

A dark blue rectangular background with a subtle, faded image of a softball's stitching. The stitching is visible as curved lines on the left and right sides, creating a sense of depth and texture.

# SOFTBALL IRELAND

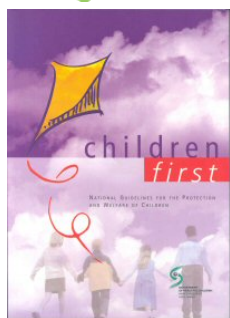
CODE OF ETHICS & GOOD PRACTICE FOR CHILDREN'S SPORT

The guidelines in this document are based on the national guidelines as outlined in the following documents: -



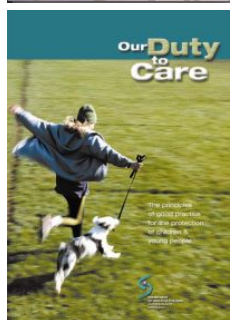
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Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, Irish Sports Council, 2000 and 2005.



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Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Dept. of Health & Children 1999



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Our Duty to Care, Dept. of Health & Children 2002

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*Northern Ireland Clubs and organisations reference should also refer to Children Act NI and Safeguarding Children*

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## SOFTBALL IRELAND YOUTH PROGRAMMES POLICY STATEMENT



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

Softball Ireland's first priority is the welfare of its members, especially young people. We are committed to providing an environment that will allow players and participants to perform to the best of their ability, free from bullying, intimidation, harassment or abuse.

Although officials, coaches and managers are responsible for enforcing the code at all times, adult members (including parents, guardians and others who sponsor players/participants) have a particular duty to ensure the youth they sponsor into the organisation are aware of, willing and able to comply with the Spirit and Intent of the code.

Signed

President

## Definitions:

**Bullying:** Repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or a group against another person or group of persons. Bullying is where aggression or cruelty, viciousness, intimidation or a need to humiliate someone is reasonably evident in the behaviour. Bullying may include inappropriate gestures, verbal abuse, lewd or disparaging comments, isolation or any other action or behaviour which undermines a person's right to dignity and respect.

**Harassment:** any act or conduct including spoken words, gestures or the production, display or circulation of written words, pictures or other material if the action or conduct is unwelcome and could reasonably be regarded as offensive, humiliating or intimidating: Any behaviour intended to undermine a person's right to dignity and respect.

**Player / Participant:** Any person registered or participating as a Softball player on a team or a participant in any other activity, sporting or social.

**Leader:** Any person in a leadership position, voluntary or paid, within the organisation. This includes but is not limited to principles, managers, coaches, assistants, officials, and helpers (adults and youth assistants).

**Sponsor:** Any person who has or accepts responsibility for a player / participant including parents, guardians, carer or any person *in loco parentis*.

**"star system":** An inappropriate system of conferring a special status on a player / participant which is used to justify or excuse inappropriate behaviour on their part (including the bullying or harassing of other player / participants) or which leads to an imbalanced and unfair allocation of time and other resources by coaches or other leaders in favour of that player and in disregard of the needs of others.

**Sexual harassment:** Any harassment that is sexual in nature

## Core Values in Sport for Young People

All Club activities are based on principles that will guide the development of sport for young people in this organisation. Knowledge of the stages of development and the ability of the young person should guide the types and levels of activities provided by the club. Adults working with youth should have a basic understanding of the needs of young people, including physical, emotional, social and personal.

### *Integrity in relationships*

Adults must interact with young people with integrity and respect for the child and never with an intent to exploit or undermine a child or the sport. All adult actions should be guided by what is best for the child—in particular in respect to the quality of the overall experience and in maintaining open working relationships with both children and their sponsors. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind is absolutely unacceptable.

### *Quality atmosphere and ethos*

Sport for young people should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere.

### *Equality*

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

### *Fair Play*

Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just a way of behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of cheating, gamesmanship, doping, violence (both physical and verbal), exploitation, unequal opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption.

Fair play is the guiding principle of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport. All children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play incorporating the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing with the right spirit.

### *Competition*

A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of young people, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. A child-centred approach will help to ensure competition and

specialisation are kept in their appropriate place. Leaders should aim to put the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second.



# Code of Conduct for Young People

It is our intent to provide the best possible environment for everyone involved in Softball: enjoyable, safe sporting opportunities, free of abuse of any kind. Young people participating in Softball Ireland activities have rights which must be respected and responsibilities that they must accept including the treatment of others with fairness and respect.

