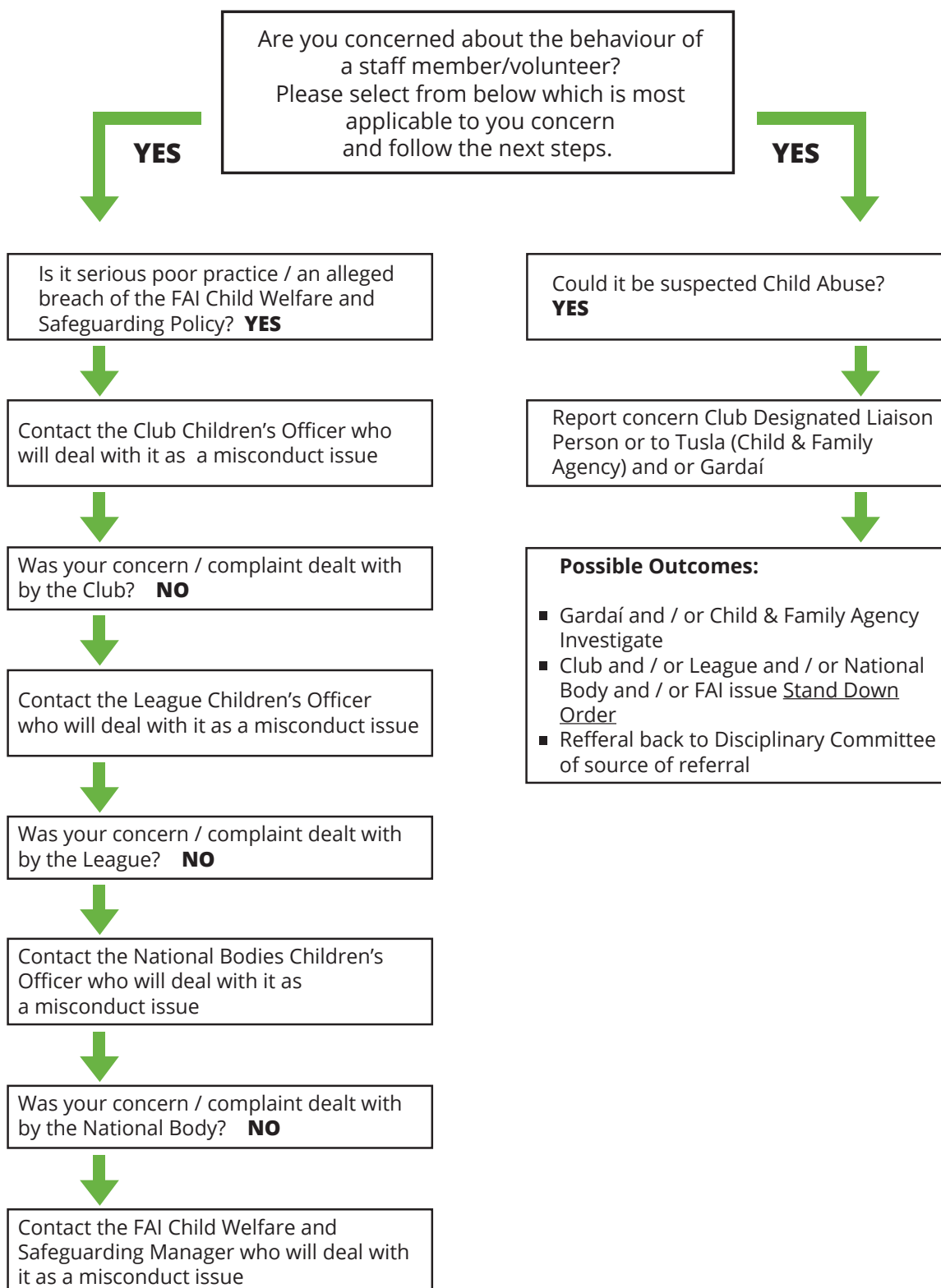
Witness 2 Contact Details	
---------------------------	--

Signature	
-----------	--

Date	
------	--



Concern / Complaint Procedure





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Glossary

- **Affiliated Member** of the Association shall mean all National Bodies, Provincial Associations, leagues, clubs and AGM Members who have affiliated directly to the FAI or to their respective governing body.
- **Children, Child or Young Person** shall mean a person under the age of 18 other than a person who is or has been married.
- **Clubs/League Children's Officer** shall mean the person who the Child welfare day to day functions are delegated to. Their remit shall be a key component of the Safeguarding Statement and they shall be the Relevant Person for the Child Safeguarding Statement.
- **Designated Liaison Person** shall mean the person who is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures within the Club/League are followed so that child welfare and protection concerns are referred promptly to Statutory Authorities and will also liaise with outside agencies. Additionally, they will be a resource person to any employee or volunteer who has child protection concerns.
- **Executive Committee** shall mean the Committee of the Affiliated Member responsible for the day to day running of the Affiliated Member.
- **Incident Form-** Shall mean the document which should be completed when making a report of poor practise.
- **National Body** shall mean the Colleges Football Association of Ireland (CFAI), Defence Forces Football Association (DFFA), Football Association of Ireland Schools (FAIS), Football For All (FFA), Irish Soccer Referees Society (ISRS), Irish Universities Football Union (IUFU), Junior Council and the Schoolboys Football Association of Ireland (SFAI).
- **Provincial Associations** shall mean the Connaught Football Association (CFA), Leinster Football Association (LFA), Munster Football Association (MFA) and Ulster Football Association (UFA).
- **Reporting Form** shall mean the document which should be completed when making a report of Child abuse.
- **Stand Down Order** shall mean an order which is issued to any person who is the subject of a complaint or inquiry by a Statutory Authority in relation to any Child welfare or Vulnerable Person concern. A Stand Down Order is issued to an individual to immediately refrain from particular activities within the FAI for a specified or indefinite period pending the outcome of an enquiry or investigation in accordance with FAI Rules.
- **Statutory Authorities** shall mean those state bodies which promote the welfare and protection of Children and Vulnerable Persons and have a legal responsibility for the investigation and/or validation of suspected abuse, and these include An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and any other authority as may be appropriate from time to time.
- **The Policy** shall mean this FAI Concerns / Complaints Policy.
- **Vulnerable Person** means a person, other than a Child, who—
 1. is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia,
 2. has an intellectual disability,
 3. is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age, or
 4. has a physical disability,

