

# **CODE OF ETHICS & GOOD PRACTICE IN SPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE SHOOTING SPORTS ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND.**

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## **POLICY STATEMENT**

The SSAI is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of its members, especially those young members under the age of 18 years of age.

Leaders should at all times show respect and understanding for their rights, safety and welfare and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the association and the guidelines contained in the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's sport.

The SSAI will strive to locate any event organised by the association at venues that are appropriate for all its members.

## **CORE VALUES IN SPORT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

The work of the Shooting Sports Association of Ireland (SSAI) is based on the following principles that will guide the development of target shooting,(as outlined in page 9, Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport).

Young People's experience of sport should be guided by what is best for the young person. The

stages of development and ability of the young person should guide the type of activity provided within the association. Adults who are working with young people within the association will need to have a basic understanding of the needs of young people, including physical, emotional and personal.

### **Integrity in relationships**

Adults interacting with young people in sport should do so with integrity and respect for the child. There is a danger that sporting contexts can be used to exploit or undermine children. All adult actions in sport should be guided by what is best for the child and in the context of quality, open working relationships. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind is unacceptable within sport.

### **Quality atmosphere and ethos**

Sport for young people should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. A child-centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place. Too often competitive demands are placed on children too early resulting in excessive levels of pressure on them and as a consequence, high levels of drop-out from the sport.

### **Equality**

All children should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, sex, religion, social and ethnic background. 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 the guiding principle of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport.

Where children are involved in sport it should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. Ireland has contributed and is committed to the European Code of Sports Ethics, which defines fair play as: "much more than playing within the rules". It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing with the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption. (European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics, Council of Europe, 1993).

### **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. However, often competitive demands are placed on children too early, which results in excessive levels of pressure on them. This can contribute to a high level of drop-out from our sport. Leaders should aim to put the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second. A child-centred approach will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.

## Code of Conduct for Young People

The SSAI wishes to provide the best possible environment for all young people involved in the sport. Young people deserve to be given enjoyable, safe sporting opportunities, free from abuse of any kind. These participants have rights, which must be respected, and responsibilities that they must accept. Young people should be encouraged to realise that they have responsibilities to treat other participants and sports leaders with fairness and respect.

### **Young shooters are entitled to:**

- Be safe and to feel safe
- Be listened to
- Be believed
- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Have a voice in the association
- Participate on an equal basis
- Have fun and enjoy sport
- Experience competition at a level they feel comfortable with
- Make complaints and have them dealt with
- Get help against bullies
- Say NO
- To protect their own bodies
- Confidentiality

### **Young shooters should always:**

- Treat sports leaders with respect
- Do their best and play fairly at all time
- Respect fellow shooters, even when things go wrong
- Respect opponents, be gracious in defeat
- Abide by the rules set down by team managers when travelling to events
- Behave in a manner that avoids bringing the sport of windsurfing into disrepute
- Talk to children's officer if they have any problems

### **Young shooters should never:**

- Cheat
- Use violence or physical contact in an aggressive manner

- Shout or argue with range officers, fellow shooters or opponents
- Harm fellow shooters, opponents or their property
- Bully or use bullying tactics to isolate another target shooter.
- Use unfair or bullying tactics to gain advantage
- Take banned substances
- Tell lies about adults / young people involved with our sport
- Spread rumours

### **Guidelines for Parents**

The SSAI believes that parents should .....

Be a role model for your child and maintain the highest standards of conduct when interacting with children, other parents, with officials and organisers.

Always behave responsibly and not seek to unfairly affect the outcome of competitions.

Never intentionally expose any young participant to embarrassment or disparagement by the use of flippant or sarcastic 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 range officers, coaches, organisers and other shooters.

Encourage your child to play by the rules. Teach your child that honest endeavour is as important as winning and do all you can to encourage good sportsmanship.

Set a good example by applauding good sailing on both sides. Encourage mutual respect for fellow shooters and opponents.

Parents should support all efforts to remove abusive behaviour and bullying behaviour in all its forms. ( Please read insert on anti-bullying policy).

### **Guidelines for the Leaders in our Sport**

Leaders in children's sport should strive to create a positive environment for the children in their care. They have an overall responsibility to take the steps necessary to ensure that positive and healthy experiences are provided.

The SSAI recognises the key role leaders (coaches and range Officers, etc.) play in the lives of children in sport.

All leaders should adhere to the guidelines and regulations set out in the association's Code of Ethics.

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

Leaders working with young people in the SSAI should be suitable and appropriately qualified. Leaders will be expected to go through appropriate recruitment and selection procedures (see attached application and reference form), that apply to all persons with substantial access to young people, whether paid or unpaid. References will be needed and will be followed up.

Leaders will be given a copy of the association's code of ethics and they will be expected to abide by the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Sport.

Once appointed the leader must act as a role model and promote the positive aspect of sport at all levels. He or she must 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.

Remember that your behaviour to young shooters, other officials and opponents will have an effect on the shooters in your care.

Be generous with praise and never ridicule or shout at participants for making mistakes. All young shooters are entitled to respect.

Be careful to avoid the "star system". Every 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.

Physical punishment of physical force must never be used. Never punish a mistake by verbal or physical means or by exclusion.

