



PENTATHLON IRELAND CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Policy Statement

The welfare and protection of children is paramount to everything that we do.

Pentathlon Ireland is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all children who participate in our activities. All children who participate with Pentathlon Ireland regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, family status, disability or membership of the Traveller community have the right to be protected, treated with respect, listened to and have their views taken into consideration.

Aim of this policy

The aim of this policy is to afford protection for children and to ensure the welfare of each child participating with Pentathlon Ireland.

Objectives:

- To ensure that staff and volunteers are aware of how to recognise signs of child abuse or neglect.
- To give guidance and define clear procedures for staff and volunteers who have reasonable grounds for concern about the safety and welfare of children involved in the organisation.

Introduction

The primary goal for all involved in Pentathlon Ireland is to provide a safe and positive environment where young people can develop as individuals. Pentathlon Ireland accepts that organisations which include young people among its members may be vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. Below are the procedures for dealing with any welfare or protection issues that may arise at any level of Pentathlon Ireland.

Importance of childhood - The importance of childhood should be understood and valued by everyone involved in sport.

••Needs of the child - All children's sport experiences should be guided by what is best for children. This means that adults should have a basic understanding of the emotional, physical and personal needs of young people.

••Integrity in relationships - Adults interacting with children in sport are in a position of trust and influence. They should always ensure that children are treated with integrity and respect, and the self-esteem of young people is enhanced.

••Fair Play - All children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. The principles of fair play should always be emphasised, and organisers should give clear guidelines regarding acceptable standards of behaviour.

••Quality atmosphere & ethos - Children's sport should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere.

Child welfare and the protection of young people is the concern of all involved with Pentathlon Ireland at all times, (irrespective of what that involvement is).

It is not the responsibility of anyone working within Pentathlon Ireland, in a paid or voluntary capacity, to take responsibility or decide whether or not child abuse is taking place - that is the role of the Statutory Authorities.

The guiding principles in regard to reporting child abuse or neglect may be summarised as follows:

1. The safety and well-being of the child must take priority;
2. Reports should be made without delay to Tusla – The Child and Family Agency (CFA).

The CFA was established on the 1st January 2014 and is now the dedicated State agency responsible for improving wellbeing and outcomes for children.

Children First, National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 was launched on October 2nd 2017. This Guidance is a primary reference for all citizens to report concerns and includes the new legislative obligations. It provides clarity between the legislation and the existing non-statutory obligations which will continue to operate for all sectors of society.

Children First Guidance describes the four main types of abuse and sets out the steps which should be taken to ensure that the child or young person is protected from harm. It has been updated to include new information about the Children First Act 2015 and it includes specific information for the professionals and organisations that now have legal obligations to keep children safe.

The Guidance also outlines the roles of the main statutory bodies involved in child welfare and protection: Tusla - Child and Family Agency, and An Garda Síochána. It contains details of how to report a concern about a child and what happens once the report is received by Tusla.

Please click on the following link to view Children First Guidance

http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf

Recognising Child Protection & Welfare Concerns

- All staff and volunteers have a responsibility to safeguard children and to report child protection and welfare concerns in line with the policy outlined below.
- Any reasonable concern or suspicion of abuse or neglect must elicit a response. Ignoring the signals or failing to intervene may result in ongoing or further harm to the child. Anyone who has a concern about a child but are not sure what to do, should discuss the concern with Pentathlon Ireland's Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or contact your local Child and Family

Agency social work department/ Social Care Trusts (HSCT) for advice (see contact numbers below).

- All staff and volunteers should be familiar with the definitions of abuse as outlined in Children First, National Guidance, 2017 – (Chapter 2).
http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf
- Under the Children First Act 2015 Mandated Persons have a statutory obligation to report concerns which reach a particular threshold (as defined in section 2 of the Children First Act 2015) to Tusla.

Reporting Procedure - Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers (included Mandated Persons – see below) should follow the procedures outlined in this section when they have a concern that a child has been, is being, or is at risk of being abused, harmed or neglected. Mandated Persons have further responsibilities outlined in the next section.

Children First, National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 states that both public and private organisations that are providing services to children should consider appointing a **Designated Liaison Person** in keeping with best practice in child safeguarding. This person will be the resource person for any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns and will liaise with outside agencies.

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

The Designated Liaison Person in Pentathlon Ireland is Sheena Carroll, 01-6251134

The DLP will:

- Act as a liaison person with outside agencies where there is a child protection concern
- Ensure that the standard reporting procedure is followed and that suspected cases of child neglect or abuse are referred promptly to the designated person in Tusla, or An Garda Síochána in the event of an emergency or when Tusla is not available
- Must be knowledgeable about child protection and undertake any training considered necessary

Under Sport Ireland Guidelines, each Governing Body of Sport should appoint a National Children's Officer. The National Children's Officer should be a member of the Executive Committee, or have access to the committee and its accompanying documents, to ensure that children's interests are kept on, and influence the decisions of, the agenda of the Governing Body.

The National Children's Officer (NCO)

The National Children's Officer in Pentathlon Ireland is George Maybury 087 2418151

The NCO will

- Work with the DLP in suspected cases of child neglect or abuse.