which is of such a nature or degree—

 1. as to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or
 2. that results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing.

Please note- within the Policy where Child/Children is referred to there may be occasions when it may also be applicable to Vulnerable Persons.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This document is written to provide clear and unambiguous procedures for responding to cases of suspected poor practice and/or abuse. It aims to set out guidelines and procedures on how to take action if there are any concerns about a Child's or Vulnerable Person's safety and welfare, for those working in a voluntary or paid capacity with Children or Vulnerable Persons within the game.
- 1.2. There is a responsibility on all volunteers/ staff within the game of Association football in Ireland to protect Children, Young Persons and Vulnerable Persons and report suspected abuse so that the Statutory Authorities can investigate. However, it is important to distinguish between poor practice and abuse.

2. What is Poor Practice?

- 2.1. Incidents of poor practice occur when the needs of Children or Vulnerable Persons are compromised. Examples of poor practice are likely to be once off incidents and these might include but are not limited to:

2.2. Coach

1. Giving preferential treatment to individuals and unfairly rejecting others (e.g. singling out and only focusing on the talented Children and failing to involve the full squad).
2. Giving preference to winning games over Children's development, participation and satisfaction.
3. Encouraging Children to play while injured.
4. Using inappropriate language, gestures or comments to motivate Children or provoke a reaction.
5. Delivering a coaching session alone, without another responsible adult present.
6. Not paying due care and attention to the Children taking part in the training session or game.
7. Failing to recognise and applaud a Child's efforts to make improvements to their game.
8. Coaching alone when their own child is part of the team.
9. Entering the field of play as a coach/manager when their own child is involved in an on-field incident.

2.3. Parent / Guardian

1. Placing too much pressure on their Child to perform to a high standard and win games.
2. Criticising their Child's performances instead of highlighting the positives of their game and where improvements were made.
3. Failing to ensure that their Child is appropriately dressed for the weather conditions.
4. Making derogatory comments about their Child, or another Child during a game or training session.
5. Failing to bring their Child to training on time, or collect them promptly at the end of the session.

2.4. Supporters

1. Using inappropriate language towards Children, coaches, referees or other supporters.
2. Making inappropriate comments about the performance of Children, coaches or referees.
3. Entering the field of play during a match or training session without being asked to do so.

2.5. The Club

1. Failing to provide adequate safeguarding arrangements for the Children in their care.
2. Failing to implement FAI Rules on the protection and welfare of Children, the FAI Child Welfare Policy and other supporting documents.
3. Placing undue pressure on a coach or team of Children to win games or competitions.
4. Allowing poor practice to go unreported (e.g. a coach who ridicules and criticises Children who make a mistake during a match).

5. Failing to create an environment that encourages player development and enjoyment over winning games and trophies.
6. Failing to provide appropriate safeguarding education for their coaches and members.
7. Not having procedures in place to ensure a parent/guardian does not coach their own child's team alone and that they do not enter the field of play as the coach or manager when their own child is involved in an on-field incident.

2.6. General

1. Shouting at or ridiculing Children when they make a mistake. Children should be given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and develop.
2. Allowing Children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
3. Placing Children in potentially compromising and uncomfortable situations with adults.
4. Ignoring health and safety guidelines (e.g. allowing Children to set up goal posts unsupervised by adults).
5. Failing to adhere to the club's codes of practice.

2.7. Points to remember

1. Judgement about whether an incident is one of Child abuse or poor practice may not be possible at the point of referral, but only after the collation of relevant information.
2. The majority of poor practice concerns should be dealt with directly by the club in the first instance. Please refer to Section 3 for guidance on how to deal with an example of Poor Practice.

