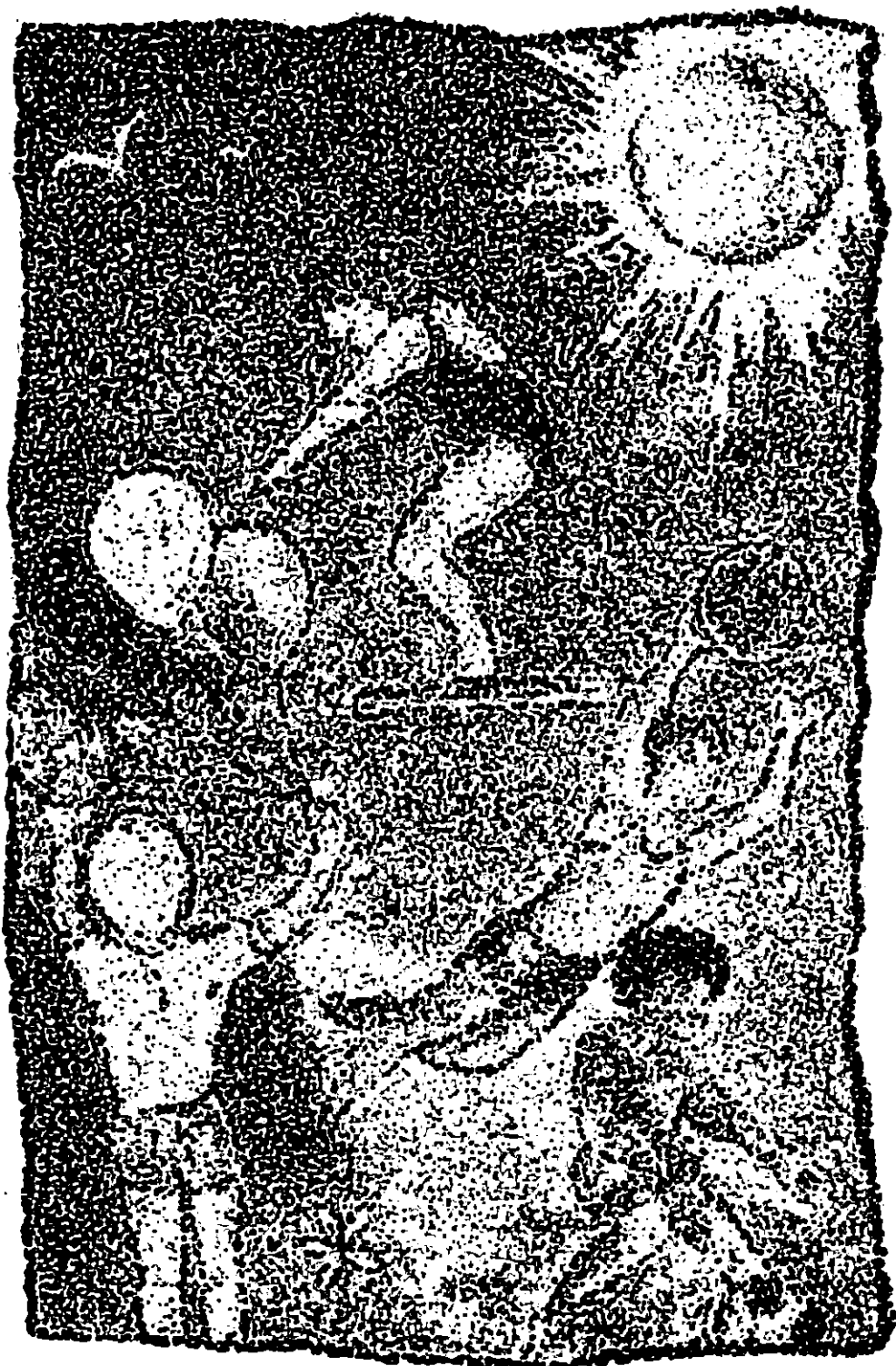




CODE OF ETHICS and GOOD PRACTICE for children's sport in Ireland



June 1996



CODE OF ETHICS and GOOD PRACTICE for **children's sport** in Ireland

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY MR BERNARD ALLEN, TD, MINISTER FOR SPORT AND YOUTH AFFAIRS	3
INTRODUCTION BY DR BREDa McLEAVEY, CHAIRPERSON, CODE OF ETHICS AND GOOD PRACTICE COMMITTEE	4
MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE	5
THE NEED FOR A CODE OF ETHICS AND GOOD PRACTICE FOR CHILDREN'S SPORT	6
1. CORE VALUES IN CHILDREN'S SPORT	7
1.1 Importance of childhood	7
1.2 Needs of the child	7
1.3 Integrity in relationships	7
1.4 Fair play	7
1.5 Quality atmosphere and ethos	7
1.6 Equality	8
1.7 The important role of sports leaders	8
1.8 The necessity for education and training	8
1.9 Self awareness	8
1.10 Child to child relationships	8
1.11 Benefits of sport for children	8
2. ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS IN SPORT	9
3. QUALITY LEADERSHIP IN CHILDREN'S SPORT	9
3.1 Adults involved in sport	9
3.2 Education and training	11
3.3 Selection and screening	13
4. GOOD PRACTICE IN CHILDREN'S SPORT	14
4.1 Preparation and supervision of sessions	14
4.2 Behaviour of leaders	14
4.3 Balanced approach to winning	15
4.4 Context for the conduct of sporting activity	15
4.5 Coaching qualifications	16
4.6 Supervision of away trips	16
4.7 Discipline and the creation of a positive environment	16
4.8 Breaches of discipline and appeals procedures	17
4.9 Confidentiality	17
4.10 Sanctions	17
4.11 Guidelines for the use of sanctions	17
4.12 Substance abuse in sport	18
4.13 Safety	19
4.14 Psychological stress, burnout and dropout among young participants in sport	19
4.15 Insurance	21

CONTENTS

5. CHILD ABUSE	22
5.1 Protection from abuse	22
5.2 Sources of abuse	22
5.3 Categories of abuse	22
5.4 Signs of abuse	23
5.5 Children's rights	23
6. AWARENESS AND IDENTIFICATION OF CHILD ABUSE	24
6.1 Behavioural signs of abuse	24
6.2 Physical abuse	24
6.3 Child neglect	25
6.4 Psychological/emotional abuse	25
6.5 Child sexual abuse	25
7. REPORTING PROCEDURE FOR CHILD ABUSE	27
7.1 Reporting procedure for child abuse	27
7.2 Child abuse reporting procedure within a sporting context	27
7.3 Confidentiality	27
7.4 Responsibilities of sports leaders and organisations	27
7.5 Immediate response to a child reporting any form of abuse	28
8. CHILDREN'S LIAISON OFFICERS	30
CONCLUSION	30
REFERENCES AND SOURCE MATERIAL	31
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	33
APPENDIX 1 Submissions received	34
APPENDIX 2 National Coaching Development Programme: Coaching Ladder	36
APPENDIX 3 Sample screening form for potential sports leaders and sample letter to person giving reference	37

FOREWORD

This Code of Ethics and Good Practice is the culmination of a lengthy and broadly based consultative process.

