



## **SSAI Rules and Regulations Protection of children and vulnerable adults Notes for Club Children's Officers**

### ***Introduction***

1. The SSAI believes that child protection is everyone's responsibility. Abuse can occur anywhere there are children, at any time, at school, in the park or potentially at the shooting club. It is a sad fact that there are some people who will seek to be where children are, simply in order to abuse them.

2. The SSAI believes that everyone has a part to play in looking after the children with whom they may be working. This is both a moral and a legal obligation. This obviously has a great impact on coaches and range officers who may work with children at any time. While the recommendations and procedures below are aimed primarily at coaches and officials who are likely to be working with children they apply equally to all members of the SSAI its member Associations and all target shooting clubs.

3. The child protection procedures outlined below stem from the following principles:  
(a) the child's welfare is the first consideration  
(b) all children, regardless of age, any disability they may have, gender, racial origin, religious belief and sexual identity have a right to be protected from abuse.

4. If the procedures are to help to protect children, everyone involved in shooting needs to see and discuss them. The SSAI therefore requests coaches, officials and members to ensure that they are widely distributed and are discussed at club and national level.

5. If there is any doubt about the procedures and what constitutes good practice in this area the SSAI Children's Officer should be contacted.

### ***Types of Abuse***

6. It is generally acknowledged that there are four main types of abuse - Physical, Sexual, Emotional and Neglect.

(a) Physical Abuse is just what the term implies, hurting or injuring a child, for example, by hitting or shaking them. It might also occur if a child is forced to train beyond his/her capabilities. Bullying is likely to come into this category.

(b) Sexual Abuse occurs when a child knowingly or unknowingly takes part in something which meets the sexual needs of the other person or persons involved: it could range from

sexually suggestive comments to full intercourse.

(c) Emotional Abuse occurs when a child is not given love, help and encouragement and is constantly derided or ridiculed or, perhaps even worse, ignored. Conversely, it can also occur if a child is over-protected. It is present in the unrealistic expectations of parents and coaches over what a child can achieve. Racially and sexually abusive remarks constitute emotional abuse and can be a feature of bullying.

(d) Neglect usually means failing to meet children's basic needs such as food, warmth adequate clothing, medical attention etc. It could also mean failing to ensure they are safe or exposing them to harm.

### ***Indications of Child Abuse***

7. Recognising child abuse is not always easy, even for the experts. The examples listed below are not a complete list and they are only indicators, not confirmation:

(a) Information: The child says that she or he is being abused, or another person says they believe (or actually know) that abuse is occurring.

(b) Injuries: The child has an injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent.

(c) Behaviour Changes: The child's behaviour changes, either over time or quite suddenly, and he or she becomes quiet and withdrawn, or alternatively becomes aggressive.

(d) Reaction to Others: The child appears not to trust adults, eg. a parent or coach with whom she or he would be expected to have, or once had, a close relationship, and does not seem to be able to make friends.

(e) Appearance: The child becomes increasingly neglected-looking in appearance, or loses or puts on weight for no apparent reason.

(f) Sexual Awareness: the child shows inappropriate sexual awareness for his/her age and sometimes behaves in a sexually explicit way.

8. Bear in mind that physically disabled children and children with learning difficulties are particularly vulnerable to abuse and may have added difficulties in communicating what is happening to them.

### **If there are Concerns about the Welfare of a Child**

9. It is not the responsibility of the coach or official to decide whether a child is being abused, but they should act if they have concerns. They should make a detailed note of what they have seen or heard but should not delay in passing on the information.

10. If the coach or official is a member, or the parent/carer or friend of a member, of a shooting club they should:

(a) tell a club official such as the Club Children's Officer, Chairman, Coach or any Committee Member, or

(b) at an event tell the Chief Range Officer unless, of course, these people are suspected of being involved.

11. If the coach or official is himself a club official or, at an event, the Chief Range Officer they should:

(a) talk to the child's parents/carers about the concerns if they think there may be an obvious explanation such as a bereavement or pressure from studies or exams, or

(b) contact the SSAI Children's Officer (c) contact the HSE or contact, asking for the Duty Social Worker or, in an emergency, An Garda Síochána.

12. If the coach or official is working with:

- (a) shooters away from home, at a training camp perhaps, or a national or regional competition, they should in the first instance tell the Team Manager or the Chief Coach.
- (b) They should make a detailed note of what they have seen or heard but should not delay in passing on the information. It is also advisable to contact the SSAI children's officer to advise them of their concern and to whom they have reported it.

### ***What to do if Abuse is reported***

13. If a child tells a coach or official that he or she is being abused they should:

- (a) stay calm.
- (b) not promise to keep it to themselves.
- (c) listen to what the child has to say and take it seriously.
- (d) only ask questions if they need to clarify what the child is telling them: they should not ask the child about explicit details.
- (e) make a detailed note of what the child has told them but should not delay in passing on the information.

### ***Good Practice when Dealing with Children in Shooting***

14. All coaches and officials should:

- (a) avoid situations where they and child are alone. It is acknowledged that occasionally there may be no alternative, for example a child may fall ill and have to be taken home. It is stressed, however, that one to one contact must never be allowed to occur on a regular basis.
- (b) avoid physical contact as much as possible when coaching children on or off the firing point. If physical contact is necessary (for example when teaching new shooting positions etc.) they should first ascertain the child's and the parent's/carer's views on this.
- (c) make sure they have another adult accompanying them if it is necessary to do things of a personal nature for children who are young or who are disabled. They should get the child's consent if at all possible and certainly get consent from the parent/carer. They should let the child know what they are going to do, and why.
- (d) ask parents/carers and/or nominated club officials to be responsible for children in changing rooms or overnight accommodation. They should get teachers/coaches/club officials to work in pairs if classes or groups of children have to be supervised in a changing room or overnight accommodation.
- (e) ensure that mixed teams are always accompanied by male and female coaches/club officials.

15. If the procedures and guidance contained here are implemented properly, they can offer safeguards to everyone involved in shooting and, in doing so, help to maintain the success of the Code of Ethics in Children's Sports initiative.

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