3. How to Deal with Alleged Poor Practice

- 3.1. Where alleged poor practice has been identified or reported, it must be dealt with in a fair and impartial manner. All information should be treated in the strictest of confidence, in accordance with procedures concerning confidentiality outlined in the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.
- 3.2. When an example of alleged poor practice is reported, it should be dealt with on a case by case basis. The following steps provide guidance as to how a complaint of poor practice could be handled:
 1. Alleged poor practice is observed and/or reported. This information is then passed on to the Children's Officer.
 2. Initial assessment is carried out by the Children's Officer who should collate all information / reports and record what action has been initially taken, if any.
 3. Inform the person(s) against which the report of alleged poor practice has been made and offer them the opportunity to respond.
 4. The Children's Officer should then record what the next step will be and if any other parties need to be approached to collect information or reports from.
 5. If information needs to be collected from Children this should be done in the presence of their parents or guardians. Collecting information from Children should only occur where necessary.
 6. All information should be treated in the strictest of confidence, in accordance with procedures concerning confidentiality outlined in the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.
 7. If the accused agrees that poor practice has taken place, they may be subject to an appropriate sanction. The matter should be referred by the Designated Liaison Person and / or Children's Officer to their Executive Committee for review. On assessment, the Executive Committee may refer the matter to an appropriate disciplinary body. This should be the body to which the matter was reported and if investigated in full no referral to a higher body is warranted.
 8. If the alleged poor practice is disputed, the Designated Liaison Person and / or Children's Officer must refer the matter to their Executive Committee for review. On assessment, the Executive Committee may refer the matter to an appropriate disciplinary body. This should be the body to which the matter was reported and if investigated in full no referral to a higher body is warranted.

9. Should a disciplinary hearing be required, the panel should be impartial consisting of at least 3 members. All parties should be provided with the opportunity to make further oral and / or written submissions.
10. Should the alleged poor practice relate to an individual that is under 18 years of age, **no meetings should be held with that person without the presence or permission of a parent/ guardian.** If a parent or guardian cannot attend then a coach chosen by the parents can attend in their place.
11. All parties should be informed of the decision of any such investigation or disciplinary hearing in **writing** as soon as possible on completion of same.

Note: If a party feels that the alleged Poor Practice has not been investigated in full, they should refer the matter to the appropriate Affiliated Member as outlined in the FAI Concern / Complaint Procedure (please see Appendix 1), for example, Club to League, League to National Body/Provincial Association, National Body/Provincial Association to FAI.

4. Possible Sanctions Involving Poor Practice

4.1. If there is cause to believe that poor practice has occurred, a sanction proportionate to the offence should be applied. Some examples of possible sanctions are likely to be, but are not limited to:

4.2. Coach

1. Issued with a verbal and / or written warning and warned as to their future conduct.
2. Required to re-attend an FAI approved Safeguarding course.
3. Required to step aside from duties for a specified period of time, or permanent removal.
4. Asked to work alongside a more experienced coach to ensure best practice is followed at all times.
5. Monitored by a nominated person as directed by the appropriate Committee.

4.3. Parent / Guardian and Supporters

1. Issued with a verbal and / or written warning and warned as to their future conduct.
2. Asked not to attend training sessions and / or games for a period of time, or permanent removal.
3. Required to attend an FAI approved Safeguarding 1 course.
4. Suspended from club and have club membership removed.

Note: Any suspension / removal of a parent / guardian should not impact the involvement of the Child. Drop off and collection of their Child should be facilitated to allow the Child attend training and matches.

4.4. The Club

1. Issued with a verbal and / or written warning and warned as to their future conduct.
2. Required to attend an FAI approved Safeguarding 2 or 3 course as appropriate to the role.
3. If a complaint of poor practice concerns a member of the Executive Committee, they may be asked to step down from their role for a specified period of time, or permanent removal.
4. Required to comply with recommendations concerning safeguarding practices from a higher body.

5. Child Abuse

5.1. Concerns identified as Child abuse will fall within the following categories:

1. Physical Abuse
2. Neglect
3. Sexual Abuse
4. Emotional Abuse
5. Bullying

Note: Further information on each form of abuse can be found in the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.

5.2. Grounds for Reasonable Concern

There are a number of indicators of abuse / suspected abuse, which include but are not limited to:

1. A direct disclosure / indication from a Child that they are / have been abused.
2. An account or report by a person who saw the Child being abused.
3. Consistent indication, over a period of time that a Child is suffering from abuse as defined in the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.
4. Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way.
5. A sudden change of temperament and / or personality in the Child.
6. Corroborative indicators supporting a concern e.g. pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indicators of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour.
- 7.

If you have any concerns you should discuss these with the Designated Liaison Person in your organisation. At any time, you can consult informally with Tusla (Child & Family Agency) if you have a concern.

Note: For more information on recognising child abuse, please refer to the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.

5.3. How to Respond to a Disclosure from a Child

Should a Child make a disclosure, the following points should be considered:

1. At all times, take the Child seriously.
2. Questions should be kept to a minimum. Your role is to listen, not to interview.
3. Praise the Child and assure them they have done the right thing.
4. Stay calm and do not react emotionally.
5. Do not make any judgemental statements about the alleged abuse or abuser.
6. Do not promise to keep the information a secret, but reassure the Child that any sharing of information will be to protect them.
7. Record exactly what has been said as soon as possible in line with recording procedures (Please see Appendix 2).
8. Explain to the Child what will happen next.
9. All information should be treated in the strictest of confidence, in accordance with procedures concerning confidentiality outlined in the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.