- Be knowledgeable about child protection and undertake any training considered necessary
- Ensure that members of the organisation are informed about policy, legislation and best practise in child protection
- Ensure that the events involving children are organised and delivered in a child-centred approach, with the safety, protection and welfare of children paramount to this
- Be a point of contact for all members where there is a concern regarding child protection, Garda vetting and recruitment of volunteers
- Ensure that all staff are provided with child protection training, either in-house or through Sport Ireland and Sports Council Northern Ireland 'Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport'.

Reporting Concerns about a Child.

- When a staff member or volunteer has a child protection or welfare concern they should speak to the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) as soon as possible.
- If the DLP is unsure if a child protection concern meets the reasonable grounds (see next section) for concern they should contact Tusla Social Work duty service for advice and guidance using the informal consultation process.
- The DLP can formally report child protection and welfare concerns using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form (available on www.tusla.ie) to Tusla on the following basis:
 - Child protection and welfare concerns that meet reasonable grounds for concern but do not meet the threshold for mandated reporting (see below)
 - Child protection and welfare concerns that meet reasonable grounds for concern and have been passed to them by persons who are not Mandated Persons.
- Under no circumstances should a child be left in a situation that exposes him or her to harm or risk pending intervention from Tusla.

Reasonable grounds for concern

Children First: National Guidance, 2017 states that: 'Tusla should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected.' Reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern include:

- Evidence, for example 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

All staff and volunteers are expected to bring any child protection concern which meets reasonable grounds for concern to the attention of the DLP and to seek their advice and guidance if unsure.

In the event of an emergency and the unavailability of a Tusla Social Worker, the DLP should contact An Garda Síochána

Depending on advice received from the CFA the ***Child Protection and Welfare Report Form (CPWRF)*** may be required to be submitted to CFA. If a report is made by telephone, this form should be completed and forwarded subsequently to the Child and Family Agency. Please click on the link below for this form.

<https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child Protection and Welfare Report Form F INAL.pdf>

Under The Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, so long as you report what you believe is true and it is done in good faith you cannot be sued.

Everyone involved in the promotion of youth sport should be familiar with the signs and behaviours that may prompt a concern for the safety of the young person. There are four categories of abuse types, neglect, emotional, physical and sexual. For more detailed information on these categories, (including the possible signs and behaviours) please refer to Children's First (National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (ROI) and Co-operating to Safeguard Children (NI) or attend Sport Ireland or Sport NI Safeguarding training.

<http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children First National Guidance 2017.pdf>

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-andyoung-people-northern-ireland>

ROLE OF DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON

The designated liaison person is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures within your organisation are followed, so that child welfare and protection concerns are referred promptly to Tusla. The designated liaison person should record all concerns or allegations of child abuse brought to his or her attention, and the actions taken in relation to a concern or allegation of child abuse.

If, as a designated liaison person, you decide 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, member 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

Reporting Procedures - Mandated Persons Only

- Under the Children First Act 2015 Mandated Persons are legally 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 to Tusla.
- If the child protection concern reaches the threshold for harm as defined in the Children First Act 2015 it is a mandated report.
- Mandated reports can be made jointly by the Mandated Person (who raised the concern) and the DLP, using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form (available on www.tusla.ie). The form must clearly indicate that the report is a Mandated Report.
- If the child protection concern requires a more urgent intervention to make the child safe, the Children First Act 2015 allows Mandated Persons to alert Tusla of the concern, by telephone or in person, in advance of submitting a written report. The mandated report must then be submitted to Tusla using the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form within 3 days.
- The statutory obligation of Mandated Persons to report under the Children First Act 2015 must be discharged by the Mandated Person and cannot be discharged by the DLP on their behalf. Mandated Persons can however, report jointly with another person.
- Where the Mandated Person or DLP is unsure if the report meets the threshold of harm as outlined in the Children First Act 2015 advice and guidance should be sought through informal consultation with Tusla Duty Social Work.
- If a child protection concern does not meet the criteria for a mandated report, it may meet 'reasonable grounds for concern' for a report to Tusla and this possibility must be considered. If 'reasonable grounds for concern' exist a report to Tusla will be made by the DLP.
- The Mandated Person may submit the report to Tusla solely, however, the DLP must be informed that the report has been made and be given a copy of the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form.
- If a child protection concern has come to the attention of a number of Mandated Persons, the report may be submitted jointly by a number of Mandated Persons.
- Mandated Persons are not required to make a report to Tusla where the sole basis of their knowledge, belief or suspicion of harm is of a result of becoming aware that another Mandated Person has made a report to Tusla.

Types of child abuse and how they may be recognised

As stated earlier Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect; emotional abuse; physical abuse; and, sexual abuse.

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. For further information on the types of abuse please refer to Children First Guidance Chapter 2 –

http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf

Recording Child Protection Concerns

- Written records should be kept of all child protection concerns (including those not reported to Tusla) and these will be managed by the Designated Liaison Person. (Information will include: details of the concern, who raised it, who was contacted, details regarding an informal consultation if it happened, any action taken, details regarding informing parents.
- If a child has made a disclosure of abuse, a written record will be made. If there are other grounds for concern that the child has been abused or neglected, a written record will be made.
- Records relating to child protection and welfare issues will be kept confidentially and held for as long as is appropriate.

Contacting TUSLA/NI HSCT

<https://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/local-area-offices/>

<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/gateway-service-teams-contact-details>

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