*Young people are entitled to: -*

- Feel safe / Be Safe
- Have fun and enjoy sport
- Participate on an equal basis
- Experience competition at a level at which they feel comfortable
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- Have a voice in the club/organisation
- Make complaints and have them dealt with
- Be protected against bullies and receive help in stopping bullying
- Be listened to and believed
- Have their confidentiality respected
- Be disciplined fairly
- Protect their own bodies and refuse inappropriate touching and physical contact
- Say No

*Young players should always: -*

- Treat all Sports Leaders with respect.
- Play fairly at all times, do their best
- Respect team members, even when things go wrong
- Respect opponents, be both honourable and gracious in defeat
- Abide by the rules for travelling to away events
- Behave in a manner that avoids bringing themselves, their club and Softball Ireland into disrepute
- Talk to a [children's officer](#) if they have any problems

*Young players should never: -*

- Cheat
- Be violent or unsportingly aggressive or harm team members, opponents or their property
- Shout or argue with officials, team mates or opponents
- Bully or isolate another player or opponent
- Take banned substances
- Keep secrets, especially where harm has been done or may be prevented
- Tell lies or spread rumours about adults/young people

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**For more information on Guidelines for Children see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, pages 29/30 section 4.4**

## Guidelines for Sponsors of Players/Participants

*Softball Ireland is committed to providing a safe, supportive sporting environment where players are able to develop their skills and perform competitively free from undue pressure and abusive or otherwise inappropriate behaviour. Sponsors have a particular responsibility to work together and with a teams leaders, formally and informally, to encourage the growth and development of the sport and to create a positive and encouraging environment for players / participants and other who would enjoy the game. Any actions which serve to embarrass, intimidate or humiliate someone, on or off the field, or to discourage participation or achievement must be properly policed and prevented. Parents/sponsors should:*

- Learn the rules of the game and the policies of the association
- Be a role model for young people and maintain the highest standards of conduct when interacting with player/participants, other parents, officials and organisers
- Always behave responsibly and not seek to unfairly affect or influence a player, leader, official or the game
- Never intentionally expose any young participant to embarrassment or disparagement by the use of flippant, sarcastic or other inappropriate remarks
- Always recognise the value and importance of the volunteers who provide sporting/recreational opportunities for your child. Do not publicly question the judgement or honesty of referees, coaches or organisers. Respect referees, coaches, organisers and other players/participants
- Encourage the young person you sponsor to play by the rules. Teach young people that honest endeavour is as important as winning and do all you can to encourage good sportsmanship.
- Set a good example by applauding good play on both sides. Encourage mutual respect for teammates and opponents
- Support all efforts to remove all forms of bullying and abusive behaviour. Read and be familiar with the bullying policy within your club/organisation and understand its guidelines and procedures.

## Guidelines for Sports Leaders/Coaches

Leaders in children's sport must strive to create a positive environment for the children in their care. They have an overall responsibility to take the necessary steps to ensure that positive and healthy experiences are provided. Leaders at all levels – including managers, coaches, assistants and helpers, etc. – play key roles in the lives of children in sport and therefore have specific responsibilities in respect to their interaction with player/participants, sponsors, other leaders, officials and spectators. The following guidelines for leaders apply to all club activities:

Leaders should have the children's safety as their first priority followed by the enjoyment of the sport. All should adhere to the guidelines and regulations set out in this Code of Ethics.

Leaders must respect the rights, dignity and worth of every child and must treat everyone equally irrespective of sex, ethnic origin, religion, family status or ability.

Leaders working with young people in Softball should be suitable and appropriately qualified. Leaders will be expected to go through appropriate recruitment and selection procedures that apply to all persons with substantial access to young people, whether paid or unpaid. References will be needed and will be followed up.

There will be a 'sign-up' procedure, whereby the appointed/reappointed leaders agree to abide by the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Sport* and to the policies and code of the club/organisation.

Leaders will be given a copy of Softball Ireland's code of ethics and should be made aware of the procedures contained within the code.

Once appointed the Leader must act as a role model and promote the positive aspects of sport and of Softball and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct.

The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco must be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity.

Leaders must remember their behaviour towards players, other officials, and opponents will have an effect on the players in their care.

Leaders should be generous with praise and never ridicule or shout at player participants for making mistakes or for losing a game. All young people are entitled to respect.

Leaders must be careful to avoid the "star system". Each child deserves equal time and attention.