Sport has a very special place in the life of all Irish people. This would not be the case were it not for the extraordinary commitment and total dedication of so many people, particularly those voluntary workers who have devoted themselves to sport, the community and young people down through the years. It is vital that this should never be forgotten and that their contribution is encouraged, sustained and never under-valued. The country owes them a great debt of gratitude and sport in Ireland will not flourish without their generosity, hard work and integrity.

Children, young people and their families should have every confidence that they are treated with respect and understanding when they take part in sport. This Code will provide administrators, coaches and players with guidelines and standards to be used in dealing with young people in sport.

I would like to thank the Chairperson, Dr Breda McLeavey and the other Committee members for their hardwork and expertise in drafting this Code. I am confident that this Code will contribute to the enjoyment and fulfilment of everybody involved in Children's sport.

Bernard Allen, T.D.,
Minister for Sport and Youth Affairs
June 1996

INTRODUCTION

Sport has held a valued place in society down through the ages. Socialisation is the process whereby a person acquires a social identity, learns appropriate behaviour and conforms to expectations held by members of the group to which s/he belongs or aspires to belong. The importance of sport in socialisation has long been recognised. The role of sport in modern society has become increasingly more significant in the social and cultural life of many countries. Ireland stands proud amongst sports-loving nations of the world.

Sport for children and young people has never been of greater importance than it is today, with all of the pressures and distractions (many less than healthy) calling on the minds and emotions of children from an early age. Apart from its important role in socialisation, sport answers many needs of today's children and young people, from healthy exercise to stress reduction, from the thrill of achievement to the enhancement of self-confidence and self-esteem.

The contribution of sports leaders, who voluntarily give of their time to provide such experiences for children, is invaluable. Without them children's sport could not flourish. This unique relationship, whereby adults and young people voluntarily come together to learn and to share values, deserves all the support and protection that can be provided. This Code of Ethics and Good Practice is aimed at helping to provide such support and protection.

The role of teachers, at both primary and post-primary levels in the development and success of Irish children's sport is widely appreciated. Teachers work within the guidelines provided by their own schools and organisations, but the Code should be of supplementary benefit to them.

The Code is the result of the work of the Expert Committee established by the Minister for Sport, Mr Bernard Allen, T.D. in February, 1995. In preparing the Code, the Committee consulted widely with organisations and individuals who are involved in sport. European and International Directives and Policy Statements on Youth Sport, as well as Codes prepared by various sports bodies, youth organisations, etc. were taken into account. The Committee met with interest groups to discuss areas of special concern to them, and sought the views of specialists in areas where particular clarification or advice was needed. Submissions were invited from all members of the public, particularly from young people. A very large and extremely helpful range of submissions was received, which are reflected in many of the recommendations.

It is in the interest of everyone involved in children's sport that this Code will be a living document, used by all involved in children's sport, and acted upon by those involved in policy decisions. Time and experience will necessitate revisions and additions to the Code, which is integral to the nature of such a document.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish to thank the Minister for his timely attention to establishing this Code and for his constructive support throughout the work of the Committee. I wish to thank all those who made submissions to the Committee (see Appendix 1) or who contributed their views at meetings or informal discussions.

My grateful appreciation is extended to the Members of the Committee, to the Secretary of the Committee, Mr Marc Howard and to the Rapporteur to the group, Mr Pat Duffy, who gave so generously of their time and expertise for the benefit of Irish children and young people and all others who work for the continuing success of Children's Sport in Ireland.

Dr Breda McLeavey
Committee Chairperson

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Mr Marc Howard, Secretary, Sport Section, Department of Education

THE NEED FOR A CODE OF ETHICS AND GOOD PRACTICE FOR CHILDREN'S SPORT

Sport for children is of particular importance given its potential to promote fair play, social skills and a positive approach to competition. Through participation in sport children can have fun, develop new skills, make new friends, feel good about themselves and experience life in a way which will enhance their personal growth throughout their childhood, adolescence and adulthood.

Adult leaders in sport have a central role in helping children to grow and develop in a healthy, happy and balanced way. Adults (including older adolescents and young adults) who are charged with the care of children often do so in their own free time and are providing an important social service. The future of our sports system depends on the continued involvement of such dedicated people, and on all who work with young people in sport to be positively motivated and well trained. It is essential, therefore, that the contributions made by these people are guided by a positive and ethical philosophy.

In all aspects of its operation sport must value children and cherish childhood and must be governed by an atmosphere which promotes positive adult-child relationships. This Code of Ethics and Good Practice is aimed at promoting positive experiences for children in sport. The Code consists of a general set of principles which should underpin the conduct of sport in all areas, including competitive sport and non-competitive physical recreation. The Code is designed to assist those who work with children in sport to do so in an ethical manner and to provide the basis for good practice.

This Code should be adopted by all sporting organisations at national, regional and local levels, and individuals working with children should abide by the provisions contained herein. The Code is designed to cover sporting activities involving children and young people up to 18 years of age.

1. Core Values in Children's Sport

The organisation of sport for children should be guided by a set of core values which provide the foundation for all practice:

1.1 Importance of Childhood

The importance of childhood must be understood and valued by everyone involved in sport. The right to happiness within childhood must be recognised and enhanced at all levels of sport.

1.2 Needs of the child

All children's sport experiences and contexts must be guided by what is best for children. This means that adults must understand the emotional, physical and personal needs of young people. The stages of development of children should guide the types of activity provided within sport. Coaches, instructors, administrators, leaders and their assistants should have the ability to respond positively to the individual needs of each child. All adults involved in leadership roles should have a sound understanding of the importance of enhancing self esteem for young people and should seek to develop positive and healthy relationships with and between the children in their care.

1.3 Integrity in relationships

Adults interacting with children 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 are unacceptable within sport.

1.4 Fair play

All children's sport 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 within the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just a way of behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of cheating, gamesmanship, doping, violence (both physical and verbal), exploitation, unequal opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption.

(European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics. Council of Europe, 1993)

This model of fair play should be adopted by all children's sport organisations.

1.5 Quality atmosphere and ethos

Children's sport 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 which results in excessive levels of pressure on them and, as a consequence, high levels of drop-out from sport.

1. Core Values in Children's Sport

1.6 Equality

All children should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, sex, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. Children with disability should be involved in sports activities in an integrated way, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children.

1.7 The important role of sports leaders

Sports leaders play a vital role in Irish sport. The input of such personnel, which occurs mainly on a voluntary basis, will be promoted and enhanced through the provisions of this Code of Ethics and Good Practice. The right of sports leaders to obtain a healthy sense of achievement and satisfaction through their involvement in children's sport must be recognised.

1.8 The necessity for education and training

Sport exposes children to new challenges, some of which occur in environments with certain risks. Adults who take responsibility for children in sport have a duty to ensure that they are competent to provide safe and rewarding experiences for those in their care. Appropriate training and educational opportunities need to be developed for all leaders in sport.

1.9 Self awareness

All leaders in children's sport should have a realistic understanding of their level of competence in relevant areas. This should include an understanding of the reasons for their own involvement in sport and a recognition that the main goal of children's sport is to provide positive experiences for children.

1.10 Child to child relationships

Interaction between children should be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and fair play. Such interaction can be promoted by adults who create an environment in which quality, open relationships are modelled and valued and where the integrity of each individual is respected.

