



Sportslink

Children's Policy (Good Practice & Child Protection)

Contents

Pg2	Introduction and Statement of Policy
Pg2	Code of Good Practice
Pg5	Guidelines for Use of Photographic Filming Equipment at Sportslink
Pg5	Recruitment and selection of staff
Pg6	Dealing with Bullying
Pg7	What happens if (making a Disclosure, also called a Referral)
Pg9	Incident Flow Chart
Pg10	If a SPORTSLINK Employee / Member is the Subject of a Disclosure

Appendices

Pg11	<i>Sample Incident Record Form</i>
Pg13	SPORTSLINK Employee Application Form
Pg15	<i>Useful Reading & Sources of Information</i>

A LIST OF USEFUL CONTACTS IS AVAILABLE AT THE END OF THIS DOCUMENT. SPORTSLINK ALSO RETAIN COPIES OF THE CODE OF ETHICS AND GOOD PRACTICE FOR CHILDREN'S SPORT (ISC) WHICH IS AVAILABLE FOR ALL STAFF.

THE DETAILS WITHIN THIS DOCUMENT ARE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE ABOVE. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT THOSE DEALING DIRECTLY WITH CHILDREN DO FURTHER READING.

Introduction

Children have a lot to gain from involvement in physical activities. Sportslink provides opportunities to learn new skills, explore new environments, gain confidence and of course have fun. The full potential of these benefits can only be gained with a positive and progressive approach to the child's involvement. The focus should be on the participation of the child rather than on competition or success.

Sportslink's policy is to encourage children to engage in physical activity and provide a range of facilities with this policy in mind. Sportslink has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in sporting activities at the facility from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. Sportslink will ensure the welfare and safety of all children involved in activities through promotion of, and adherence to, the Good Practice and Child Protection guidelines adopted by SPORTSLINK.

A child is defined as under 18 by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

All sporting organisations which make provision for children and young people must ensure that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount;
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin, religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to be involved in sport;

Policy Statement

Sportslink is fully committed to safeguarding the well being of its members. Every employee and club member of SPORTSLINK should, at all times, show understanding for the safety and welfare of all children involved in activities at the facility. They should conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of SPORTSLINK and the guidelines contained in SPORTSLINK's Good Practice and Child Protection Policy.

Code of Good Practice for SPORTSLINK Employees and Members

By adhering to this Code of Good Practice, SPORTSLINK employees and members can ensure that our club will be safe and fun for young members, while those participating in activities within our club will be protected.

Good Practice means:

- putting the child's welfare, safety and enjoyment first.
- treating all young people regardless of ability equally, and with respect and dignity.
- making sport and activities fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- building balanced relationships based on mutual trust, which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- planning and preparing appropriately so that each session suits the needs of the group (e.g. activities are age appropriate and allow each child to participate in an enjoyable way).
- always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment i.e. no secrets).
- recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- ensuring that manual or physical support is only provided when there is no alternative, and that this is in the interest of the child and takes place openly. Young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Care is needed, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when a child is constantly moving. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- involving parents/carers wherever possible (e.g. for the responsibility of their children in changing rooms and in other locations in the centre). If groups have to be supervised in a changing area, always ensure parents / teachers / coaches / officials work in pairs.
- securing parental consent in writing to *act in loco parentis*, if the need arises to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.

It is important that all SPORTSLINK employees and members follow this Code of Good Practice. By 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 will be regarded as safe. In addition employees and members **should never:**

- Exert undue influence over a young participant in order to gain personal benefit or reward.
- Engage in rough contact, sexually provocative games, inappropriate touching of any kind, and/or make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child to anybody or in any circumstances.
- Exchange of personal details, such as Bebo addresses, phone numbers etc. while acting in the employ of Sportslink
- Engage in a sexual relationship with a young person. This is considered a breach of trust and a disciplinary matter. If the young person is below the age of consent it may be illegal and hence a criminal matter.
- Use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a young person.
- Take body measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adult.

SPORTSLINK employees and members, particularly those involved in instruction, will be working in an environment where a 'hands on' approach may sometimes be necessary (e.g. demonstrating proper swim stroke technique). Ensure that such contact is kept to the safe minimum, done openly, is in response to the child's need, and is with the knowledge and consent of the child and their parent/guardian.