6. Reporting

- 6.1.** If a report of poor practice is made it should be recorded using the Incident Form in Appendix 2. This report should be submitted to the Children's Officer. A record should be kept of when the report was made, to whom and any response(s) received. For the avoidance of doubt, the person completing the Incident Form may in fact be the Children's Officer.
- 6.2.** If the report of Child abuse is made it should be recorded using the Reporting Form in Appendix 3. This report should be submitted to the Designated Liaison Person. Reporting procedures are detailed within Section 5 of the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy should be followed.
- 6.3.** In cases which are deemed to be poor practice, they should be dealt with in accordance with Section 3 of the Policy.
- 6.4.** In cases which are deemed child abuse they should be dealt with as follows:
1. Anyone can report a concern about a child. If you have any concerns about a child you should report it to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla).
 2. A report can be made in person, by telephone or in writing to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla).
 3. The Reporting Form should also be completed and submitted immediately to the Designated Liaison Person for your organisation, where appropriate.
 4. This report must also be forwarded to a Duty Social worker in the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) in the area where the child lives.
 5. To access the contact details of a Duty Social worker you will need to log onto www.tusla.ie, select 'Get in Touch', select 'Duty Social Work Teams'.
 6. If the Designated Liaison Person is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist, they should informally contact the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) who will advise whether or not the matter requires a formal report.
 7. If a child is in danger outside of office hours for the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) you need to contact the Gardai.

Note: In the event that the Designated Liaison Person decides that they do not have reasonable grounds for reporting any concerns - individuals are free to consult with, or make a report (formal or informal) to the Statutory Authorities themselves. More detail on reporting cases of Child Abuse can be found in the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy 2018.

7. Stand Down Order

- 7.1.** Any persons under investigation by a Statutory Authority must be issued with a Stand Down Order in accordance with the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.

8. Anonymous Complaints

- 8.1.** Whilst difficult to pursue, anonymous complaints should not be ignored. Anonymous complaints should be brought to the attention of the Designated Liaison Person and / or Children's Officer and investigated in full based on the information that has been provided. The investigation should be completed without prejudice to any person and it should be explained to all parties that there is an obligation to investigate all matters reported. Where necessary, having carefully considered all of the facts, a report to the Statutory Authorities may be submitted.



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Glossary

- **Affiliated Member** of the Association shall mean all National Bodies, Provincial Associations, leagues, clubs and AGM Members who have affiliated directly to the FAI or to their respective governing body.
- **Board** shall mean the Board of Management of the FAI.
- **Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee** shall mean a Committee of the FAI.
- **Children, Child or Young Person** shall mean individuals under the age of 18 other than a person who is or has been married.
- **Clubs/League Children’s Officer** shall mean the person who the Child welfare day to day functions is delegated to. Their remit shall be a key component of the Safeguarding Statement and they shall be the Relevant Person for the Child Safeguarding Statement.
- **Designated Liaison Person** shall mean the person who is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedure within the Club/League are followed so that Child welfare and protection concerns are referred promptly to Statutory Authorities and will also liaise with outside agencies. Additionally, they will be a resource person to any employee or volunteer who has Child protection concerns.
- **National Bodies** shall mean the Colleges Football Association of Ireland (CFAI), Defence Forces Football Association (DFFA), Football Association of Ireland Schools (FAIS), Football For All (FFA), Irish Soccer Referees Society (ISRS), Irish Universities Football Union (IUFU), Junior Council and Schoolboys Football Association of Ireland (SFAI)
- **Provincial Associations** shall mean the Connaught Football Association (CFA), Leinster Football Association (LFA), Munster Football Association (MFA) and Ulster Football Association (UFA).
- **Social Media** shall mean any form of electronic communication through which users share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content.
- **Stand Down Order** shall mean an order which is issued to any person who is the subject of a complaint or inquiry by a Statutory Authority in relation to any Child welfare or Vulnerable person concern. A Stand Down Order is issued to an individual to immediately refrain from particular activities within the FAI for a specified or indefinite period pending the outcome of an enquiry or investigation in accordance with FAI Rules.
- **Statutory Authorities** shall mean those state bodies which promote the welfare and protection of Children and Vulnerable person and have a legal responsibility for the investigation and / or validation of suspected child abuse, and these include An Garda Síochána, the Health Service Executive and the Child and Family Agency (Tusla).
- **The Association or the FAI** shall mean the Football Association of Ireland.
- **The Policy** shall mean this FAI Social Media Policy.
- **Vulnerable Person** means a person, other than a Child, who—
 - (a) is suffering from a disorder of the mind, whether as a result of mental illness or dementia,
 - (b) has an intellectual disability,
 - (c) is suffering from a physical impairment, whether as a result of injury, illness or age,
 - (d) has a physical disability,
 Which is of such a nature or degree:
 1. As to restrict the capacity of the person to guard himself or herself against harm by another person, or
 2. That results in the person requiring assistance with the activities of daily living including dressing, eating, walking, washing and bathing.

Please note- within the Policy where Child/ Children is written there may be occasions when it may also be applicable to Vulnerable Persons.

1. Policy statement

- 1.1. The Football Association of Ireland (the "FAI") understands that the use of Social Media helps promote football in the Republic of Ireland if used appropriately. The Policy outlines the standards the FAI requires when using Social Media.

2. Who is covered by the Policy?

- 2.1. The Policy is applicable to all individuals working / volunteering within the game of Association football in the Republic of Ireland.

3. The scope of the Policy

- 3.1. The Policy is established to ensure the interests of Children, Young Persons and Vulnerable Persons participating in football is of paramount importance.
- 3.2. The Policy is also to ensure all Affiliated Members are aware of the negative impact social media can have on our all members and give guidance on how to avoid them.
- 3.3. Breach of the Policy may be dealt with using the disciplinary procedures which apply to each organisation and, in serious cases, may be treated as gross misconduct leading to a Stand Down Order, ban from membership of the FAI and / or dismissal.
- 3.4. The Policy is approved by the Board of the FAI. Proposals for additions and / or amendments to the Policy are considered by the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Committee on an ongoing basis.

