



# Safeguarding Policies

*A Guide to Best Practice, Policy and Procedure*



***Special  
Olympics***  
*Ireland*



# Contents

1	Safeguarding Policy Statement	3
2	Child Safeguarding Statement	4
3	Safeguarding Statement for Adults at Risk of Abuse	8
4	Safeguarding Training Policy	11
5	Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse Policy	15
6	Recognising and Reporting Abuse of Adults at Risk Policy	18
7	Vetting Policy including Handling Vetting Records and Disclosures	22
8	Athlete Code of Conduct	23
9	Code of Conduct for Coaches	24
10	Code of Conduct for Family Member / Guardian / Carer	26
11	Code of Conduct for Volunteers	27
12	Safeguarding Roles	28
13	Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers	30
14	Coach Education and Qualification Requirements	33
15	Mental Health & Wellbeing	37
16	Record Keeping and Storage of Safeguarding Information Policy	38
17	Club Communications	39
18	Club Prevention and Resolution of Bullying Policy	42
19	Supervision	46
20	Away Trips and Overnight Stays	50
21	Physical Contact in Special Olympics Ireland Sports	52
22	Filming and Photography Policy	54
23	Online Safety and Social Media Guidance for Clubs	56
24	Safeguarding in a Virtual Learning Environment	59
25	Personal Intimate Care Needs of Athletes	62
26	Monitoring Leavers and Transfers	63
APPENDIX		
	Reporting Structure for Safeguarding Issues for Clubs (ROI/NI)	65





# 1

## Safeguarding Policy Statement

Safeguarding is at the core of all Special Olympics Ireland activities and is fundamental to the development and implementation of everything we plan for the future. Special Olympics Ireland is committed to providing an athlete-centred environment where everyone has a voice in their sport.

Special Olympics Ireland continues to learn and improve from experience; we will frequently monitor our practices and strive for 100% compliance. Special Olympics Ireland are fully compliant with the Children First Legislation (ROI) and engage regularly with Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit and the Health Services Executive (HSE) to continually meet legislative requirements and industry standards.

Management of safeguarding requires both a robust personnel structure and strong policies and procedures. Special Olympics Ireland has a full-time Safeguarding Officer (National Children's Officer) employed to ensure we meet legislative compliance and follow best practice guidance; to keep our members safe across the island of Ireland. We have 5 Regional Directors who take on the role of Regional Designated Liaison Persons supporting Club Designated Liaison Persons. Every Special Olympics Ireland club has a Safeguarding Officer to promote and implement our policies whilst liaising with athletes to ensure a safe and fun environment is provided. Special Olympics Ireland offers support to members in their role to help fulfil our commitment.

Safeguarding policies and guidelines have been developed to govern our organisation and support the operational implementation of good practices and management of concerns within our clubs. Clubs are required to adapt or adopt these policies to ensure they are compliant with Special Olympics Ireland requirements. These are living documents and are updated as needed by the National Children's Officer. Our aim is to inform members and provide clear pathways for people to feel comfortable raising a concern or an issue, or to highlight a potential risk in our safeguarding measures.

We want our members to understand WHY we safeguard and, although it may seem arduous at times, we welcome the vital protection and peace of mind it brings to all involved. To the parent who worries about their child, to the volunteer who worries about the vulnerable nature of Special Olympics Ireland athletes, to the coach who worries about the best way to help athletes achieve their goals and to the athlete who places their trust in Special Olympics Ireland; our safeguarding measures are a comfort. The requirements, policies and guidance are there to ease these concerns and prevent any potential harm coming to one of our members. If you feel like you are being asked to do too much, we ask you to consider WHY we need you to do this and weigh up the potential benefits. Our members thank you for taking the time to keep our organisation safe.



# Child Safeguarding Statement

Special Olympics Ireland offers sports training and competition for children and young people with an intellectual disability on an all island basis. Special Olympics Ireland recognise the duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. The organisation is committed to ensuring our safeguarding practices reflect statutory and legal responsibilities, government guidance with best practice and Special Olympics Ireland requirements.

Our Special Olympics Ireland Clubs are committed to the ongoing implementation of our Code of Ethics and Good Practice which aims to foster a culture of understanding and compliance for all and to create a safe child-centred environment for young people to grow and develop within sport.

