

**Child Protection Policy**

Sportslink is committed to safeguarding the well-being of all the children and young people with whom our staff come into contact. Our policy on child protection is in accordance with ‘Children First-National Guidance for the protection and Welfare of Children’ (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2011) and Our Duty to care. The Principles of good practice for the protection for children and young people. We are committed to promoting the right s of the child to be protected, be listened to and have their own views taken into consideration.

Principle

The policy is underpinned by the Childcare (Preschool Services) Regulations 2006 and Children First. National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of children.

Purpose

This policy applies to all employees and volunteers who have contact with children and young people on the premises or through their work on behalf of the childcare service.

It is of high importance to ensure all employees have an ability to recognise abuse as it can be defined in many ways. Please see appendices for the Definitions of Abuse.

All employees of Sportslink will be made aware of and be familiar with the childcare services child protection policy through an in-house induction, on-going training and they will sign up to the overall child protection policy of Sportslink.

The designated Liaison Officers (Katie Byrne, Yvonne Kehoe and Paul Kelly) will act as a liaison with outside agencies and a resource person to any staff member who has child protection concerns. The liaison officer is responsible for reporting any allegations or suspicions to the Child and Family agency Tusla or An Garda Siochana.

Sportslink has put in place a standard reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures.

Reporting procedure for dealing with disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse

1-The employee who has received a disclosure of child abuse or who has concerns about a child should bring them to the attention of the designated Liaison person immediately.

2-No child will be left in a situation that exposes him/her to harm or of risk to harm pending Tusla intervention, in the event of emergency where you deem a child to be in immediate danger and you cannot get in touch with Tusla, the Garda will be contacted.

3-Where the designated liaison officer considers that a child protection or welfare concern meets the reasonable grounds for the concern criteria then the officer can refer to Tusla.

Reasonable grounds for concerns are:

\*Specific indication from the child that he/she were abused

\*An account by the person who saw the child being abused

\*evidence, such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused any other way

\*an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour.

\*consistent indication over time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

4-where the liaison officer remains uncertain they should contact Tusla for informal advice relating to the allegation, concern or disclosure.

5-The liaison officer will ensure that the parents/carers are informed that a report/referral has been made to Tusla. The liaison officer will make an appointment with parents to inform them that the report has been made to Tusla unless to do so would be likely to endanger the child.

6-after consultation with the Duty Social Worker the liaison officer will choose one of the following options

1. Report the allegation, concern or disclosure to the relevant authority using the standard reporting form from Children First and in the case of out of hours or immediate danger contact the Garda.
2. In cases where it is decided not to report concerns, the individual who raised the concern should be given a clear written statement of the reasons why no action is being taken. The employee should be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free as individuals to consult with or report to Tusla or An Garda. The provisions of the Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 apply once they communicate ‘reasonably and in good faith’.

In making a report the liaison officer must ensure that the first priority is always the safety and welfare of the child and that no child is ever left in a situation that could place them in immediate danger.

All reports in relation to the safety and welfare of children should be made to one of the liaison officers in Sportslink.

Principles to reporting child abuse

\*the safety and well being of the child must take priority

\*reports should be made to the Tusla local health office area where the child resides

\*a suspicion which is not supported by an objective indication of abuse will not constitute reasonable grounds for concern, however they should be recorded and noted by the liaison officer as future suspicions may lead to a report being made for Tusla or An Garda.

Reports can be made by

\*Children/young people

\*Parents/guardians

\*Employees of Sportslink

\*Other advocates on behalf of children/young people

How to handle a report of abuse

\*react calmly

\*listen carefully and attentively, take the young person seriously

\*Reassure the child/young person they have done the right thing in talking to you

\* do NOT promise to keep anything secret

\*ask questions for clarifications only. Do not ask leading questions, this is not an interview, but just receiving a disclosure from a child.

\*check back with the child/young person that what you have heard is correct and understood

\*do not express opinions about the alleged abuser

\*record the conversation as soon as possible, in as much detail as possible. Sign and date the record

\*ensure the child/young person understands the procedures which will follow

\*pass the information to the liaison officer, do not attempt to deal with the problem alone

\*treat the information confidentially.