1.11 Benefits of sport for children

Children have a lot to gain from sport. Their natural sense of fun and spontaneity can blossom in positive sporting environments which promote progress in a child centred way. Sport provides an excellent medium in which children can learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own unique potential. These benefits will accrue through a positive and progressive approach to the involvement of children in sport which places the needs of the child first and winning and competition second. A child centred and progressive approach to children's sport will return many benefits in terms of the health and well being of our future adult population.

2. Adult-Child Relationships in Sport

Adult-child relationships in sport should be:

1. Entered into by choice.
2. Open, positive and encouraging.
3. Defined by a mutually agreed set of goals and commitments.
4. Respectful of the creativity and autonomy of children.
5. Defined by an ethical code of conduct relating to interaction, touching and bullying.
6. Carried out in a context where children are protected and where their rights are promoted.
7. Free from verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
8. Respectful of the needs and developmental stage of the child.
9. Aimed at the promotion of enjoyment and individual progress.
10. Respectful of the roles and responsibilities of sports leaders.
11. Governed by a code of ethics and good practice in sport.

3. Quality Leadership in Children's Sport

Adults have a crucial leadership role to play in sport. Whether as parents/guardians, spectators, coaches, instructors, administrators or leaders they hold positions which can contribute to creating a positive sporting environment for young people. The unique nature of sport provides sports leaders with the opportunity to develop positive and special relationships with children. Such relationships have tremendous potential in helping children to develop and express themselves in an open and secure way.

Because of the personal input of volunteers the view might be held that they are either beyond reproach or that the imposition of any additional conditions or training would be unacceptable. However, given the important and responsible roles which adults play at many different levels in sport, it is essential that their competence and ability to deal with children in a fair, empathic and ethical way is ensured.

3.1 Adults involved in sport

There are many leadership roles which contribute to the successful development and organisation of children's sport. These are defined below:

Administrator: Administrators are those people who look after organisational matters but who are not directly involved in delivering or supervising the activity session itself.

Assistant: Assistants are those people who provide back-up to any of the roles defined in this section and

3. Quality Leadership in Children's Sport

often such assistants are involved on an intermittent basis (e.g. provision of lifts to matches, competitions; supervision of trips).

Coach/Trainer: A coach is a person who assists the young participant to develop his or her skills and abilities in a progressive way. Coaching should provide the participant with the opportunity to improve based on personal goals and standards. Good coaching will recognise the role which suitably structured and graded competitive experiences can play in the child's development. Good coaches will also recognise the need to promote fun and fulfilment for children and to de-emphasise competition with younger children. Coaches should have sufficient knowledge and training to enable them to put together safe and worthwhile practice sessions and to prepare young people for competitive situations in an ethical and balanced way, respecting the developmental and individual needs of the child.

Leader: Leaders are defined as those individuals who are primarily involved in the organisation and supervision of activity sessions for young people and where coaching and/or teaching inputs are at a minimal level.

Manager: An individual who takes overall responsibility for a team or a group of sports people and who will often have a direct input into the nature and organisation of the activity itself.

Mentor: An individual who undertakes an overseeing role with a group of children, often in co-operation with other mentors.

Official: An official is an individual charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the rules of an activity are adhered to in a formal way. This category includes referees, judges, umpires, etc.

Selector: An individual who has responsibility for the selection of children for teams and events.

Instructor: Instructors are involved in the systematic development of the core skills and abilities of an activity, usually in a non-competitive context.

Note: While these definitions indicate a number of discrete roles related to children's sport there is often overlap between the different categories. For the purposes of this Code, all of the above will be referred to in a general sense as **sports leaders**.

3. Quality Leadership in Children's Sport

Adults become involved in working with children in sport in a number of different capacities. The guiding principle of such involvement must be: Does the activity respect the dignity of the young person and enhance his/her personal development?

Parents/Guardians have a primary responsibility for their child's involvement in sport. This involvement should be seen as a positive, happy experience for the child. Parents should know and ensure that those adults who act in leadership roles within the sports setting are qualified and competent to teach, supervise and look after children in their care. Parents should check that this Code of Ethics and Good Practice has been adopted by clubs and organisations in which their children are involved. In addition, parents should be aware of the nature of the sessions and activities in which their children participate.

3.2 Education and training

Given the wide and diverse range of sports involvement by adults, it is essential that suitable education programmes are widely available.

The following areas should be included in any education programme offered to individuals dealing with young people in sport:

1. Issues of general competence (e.g. coaching, administration).
2. Ethical responsibilities and a code of practice.
3. Child development.
4. Issues relating to children's needs in sport.
5. Recognising and responding to child abuse situations.
6. Prevention and reporting of child abuse.

It is recommended that a three tier approach to ethics and child protection be taken in order to ensure that appropriate attitudes and skills are fostered within the sporting community:

1. Implementation of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice

The Code of Ethics and Good Practice should be available, familiar to and complied with by all those involved in children's sport. The Code of Ethics and Good Practice should be adopted by all sports organisations and displayed in sports clubs or other venues where sporting activities take place.

2. Specific Education in Child Protection

There is a need to ensure that a core of specific education exists in the area of child protection and child abuse in sport. It is recommended that a specific workshop entitled Children in Sport be developed for delivery to organisations, clubs, communities, parents/guardians etc. and that such a workshop might be delivered by trained personnel drawn from the child protection area and from sport. The development and delivery of the workshop should be complementary to existing programmes in sport and the child protection area.

3. Quality Leadership in Children's Sport

3. Education as part of the Training Programmes for Sports Leaders

Ethical issues and questions relating to the protection of children from abuse in sport should be part of the education and training programmes offered to sports leaders. Where no such training programmes exist it is recommended that they should be developed. Player and parent/guardian education should also be addressed as part of this overall process.

The proposed three tier strategy is summarised below.

TARGET POPULATIONS	MEASURES		
	GENERAL CODE	SPECIFIC EDUCATION	EDUCATION AS PART OF TRAINING PROGRAMMES
Children's Liaison Officers (see 8.0) Sports Leaders Sports Organisations Parents/Guardians Participants	Code of Ethics and Good Practice. Explanatory materials also to be widely available	Specialist workshop "Children in Sport" to be provided for organisations, clubs, communities, parents/guardians, etc.	Ethical and child abuse issues included in all formal training programmes for sports leaders

Coaching

Much valuable work is done by coaches within children's sport. In order to further enhance this contribution, it is recommended that all coaches be afforded the opportunity to take courses within the National Coaching Development Programme, which is a scheme currently being implemented by 51 National Governing Bodies in sport. This will help the coach to enhance his/her basic coaching competencies and to become part of a national coaching register. The syllabus at levels 1 to 4 of the Programme currently deals with aspects of the role of the coach and ethics in sport (See Appendix 2). This syllabus should be expanded to reflect the recommendations of this Code of Ethics and Good Practice and particular emphasis should be placed on coaching children's sport at levels 1 and 2 of the Programme.

It is also recommended that specialist options in teaching, coaching and leading children's sport be developed. This initiative should be co-ordinated by the National Coaching and Training Centre in consultation with relevant agencies.