- ▶ **Importance of childhood** - The importance of childhood should be understood and valued by everyone involved in sport.
- ▶ **Needs of the child** - All children's sport experiences should be guided by what is best for children. This means that adults should have a basic understanding of the emotional, physical and personal needs of young people.
- ▶ **Integrity in relationships** - Adults interacting with children in sport are in a position of trust and influence. They should always ensure that children are treated with integrity and respect, and the self-esteem of young people is enhanced.
- ▶ **Fair Play** - All children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. The principles of fair play should always be emphasised, and organisers should give clear guidelines regarding acceptable standards of behaviour.
- ▶ **Quality atmosphere & ethos** - Children's sport should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere.
- ▶ **Competition** - Competition is an essential element of sport and should be encouraged in an age-appropriate manner. A child-centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.
- ▶ **Equality** - All children should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of ability, age, gender, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion.
- ▶ **Awareness of Intellectual Disability** - All our children and young people also have an intellectual disability and we are committed to ensuring our volunteers understand that this can create an additional vulnerability and that we may need to support additional needs.

The organisation has a confidential safeguarding support structure to provide guidance and support for individuals with concerns about the safety and welfare of children and young people.



This Special Olympics Ireland written Risk Assessment document indicates the areas of potential risk of harm, the likelihood of the risk occurring, and gives the required policy

and relevant procedures, guidance or process documents required to alleviate these risks. The list of risks identified and procedures to manage these risks are contained in the following categories:

## Risk Identified

## Policy/Procedure in Place to Manage Risk Identified

### Club and Coaching Practices

- ▶ Lack of coaching qualification
- ▶ Supervision issues
- ▶ Unauthorised photography & recording activities
- ▶ Behavioural Issues
- ▶ Lack of gender balance amongst coaches
- ▶ No guidance for travelling & away trips
- ▶ Lack of adherence with miscellaneous procedures in Safeguarding policy

- ▶ Coach Education Policy/Recruitment Policy
- ▶ Supervision Policy/Coach Education Policy
- ▶ Photography & Use of Images Policy
- ▶ Code of Conduct / Safeguarding 1 / Complaints Policy/Disciplinary Policy.
- ▶ Coach Education Policy / Supervision Policy
- ▶ Travel/Away Trip Policy / Child Safeguarding Training
- ▶ Safeguarding Policy / Complaints Policy/ Disciplinary Policy

### Complaints & Discipline

- ▶ Lack of awareness of a Complaints Policy/ Disciplinary Policy
- ▶ Difficulty in raising an issue by child or parent
- ▶ Complaints not being dealt with seriously

- ▶ Complaints Policy/Disciplinary Policy / Communications Policy
- ▶ Complaints Policy/Disciplinary Policy / Communications Policy
- ▶ Complaints Policy/Disciplinary Policy

### Reporting Procedures

- ▶ Lack of knowledge of organisational & statutory reporting procedures
- ▶ No Designated Liaison Person (DLP) appointed
- ▶ Concerns of abuse or harm not reported
- ▶ Not clear who young people should talk to or report to

- ▶ Reporting procedures/Policy / Coach Education Policy / Code of Conduct
- ▶ Reporting procedures/Policy
- ▶ Reporting procedures/Policy / Child Safeguarding Training – Level 1
- ▶ Post the names of Regional Safeguarding Officer, Programme Safeguarding Officer

## Risk Identified

### Use of Facilities

- ▶ Unauthorised access to designated children's play & practice areas & to changing rooms, showers, toilets etc...
- ▶ Unauthorised exit from children's areas
- ▶ Photography, filming or recording in prohibited areas
- ▶ Missing or found child on site
- ▶ Children sharing facilities with adults e.g. dressing room, showers etc...