4. Responsibility for implementation of the Policy

- 4.1. The FAI and each Affiliated Member has overall responsibility for the effective operation of the Policy.
- 4.2. Each individual is responsible for their own compliance with the Policy and for ensuring that it is consistently applied.

5. Personal use of Social Media sites

The FAI respects your right to use Social Media for personal use however it is important to be mindful of the impact Social Media can have on others. The following conditions must be met for personal use to continue:

1. You are responsible for your conduct when using any form of Social Media.
2. Your personal views should not conflict with your existing role in football. You should be aware that what you publish will be public for many years.
3. Be mindful of the impact your contribution might make to people's perceptions of the FAI and its Affiliated Members.

6. Using Social Media

- 6.1. When making use of any Social Media platform, you must read and comply with its terms of use.
- 6.2. Do not upload, post or forward any content belonging to a third party unless you have that third party's consent. For example, don't discuss colleagues, competitors, coaches and / or players without their prior approval.
- 6.3. Avoid publishing your contact details where they can be accessed and used widely by people you did not intend to see them, and never publish anyone else's contact details.
- 6.4. Do not engage with irate players, parents or coaches on a public forum. Organise a meeting to allow all parties to discuss possible outcomes.
- 6.5. If you are a manager, coach, club official, referee or medic you should not:
 1. accept any player or referee who is under 18 as a friend on your personal Social Media page.
 2. communicate with any person under 18 through Social Media, text message, phone or email.
- 6.6. All communications concerning under 18's should be made through parents / guardians. It is important to ensure all communications relate to specific club matters e.g. fixtures, training etc.

7. Setting up and running a Social Media page

- 7.1. Do not use personal details to set up your organisations Social Media page. You should for example use the organisations email address. All account log in details should be kept safe and secure to avoid possible hacking.
- 7.2. When setting up an email address and / or Social Media page for your organisation (for example, a club web-site), it should be accessed by at least three administrators. These administrators should be responsible for up-loading content and monitoring posts on the site. If any of these administrators or any other person are behaving inappropriately their access should be removed immediately.
- 7.3. It is important to ensure everyone within your organisation is aware of who is administering your Social Media page(s).
- 7.4. Each administrator should be familiar with the privacy and safety settings on their Social Media page to ensure it is for use by your organisation only.
- 7.5. Do not accept anyone under the age of 13 on your Social Media page. Report underage users to the Child's parents or the Social Media outlet.
- 7.6. Any user under the age of 18 looking to join your Social Media page should have provided written parental/ guardian consent in advance.
- 7.7. No images or personal information of under 18's should be posted online without prior written consent from each parent / guardian. It is critical that no user is asked to post any personal details of under 18's as certain information could be used to identify or locate them.
- 7.8. To avoid any inappropriate material appearing on your Social Media page you should enable the appropriate privacy settings. This will allow you to manage the content on your Social Media page to avoid any distress or reputational damage.

- 7.9.** The content on your page should be accurate and up to date and any material that is no longer required should be removed.
- 7.10.** Any inappropriate use, such as bullying, is strictly prohibited and should be reported to the Children's Officer within your organisation.
- 7.11.** Misuse of Social Media, in certain circumstances, constitute a criminal offence and suspicious behaviour towards under 18's should be reported to the Statutory Authorities.
- 7.12.** If you are unsure about something you are about to post, then you should not do it. Always consider who will be able to view it and if in doubt, always discuss it with the Children's Officer within your organisation.

8. Photography & Filming

- 8.1.** There are inherent risks in posting personal information about Children or Vulnerable Persons as it can lead to being able to identify the them and their location, or it is possible that images may be subject to inappropriate use. When posting photographs or videos the following points should be considered:
1. At the start of each season it is essential that written consent is received from every Child's parent / guardian before any photography or filming takes place. This should be obtained using an appropriate consent form.
 2. Children's names or additional detailed information about them **must not** accompany any image or video. Before up-loading any images or videos of Children, written consent **must** be received from each parent / guardian.
 3. Any person filming or taking photographs **must** be Garda vetted and have completed a relevant FAI approved Safeguarding 1 basic awareness training course.
 4. If a Child within your organisation is under a court order or is in the care of the Child & Family Agency (Tusla) / HSE, their image **must not** be placed in the public domain.
 5. Ensure that Children are appropriately dressed and only allow images to be taken on the field of play. Photographing / filming **must not** take place in areas of personal privacy such as, changing rooms, showers, toilets and bedrooms.
 6. Camera phones **should never** be allowed into Children's changing rooms, showers or toilets.
 7. If an individual who is engaged in filming / photography presents a serious concern or an immediate danger, please report the issue to your local Garda station or Tusla.
- 8.2.** If parents / guardians, professional photographers or other spectators are intending to photograph or video at an event they should also be made aware of the Policy.
- 8.3.** Specific details concerning the Policy in relation to photography and filming should, wherever possible, be published prominently and must be announced over the public-address system, prior to the start of an event.
- 8.4.** Organisations **must never** allow unsupervised access to Children, one to one photo sessions or photo sessions outside the event or at a Child's home.



Football Association of Ireland Sample Child/Young Person Social Media Consent Form

Organisation Name	
Child's Name	

In accordance with the FAI Social Media Policy, *(insert organisation name)* will not permit personal details, photographs or videos of children to be taken without the consent of their parents / guardians.