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

Remember that young people sail for fun 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, selectors and other coaches. Avoid criticism of fellow coaches.

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

Leaders are responsible for setting and monitoring boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with young shooters.

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

Leaders should communicate and co-operate with medical and ancillary practitioners in the diagnosis, treatment and management of their shooter's 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 participant can often mean that a leader will learn confidential information about a participant or his/ her family. This must not be divulged to a third party without the express permission of the shooter/ family.

Set realistic goals for the participants and do not push young shooters. Create a safe and enjoyable environment.

Do not criticise other leaders, (officials, coaches, and selectors). You are the role model for the children in your care.

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

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

### **Leaders Code of Conduct**

Leaders should be

Positive during sessions, praise and encourage effort as well as results.

Plan and prepare appropriately.

Put the welfare of young people first, strike a balance between this and winning.

Insist on fair play, treat participant equally.

Keep your own knowledge and skill up-to-date.

Involve parents where possible and inform parents when problems arise.

Keep record of attendance at training.

Keep a brief record of injuries and action taken.

Keep a brief record of problem/ action/ outcomes, if behavioural problems arise.

**Where possible leaders should avoid:**

- Spend excessive amounts of time with children away from others.
- Taking sessions alone.
- Taking children to your home.
- Taking children on journey's alone in their car.

**Sports leaders should not:**

- Use any form of punishment or physical force on a child.
- Exert undue influence over a 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, and/or make sexually suggestive comment about , or to a child.
- Undertake any form of therapy in the training of children.

I have read and agree to abide by the above guidelines

\_\_\_\_\_ (signed) \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

**Recruitment and Selection Policy**

The SSAI will take all reasonable steps to ensure that leaders working with young people are suitable and appropriately qualified.

Recruitment and selection procedures are therefore necessary and these procedures apply to all persons with substantial access to young people.

All adults taking responsibility for children in sport should undergo a recruitment process. The responsibilities of the role and the level of experience/ qualifications required should be drawn up and clearly stated beforehand.

Volunteers should fill in an application form, giving names of two referees that can be contacted. (Sample application form attached). Where possible there should be an interview.

A probationary period is advisable.

There will be a "sign-up" procedure, whereby the newly recruited volunteers, agrees to abide by the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Sport and to the association's Code and policies.

Every effort should be made to manage and support appointed leaders. Adequate supervision should always be provided, a leader should not have to work alone.

A decision to appoint a leader is the responsibility of the association and not of any one individual within it. The association's committee should ratify recommendations for appointment.

### **Child welfare protection procedures**

The SSAI 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 (Code, page 41), about the safety or welfare of a young person you should respond 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 the 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 of the association but should be passed on to the Children's Officer or to the Chair Person who may in turn pass the concern on to the local Statutory Authorities.

It is not the responsibility of anyone working within the SSAI, 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. That is the job of the local statutory authorities. However, there is a responsibility to protect children by assisting the appropriate agencies so that so that they can make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the young person.

Everyone should follow both procedures 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 allegations 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.

- (d) make no judgemental statements against the person of whom the allegations are made.
- (e) do not question the child unless the nature of what he/she is saying is unclear. Leading questions must be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as "Can you explain to me what you mean by that".
- (f) check out the concerns with the parents/guardians before making a report unless by doing so you would endanger the child.
- (g) in giving the child some indication as to what would happen next, such as informing the parents/ guardians, health board or social services it should be borne in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.
- (h) carefully record all details.
- (i) pass on the information to the Children's officer
- (j) reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.

## SSAI COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

### Responding to allegations against staff / volunteers

Where there is a complaint against a member of staff or a volunteer, there may be three types of investigations:

- A criminal investigation
- A child protection investigation
- A disciplinary investigation

### What to do if there are concerns

If the allegation is about poor practice, the person in charge will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice of the person in charge, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be referred to the Code of Ethics Officer of the Irish Sailing Association. They will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

Any suspicions that a child has been abused by either a member of staff or a volunteer should be reported to the person in charge, who 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.

The person in charge will inform the SSAI Children's Officer who will refer the allegations to the appropriate Health Board's Social Work Department who may decide to involve the Gardai.

The parents or guardians of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the Social Work Department.

The Code of Ethics Officer of the ISA should also be notified.

Confidentiality must be maintained at all levels at all times.

If the person in charge is the subject of the allegations, the report must be made to the I.S.A. who then will be responsible for taking the action outlined above.

### **Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998**

This act came into operation on 23rd January 1999. The main provisions of the act are:

- The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of the Health Board or the Gardai.
- The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report” knowing that statement to be false.”
- “A person shall not be liable for damages in respect of the communication, whether in writing or otherwise, by him/ her to an appropriate person of his/ her opinion that
  1. a child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused.
  2. a child’s health, development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or neglected.

Unless it is proved that he/she has not acted reasonably and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person.

### **Common Difficulties in dealing with Child Abuse**

Dealing with child abuse is rarely straightforward. Many complications can arise including the following:

- Disclosure is made and then withdrawn.
- A disclosure is made and secrecy is expected.
- A young person may threaten to harm him/herself if the report is passed on.
- The young person will often try to protect his/her abuser.

Despite these and other complications that may arise, the officer in charge should always follow the procedures and the code of good practice described above.