## Policy/Procedure in place to manage risk identified

- ▶ Supervision Policy / Coach Education Policy
- ▶ Supervision Policy / Coach Education Policy
- ▶ Photography Policy and use of devices in private zones
- ▶ Missing or Found Child Policy
- ▶ Safeguarding Policy

### Recruitment

- ▶ Recruitment of inappropriate people
- ▶ Lack of clarity on roles
- ▶ Unqualified or untrained people in role

- ▶ Recruitment & Selection Policy
- ▶ Recruitment & Selection Policy
- ▶ Recruitment & Selection Policy

### Communications

- ▶ Lack of awareness of 'risk of harm' amongst members and visitors
- ▶ No communication of Child Safeguarding Statement or Code of Behaviour to members of visitors
- ▶ Unauthorised photography & recording of activities
- ▶ Inappropriate use of social media & communications by under 18 year olds
- ▶ Inappropriate use of social media & communications with under 18 year olds

- ▶ Child Safeguarding Statement / Child Safeguard Training
- ▶ Child Safeguarding Statement (display) / Code of Behaviour (distribute)
- ▶ Photography & Use of Images Policy
- ▶ Communications Policy / Code of Conduct
- ▶ Communications Policy / Code of Conduct



## Risk Identified

### General Risk of Harm

- ▶ Harm not being recognised
- ▶ Harm caused by:
  - Child to Child
  - Coach to Child
  - Volunteer to Child
  - Member to Child
  - Visitor to Child
- ▶ General behavioural issues
- ▶ Issues of Bullying
- ▶ Vetting of staff/volunteers
- ▶ Issues of Online Safety

## Policy/Procedure in place to manage risk identified

- ▶ Safeguarding Policy / Child Safeguarding Training
- ▶ Safeguarding Policy / Child Safeguarding Training
- ▶ Code of Conduct/ Code of Ethics
- ▶ Anti-Bullying Policy
- ▶ Recruitment & Selection Policy
- ▶ Social Media & Online Safety policy

The Risk Assessment will be undertaken on regular designated dates.

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, (the Children First: National Guidance, and Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People in Sport- Sport Ireland and the guidelines produced by Gateway NI). In addition to our Risk Assessment document described above, there are further procedures that support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of Special Olympics Ireland activities.

**Special Olympics Ireland** has the following procedures in place as part of our Safeguarding Policies:

Procedures for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct by staff or volunteers against a child availing of our activities.

- ▶ Procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and volunteers to work with children in our activities.
- ▶ Procedures for access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm.
- ▶ Procedure for reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to statutory authorities.

- ▶ Procedure for maintaining a list of the Designated Liaison Persons in the relevant regions and the mandated person for the programme.
- ▶ Procedure for appointing a relevant person.

**Please note that all procedures listed are available on request.**

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Special Olympics Ireland is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our activities.

Please note the following:

- ▶ That all staff have been furnished with a copy of this statement.
- ▶ This statement is available to parents/guardians, Tusla - Child and Family Agency, and members of the public on request.
- ▶ This statement will be displayed in a prominent place by Special Olympics Ireland.

Designated Liaison Person Amanda Ní Ghabhann  
[amanda.nighabhann@specialolympics.ie](mailto:amanda.nighabhann@specialolympics.ie)

# Safeguarding Statement for Adults at Risk of Abuse

Special Olympics Ireland provides various sporting activities and opportunities for adults with intellectual disabilities through participation in over 290 clubs, at regional and Ireland events and through our national teams. Special Olympics Ireland is committed to working under the guidance of our Safeguarding Policies to create a safe environment for athletes to grow and develop within sport. The following set of principles should be adhered to:

- ▶ **Person-Centred** - All Athletes sport experiences should be guided by what is best for them. This means that our volunteers and staff should have a basic understanding of the emotional, physical and personal needs of our athletes.
- ▶ **Empowerment and Integrity in Relationships** - Adults interacting with athletes are in a position of trust and influence. They should always ensure that athletes are treated with integrity and respect, and the self-esteem of athletes is enhanced. Athletes are supported to have choice and control over their life and develop their skills and resources.
- ▶ **Fair Play** - All sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. The principles of fair play should always be emphasised, and organisers should give clear guidelines regarding acceptable standards of behaviour. Our Code of Conduct, signed by all, underpins this.

