



Sport and young people

Many leaders become involved in sport for young people for a variety of different reasons, from a variety of sporting backgrounds and take on varying roles within clubs and organisations. Yet irrespective of the role or responsibility, we share a common goal in our commitment to sport for young people.

We want sport to be safe, we want sport to be fun and we want to ensure that no matter what sport young people are involved in, that it takes place in the spirit of 'fair play'.

Fair play is the guiding principle of *The Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*. It is designed to provide guidance for those working with young people in sport. It outlines for sports organisations the type of issues that need to be discussed and addressed to provide the safest and most enjoyable environment for young people.

The main reasons young people want to take part in sport are they want to learn new skills, make new friends, be part of a group, to win and be successful, experience excitement, challenges and action. These too, are the reasons why most leaders are involved in sport for young people. We know sport has a lot to offer. Yet, irrespective of whether we want them to become fitter, more confident, more sociable or more skillful, we want young people to enjoy what they are doing and we want to create the safest possible environment in which they can do this.



A Child Friendly Club

There are a number of steps a sports club/organisation can take to ensure a fun and safe sporting environment for young people.

1. Examine the role the club/organisation plays in the quality of the **participant's involvement**.

Are all participants encouraged to:

- Have a go – put in their best effort
- Improve their skills
- Make friends
- Play by the rules
- Appreciate/accept everyone in the group, regardless of ability, race, religion, gender etc.
- Accept winning and losing as part of the game

Consider the reasons why young people want to play sport and compare them with the club/organisation's attitude to sport for young people. It may be necessary to make adjustments to the policies and procedures of the club/organisation.

2. Encourage members to be **role models** to junior members - participants learn best by example:

- Show appreciation of, and respect towards, officials and their decisions
- Encourage participants to play within the rules
- Behave responsibly on the sidelines and in all interactions involving young people
- Focus on the fun and participation of young people in the activity



3. Examine the **structures** within the club/organisation. They should encourage the development of young people, making them the centre of all the club/organisation's activities, policies and procedures. Ensure that the club/organisation:

- Operates on the basis of a constitution which promotes a child-centred approach
- Has adopted *The Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in Ireland*
- Has its members affiliated and signed up to an agreed code of good practice
- Clearly defines and outlines the roles and duties of leaders
- Has proper selection, recruitment and management policies in place, applicable to all members
- Has an effective disciplinary and complaints procedure, including an appeals procedure
- Appoints Children's Officers

4. The **Sports Leader** is an important influence on the young person's enjoyment of sport. It is important that the club supports the leader as much as possible by:

- Encouraging an emphasis on fun as well as competition
- Providing opportunities for young people to socialise, learn and improve new skills
- Providing each junior member with a chance to participate
- Encouraging leaders to use modified games or equipment where possible
- Communicating often with leaders
- Offering leaders an opportunity to attend appropriate training
- Encouraging other committee members to attend or assist at sessions



5. Parents can also play their part to support the club/organisation. Encourage them to:

- Become a member of the club and commit to an agreed code of good practice
- Become the Children's Officer
- Take an active interest or offer to help in the running of the club, club events or any sporting activities in which their child takes part
- Be aware of their child's training and/or competitive programmes and its suitability for the child

6. Encourage all leaders working with young people to undertake appropriate **education & training**. The Irish Sports Council and the National Coaching and Training Centre will work with Governing Bodies and Clubs in the implementation of a specially designed module on working with 'Children in Sport', which will be available to leaders and Children's Officers.

General Training for all those working with young people should include:

- *The Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*
- Knowledge specific to, or experience of, working with children, including the 'Children in Sport' training module.
- Understanding of child development as it relates to sport
- Communication skills
- A recognised up-to-date coaching qualification from your National Governing Body to lead sport specific sessions
- Awareness of the appropriate response to suspicions or reports of child abuse
- Knowledge of or access to relevant first aid

In following the steps above sports clubs and organisations can be confident that they are contributing to the enjoyment of sport for young people.



Sport provides an excellent pathway for young people to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own potential. These benefits will occur through a positive approach to the involvement of children in sport that places the needs of the child first and winning and competition second.

Winning is an important goal but winning at all costs does not meet the needs of young participants. Help them to enjoy the thrill of competing, to improve their skills, to try hard, to have a good time, to have the courage to compete and to come back for more.

Focus on the importance of participation for each child, best effort and enjoyment. If participants enjoy their earlier experiences of sport they are more likely to stay involved, returning many benefits in terms of the health and well being of our future adult population.



For Further Information:
Contact your Governing Body of Sport and/or the **Irish Sports Council**,
Top Floor, Block A, West End Office Park,
Blanchardstown, Dublin 15.
Tel No: 01-8608800, Fax No: 01-8608880.
E-mail: info@irishsportsCouncil.ie
Web site: irishsportsCouncil.ie



*The Code of Ethics and
Good Practice for Children's Sport in Ireland*

**Club/
Organisation**