3. Quality Leadership in Children's Sport

3.3 Selection and Screening

It is recommended that adults taking responsibility for children in sport, whether on a professional or voluntary basis, should undergo a selection and screening process. National Governing Bodies in sport, clubs and all other relevant organisations have a responsibility to ensure that such selection and screening occurs. This process should take into account the following:

1. All sport leaders should have an appropriate background and competence to undertake their respective tasks. Specifically in relation to coaches, it is recommended that they should hold Introductory and/or Level 1 qualifications (National Coaching Development Programme) and that a concerted campaign should take place to encourage coaches to participate in the appropriate courses. It is further suggested that National Governing Bodies give consideration to the recommendation that all coaches appointed to positions with a national brief should hold at least a Level 3 certificate within the National Coaching Development Programme, when such a qualification becomes available within their sport.
2. At local and club level it is recommended that a screening form be used for sports leaders (See Sample Form Appendix 3). Such a form would help to formalise the process of becoming involved in responsible positions and should become a condition of such involvement.
3. At regional and national levels and for any sports leaders who are paid for the work they do, it is recommended that sporting organisations should introduce screening to include Garda clearance. Such a process should include specific questions and the checking of references relating to previous work with children.
4. Parents/guardians have a right and a duty to be aware of the personnel dealing with their children and to be satisfied with the training and competitive programmes and the general environment which is created.

4. Good Practice in Children's 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.

Sports leaders should:

- (i) be competent and qualified;
- (ii) be positive, enthusiastic and cheerful;
- (iii) reinforce the principles of fair play;
- (iv) give feedback in a constructive and encouraging manner;
- (v) encourage an active healthy lifestyle;
- (vi) involve parents/guardians as much as possible; and
- (vii) recognise that they themselves are human and will not get it right all the time!

Above all, sports leaders should recognise the importance of fun in children's sport. Children should not be treated as mini-adults and their needs should be recognised at all stages. In addition, the sports leader is in a unique position of trust and this position must be maintained with integrity at all times.

4.1 Preparation and supervision of sessions

1. The sports leader should be well prepared for each sports session.
2. The sports leader should take all reasonable steps to establish a safe sporting environment.
3. Sessions should be in recognised venues, not at personal premises.

4.2 Behaviour of leaders

The sports leader should:

1. Maintain the highest standard of personal conduct and support the principles of fair play.
2. Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being. Specifically the sports leader should treat everyone equally regardless of sex, age, ability, ethnic origin, religion or political persuasion. In this regard, the sports leader should ensure that all are given sufficient opportunity to participate in the activity.
3. Be responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with participants. This is particularly important when the sports leader and participant are of opposite sex and/or when the participant is a young person.
4. Realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted by the participant or by outsiders and could lead to allegations of sexual misconduct or impropriety.
5. Encourage the participants to adhere to the spirit of the rules. Furthermore, the sports leader must not encourage or allow participants to violate the rules and should actively seek to discourage such action.

4. Good Practice in Children's Sport

6. Treat opponents and officials with due respect both in victory and defeat and insist that participants act in a similar manner.
7. Never exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward.
8. Be watchful of all situations, particularly bullying, which may occur
 - (i) child to child;
 - (ii) group to child; and
 - (iii) adult to child.
9. Encourage loyalty to the team and/or club as appropriate.
10. Have enjoyment of the sport as a priority.
11. Encourage two-way communication with participants.
12. Prohibit swearing or other inappropriate language, signing or behaviour.

4.3 Balanced approach to winning

A sports leader will be concerned primarily with the well being, health and future of the child and only secondarily with winning. The sports leader should stress the importance of sincere effort and enjoying the game rather than winning at all costs.

4.4 Context for the conduct of sporting activity

1. The activity undertaken should be suitable for the age, experience and ability of the participants.
2. Children with disabilities should be involved in sporting activities in an integrated way. However, sports leaders must be aware of and informed regarding the special needs of children with disabilities. Sports leaders should also be aware that children with special needs may be more vulnerable to abuse.
3. The sports leader should respond positively to the wishes and concerns of the participant regarding his/her participation in the activity.
4. When working with participants, sports leaders should always work in an open and approved environment. Situations where a sports leader and an individual participant cannot be observed should be avoided.
5. Adults should avoid situations where they are alone with children in changing rooms. Wherever practicable, there should always be two or more adults present in changing rooms.
6. Adult : child ratios should reflect the duration, nature and location of the activities, the ages and characteristics of the young people and any other responsibilities related to the activity. It is the responsibility of clubs and sports organisations to determine what are appropriate adult:child ratios and ensure that they are adhered to.
7. Parents have a key role in ensuring that the context in which their child is participating is appropriate, as indicated at points 1-6 above.

4. Good Practice in Children's Sport

4.5 Coaching qualifications

1. The sports leader should be competent to deliver the activity in which s/he is engaged as outlined in Section 3.3. The procedures and regulations of the relevant National Governing Body relating to coaching and coaching qualifications should be adhered to by coaches in each sport. Sports leaders who operate outside of such formal structures are encouraged to hold equivalent qualifications, where they exist.
2. All sports leaders should have a knowledge of First Aid.

4.6 Supervision of away trips

1. All club members, assistants and accompanying adults travelling away should be carefully chosen.
2. Whenever possible, adults should not share a room with a child. If it is necessary, then it is recommended to have more than one child in the room with the adult. If children are sharing a room, it should be with those of the same age and sex.
3. Adequate adult:child ratios should be observed.
4. Sports leaders are discouraged from being alone in their car with lone participants.
5. Permission of parents/guardians should be obtained for all away trips.
6. Special care should be taken by both host and visiting clubs in the selection of homes for over-night stays and where practicable more than one child should be placed with each host family.

4.7 Discipline and the creation of a positive environment

1. With proper leadership, sport programmes play a leading role in helping young people to accept responsibilities, to accept others and to accept themselves. Coaches should ensure that all participants feel and believe that they all have an equally important contribution to make to the activity.
2. Discipline in sport should always be positive in focus, providing the structure and rules that allow participants to learn to set their own goals and strive for them. Young people in sport need to learn to become responsible for themselves and therefore more independent.
3. The main form of discipline should be through praise for:
 - a. effort; and
 - b. social skills as well as sport skills.
4. Children must be helped to understand the responsibilities and implications of the freedom to make choices and decisions within sport which often involve the difference between playing fairly and unfairly.
5. Participants should treat others in a respectful manner. Participants should not interfere with, bully or take unfair advantage of others.
6. There should be no place for fighting, over-aggressive or dangerous behaviour in sport.
7. Participants should treat their sports leaders with dignity and respect, recognising the time and input which such people contribute to their sport.

4. Good Practice in Children's Sport

8. Officials and coaches should treat participants, fellow officials and opponents with respect and should behave as good role models.
9. Parents/guardians should encourage their child to play by the rules of the game.

4.8 Breaches of discipline and appeals procedures

1. Rules and expectations should be positively stated, agreed and communicated clearly to all involved in any activity.
2. All sporting bodies should have a clear disciplinary/complaints and appeals procedure which is made known to all young people, sports leaders and parents/ guardians.
3. This procedure should involve all complaints being fully investigated and the person, about whom the complaint has been made, being made aware of the complaint as soon as possible. In the case of an allegation of child sexual abuse or physical abuse, the matter should be referred immediately to the Statutory Authorities as outlined in Section 7 of this Code.