If at any time, the child or parent / guardian wishes images or their details to be removed from *(insert organisation name)* social media page(s) the administrators should be contacted as per the FAI Social Media Policy. This information should be removed within seven days.

To be completed by Parent/ Guardian

- I consent to *(organisations name)* using my child's name on social media.
- I consent to *(organisations name)* taking photographs or videoing my child.
- I confirm that I have been made aware of how the organisation will use these images or videos and how these images or videos will be stored within the organisation.
- I confirm that I have read, or been made aware of the FAI Social Media Policy.
- I confirm that my child is not subject to family, care or legal proceedings.

Signature of Parent/ Guardian	
Print name of Parent/ Guardian	
Date	

To be completed by the Club Chairman

Signature of Club Chairman	
Print name of Club Chairman	
Date	



Football Association of Ireland Sample Social Media Consent Form

Organisation Name	
Person's Name	

In accordance with the FAI Social Media Policy, *(insert organisation name)* will not permit personal details, photographs or videos to be taken without the consent of the individual.

If at any time, the individual wishes images or their details to be removed from *(insert organisation name)* social media page(s) the administrators should be contacted as per the FAI Social Media Policy. This information should be removed within seven days.

To be completed by the Individual

- I consent to *(organisations name)* using my name on social media.
- I consent to *(organisations name)* taking photographs or videoing me.
- I confirm that I have been made aware of how the organisation will use these images or videos and how these images or videos will be stored within the organisation.
- I confirm that I have read, or been made aware of the FAI Social Media Policy.

Signature of Individual	
Date	

To be completed by the Club Chairman

Signature of Club Chairman	
Print name of Club Chairman	
Date	



The Football Association of Ireland (FAI) is committed to safely involving all children, young people and adults in football who want to play – this includes children who have additional needs and Vulnerable Persons. This is in line with Article 30 of the UN convention.

These support guidance notes will help Coaches, Clubs and Leagues support these players in football. It will enable them to be safely involved, however it is important these guidance notes are read alongside the other FAI policies and procedures including but not limited to; The Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy and the Concern/Complaint Policy.

If you have players who have additional needs or are defined as a vulnerable person at your club, the club may need to make reasonable adjustments to help them play or volunteer. This may be possible with a little extra support, preparation and understanding.

How will you know if a player needs extra support and preparation?

It is not always easy to know if a child or vulnerable person has additional needs, sometimes it can be 'invisible', for example Attention Deficit Hyper Active Disorder (ADHD), Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Developmental Coordination Disorder/Dyspraxia, colour blindness and epilepsy. Also, it can be 'visible', such as Down's syndrome or reduced mobility. Many parents/carers will be comfortable sharing information about their child with the club. However, in some cases, parents/carers and children might prefer that others do not know or feel unsure about talking about it. Some parents/carers are afraid the player may be excluded if they tell you and some parents/carers may not be fully aware of their child's, additional needs. It is important that the Club follows a process for including children with additional needs and vulnerable persons and a positive attitude as this will help parents/carers, children and vulnerable persons be open about any supports they may need.

Registration-Start as you mean to go on!

When the player registers with the Club it is best practice to complete a registration form. Parents, carers or the player should share enough relevant information with the Club to help you include and safeguard the player and should also update the Club if things change.

To maximise the potential for parents/carers to fill out all aspects of the registration form as accurately as possible, it is important that the Coach/Club representative talks through the form first and reassures them that the information shared will be used to maximise their player's potential and to ensure that the club has all the relevant information to be able to best put in place any supports that their player may need.

Do:

- Get full registration details of player
- Complete additional Football for All passport if needed (FAI Resource)
- Arrange meeting with parents, carer and coach and/or parents, player and coach - understand their abilities and goals and never assume.
- Develop training plan for player
- Regular reviews with parents, carers and players (if appropriate) on players progress
- Adjust plan following reviews if needed

It is never too late to ask for help or advice or a chat or to review how best to support the player. Clubs may also wish to speak with specific organisations such as the organisations listed on pages 5-6 of these guidance notes.

What do we need to know?

This will depend on the player but the registration form and Football For All passport will guide you through important information regarding communication, sensory needs such as vision and hearing, physical health and behaviour.

It might be helpful to ask how the player responds to:

- Noise/large crowds
- Different places
- New people.
- Sometimes children, young people and vulnerable persons find change difficult and away games may mean they need some extra support or additional information in advance.

It will be the parents/ carers or the player themselves who knows best how the player can be supported. Therefore, it is really important to build a relationship with the parents/ carers and the player and ask for information, help or advice from them. It will also be important to reassure the player and their parent/carer that the information is kept confidential and only shared with people who need to know.

It is best practise to have a session plan so everyone knows how to support and coach the player. Examples of what might be entailed is signs that s/he may be feeling tired or unwell or not coping with the demands of the training/game. This can be part of a "what if" plan and some examples of solutions as part of this plan might be:

- Frequent roll on/roll off substitutions
- Change of position
- Time out
- Extra recovery time between training activity
- Other adjustments that bring out best in the player

Communication

Communication is key to making good players and teams. Children with additional needs or vulnerable persons may need extra help to understand what they need to do and the whole team may need tips on communicating with each other so they can play well. Sometimes the tips will be really simple.