It is important that Sportslink staff avoid confrontation with children, policies and instruction should be given without aggression. Challenge sensitively any inappropriate behaviour from a child, such as a breach of rules, a crush on an instructor or attention seeking behaviour. If this is focused on you, seek support and inform a member of the management team.

All incidents involving children should be reported in writing. In particular, following any incident where an employee or member feels their actions could be misinterpreted, a written report should be submitted.

Finally, prepare yourself, and those who work with you, by taking preventative measures.

Think through:

- the reasons for doing what you are doing;
- how you do it;
- any possible misinterpretations of your actions.
- Are there adequate supervisors

Guidelines for Use of Photographic & Filming Equipment at SPORTSLINK involving children.

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young sports-people in vulnerable positions. Permission for the use of photographic equipment will be granted by management where appropriate. Photographers should have the participants' permission or accreditation where appropriate. It is advisable that everyone is vigilant and that any concerns are reported to the Management.

Videoing as a Coaching Aid: there is no intention to prevent club coaches and teachers using video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid. However, permission should be sought and performers (and their parents/carers) should be aware that this is part of the coaching programme. Care should be taken in the storing of such films.

Rules to guide use of photography:

- No photography is permitted on or of poolside unless permission is awarded by management
- If a photograph is used in publications, avoid naming the child.
- Ask for the child's parent/guardian for permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport/activity.
- To reduce the risk of inappropriate use, only use images of children/athletes in suitable dress. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child.
- The use of inappropriate images should be reported to SPORTSLINK's Management or the health board /social services or the Gardaí.

Amateur photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek approval from Sportslink Management. The club / organisation should display the following information prior to the start of an event to inform spectators of the policy:

"In line with the recommendation in Sportslink's Children's Policy, 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”.

The Children’s Officer / event organiser must then:

- 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 children/athletes or one to one photo sessions at events
- Not approve/allow photo sessions outside the event or at an athlete’s home

Recruitment and Selection of Staff

SPORTSLINK seeks to position itself to provide a quality service to its members by allowing the recruitment of workers to provide technical, physical and clerical assistance.

SPORTSLINK will endeavour to recruit and select staff in a transparent and equitable fashion in line with current guidelines set out by the sports councils and labour agencies (ROI & NI).

SPORTSLINK recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. When undertaking pre-selection checks the following should be included:

- All employees /members working with young people should complete an application form. The application form should elicit information about the applicant's past and include a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children. These references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo).

Dealing with Bullying

Action to prevent bullying in sport and to help the victims of bullying:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed, that on this island, up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority.
- Create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bullies separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the Manager and or Supervisor (wherever the bullying is occurring).

Action towards the bully(ies):

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully(ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully's parents.
- Insist on the return of *borrowed* items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform Club Board / relevant authority of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken in incident book

Further information and advice on Dealing with Bullying is available from the Anti-Bullying Fact-sheet published by the Department of Health and Children (ROI) with 'Our Duty to Care'.

What happens if (making a Disclosure, also called a Referral)

Child abuse, in any form, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take. Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or employee may have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where a young person needs protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document. When a child enters the club having been subjected to child abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving the child's self esteem. In such instances the club must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure the child receives the required support.

All those working with children within Sportslink, whether in a paid or voluntary capacity, have a responsibility to ensure that children are protected from harm, **but do not** hold responsibility for deciding whether or not abuse has taken place. It is the role of statutory agencies to make enquiries to assess whether a child is at risk of abuse and to take any necessary action to protect that child or young person. (*Local Authorities within the NI have a statutory duty under the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995. The Children First guidelines 1999 (ROI) give statutory authorities a moral obligation to ensure the welfare of children.*)

If there is a concern about a child's welfare, or the behaviour of an adult:

The one thing not to do is to do nothing!

When a child tells you about abuse...