4.9 Confidentiality

Confidentiality must be maintained throughout all stages of dealing with a complaint.

Confidentiality is about managing information in a respectful, professional and purposeful manner. Only those who need to know about a complaint should be given information. Informally revealing information to anyone else should be avoided.

4.10 Sanctions

Sanctions are an important element in maintaining discipline. However, sports leaders should have a clear understanding of where and when particular sanctions are appropriate.

1. Any sanctions which may be interpreted as being humiliating or improper should not be used.
2. Care should be taken not to expose a child intentionally or unintentionally to embarrassment or disparagement by use of sarcastic or flippant remarks about the child, his/her family etc.
3. Sports leaders should never use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a child.

4.11 Guidelines for the use of sanctions

1. Sanctions should be used in a corrective way designed to help children improve now and in the future. Sanctions should not be used to retaliate or to make the sports leader feel better.
2. When violations of team rules or other misbehaviours occur, sanctions should be applied in an impersonal way.
3. Once a good rule has been agreed upon, ensure that children who violate it experience the unpleasant consequences of their misbehaviour. Sanctions should not be waved threateningly over the heads of children. They should be implemented fairly and firmly.

4. Good Practice in Children's Sport

4. One clear warning should be given before delivering sanctions.
5. Sanctions should be administered in a consistent way.
6. If an appropriate action cannot be devised right away, the child should be told that the matter will be dealt with later, at a specified time.
7. Once sanctions have been imposed, it is important to make the child feel a valued member of the group again.
8. Sanctions should not be seen by the child as a rewarding experience for his/her inappropriate behaviour.
9. Children should not be sanctioned for making errors when they are playing.
10. Physical activity (e.g. running laps or doing push-ups) should not be used as sanctions. To do so only causes children to resent physical activity, something which they should learn to enjoy throughout their lives.
11. Sanctions should be used sparingly. Constant sanctioning and criticism cause children to turn away from sport.
12. Sanctions should be fair and in the case of persistent offence should be progressively applied. The following steps are suggested:
 - Statement and agreement of rules
 - Warning if a rule is broken
 - Sanction if the rule is broken a second time (e.g. temporary exclusion from the activity.)
 - Individual interview if the rule is broken again
 - Longer term exclusion for continued breaking of rules and involvement of parents/guardians.

4.12 Substance abuse in sport

1. The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco should be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity.
2. A sports leader should never smoke when taking a session or drink alcohol soon before leading a session.
3. Under-age clubs and teams should be encouraged to organise receptions and celebrations in a non-alcoholic environment and in a manner that is suitable for the age group concerned. Adults should model appropriate behaviour and refrain from drinking alcohol at such functions.
4. Officials should ensure that those in their charge are aware of the illegality of proscribed drugs or other banned performance-enhancing substances.

4. Good Practice in Children's Sport

5. Sports leaders should strive to eliminate unfair practices including the use of drugs which effect performance.
6. Sports leaders in children's sport should refrain from seeking sponsorship from the alcohol and tobacco industries.

4.13 Safety

All activities being undertaken should be suitable for the age, experience and ability of the participants. Where protective equipment is deemed necessary it should be used.

1. All clubs involved in organising sporting activities or teams should have First Aid expertise available for all training sessions and events. They should have a proper First Aid Kit, including gloves for each open wound injury, and sponges to be used on a once-off basis only.
2. Injuries, including minor ones, should be recorded, with a note of the action taken.
3. Parents/guardians should be notified of all injuries which their children incur within a sporting activity.
4. All clubs and activities should be governed by a clear and widely known emergency plan.
5. Umpires and referees must ensure that the conduct of the games and the implements used are in accordance with the rules. Equipment and facilities must be appropriate to the maturity of the participants.
6. Children should be taught the rules of the game and encouraged to abide by them. Many rules are there for safety.
7. The participants should have been systematically prepared for the activity being undertaken and made aware of their personal responsibility in terms of safety. It is important that before children are taken on a trip, they have learned and acquired personal safety rules.
8. Parents/guardians have the responsibility for ensuring that their children get to and from sessions safely.

4.14 Psychological stress, burnout and dropout among young participants in sport

Burnout may be defined as a process resulting from an activity that was once a source of fun and personal satisfaction, now being associated with progressive physical and psychological distress. This change may result from the sheer number of hours involved in physical training with high expectations and pressure from sports leaders and parents/guardians. Burnout is a loss of energy and enthusiasm for sport and is characterised by anxiety and stress. The child no longer has fun and becomes overwhelmed by the demands of competition and training. S/he may wish to drop out of sport.

4. Good Practice in Children's Sport

Within a sporting context the following practices are injurious to children's health and welfare:

1. Stretching a child to perform at a level which is beyond his/her capacity related to age or maturation level.
2. Overtraining or the making of demands on a child that lead to burnout.
3. Knowingly permitting an injured child to participate in a sporting activity.
4. Failure to take into account standard safety precautions or to take adequate precautions to protect a child from environmental hazards.
5. Failure to take account of ailments or relevant weaknesses of a child.

Psychological stress within the sporting context can be caused by pressure to excel/win (if this exceeds the capacity or wishes of the child) or other age-inappropriate expectations, excessive criticism of a child or team, inappropriate use of sanctions/discipline, rejection, displaying dislike of a child or disapproval of skill/performance ability, failure to provide support, encouragement and approval for effort and achievement, failure to involve a child/children as fully as possible in the activity and the use of coarse, inappropriate language.

Signs of psychological stress and burnout

- Sleep disturbance
- Irritability
- Tension
- Lack of energy
- Sadness/depression
- Frequent illness
- Loss of interest and enthusiasm
- Absenteeism, arriving late, leaving early
- No pleasurable anticipation of participation in sporting events.

In this state a child is very susceptible to injury.

Prevention

Stress and burnout can be prevented and drop out rates reduced by measures such as:

- Parents and sports leaders de-emphasising winning and encouraging the development of individual skills and effort instead.
- Attaining an appropriate match between the individual child's ability and the activity in which s/he is participating.

4. Good Practice in Children's Sport

- Ensuring that the physical abilities of the child are not viewed by the child as indications of his/her self worth.
- Ensuring that children have fun and enjoy activities in which they are involved.
- Encouraging children to play a variety of different sports both at individual and at team level. This promotes variety and encourages a range of different sport skills in participants.
- Listening to and respecting children's needs.

4.15 Insurance

1. Bearing in mind the potential for accident, organisers/providers of all sports have a duty to ensure there is adequate insurance cover in place and to give advice on what personal accident cover might be appropriate.
2. All clubs and organisations should ensure that adequate insurance cover is in place to cover the activities of the club, sports leaders and participants. Away trips should be included in such cover.
3. Adults transporting children in their cars should be familiar with the provisions made in their motor insurance policy in relation to acceptable numbers and liability.

5. Child Abuse

Parents/guardians, carers (i.e. persons who while not parents/guardians have actual responsibility for a child) or others can harm children either by direct acts, or by a failure to provide proper care, or both. Such acts include physical injuries, severe neglect, and sexual or emotional abuse (Department of Health, 1995).