- ▶ **Quality Atmosphere & Ethos** - Sport should be conducted in a safe, positive and fun environment; and in the spirit of fair play.
- ▶ **Competition** - Competition is an essential element of sport and should be encouraged in a manner, appropriate to the athlete's ability. An athlete-centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.
- ▶ **Human Rights** - All athletes should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of ability, age, gender, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. For an adult with an intellectual disability this includes a right to dignity, choice and privacy.
- ▶ **Awareness of Intellectual Disability** - All Special Olympics Ireland athletes have an intellectual disability and we are committed to ensuring our volunteers and staff understand that this can create an additional vulnerability and that we may need to support additional needs.

Abuse of an adult at risk may be a single act or repeated over a period of time and may be one form or multiple forms of abuse. The lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse. Abuse may occur in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust and can be perpetrated by a person who acts in breach of that trust. Abuse can also be perpetrated by people who have influence over the lives of vulnerable persons, whether they are formal or informal carers or family members or others.

It is essential that there is a collaborative approach to safeguarding through family members, services, sports organisations and statutory authorities. This includes open and transparent processes, and practices that include adults at risk in decision making and discussions that affect them. A person centred approach should always be taken.



Special Olympics Ireland needs people to report any safeguarding concerns. If you have a concern about abuse, neglect or coercion. The message from Safeguarding Ireland is to – ‘Call out Abuse’ and report it. Safeguarding is everyone’s business and a zero tolerance approach should be taken – We ask staff and volunteers to Recognise, Respond and Report abuse without delay.

People with disabilities and older people may be particularly vulnerable due to:

- ▶ diminished social skills
- ▶ dependence on others for personal and intimate care
- ▶ capacity to report
- ▶ sensory difficulties
- ▶ isolation
- ▶ power differentials

## Definitions<sup>1</sup>

**Physical abuse** includes hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.

**Sexual abuse** includes rape and sexual assault, or sexual acts to which the vulnerable person has not consented, or could not consent, or into which he or she was compelled to consent.

**Psychological abuse** includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

**Financial or material abuse** includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

**Neglect and acts of omission** includes ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.



### **Discriminatory abuse** includes

ageism, racism, sexism, that based on a person’s disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

**Institutional abuse** may occur within residential care and acute settings including nursing homes, acute hospitals and any other in-patient settings, and may involve poor standards of care, rigid routines and inadequate responses to complex need.

It is critical that the rights of vulnerable persons to lead as normal a life as possible is recognised, in particular deprivation of the following rights may constitute abuse:

- ▶ Liberty
- ▶ Privacy
- ▶ Respect and dignity
- ▶ Freedom to choose
- ▶ Opportunities to fulfil personal aspirations and realise potential in their daily lives
- ▶ Opportunity to live safely without fear of abuse in any form
- ▶ Respect for possessions

It is important that adults who are vulnerable are shown the same respect and dignity as any other adult; and have access to information they need in a manner in which they can understand, to make informed choices.

**Special Olympics Ireland** has the following procedures in place as part of our Safeguarding Policies:

- ▶ Procedures for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct by staff or volunteers against an athlete availing of our activities.
- ▶ Procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and volunteers to work with athletes in our activities.
- ▶ Procedures for access to safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm.
- ▶ Procedure for reporting concerns of abuse to adults at risk to Statutory Authorities.
- ▶ Procedure for maintaining a list of the persons with safeguarding responsibilities

**Please note that all procedures listed are available on request.**

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Special Olympics Ireland is committed to the implementation of this Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep athletes safe from harm while availing of our activities.

Please note the following:

- ▶ That all staff have been furnished with a copy of this statement.
- ▶ This statement is available to parents/guardians, volunteers and members of the public on request.
- ▶ This statement will be displayed in a prominent place by Special Olympics Ireland.

This Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed on regular designated dates.

For queries on this Safeguarding Statement, please contact [amanda.nighabhann@specialolympics.ie](mailto:amanda.nighabhann@specialolympics.ie)





# 4

## Safeguarding Training Policy

Safeguarding training is required for Special Olympics Ireland (SOI) staff and volunteers in order to:

- ▶ Develop a basic awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues and roles within the organisation/club.
- ▶ Establish minimum standards of best practice and codes of conduct.
- ▶ Be able to identify, respond and report concerns.
- ▶ Obtain further information and sources of support.