- A good solution to the discretion and caution required is '*observed confidentiality*' where you are witnessed speaking with the child, but not overheard.
- If a child or young person talks to you about a concern, or if the child tells you about their abuse listen carefully and compassionately to what they tell you.
- It is important to stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying.
- The child is taking a risk by telling you this; you should ensure that the child's experience of telling is a positive one.
- Encourage the child to talk, using open-ended questions such as "Do you want to tell me about this?"
- Remember the setting - the child is likely to be frightened or anxious.
- Tell the child he/she that he/she was right to tell and is not to blame.
- Take what the child says seriously.
- Recognise the inherent difficulties interpreting what is said by young children or children with communication difficulties.
- However don't prevent a child from recalling events.
- No judgmental statement should be made about the person against whom the allegation is made.
- Be honest with the child about what you can and cannot do. Tell them you are not able to keep what they have told you secret and that you will try to find them the help they need. Tell them what is likely to happen next (e.g. informing parents / guardians, health board etc.)
- When they have finished make a detailed note of what they have said and pass that information onto someone in a position of authority as soon as possible.
- If you have serious concerns about the immediate safety of that child contact the statutory authorities. Record who you spoke to and inform SPORTSLINK's management of what you have done.
- Find someone you trust to talk to and support you, but remember not to name or identify those involved in the allegations.
- In the Republic of Ireland the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith'. This law does not exist in NI, but an individual who reports a concern in good faith is not deliberately attempting to slander another person's name. In NI the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967 places the responsibility on everybody to report offences or to forward information to the police (*pg 38 Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport*).

Actions to Avoid

The person receiving a disclosure of child abuse should not:

- panic
- allow their shock or distaste to show
- ask direct questions – "Who, What Where or When".
- speculate or make assumptions
- make negative comments about the alleged abuser
- approach the alleged abuser
- make promises or agree to keep secrets.
- contact or confront the individual who is alleged to be responsible.