5.1 Protection from abuse

Within sport, child abuse is rare. However, the protection of children from any form of abuse must be a priority for all those involved in children's sport. If children are at risk of harm it is the duty of those in a position of leadership or responsibility to take immediate steps to remove the risk and to ensure that all necessary procedures are undergone in accordance with statutory guidelines.

The detection and prevention of child abuse depends on the collaborative effort of everyone concerned. Central to the success of this effort are the following:

- Knowledge of the behavioural and physical indicators of various forms of abuse.
- Knowledge of the appropriate response and action to be taken where abuse is revealed or suspected.
- Vigilance, and avoidance of all situations conducive to risk.
- Open, trusting and co-operative relationships within the club/organisation, and with parents/guardians and others concerned with children's progress or welfare.

5.2 Sources of abuse

The source of abuse of a child participating in sport may be within or outside of the club/organisation, and could include one or more of the following:

- Sports Leader
- Another child/adolescent in the club/organisation
- Person providing transport or other assistance
- Family member/carer
- Person outside of home/club.

5.3 Categories of abuse

Child abuse is generally divided into four categories, which have been defined by the Department of Health (1995:6) as follows:

1. **Physical abuse.** Physical injury to a child, including poisoning, where it is known or suspected that the injury was deliberately inflicted.
2. **Child neglect.** The persistent or severe neglect of a child, whether wilful or unintentional, which results in serious psychological impairment of the child's health, development or welfare.
3. **Emotional abuse.** The adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment or rejection, or exposure to ongoing domestic violence.

5. Child Abuse

4. **Sexual abuse.** The use of children by others for sexual gratification. This can take many forms and includes rape and other sexual assaults, allowing children to view sexual acts or be exposed to, or involved in, pornography, exhibitionism and other perverse activities.

5.4 Signs of Abuse

There are certain signs of abuse, both in the child's behaviour and appearance that should alert sports leaders to the possibility of abuse. Some of these are common to all types of abuse, others are more specific to certain forms of abuse.

Knowing the indicators of abuse is essential for recognising a potential or real problem. However, any one sign in itself can occur in the absence of abuse, and conversely, a child who is being abused may show none of the more typical signs, or show conflicting, confusing signs. Such cases make it difficult to decide which course of action to take, but all concerns or suspicions should be acted upon according to established guidelines.

5.5 Children's Rights

Children have a right to be protected from abuse. Within sport the following children's rights should be upheld:

- a. To be safe;
- b. To feel safe;
- c. To protect their own bodies;
- d. To refuse inappropriate touches;
- e. To get help against bullies;
- f. To not keep secrets;
- g. To say no;
- h. To tell; and
- i. To be believed.

(Adapted from *Kidscape* - ISPCC)

6. Awareness and Identification of Child Abuse

Abuse of children within sporting or other contexts can be combated if appropriate preventative measures and awareness exist and if identification and reporting procedures are in place. Awareness involves a number of components:

- Acceptance by all involved with children that abuse, whether physical, psychological or sexual is wrong, severely damages children and must be addressed.
- Acceptance of responsibility to protect children from all forms of abuse. This involves:
 - Knowledge of what constitutes abuse
 - Knowing how to identify abuse
 - Implementing agreed preventative procedures
 - Taking appropriate, agreed-upon steps in response to a report or observation of abuse.

SIGNS AND TYPES OF CHILD ABUSE

6.1 Behavioural Signs of Abuse

There are certain signs which sports leaders should be aware of, which might indicate that a child has suffered from abuse or trauma. It is important to note, however, that all of these indicators can occur in other situations where abuse has not been a factor and that the list which follows is not exhaustive:

- Acting-out, aggressive behaviour
- Lack of trust
- Overly compliant behaviour
- Withdrawal behaviour
- Regressive behaviour
- Lack of friends
- Excessive attachment to adults
- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities involving the removal of clothing
- Reluctance to go home or to interact with a particular individual or group
- Depressed appearance
- Sudden drop in performance
- Change in attendance pattern/unexpected drop-out
- Change in the characteristic way of behaving
- Signs of familial discord.

There are a number of different types of child abuse and these include physical abuse; child neglect; psychological/emotional abuse; sexual abuse.

6.2 Physical Abuse

Physical abuse of a child involves the intentional non-accidental use of force on the part of the carer interacting with a child in his/her care aimed at hurting or injuring the child, or knowingly not preventing such injury.

6. Awareness and Identification of Child Abuse

Signs of Physical Abuse:

- Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas
- Repeated injury
- Black eye/s
- Injuries to the mouth
- Torn or blood-stained clothing
- Burns and scalds
- Bites
- Fractures
- Marks from implements
- Inconsistent stories/excuses relating to injuries
- Behavioural Signs (see 6.1 Behavioural Signs of Abuse).

6.3 Child Neglect

Passive abuse or child neglect involves the persistent or severe neglect of a child, whether wilful or unintentional, which results in serious psychological impairment of the child's health, development or welfare.

Signs of neglect:

- Nutritional deprivation
- Persistently dirty/smelly clothing or appearance
- Inadequate clothing
- Non-healing of injuries/ailments
- Signs of parental neglect
- Behavioural signs (see 6.1 Behavioural Signs of Abuse).

6.4 Psychological/Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse occurs when an individual suffers harm as a result of being intimidated, emotionally exploited, exposed to constant denigration, ridicule, rejection or verbal attack for their supposed shortcomings. This is the least recognised form of harm done to children, yet the long-term psychological consequences may be more traumatic than in the case of simple physical injury.

Signs of Psychological/Emotional Abuse:

These are largely behavioural (see 6.1 Behavioural Signs of Abuse)

6.5 Child Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse is the involvement of dependent, developmentally immature children and adolescents in sexual activities that they do not fully comprehend, to which they are unable to give informed consent or that violate the social taboos of family or carer or which are against the law. This involves the use of children by others for sexual gratification and self power and includes many forms, from e.g. talking in a sexual way, exposure, touching, etc., to full sexual intercourse.

6. Awareness and Identification of Child Abuse

According to the Department of Health (1995): "It should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual activity is seventeen years. This means, for example, that sexual relationships between a sixteen year old girl and her seventeen year old boyfriend is illegal, although it might not be regarded as constituting child sexual abuse."

Sexual activities are abusive if one person with greater power whether due to age, physique, status, understanding or knowledge takes advantage of the vulnerability, fears, weaknesses, lack of understanding, helplessness or need of another person.

Abuse is also present if mutual consent is absent. For consent to be present, it must be "informed" and it must be freely given. Children cannot know the dangers and risks, whether emotional or physical, of engaging in sexual relationships where they are the vulnerable partner. In these circumstances they cannot give informed consent. Sexual abuse can involve older children abusing younger children if the above criteria exist. These cases must also be dealt with according to Department of Health Guidelines.

Signs of Child Sexual Abuse:

- Hints about sexual activity/abuse
- Age-inappropriate understanding of sexual behaviour (especially by young children)
- Inappropriate seductive behaviour
- Inappropriate sexual play with other children or toys
- Preoccupation with touching sexual parts of the body
- Blood-stained underclothing
- Reluctance to remove clothing
- Excessive fear or dislike of adults/older children
- Unexpected change in the child's attitude towards the sport.
- Other behavioural signs (See 6.1 Behavioural Signs of Abuse).