Examples of Good Practice:

- If the player has an Autistic Spectrum Disorder
 1. use clear and simple language,
 2. speak directly to the player and
 3. use their name to get their attention before speaking.
 4. try not to use 'negatives' such as 'don't pass the ball' as the player may only understand 'pass the ball'.
- Where a player uses Makaton, lámh or Irish Sign Language you may need to involve a parent/carer or to seek help from a disability expert to learn how best to communicate.
- If a player has ADHD they may need to be reminded of the task and have things repeated as they may be distracted by another sound or activity that's going on.
- If a player has a visual impairment or is deaf/hard of hearing explore with the player and their parent/carers to find out how best to support them.
- It is fine to ask the parents/carer to stay at training or games until you feel confident about including the player safely.

Physical Health

Not all players will have physical health needs but if they do it will be helpful to have this information in the coach/ player/parent/carer action plan. This might need to be followed if the player is unwell or simply to check what impact exercise has on the player.

Examples of good practice are:

- Do they need extra breaks?
- Do they need extra fluids?
- Are there certain activities they need to avoid?
- Are time limits to be applied?
- It is ok to ask the parents to stay at training or games until you feel confident about including the player safely.

Remember it will also be important to reassure the player and their parent/carer that the information is kept safe and only shared with people who need to know.

Challenging Behaviour

From time to time members of staff and volunteers delivering football to children/vulnerable persons may be required to respond to a player's behaviour that they find challenging. These guidelines aim to promote good practice which can help support players to manage their own behaviour. Clubs may want to engage with their Club Children's Officer and/or coaching or disciplinary committee for support or guidance on specific incidents. Or seek support from their local league.

Staff, volunteers, players and parents / carers should be involved in developing an agreed statement of what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, such as the players code of conduct.

In dealing with players who display risk-taking or unacceptable behaviours, away from in a game situation, members of staff and volunteers might consider some the following strategies, however please note this list is not exhaustive:

- Time out - from the activity, group or individual work- this is to be used as last resort and only if the player is risk to themselves or others or they want a break.
- Making up - the act or process of making amends.
- Behavioural reinforcement – rewards and praise for good behaviour, consequences for negative behaviour- e.g. missing an activity or trips (use consequences sparingly and only when their behaviour is a risk to themselves or others).
- Calming the situation - talking through with the players.
- Increased supervision by members of staff/ volunteers or parents/carers.
- Use of individual 'contracts' or agreements for their future or continued participation.

It is important to remember to avoid the use of strategies such as ignoring the player or shouting at the player and the use of physical restraint/removal. Physical restraint/removal should only be used in serious circumstance where a player is a threat to themselves or others. Members of staff and volunteers should review the needs of any player for whom consequences are frequently imposed. This review should involve the player and parents/ carers to ensure an agreed decision is made about the player's future or continued participation in the group or team. Whilst it would always be against the wishes of everyone involved in the FAI, ultimately, if a player continues to present a high level of risk or danger to him or herself, or others, he or she may not be able to continue participating. (See Flow Chart at the end of the document)

Does a Club need extra safeguards?

Children with additional needs and vulnerable persons are more vulnerable to poor practice and abuse (Please see the Child Welfare and Safeguarding policy for further information).

It is sometimes hard for them to acknowledge poor practice or abuse, this can lead to the issue not being reported. They can often be isolated, more likely to be bullied and sometimes their disability may be used as an excuse to explain injuries. The player may not recognise abuse, they may be used to receiving personal care (such as being dressed or bathed) and not realise when touch is inappropriate or they may find people do not listen or believe them when they try to disclose. Some players struggle to understand 'social interactions' and may not realise that someone is behaving in a way that is not appropriate. For these reasons, it is important that Clubs follow all the policies and procedures which help safeguards such as the Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy, the Safe Recruitment Practises, and the Social Media Policy.

In Summary

- Be positive – aim high
- Celebrate success
- Ask the player/or parent/ or carers if you are not sure about something

- Have plans for players with known needs
- Make sure you understand the players communication needs
- Use clear and plain language
- If the player signs (Irish Sign Language) find out who can stay and help who also signs or proactively learn some basic football relevant sign language or use of visual cues such as image or cue cards.
- Think broadly about players and how you assist their development, for example a player who is colourblind or a player with autism may benefit from very simple adjustments to the colours of the cones or bibs.
- Plan carefully for dressing and changing and transporting if the players needs extra help
- Have enough helpers- you may need more than usual if the players needs extra support
- Learn to recognise the signs that a player is becoming stressed or aggravated and have a “what if” plan ready such as roll on and roll off substitution and time out off the pitch to allow the player some time to unwind and prevent disciplinary incidents.
- Within your Club house, publications, website and social media have positive images of children, young people and vulnerable persons – this helps build a welcoming feeling for players.
- Have a very clear anti bullying position that does not allow banter or teasing about disability or any other differences.
- Ensure all players sign the ‘Player Code of Conduct’. You may need to take time explaining what this means and perhaps use pictures to help explain what is ‘Acceptable’ and ‘Not Acceptable’.
- Clearly identify who players can go to if they have any concerns, worries or are upset.
- Remind everybody about ‘touch’- some players may be very affectionate or perhaps frightened of touch so it’s very important to know the player. Make sure any touch is safe and appropriate.
- Follow the FAI’s social media policy - some children with additional needs and vulnerable persons have less understanding of boundaries and relationships so it’s very important to stick to the guidance.
- Report concerns immediately, do not wait – you are only expressing concerns and remember – it is your responsibility to report. It might be nothing- but you might also help make the player and other children safer

GETTING HELP AND ADVICE

There are many sources of help and advice locally and nationally.