Care must be taken not to expose a child intentionally or unintentionally to embarrassment or disparagement by use of sarcastic or flippant remarks about the child or his/her family or sponsor.

Inappropriate discipline or punishment must never be used.

Insist that players in your care respect the rules of the game. Insist on fair play and ensure players are aware you will not tolerate cheating or bullying behaviour.

Remember that young players play for fun and enjoyment and that skill development and personal satisfaction have priority over highly structured competition. Never make winning the only objective.

Encourage the development of respect for opponents, officials, selectors and other coaches and avoid criticism of fellow coaches.

When travel/overnight travel is involved, the Leaders travelling with children must sign a separate agreement underscoring their commitment to the health and welfare of the young person's in their care. Parents and participants will also be asked to sign permission/consent forms in these instances.

Leaders are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with players. It is strongly advisable for coaches to be cautious in involving young players in their personal life (e.g. visits to coaches home or overnight stays).

Avoid working alone and ensure there is adequate supervision for all activities. It is important to realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted by the participant or by outsiders.

When approached to take on a new player, ensure that any previous coach-student relationship has been ended by the in a professional manner.

When young players are invited into adult groups/squads, it is advisable to get agreement from a parent/carer/sponsor. Boundaries of behaviour in adult groups are normally different from the boundaries that apply to junior groups/squads.

Leaders who become aware of a conflict between their obligation to their players and their obligation to their governing body must make explicit the nature of the conflict and the loyalties and responsibilities involved, to all parties concerned.

Leaders should be aware of any accident or injury that occurs while young persons are under their supervision or in their immediate area of responsibility. All accidents and injuries should be documented and records should be kept for a minimum of three years. Where there is possibility of a claim Softball Ireland Youth Coordinator should be notified at the earliest possible opportunity.

Leaders should communicate and co-operate with medical and ancillary practitioners in the diagnosis, treatment and management of their players' medical or related problems. Avoid giving advice of a personal or medical nature if you are not qualified to do so. Any information of a personal or medical nature must be kept strictly confidential unless the welfare of the child requires the passing on of this information.

The nature of the relationship between leader and a participant can often mean that a leader will learn sensitive information about a player or player's family/carer/sponsor. This information must be regarded as strictly confidential and, except where abuse is suspected, must not be divulged to a third party without the express permission of the player/sponsor

Leaders should set realistic goals for player / participants and should not push young players beyond reasonable limits (established according to age, ability, experience, temperament, etc.): It is the leaders responsibility to create a safe and enjoyable environment

Leaders should not criticise other leaders, officials, coaches, or sponsors. Leaders are the role model for the children in their care.

Leaders should avoid the use of alcohol, before coaching, during events, on trips with young players.

Leaders should encourage use of proper diet and nutrition in respect to performance, recovery and the proper treatment of injury. Leaders should never encourage the use of performance enhancing drugs, medications or other stimulants.

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***For more information on Guidelines for Sports' Leaders see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, see pages 27/28 section 4.2***

## Disciplinary, Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Put a complaints procedure in place that allows all members who are dissatisfied to register their complaint in a formal way and put an open process of investigation into action.

- Complaints may be lodged by all members of the club/organisation
- They should be received in writing by the secretary of the club/organisation
- The complaint should outline all relevant details about other parties involved
- The complaint should be brought to the attention of the Chairperson who will convene the disciplinary committee
- If the complaint involves a criminal offence the chairperson should disband the disciplinary committee and, if appropriate, talk to the children's officer. The statutory authorities will then be informed.
- The disciplinary committee should hear the case of all parties involved and decide if a rule or regulation has been infringed
- They should, in writing, inform those involved of the sanctions to be imposed. Written notification should be given to parents if the complaint is against a junior member

Keep all records on file

If any party does not agree with the disciplinary committee they can appeal the decision in writing within 10-day period

The appeals committee is convened, whose chairperson should be taken from the executive committee and those who have not been on the original disciplinary committee

The appeals committee should confirm or set aside or change any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee.

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***For more information on Disciplinary, Complaints and Appeals Procedures see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, page 22 section 3.4***

## Records and Record Keeping

Local clubs should maintain the following records at a minimum:

1. Leader registration forms
2. Letters of Referral
3. Player Lists
4. Player / participant registration forms
5. Membership forms
6. Travel special consent forms
7. Signed Codes of Conduct forms
8. Accident Reports
9. Disciplinary Records
10. Attendance Records (including leaders and visiting coaches)

N.B. There is no statute of limitations on abuse cases so records, particularly injury reports and attendance records should be kept indefinitely.