Disclosure by Adults

Parents and staff who are working with children or who attend child protection training may disclose abuse which took place during their childhood, this disclosure must be noted or recorded.

Consideration must be given to the current risk to any child who may be in contact. If any risk is deemed to exist to any child who may be in contact with the alleged abuser, a report of the allegation should be made to Tusla immediately.(Investigations of disclosures by adult victims of past abuse often uncovers current incidents of abuse and is therefore a means of stopping the cycle of abuse. It is essential to establish whether there is any current risk to any child who is in contact with the alleged abuser revealed in such disclosures. If any risk is deemed to exist the liaison officer should report the allegation to Tusla.

Protection for persons reporting child abuse act 1998

Sportslink wish to draw attention of the staff that this act provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse to the HSE or An Garda (section3 (1)states)

A person who, apart from this section, would be so liable shall not be liable in damages in respect of the communication, whether in writing or otherwise, by them to an appropriate person of their opinion that

\*a child has been or is being assaulted, ill treated, neglected or sexually abused, or

\*a child’s health , development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or neglected, unless it is proved that he or she has not acted reasonably and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person.

Liaison Officers

Sportslink designated Liaison Officers are

Katie Byrne Sportslink Leisure Centre

Yvonne Kehoe Furry Park

Paul Kelly Santry, Dublin 9

 01-8621200

Role of the Liaison Officers

The Liaison Officers in Sportslink have the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the child protection and welfare policy is promoted and implemented. Their role involves the following duties:

\*To be familiar with ‘Children First’, National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children and ‘Our Duty to Care’, the principles of good practice for the protection of children and young people and to have responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the child protection and welfare policy.

\*The Sportslink Liaison Officers provide support to staff members who are or have dealt with a child protection concern or disclosure.

\*To receive reports of alleged/suspected or actual child abuse and act on these in accordiance with the guidelines

\*To ensure that training is provided for all new and existing staff in Sportslink on the child protection policy

\*To build a working relationship with Tusla, An Garda and other agencies as appropriate

\*To ensure that supports are put in place for the young person and employees in cases of allegations being made

\*To keep up to date and undertake relevant training on child policy and practice, in order to ensure the relevance and appropriateness of Sportslink policy and procedures in this area.

\*To review the Sportslink policy and procedures on child protection on an annual basis and amend as appropriate

\*To ensure that systems are in place for recording and retaining all relevant documentation in relation to child protection issues.

Confidentiality

In matters of child abuse, an employee must never promise to keep secret any information which is divulged. It should be explained to the child that this information cannot be kept secret but only those who need to know in order to safeguard the child will be told.

It is essential in reporting any case of alleged/suspected abuse that the principle of confidentiality applies. The information will only be shared on a need to know basis, which means sharing the information with persons who have a need to know in order to safeguard the child and is not a breach of confidentiality and the number of people that need to be informed will be kept to a minimum.

If an employee has any doubts as to whether a report should be made, they should consult with the childcare services designated liaison person.

Record Keeping

Sportslink data controller will ensure that data is collected fairly, is accurate and up-to-date, is kept for lawful purposes and is not used or disclosed in any manner incompatible with those purposes. All data in relation to child protection records collected must be stored in a safe and confidential manner in a secure locked cabinet. Under the Data protection Act every person has a right to establish the existence of personal data, to have any such relating to them and to have inaccurate data rectified or erased. Only the Liaison Officers will have access to this information

Recruitment and Child Protection.

All advertisements, screening and recruitment for vacant posts in Sportslink will reflect our commitment to equality. We will ensure that interviewers conduct interviews in a non-discriminatory way. Interviews will be under taken by a minimum of two representatives of Sportslink using an agreed set of questions. All assessments and workplace tests, including psychometric testing for job applicants and performance assessments for employees, will be conducted, in a fair and non-discriminatory way, bearing in mind the principles of equality of opportunity. Advertisements will be posted on the Sportslink website, recruitment websites and newspapers where applicable. All applicants will be provided with

Details of the service

A job description and personal specification

An application form

A minimum of two references will be taken up followed by a telephone reference check

References should be in writing and no references from family or relatives will be accepted.