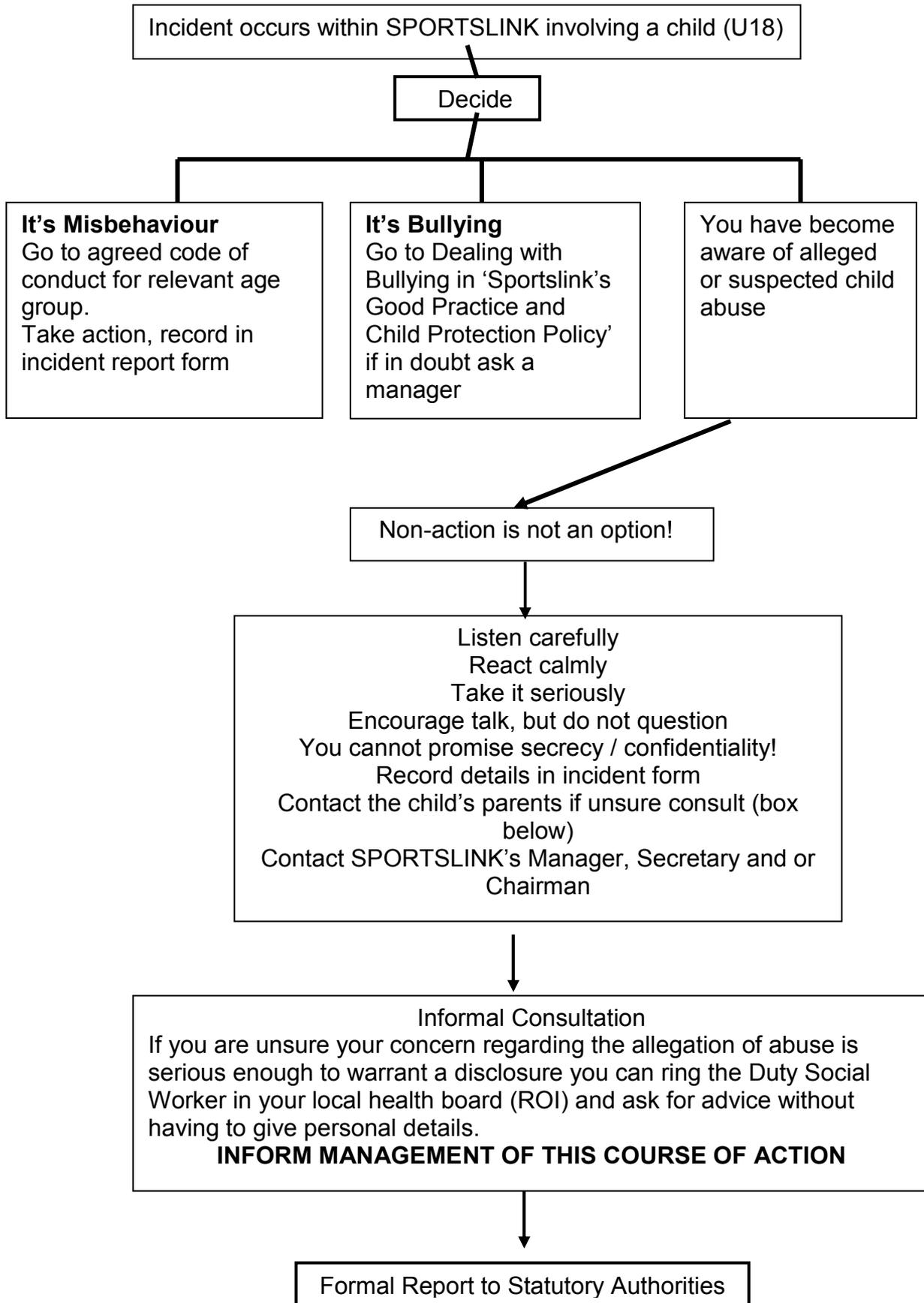
Responding to non-verbal concerns

Changes in a child's behaviour can be the result of a wide range of factors and this makes it difficult to identify if the changes are linked to abuse. Even signs such as bruising or other injuries cannot be taken as "proof" of abuse. However if you have concerns, you have a responsibility to act on those concerns.

Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of members who is still currently working with children). Where such an allegation is made, the club should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children, either within or outside sport, may be at risk from this person.

Incident Flow Chart



If a SPORTSLINK employee is the subject of a disclosure or referral

Sportslink will assure all members/employees that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint against a member or employee there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal (Garda) investigation,
- A child protection investigation,
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the criminal and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Poor Practice

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the Club Committee will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

Suspected Abuse

- Any suspicion that a child has been abused, by either a member or an employee, should be reported to the Club Management. Management will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.
- Management will report the allegation to the local health board or social services department who may involve the Gardaí. Relevant officers of SPORTSLINK should also be informed.
- The parents or carers of the child should be contacted as soon as possible, unless by doing so the child may be exposed to further risk. If in doubt follow advice from health board officer / social services department.
- If the Club staff or member of the management team is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report should be made to the SPORTSLINK' Manager, Secretary and/or Chairman who will refer the allegation to the statutory authorities.
- All members have the option of making a report direct to the statutory authorities if they so wish, or if they are unhappy with how the allegation is being dealt with by SPORTSLINK.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned.

Information should be handled and disseminated on a ***need to know basis*** only. This includes the following people:

- Relevant SPORTSLINK Officers.
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused, unless doing so would endanger the child further;
- The person making the allegation;
- Health board / Social Services, Gardaí
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child)*

**Seek advice of the statutory authorities on who should approach alleged abuser.*

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

- The SPORTSLINK member accused of abuse will be asked to stand down pending the outcome of any investigation by the statutory authorities. It should be made clear to a person asked to stand aside, that this is only a precautionary measure and will not prejudice any later disciplinary procedure.
- Irrespective of the findings of the criminal and child protection inquiries, the SPORTSLINK person responsible will appoint a Disciplinary Committee who will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member or employee can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the Gardaí. In such cases, the SPORTSLINK Disciplinary Committee must reach a decision based upon the available information. **The welfare of children should always remain paramount.**

Support to Deal with the Aftermath

- Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to children, parents and members of staff. Use of helplines, support groups (e.g. ISPCC) and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process.

- Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

If you (an adult) are accused of an abusive action

- Make notes of all your actions/contacts with the child in question as soon as possible.
- Seek access to professional and legal advice.
- Ensure you are no longer working with the child/children making the allegation.
- Consult SPORTSLINK procedures and make sure these are followed correctly
- Accept that colleagues may be expected not to contact you whilst an investigation is underway.
- Don't believe it couldn't happen to you.

Think about your relationship with a colleague who is under investigation. Ask management to confirm the contact arrangements and what support is available to your colleague and all other members they work with.