## Appointment and Registration of Leaders

Club leadership is primarily a voluntary activity and will take all reasonable steps to ensure that people working with young people are suitable and appropriately qualified. Appointment procedures are appropriate to ensure the suitability of all persons with substantial access to young people.

1. All adults taking responsibility for children in sport should undergo an appointment process. The responsibilities of the role and the level of experience/qualifications required should be drawn up and clearly stated beforehand.
2. Volunteers should fill in an application form (see Appendix 3) providing at least two referees with direct knowledge of their suitability to work with children.
3. Where possible there should be an interview with the Youth Co-ordinator.
4. A probationary period may be advisable where adequate referral support is not available.
5. At the club level there should be a “sign-up” procedure, whereby the newly recruited volunteers, agree to abide by the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Sport and to both the club and Softball Ireland’s codes and policies.
6. Every effort should be made to manage and support appointed Sport Leaders. Although there is no prescribed ratio of adults to young persons adequate supervision should always be provided: a leader should not normally have to work alone.
7. A decision to appoint a local leader is the responsibility of the local club and not of any one individual within it. Ideally a club level committee should ratify all recommendations for appointment.

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*For more information on Recruitment and Selection Policies see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, page 23 section 3.5*



# Anti-Bullying Policy

## *What is Bullying?*

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression, be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with children and young people. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion behaviour by one or more children against a victim.

## *How would you know if a child is being bullied?*

All bullies operate using furtiveness, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so. The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied: -

- Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities
- Physical signs – unexplained bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings
- Stress-caused illness – headaches, and stomach aches which seem unexplained
- Fearful behaviour – fear of walking to a meeting, going different routes, asking to be driven
- Frequent loss of, or shortage of, money with vague explanations
- Having few friends
- Changes in behaviour –withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed
- Not eating
- Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide
- Anxiety – shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics

There are other possible reasons for many of the above

## *Who should deal with bullying?*

While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reported to the health board or An Garda Síochana, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of all Leaders within this club/organisation.

## *How can it be prevented?*

- Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.
- Deal with any incidents as they arise.

- Use a whole group policy or ‘no-blame approach’, i.e., not ‘bullying the bully’ but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a ‘shared concern’ of the group, (see below)
- Reinforce that there is ‘a permission to tell’ culture rather than a ‘might is right’
- Encourage young people to negotiate, co-operate and help others, particularly new or different children
- Offer the victim immediate support and put the ‘no blame approach’ into operation
- Never tell a young person to ignore bullying, they can’t ignore it, it hurts too much
- Never encourage a young person to take the law into their own hands and beat the bully at their own game
- Tell the victim there is nothing wrong with them and it is not their fault

### *The ‘No Blame’ Approach?*

#### *Step 1 – Interview with the victim*

If you find that there has been an incident of bullying, first talk to the victim. At this stage find out who was involved and what the victim is now feeling. Try asking the following questions:

- Was it verbal or physical intimidation?
- How hurt is the victim
- Was it within his/her own peer group?
- Ensure the victim that his/her name will not come out in the investigation
- Actively listen

#### *Step 2 – Meet with all involved*

Arrange to meet with all those involved; this should include some bystanders, those who may have colluded, those who joined in and those who initiated the bullying.

- Have a maximum of six to eight in the group – keep the number controllable
- Make a point of calling a ‘special’ meeting
- Ensure the severity of the topic is understood by all
- Speak only of the hurt caused in general terms with no reference to the victim
- Play on the conscience of all – ask questions like: How would you feel? Would you like it done to you?

#### *Step 3 – Explain the problem*

The distress being suffered as a result of the bullying incident is explained. At this stage the details of the incident or the allocation of the blame is not discussed. Explain the feelings of loneliness, feeling left out, rejected, laughed at. Try asking questions:

- ❖ Would they like it if it happened to them
- ❖ “Someone here in this group was bullied by someone within the group, what could we do to see it does not happen again?”
- ❖ Listen, watch out for reactions, and pick up on any without isolating anyone

#### *Step 4 – Share the responsibility*

Explain what steps / controls may have to be introduced to prevent further incidents and how everyone will loose out as a result

#### *Step 5 – Ask the group for their ideas*

At this stage the group is encouraged to suggest ways that would make the victim feel happier. All positive responses are noted. Use phrases “if it were you” to encourage a response. Listen to all suggestions and note them

#### *Step 6 – Leave it to them*

Now the problem has been identified, solutions suggested, the problem is now handed over to the group to solve. Arrange to meet again in a week’s time. Pass responsibility over to the group and give a time frame within which something must be done

#### *Step 7 – Meet them again*

Each member of the group, including the bully, discuss how things are going, who is doing what and have there been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and also keeps all involved in the process.