Intellectual Disability

- Inclusion Ireland
- Local Special School
- Local adult services (St. John of God’s, Rehab Care. National Learning Network)
- Special Olympics Ireland
- Down Syndrome Ireland

Sensory Disabilities (Deaf/Hard of Hearing/Visual Impairments)

- Deaf Sports Ireland
- Vision Sports Ireland
- National Council for the Blind
- Deaf Hear
- Schools for Deaf and Visually Impaired (Dublin & Limerick)

Physical Disabilities

- Central Remedial Clinic
- Enable Ireland
- Irish Wheelchair Association
- Muscular Dystrophy Ireland
- Association of Irish Power-chair Football
- Irish Amputee Football Association

Autism & Asperger’s Syndrome

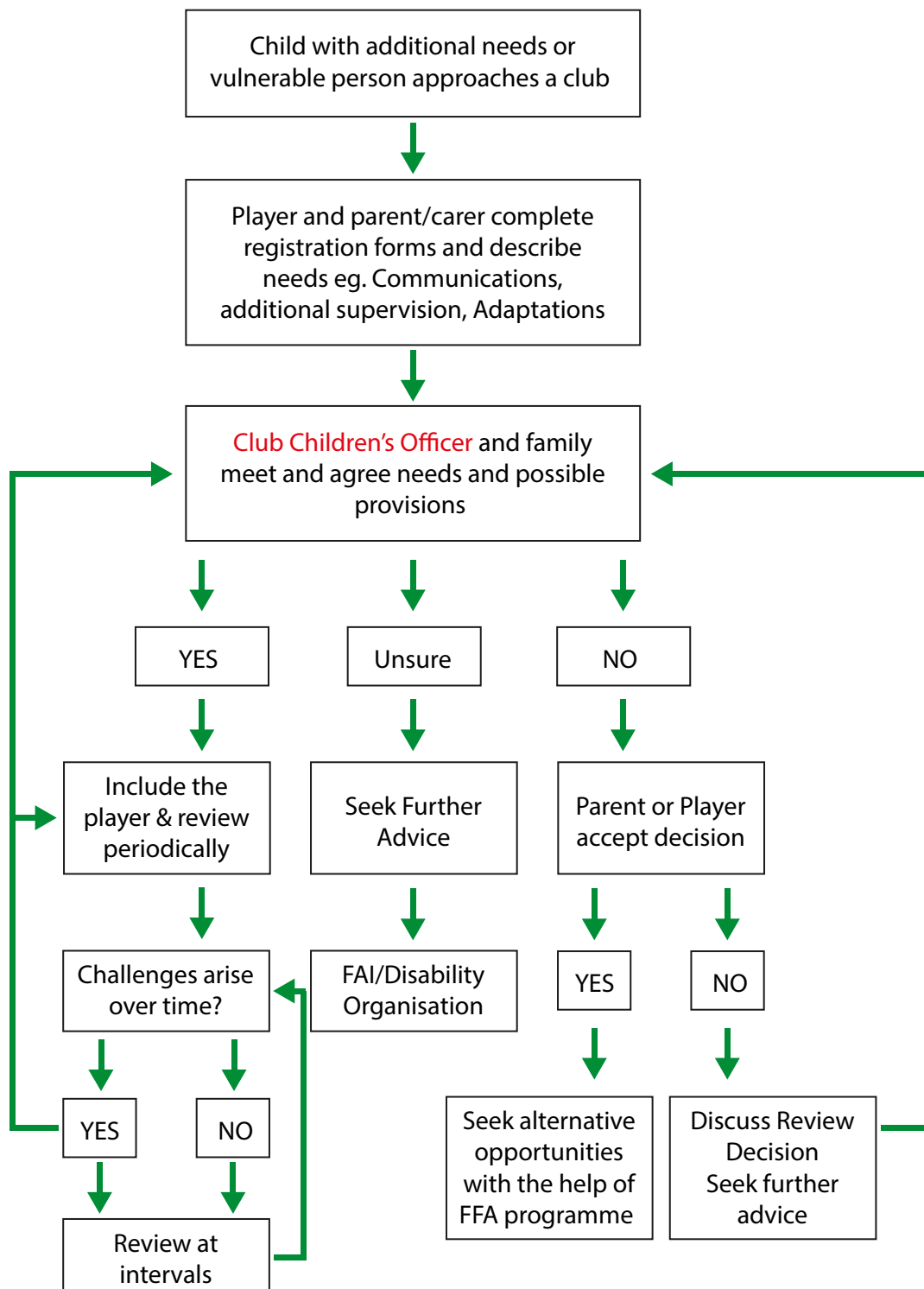
- Irish Society of Autism
- Dyspraxia Ireland

- www.lamSamAslAm.ie
- [Get Autism Active - https://www.getautismactive.com/](https://www.getautismactive.com/)

Other Supports

- Football Association of Ireland Football For All Programme
- Sports Inclusion Disability Officers within Local Sports Partnerships's
- Cara (Sport-Inclusion-Ireland)

The flow chart below is a process for including children with additional needs and vulnerable persons in a way that encourages the Club to make reasonable adjustments in an informed way.



NOTES



Football Association of Ireland

National Sports Campus

Abbotstown

Dublin 15