7. Reporting Procedure for Child Abuse

All sporting organisations and personnel must follow guidelines and procedures for reporting suspected or revealed abuse as recommended by Department of Health Guidelines.

It is important to remember that when one is reporting suspected child abuse in good faith it is not the same as making an accusation of abuse i.e. reporting does not mean accusing.

7.1 Reporting procedure for child abuse

Responsibility for investigation of child abuse cases, suspected or otherwise, lies with the Health Boards and the Gardai. Responsibility for monitoring and co-ordinating the management of such cases rests with the Health Boards as part of the Child Care Services provided within the Community Care Programme (Department of Health, 1995).

It is not appropriate for individuals, clubs, sporting organisations etc. to carry out internal investigations into cases where child abuse is suspected.

7.2 Child Abuse Reporting Procedure within a sporting context

Any person who knows or suspects that a child is being harmed or is at risk of harm has a duty to convey his/her concern to the local Health Board (Department of Health, 1987).

It may however, be appropriate for a person to discuss concerns they have with another person in the club. This could be with the Children's Liaison Officer (see Section 8) within the club, though it does not preclude discussion with someone else if this is considered necessary.

This type of discussion would most likely happen in cases where no specific allegation of child abuse has been made but the concern is based on emotional behavioural and/or physical indications of a particular child. In cases where an allegation has been made then the matter has to be reported immediately to the relevant authorities as recommended in Department of Health Guidelines.

When matters regarding the safety of other children arise in a sporting context it will be necessary for someone in a position of authority in a club to be informed of the allegations made so that suspension of the person from activities which involve children may be carried out until the conclusion of an investigation by the Statutory Authorities. It is important to record carefully all concerns and allegations made.

7.3 Confidentiality

Confidentiality must be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in concerns about abuse. A guarantee cannot be given to a person providing information relating to concerns about or knowledge of abuse that the information received will be kept absolutely confidential. However, all information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know.

7.4 Responsibilities of sports leaders and organisations

1. It is the responsibility of clubs and organisations to ensure that all involved in children's sport are aware of the contents of this Code of Ethics and Good Practice.

7. Reporting Procedure for Child Abuse

Sports leaders should be aware of this Code and of any additions to the Code which are laid down by their organisation. Sports organisations should have their own code of conduct particular to their sport in addition to this Code of Ethics and Good Practice. Disciplinary procedures should be clearly set out within the organisation/club code.

2. Following any complaint made against a sports leader, where there are concerns about the safety of other children, the leader must be suspended from participation in activities involving children pending the outcome of an investigation which can only be conducted by Statutory Authorities. Confidentiality should be maintained at all stages.
3. In the case of a suspension, the sports leader being suspended should be formally notified by senior personnel within an organisation or club.
4. A sports leader against whom an allegation of abuse has been made should be informed that this is not an accusation, and that the procedures being undertaken are in accordance with statutory guidelines. S/he should be assured that within the club/organisation all information will be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.
5. A sports leader should be made aware generally of the nature of any allegation made against him/her and of any allegation being made known to the Statutory Authorities. The timing of this discussion may be a matter to be decided upon in consultation with the Statutory Authorities. The sports leader should be afforded the opportunity to present a formal response to the allegation to senior personnel in the organisation/club. From this point on, the matter should only be dealt with by the Statutory Authorities. The quantity of information given about the specific allegation will vary depending on the precise nature of the complaint. For example, in the case of an allegation of child sexual abuse, in the interest of confidentiality and child protection, it will be necessary to withhold the name of the child and precise details of the allegation. The treatment of this information is a matter for the Statutory Authorities.
6. An individual who has been convicted of a child abuse offence should never be permitted to become involved in any form of children's sporting activity.

7.5 Immediate response to a child reporting any form of abuse

1. It is important to deal with any allegation 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 has happened.
2. It is important to stay calm and not to show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the child is saying seriously.
3. It should be understood that the child has decided to tell about something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation.

7. Reporting Procedure for Child Abuse

4. No judgemental statement should be made about the person against whom the allegation is made.
5. The child should be reassured that s/he was right to tell, and that s/he will be helped. However, false promises should not be made, such as saying that no-one else will be told.
6. The child should not be questioned unless the nature of what s/he is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as "Can you explain to me what you mean by that?".
7. The child should be given an indication of what should happen next, such as informing parents, reporting to Statutory Authority, etc. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel very vulnerable at this stage.
8. It may be appropriate for the person who has received the information to consult with another adult, and in particular the Children's Liaison Officer in the club (see Section 8). Such consultation should be entirely confidential and should not involve investigative procedures. Clubs/organisations have no role in investigating such allegations.
9. A detailed account of any discussion regarding alleged or suspected abuse should be written as soon as possible after it has taken place.

8. Children's Liaison Officers

Given the need to ensure that children are valued within all sporting contexts a Children's Liaison Officer should be appointed by all clubs, subject to appropriate selection and screening as recommended within this Code. Appointment of this person should be done in consultation with the juvenile members of the club and their parents/guardians. The Children's Liaison Officer should be child centred in focus and should have as his/her primary aim the establishment of a child centred ethos within the club. To achieve this the Children's Liaison Officer should have the following functions:

- a) to promote awareness of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice within the club and particularly among the children and young people within the club. This would best be done by the production of information leaflets etc. and by the facilitation of regular information meetings;
- b) to influence policy and practice within the club to ensure that all policy and decisions take account of the child's needs, as a matter of priority;
- c) to facilitate communication with children through the creation of forums by which children can express their views about the club and can influence decisions within the club;
- d) to provide an accessible resource to children when they need to express their concerns, views or worries regarding their involvement in the club;
- e) to act as an advisory resource to sports leaders on child protection issues ensuring that statutory guidelines and procedures are followed; and
- f) conduct research into why children drop out of club activities.

The Children's Liaison Officer should receive training in the following areas;

- a) the code of ethics and good practice;
- d) child protection procedures;
- c) basic understanding of children's development;
- d) communicating effectively with children; and
- e) being accessible to and being approachable to children.

This training should be available to the person or club through relevant agencies ensuring a quality input and a measure of effectiveness. This training should involve an assessment and evaluative component ensuring that only those suitable to be Children's Liaison Officers would be asked to undertake this function. Children's Liaison Officers have no role in the investigation or validation of child protection concerns within the club and would have no counselling or therapeutic role.

Conclusion

This Code of Ethics and Good Practice outlines the major issues which need to be addressed if children's sport is to develop to the highest standards of quality and respect for the needs and dignity of children. Responsibility lies with all sports agencies and individuals to act on the recommendations which have been included and to work co-operatively in helping to make children's sport a happy, safe and rewarding experience for all.