Again enforce the idea of the ‘team’ looking after each other at regular intervals to ensure it is know that bullying or intimidating behaviour will not be tolerated.

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***For more information on Bullying see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, page 37 section 5.4***

# Guidelines on Travelling with Children

## *Travelling with children*

There is extra responsibility taken on by leaders when they travel with children to events. When travelling with young people you should:

- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover
- Not carry more than the permitted number of passengers
- Ensure use of safety belts
- Avoid being alone with one participant, put passenger in the back seat, drop off at central locations or seek parental permission to transport an individual participant on a regular basis and clearly state times of pick-up and drop off

## *Supervision*

- Make sure there is an adequate adult: child ratio. This will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the participants and any special needs of the group. As a guide a ratio of 1:8 for under 12 years of age and 1:10 for participants over 12 years of age. This is only a guide and will change depending on the circumstances, e.g. water sports or adventure sports, athletes with special needs or away trips
- Where there are mixed groups there should be leaders of both genders
- Avoid being alone with one participant, if you need to talk separately do so in an open environment, in view of others
- In changing rooms, ask parents to take responsibility and supervise in pairs of appropriate gender
- Leaders should not have to enter the changing rooms unless children are very young or need special assistance, where supervision should be in pairs of appropriate gender
- Clearly state time for start and end of training sessions or competitions, leaders should remain in pairs until all participants have been collected
- Keep attendance records and record of any incidents / injuries that arise
- Ask parents to stay and supervise sessions, (for safety and supervision, not necessarily for their 'technical' expertise)

## *Away trips/Overnight stays*

- Separate permission forms should be signed by parents and participants, containing emergency contact number
- Young participants should sign a behaviour agreement
- Appoint a group leader who will make a report on returning home
- 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

- Rooming arrangements – adults should not share rooms with children, children share rooms with those of same age and gender and adults should knock before entering rooms
- All group socialisation should take place in communal areas (i.e. no boys in girls' rooms and vice versa).
- Alcoholic drink, smoking or other illegal substances are forbidden to players.
- There must be at least one adult of each gender with a mixed party, there should be a good adult – child ratio, 1:5/6, and proper access to medical personnel
- Lights out times should be enforced
- Young players should be under reasonable supervision at all times and should never leave the venue or go unsupervised without prior permission

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*For more information on Supervision Guidelines see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, page 30 section 4.5*

## Special Rules on Touch and Touching

Teaching Softball at times require a ‘hands on approach’—properly holding a ball, developing the batting stance, understanding position play, checking an injury, etc.. Coaches should not be afraid to touch a child as part of teaching the game or acknowledging good performance. Whenever touching a young person the following should be taken into consideration

- Avoid unnecessary physical contact
- Any necessary contact should be in response to the needs of the child and not the adult—be particularly cautious when comforting a young person
- Touching should be done only in an open environment with the permission and understanding of the participant
- Appropriate touching should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the participant - Don't do something that a young person can do for themselves
- Never engage in inappropriate touching or the appearance of inappropriate touching (generally related to bullying, harassment, sexual touching or sexual harassment, striking or grabbing a young person to discipline them or engaging in physical abuse)

## Safety Statements

All clubs/organisations should have a safety statement, including specific and potential risks appropriate to their club. They should also have procedures in place for safeguarding against such risks. In addition clubs should attend to the following:

### *General Safety Considerations:*

- Ensure activities are suitable for age and stage of development of participants
- Keep a record of any specific medical conditions of the participants
- Keep a record of emergency contact numbers for parents/guardians
- Ensure any necessary protective gear is used
- Ensure First Aid kit is close at hand with access to qualified first-aider
- Know the contact numbers of emergency services
- Keep first aid kit stocked up
- Ensure easy access to medical personnel if needed and have a emergency plan
- If an incident occurs, make a brief record of injury and action taken. Make a brief record of the problem/action/outcome. Contact the participants parents and keep them informed of all details
- Officials – umpires, referees, etc. – should ensure the conduct of the game
- Participants should know and keep the rules of their sport, keeping in mind that many rules are there for safety
- Leaders should hold appropriate qualifications required by the governing body
- Ensure there is adequate insurance cover for all activities
- Ensure parents/guardians are present at finishing time of sessions or events