CONFIDENTIAL

SPORTSLINK - Incident Record Form (Child Abuse)

Your name: Your position:
Child's name (Initials): Child's date of birth:
Parents / guardians names:
Child's home address (and phone number, if available):

What prompted your concerns (include date and time of any incident, also any physical and behavioural signs you have observed):

Have you spoken to the child about this? As best you can, record exactly what the child said and what you said: (remember, do not lead the child – record actual details. Continue on separate sheet if necessary)

Action taken so far:
Have parents been contacted?
(if unsure contact an agency – see below)
What has been said?

External agencies contacted (date & time)

Gardaí	Yes/no
If 'yes'	Name, unit and contact number: Details of advice received:
Social services yes/ no	If 'yes' which service?
Social worker	Name and contact number: Details of advice received:
Other (e.g. ISPCC)	Which:
24 hr helpline: 1800 66 66 66 (ROI)	Name and contact number: Details of advice received:

Signature: Print name: Date:

Remember to maintain confidentiality on a *need to know* basis [information about an incident should only be divulged if it is needed to remove the child from harm. Do not discuss this incident with anyone other than those who need to know. If unsure get advice before contacting child's parents.

NB: A copy of this form should be sent to the local Health Board / Social Services after the telephone report with the original going to the SPORTSLINK's Manager, Secretary or Chairman who will keep it in a designated locked drawer.

CONFIDENTIAL

SPORTSLINK Employee Application Form

1. Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms) _____

Other surname, previously known by: _____

2. Address _____

Previous addresses within last 5 years (if different than above)

i) _____

ii) _____

iii) _____

Tel No. (Daytime) _____ (Evening) _____

Email _____

Place of Birth _____

4. Occupation _____

5. PPS number (ROI) _____ Other _____

6. Please outline why you wish to become a camp leader with the SPORTSLINK:

7. Please give details of leadership training/any previous experience/involvement in youth activity/clubs:

8. Do you suffer from any illness/disability/medical condition which may at times affect your ability to work with young people or work in general? If so, please give details:

9. Times available (Please indicate times when you will be available)

Day: Mon Tues Wed Thurs Fri Sat Sun

Morning

Afternoon

Evening

10. Have you ever been asked to leave a sporting Organisation, paid or voluntary work position? Yes/No
(If you answer yes please give reason)

11. Please supply the name, address, telephone numbers and position of two people (non-relative), who know you well and can provide us with a reference.

NAME _____ NAME _____

Tel No. _____ Tel No. _____

Position _____ Position _____

12. I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, there is nothing in relation to my conduct, character or personal background of any nature that would adversely affect the position of trust in which I would be placed by virtue of this appointment. I hereby confirm my irrevocable consent to the management Sportslink to the making of such enquiries, as it deems necessary in respect of my suitability for the post in respect of which this application is made. I hereby accept and confirm the entitlement of the management of Sportslink to reject my application or to terminate my employment, (in the event of a contract of employment having been entered into), if I have omitted to furnish them with any information relevant to my application or to my continued employment, or where I have made any false statement or misrepresentation relevant to this application or my continuing employment with Sportslink. Furthermore, I hereby declare that all the particulars furnished on this application are true, and that I am aware of the qualifications and particulars for this position. I understand that I may be required to submit documentary evidence in support of any particulars given by me on my Application Form. I understand that any false or misleading information submitted by me will render me liable to automatic disqualification

Please complete below to give us this information and return it with your application.

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 criminal investigations?

Yes / No

If yes, please state below the nature and date(s) of the offence(s)

13. I declare that the above information is true and agree that I will abide by and accept the rules of the Governing Bodies, Sportslink and the guidelines as laid out in Sportslink's Child Protection Policy and those contained in the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in Ireland.

Signed _____

Date: _____

Useful Reading & Sources of Information

Title:

Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's
Sport Irish Sports Council & Sports Council for NI
Our Duty to Care
Safe Sport Away

Useful Contacts

<http://www.doh.ie>
<http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie/home.asp>
<http://www.sportnet.org>
<http://www.theCPSU.org>
<http://www.crb.gov.uk/>

pecs@dhsspsni.gov.uk
www.swimireland.ie

Published by:

Department of Health & Children (ROI)
NSPCC (NI)

Department of Health & Children (ROI)
Irish Sports Council
Youth Sport NI
Child Protection In Sport NSPCC
Criminal Records Bureau <http://www.disclosure.gov.uk/>
Disclosure Service
PECS (e-mail)
Swim Ireland