



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* which 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.

As Sport Leaders we achieve satisfaction from our work with **young people**. Focusing on the participants' needs and performance, encourages young people to achieve and demonstrate enjoyment, equality and fair play. They will come to realise that standards of behaviour are as important as sports performance. In taking this approach participants will be 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.**



A Child Centred Approach

As leaders we need to keep in mind the reasons why young people want to take part in sport. 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 - we know sport has a lot to offer young people.

As Leaders our aim is to create and maintain a safe and fun environment, where we put our participants at the centre of all our activities. To promote this good practice and create and maintain a child centred approach we:

- Act as good role models
- Are encouraging and positive during sessions so that the participants leave with a sense of achievement
- Plan and prepare appropriately for each session, so that each session suits the needs of the group, all activities are age appropriate and inclusive and allow each person to participate in a fun and enjoyable way.
- Put the welfare and enjoyment of the participant first, striking a balance between this and winning or achieving results
- Enforce the principles of fair play, treating each participant equally, with respect and dignity and ensure that all participants abide by the rules
- Recognise the developmental needs of the child, (avoiding excessive training and over competition)
- Involve parents/guardians and club members in what we do
- Show the necessary attributes to work with young people or to take on the roles within the club/organisation
- Are qualified or up-to-date with the knowledge and skills related to what we are leading



Good Practice

In keeping young people at the forefront of our planning and practice we can be confident that participants will enjoy their sporting experiences and that our actions are regarded as safe. As Sports Leaders we are responsible for setting and monitoring boundaries – where we strike a balance between a working relationship and friendship with the participants. It is important that we follow an agreed code of good practice and are satisfied that we are suitable to lead the activities we undertake. In addition Sports Leaders **should never:**

- Exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward
- Share a room with a young person alone on away trips
- Engage in rough physical games, sexually provocative games or allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind, and/or make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child
- Use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a young person
- Take measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adult
- Undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.) in the training of young people

Most leaders will be working in an environment where it is recognised that, in a sporting context, certain types of coaching require a 'hands on approach', i.e., it may be necessary to support a participant in order to physically demonstrate a particular technique. This should only occur when necessary and in an open and appropriate way with the knowledge, permission and full understanding of the participant concerned and his/her parents/guardians. There are other situations where the leader's role may extend beyond the duties of the club/organisation but where possible Sports Leaders **should avoid:**

- Spending excessive amounts of time with a participant away from others
- Taking sessions alone
- Taking young people to their home
- Taking young people on journeys alone in their car



Leader's Role

In the Club

- Agree a code of good practice
- Sign up to a code of good practice
- Review the club's constitution
- Review club procedures
- Create disciplinary procedures
- Maintain a child-centred ethos

With Parents

- Communicate with parents
- Inform of training programme
- Inform of change in location/time
- Seek their assistance
- Involve in organisation

And Training

- Experience of working with children
- Knowledge of the Code
- Awareness of response to abuse
- Good communication skills
- Leadership Qualification
- Knowledge of first aid

Sports Leaders adhering to club procedures and promoting good practice should have the support of the club/organisation and parents/guardians. If you and your club/organisation adhere to such models of good practice then everyone should feel protected in undertaking their roles within children's sport. Remember each of us share a common code of practice for children's sport.

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



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.



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

Leaders