### *Softball Specific Considerations for safety statements:*

- Batting—Use of helmets, Bats must only be used under supervision and in designated areas
- Throwing—preventing injury to self (throwing arm) and others
- Base running—sliding and tagging, collisions
- Fielding—tripping and falling, collisions
- Protective equipment for girls and boys (including protective cups and supports) and ; umpiring equipment

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***For more information on Supervision Guidelines see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, page 30 section 4.5***

## Use of Photographic and Filming Equipment

Softball Ireland has adopted a policy in relation to the use of images of athletes on their websites and in other publications, as there have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people through the use of photographs on sports websites and other publications. Where possible we will try to use models or illustrations when promoting an activity and avoid the use of the first name and surname of individuals in a photograph. This reduces the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and outside the sport.

### *General guidance on the use of photography:*

- If the athlete is named, avoid using their photograph.
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the athlete.
- Ask for the athlete's permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. An athlete's permission form is one way of achieving this.
- Ask for parental permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. A parental permission form is one way of achieving this.
- Only use images of athletes in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child
- Create recognised procedures for reporting the use of inappropriate images to reduce the risks to athletes. Follow the child protection procedures, ensuring either the designated person or, if necessary, the social services and/or police are informed.

### *Videoing as a coaching aid*

Video equipment can be used as a legitimate coaching aid. However, permission should first be obtained from the player and the player's parent/guardian.

Anyone concerned about any photography-taking place at events or training sessions can contact the children's officer/designated person and ask them to deal with the matter.

### *Guidelines on use of Photographic and Filming Equipment at Competitions & Practice Sessions*

Amateur photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the event organiser or leader of practice session.



During competitions or practice sessions, children must not be photographed or filmed without their permission and the express permission of one of their parents or person acting for the parent. A record of the permission should be kept.

Professional photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the event organiser by producing their professional identification for the details to be recorded. A record should be kept of accreditations.

Information about video/photography should be published prominently in event programmes and should be announced over the public address system prior to the start of an event.

Recommended wording:

*"In line with the recommendation in the Softball Ireland Code of Conduct, the promoters of this event request that any person wishing to engage in any video, zoom or close range photography should register their details with the organisers. On no account should children be photographed or filmed without their permission and the permission of their parents/sponsors".*

### *Guidance for teams issuing accreditations*

When commissioning photographers or inviting the press to an activity or event ensure they understand their responsibilities in relation to child protection.

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour
- Issue the photographer with identification which must be worn at all times
- Keep a record of accreditations
- Inform athletes and parents that a photographer will be in attendance at an event and ensure they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs
- not allow unsupervised access to athletes or one to one photo sessions at events
- not approve/allow photo sessions outside the events or at an athlete's home

## Child Welfare and Protection Procedures

Softball Ireland accepts that organisations, which include young people among its members, are vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. Below are the procedures for dealing with any welfare or protection issue that may arise. Child welfare and the protection of young people is the concern of all adults at all times, irrespective of their role within the organisation.

If there are grounds for concern – see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport, page 41 – about the safety or welfare of a young person you should react to the concern. Persons unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive and therefore reportable should contact the duty social worker in the local health board or social services department where they will receive advice. Grounds for concern include a specific indication from a child, a statement from a person who witnessed abuse or an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse.

A report may be made by any member in the club but should be passed on to the Designated Person/Children’s Officer who may in turn have to pass the concern to the local Statutory Authorities. It is not the responsibility of anyone working within Softball Ireland, in a paid or voluntary capacity, or those working in affiliated organisations, to take responsibility or decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. Investigations of child abuse are the sole responsibility of the local statutory authorities. There is, however, a responsibility to protect children by assisting the appropriate agencies so that they can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the young person.

Everyone should follow both procedures outlined below, firstly the procedure for responding to a child in distress and secondly the procedure for reporting the concern.