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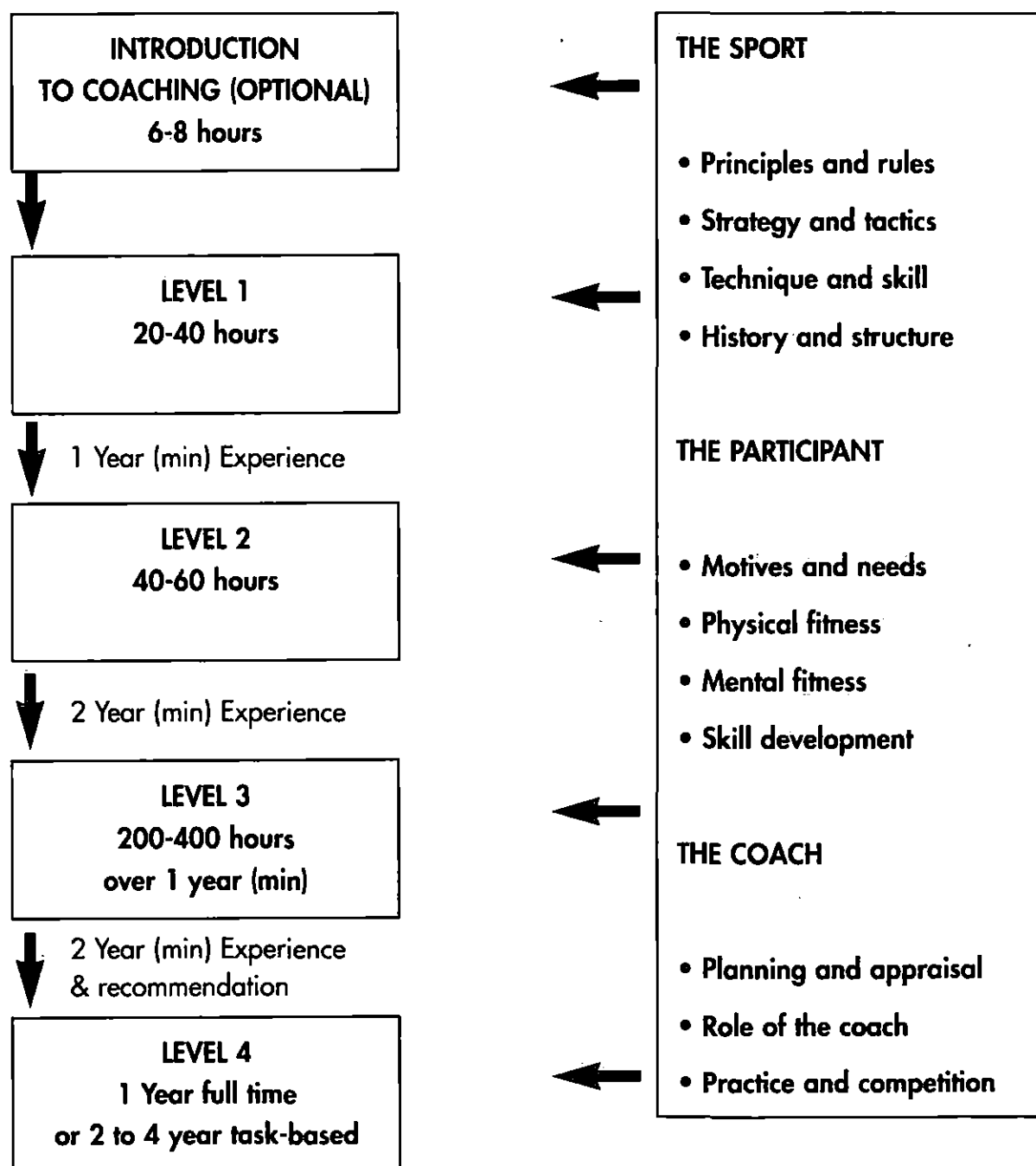
Appendix 1 - Submissions Received

Association for Adventure Sports
 Association of Secondary School Teachers in Ireland
 Bol Chumann na hÉireann
 Bowling League of Ireland
 Catholic Boys Scouts of Ireland
 Catholic Girl Guides
 Catholic Primary School Managers' Association
 Catholic Youth Council of Ireland
 Cerebral Palsy Sport
 Council of Europe
 Cumann Luthchleas Gael
 Dr. Aidan Moran, Lecturer in Psychology, U.C.D.
 Dr. Art O'Connor, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, EHB
 Dr. Declan Quinn, MD.
 Equestrian Federation of Ireland
 Football Association of Irish Schools
 Garda Síochána
 Golfing Union of Ireland
 Institute for Children's Sport in Ireland
 Irish Amateur Gymnastics Association
 Irish Amateur Swimming Association
 Irish Association of Social Workers
 Irish Blindsports
 Irish Chess Union
 Irish Cricket Union
 Irish Deaf Sports Association
 Irish Girl Guides
 Irish Hanggliding and Paragliding Association
 Irish Hockey Union
 Irish Judo Association
 Irish Ladies Golf Union
 Irish Martial Arts Commission
 Irish National Teachers Organisation
 Irish Rugby Football Union
 Irish Sailing Association
 Irish Schools Swimming Association
 Irish Sports Acrobatics Federation
 Irish Squash
 Irish Wheelchair Association
 Irish Women's Cricket Union
 J. Martin, Social Worker, South Eastern Health Board
 Joan Gordon
 John Cremin
 K. G. Kelly

Appendix 1 - Submissions Received

Laois Regional Games Council
M. M. Dunne
Michael Mc Cann
Mid Western Health Board
Midland Health Board
Motor Cycling Union of Ireland
Mountaineering Council of Ireland
National Association of Games Councils
National Athletic and Cultural Association of Ireland
National Parents Council
National Safety Council
Parachute Association of Ireland
Paul Marron, P.E. Teacher
Physical Education Association of Ireland
Pitch and Putt Union of Ireland
Psychological Society of Ireland
Rape Crisis Centre
Rathnure and District Game Protection Association
Republic of Ireland Billiards and Snooker Association
Schools Basketball Association
Secondary Schools Principals' Association
Sinead Tuohy
Special Olympics Ireland
Tennis Ireland

Appendix 2 - National Coaching Development Programme: Coaching Ladder



Appendix 3 - Sample Screening Form for Potential Sports Leaders

Application Form: To Become _____

Name of Club, Organisation, etc. _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone No: _____

Reason for applying: _____

Any previous experience/involvement in sport. If so, please give details.

Have you ever been asked to leave a sporting organisation in the past. If so, please give details.

Yes

☐

No

☐

REFEREE:

Please supply the names of two responsible people whom we can contact and who from personal knowledge is willing to endorse your application. If you have had a previous involvement in sport one of these names should be that of an administrator/leader of your last club/place of involvement.

Referees Name/Address

[1] _____

[2] _____

SIGNED:

DATE:

Appendix 3 - Sample Letter to Person Giving Reference

Re: _____ application to become a
in _____ Club/Organisation.

Dear _____

The above has given your name as one who can support his/her application to become a
in this _____ Club/Organisation.

I would appreciate it if you would complete the box below and return to me as soon as possible.

Any comments made will be treated in strictest confidence.

Yours sincerely

Chairman

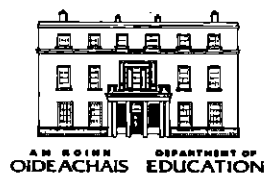
Referee Use Only

Name: _____

Address: _____

I confirm that I know the above person and state that I am ☐ am not ☐ satisfied he/she is
suitable to be involved with children in a sporting capacity.

Signed: _____ Date: _____



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