Successful candidates will be offered a contract of employment in accordance with employment legislation requirements and each contract will include a probationary period. All employees’ contracts will include signing up to Sportslink Child Protection Policy. These guidelines will apply both to the recruitment of new employees and to the selection of internal candidates for promotion or job change.

Sportslink will not employ, contract or involve as a volunteer, any person to work with children or young adults who has a criminal conviction for violent crime, sexual crime, drugs related offences, or any other offences deemed inappropriate in relation to work with children.

All workers employed, contracted to work or volunteering to work with children through Sportslink will be required to sign a declaration form outlining any previous criminal convictions and granting permission for vetting from An Garda to be sought. Garda vetting will be undertaken for all Sportslink board and staff.

Management of Staff

In accordance with Sportslink policy, all staff undergoes an induction process including the Child Protection Policy and will confirm in writing that the induction process has taken place. Sportslink Child Protection Policy will be rolled out to existing staff through an in- house training programme. On-going training will be provided following annual review or statutory/guidelines changes.

Allegations against an employee

Upon receipt of an allegation, the liaison officer will notify the manager/chairperson. If the allegation relates to the manager/chairperson, the liaison officer will notify the board of directors of the allegation.

If an allegation is made against an employee, ant of the liaison officers, in these situations there are two parts to the process, i.e. dealing with the allegation of abuse and dealing with the employee. Where possible these two pieces should be dealt with by two different people.

There are two different procedures that are followed:

1. The reporting procedure in respect of a child
2. The safety of the child is the first priority of Sportslink and all necessary measures will be taken to ensure that the child and other children are safe.
3. The liaison officer will deal with the procedure involving the child and the reporting to Tusla.
4. The procedure for dealing with the worker

a) The liaison officer and the chairperson will work in close co-operation with each other and with Tusla and An Garda

b) If a formal report is being made, the chairperson will notify the employee that an allegation has been made and what the nature of the allegation is. The employee has a right to respond to this and this response should be documented and retained. Furthermore, Sportslink will ensure that a person is considered innocent until proven otherwise.

c) The chairperson will suspend the employee with pay (where appropriate). In the case where the worker is not suspended the level of supervision of the employee will be increased.

d) The chairperson will liaise closely with HSE children and family services and An Garda to ensure that the actions taken by Sportslink will not undermine or frustrate any investigations.

e) The protective measures which can be taken to ensure the safety of children can include the following

\*suspension of duties of the person accused

\*re-assignment of duties where the accused will not have contact with children

\*working under increased supervision during the period of investigation

\*or other measures as deemed necessary.

Code of behaviour

* All employees of Sportslink must make themselves aware of the childcare services good practice guidelines and must be familiar with the overall child protection policy of Sportslink and sign up to it.
* Parents of children involved in our work must be informed of our policy and procedure
* Sportslink has three liaison officers to deal with any complaints or issues arising which concern the safety or welfare of any child. Our officers are appropriately trained and familiar with the procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation, concern or disclosure of child abuse.
* Sportslink has put in place an anti-bullying policy. Sportslink will not tolerate ant bullying behaviour by children or adults and will deal with any incidents immediately in accordance with the DCYA anti-bullying policy when working with children and young people. Where bullying amounts to any form of abuse it will be treated as such and be recorded and reported as appropriate.
* Sportslink staff show respect and understanding for the rights, safety and welfare of the children and young people.
* Sportslink has put in place a complaints procedure
* Employees should avoid working in isolation with children and favouritism.
* Sportslink respects and promotes the principle of equality and diversity and works with all children in a culturally sensitive way within the context of the Irish Constitution and law and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child i.e. staff should never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child, nor should they ever tell jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children.

Sportslink will review their Child Protection Policy on an annual basis. The next review will take place in\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Notification of our policy and any changes will be displayed on our notice boards and our website.

**Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ on behalf of management.**

**This Policy will be reviewed on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in collaboration with staff**.

**Duty Social Worker number \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Garda Station contact details \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**