### *Response to a Child Disclosing Abuse*

When a young person discloses information of suspected abuse you should:

- a. Deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened
- b. Stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the child is saying seriously
- c. Understand that the child has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation
- d. Be honest with the child and tell them that it is not possible that keep information a secret
- e. Make no judgmental statements against the person whom the allegation is made

- f. Not question the child unless the nature of what s/he is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as “can you explain to me what you mean by that”
- g. Check out the concerns with the parents/guardians before making a report unless doing so would endanger the child
- h. Give the child some indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents/guardians, health board or social services. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.
- i. Carefully record the details
- j. Pass on this information to the designated person
- k. Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you

### *Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse*

The following steps should be taken in reporting child abuse to the statutory authorities: -

- a. Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information
- b. Report the matter as soon as possible to the designated officer, name with responsibility for reporting abuse. If the Designated Person has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, s/he will make a report to the health board/social services who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse
- c. In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Designated Person is unable to contact a duty social worker, the police authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities
- d. If the Designated Person is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist s/he can informally consult with the local health board/social services. S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

A Designated Person reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities will first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse ‘reasonably and in good faith’ to the Health Board or the Gardaí (See 5.13.1 – ISC. Code). The act also covers the offence of ‘false reporting’. The main provisions of the Act are: -

1. The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of Health Boards or any member of An Garda Síochána;

2. The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including, dismissal;
3. The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities “knowing that statement to be false”. This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

This law does not exist in Northern Ireland, but an individual who reports concerns in ‘good faith’ is not deliberately attempting to slander another person’s name. In Northern Ireland there is legislation, the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967 which places the responsibility on everyone to report offences or to forward information to the police by emphasizing the, “duty of every other person, who knows or believes, (a) that the offence or some other arrestable offences has been committed: and (b) that he has information which is likely to secure, or to be material assistance in securing, the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of any person for that offence”

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***For more information on Responding and Reporting to Child Abuse see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, page 42 section 5.13***

## Allegations Against Sports Leaders

Softball Ireland has agreed procedures to be followed in cases of alleged child abuse against Sports Leaders. If such an allegation is made against Sports Leader working within the organisation two procedures should be followed: -

- The reporting procedure in respect of suspected child abuse (reported by the designated person/ children's officer), see previous page
- The procedure for dealing with the Sports Leader (carried out by the President or senior officer, or a person not already involved with the child protection concern)

The safety of the child making the allegation should be considered and the safety of any other children who may be at risk. The club should take any necessary steps that may be necessary to protect children in its care

The issue of confidentiality is important. Information is on a need to know basis and the Sports Leader should be treated with respect and fairness.

### *The Reporting Procedure*

If the designated person has reasonable grounds for concern – see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport page 41, Section 5.13.1, Code – the matter should be reported to the local health board/social services, following the standard reporting procedure – see page 42, Section 5.13.2, Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport

### *The Sports Leader*

While the designated officer makes the report to the local health board, the President or appointed official should deal with the Sports Leader in question: -

- The President should privately inform the leader that (a) an allegation has been made against him/her and (b) the nature of the allegation. He/she should be afforded an opportunity to respond. His/her response should be noted and passed on to the health board/social services.
- The leader should be asked to step aside pending the outcome of the investigation. When a person is asked to step aside it should be made clear that it is only a precautionary measure and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings.

The governing body should be informed by the Designated Person that the leader has been asked to stand aside. Governing bodies can consider disciplinary action on the leader but should ensure that this does not interfere with the investigation of the Statutory Authorities. It is important that governing bodies consider the outcome of the investigation and any implications it might have. The fact that the alleged abuser

has not been prosecuted or been found guilty does not mean that they are appropriate to work with young people in the future.

## Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in cases of abuse, welfare or bad practice. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected.

The following points should be kept in mind: -

- A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the child will supersede all other considerations
- All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know
- Information should be conveyed to the parents / guardians of the child in a sensitive way
- Giving information to others on a 'need to know' basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality
- All persons involved in a child protection process (the child, his/her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family, Sports Leaders) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure
- Information should be stored in a secure place, with limited access only to designated people
- The requirements of the Data Protection laws should be adhered to
- Breach of confidentiality is a serious matter

For more information on Confidentiality see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, page 42 section 5.13

## Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but should not be ignored. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child/children is paramount. Any such complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Designated Person, name. The information should be checked out and handled in a confidential manner.

For more information on Anonymous Complaints see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, page 44 section 5.17

## Rumours

Rumours should **not** be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Designated Person, name, and checked out without delay.

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*For more information on Rumours see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, page 44 section 5.18*

Appendix 1

## Sponsor's Code of Conduct: -

I will respect the rules and procedures set down in the Code of Ethics for Children in Sport and the specific policies of Softball Ireland.

I will respect my child's leader(s) and support his/her efforts

I will respect the officials and their authority at all times on or near the playing field

I will respect teammates, leaders, coaches, officials, judges, etc. and other sponsors, as well as players, sponsors and coaches from opposing teams.

I will require my child to treat other leaders, participants, coaches, managers and officials with respect.

I will give encouragement and applaud only positive accomplishments whether from my child, his/her teammates, their opponents or the officials.

I will never demonstrate threatening or abusive behaviour or use foul language.

Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Sponsored Player(s)/Participants

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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***For more information on Guidelines for Parents see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, pages 28/29 section 4.3***



## Leaders/Coaches Code of Conduct

Leaders/Coaches should familiarise themselves with the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport and with the Code of Conduct and follow the procedures if they suspect or receive complaints of abuse of any sort.

### **Leaders should: -**

- Put welfare of young person first, strike a balance between this and winning/results
- Encourage fair play, treat participants equally
- Be positive, praise and encourage effort as well as results
- Plan and prepare appropriately
- Recognise developmental needs
- Be qualified and up-to-date with knowledge and skill of sport for young people
- Involve parents where possible and Inform parents when problems arise
- Keep record of attendance at training
- Keep a brief record of injury(s) and action taken
- Keep a brief record of problem/action/outcomes, if behavioural problems arise
- Where possible Leaders should avoid: -
  - Taking sessions alone
  - Taking children to your home
  - Taking children on journey's alone in their car
  - Spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others
- Sports Leaders should not: -
  - Use any form of physical force to discipline a young person
  - Exert undue influence over a player / participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward
  - Engage in rough physical games, sexually provocative games or allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind or make sexually suggestive comments to or about a child
  - Take measurements or engage in fitness testing that requires physical contact without the presence of another adults
  - Undertake to use any form of therapy in the training of young persons

I have read and agree to abide by the above guidelines

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Application Form: Leaders

Position applied for: \_\_\_\_\_

Full name:  Maiden name (if applicable):

Current address:

Telephone no:  Date of birth:

Place of birth:  National insurance no:

Previous experience/involvement in this or other relevant organisation:

Do you agree to abide by the guidelines contained in the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport?

Yes  No

Do you agree to abide by the rules of the National Governing Body?

Yes  No

Have you ever been asked to leave a sporting organisation in the past? If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence

Yes  No

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a caution, a Bound Over Order, or are you at present the subject of a criminal investigation?

Yes  No

If so, please state the nature and date(s) of the offence(s):

**References:** Please supply the name, address and contact details of individuals we can contact and who, from personal knowledge, are willing to endorse your application. One of these names should be, where possible, the name of an administrator/leader in your last club/place of involvement with young persons.

Name, Address and Telephone of Referee 1:

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Name and Address of Referee 2:

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Affirmation:

I affirm the information is accurate and complete. I agree to abide by the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* and the club / association's Code of Conduct.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY:

Date application received:  Date of interview:

Interviewed by:

Interviewed by:

Recommendation:

Approved  Not Approved

Reasons:

## Confidential Reference Form

This form can be used as a telephone reference or used as a written reference

The following person \_\_\_\_\_ has expressed an interest in working with \_\_\_\_\_ as

\_\_\_\_\_

If you are happy to complete this reference, any information will be treated with due confidentiality and in accordance with relevant legislation and guidance. Information will only be shared with the person conducting the assessment of the candidate's suitability for the post, if he/she is offered the position. We appreciate you being extremely candid, open and honest in your evaluation.

How long have you known this person? \_\_\_\_\_

In what capacity? \_\_\_\_\_

What attributes does this person have that would make them suited to this work?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please rate this person on the following (tick one box for each statement)

	Poor	Average	Good	V Good	Excellent
Responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maturity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self motivation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can motivate others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trustworthiness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reliability	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

This post involves substantial access to children. As an organisation committed to the welfare and protection of children, we are anxious to know if you have any reason at all to be concerned about this applicant being in contact with children and young

people. If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence

Yes

No

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

## Permission Form

### Travelling with Underage Participants

**EVENT:** \_\_\_\_\_

**VENUE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATES:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Leader

I hereby agree to abide by the guidelines and regulations contained in the Softball Ireland Code of Conduct for travelling with young persons.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Role: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Sponsor

I have read and accept the conditions and rules set down by Softball Ireland code for children travelling to games, tournaments and other events.

Sponsor: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_

### Player / Participant (under 17)

I have read and accept the conditions and rules set down by Softball Ireland for children travelling to games, tournaments and other events. I agree to abide by the code.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_