This policy applies to all SOI volunteers and staff, including those on a permanent or fixed term contracts and work placement. The purpose of this policy is to set out the safeguarding training requirements for SOI staff and volunteers.

### Definitions

**Safeguarding 1 (ROI) & Safeguarding Children and Young People (NI) are Child Welfare & Protection Basic Awareness Courses.**

This course educates participants on the implementation of best practice in protecting the welfare of children involved in sport.

**Validation period:**

3 years, with an additional 3 years on completion of Safeguarding 1 Refresher E- module course.

After this period, a face-to-face course must be completed. Certificate of attendance must be renewed after 6 years by attending a face to face Safeguarding 1 workshop.

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### **Safeguarding 2 (ROI) & Designated Safeguarding Officer (NI)**

Before a person takes up the role of Club Safeguarding Officer they must have a valid certificate of attendance at Safeguarding 1 or Safeguarding Children and Young People training and attend Safeguarding 2 or Designated Safeguarding Officer training. This course will help the Club Safeguarding Officer to carry out their role and support the implementation of best practice in the club. Participants will also receive a Club Safeguarding Officer Action Planning document as part of the training.

**Validation period:**

3 years. A Safeguarding 2 certificate may only be renewed by attendance at a Safeguarding 2 or Designated Safeguarding Officer face to face workshop.

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### **Safeguarding 3 - Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

Before a staff member or volunteer can take up the role of a Designated Liaison Person they must have a valid certificate of attendance at

Safeguarding 1 training and attend Safeguarding 3 (ROI only) training. The Designated Liaison Person is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to TULSA or Social Services (NI) and/or An Garda Síochána /PSNI. It is mandatory that the Chairperson of a club attends Safeguarding 3 (ROI) training before the club affiliation is confirmed.

**Validation period:**

3 years. A Safeguarding 3 certificate of attendance may only be renewed by attendance at a Safeguarding 3 face to face workshop.

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**Safeguarding Online Refresher (ROI) or (NI)**

This is the renewal option for anyone needing to update their Safeguarding 1 compliancy.

**NOTE:** Safeguarding Training approved by Sport Ireland and Sport NI is available through Local Sports Partnerships (ROI), Sport NI approved providers (NI), Special Olympics Ireland and other Sport National Governing Bodies in the Republic and Northern Ireland.

## Policy Statement

Special Olympics Ireland (SOI) is committed to promoting training standards that endeavour to achieve best practice for the protection of children and vulnerable adults in sport consistent with child welfare and protection guidance and relevant legislation.

It is the responsibility of the individual and affiliate club to ensure that a record is kept of the certificate number assigned to attendees at safeguarding training so it can be noted on the Special Olympics Ireland volunteer database and staff personnel files.

A club may not affiliate to Special Olympics Ireland unless their Club Management Team includes a Club Safeguarding Officer with a current certificate of attendance at Safeguarding 2 (ROI) or Designated Safeguarding Officer (NI) training.

The club's Chairperson must hold a current certificate of attendance at Safeguarding 3 training (ROI) or Designated Safeguarding Officer (NI).

The certificate of attendance number for the relevant safeguarding level must be included on the affiliation form and noted on the volunteer's profile on the Special Olympics Ireland database.

Certificates of attendance at any non-Special Olympics run course should be emailed to [volunteer@specialolympics.ie](mailto:volunteer@specialolympics.ie) for our records.

Volunteers and staff may obtain their certificate of attendance at a course organised by Special Olympics Ireland, Sport NI, Sport Ireland or through their Local Sports Partnership (ROI) or by an approved training body (NI). Certificates of attendance at Sport NI or Sport Ireland approved safeguarding training obtained through other sporting bodies will also be accepted.

Where a vacancy occurs in a club for the role of Club Safeguarding Officer or Chairperson, the Regional Director must be informed immediately. The Regional Director/Regional Development Officer will assist in seeking safeguarding training opportunities for their successor(s) and will determine in the interim if it is possible for the club to continue to operate while the vacant safeguarding role(s) are waiting to be filled.

Staff from affiliated clubs that are Intellectual Disability Services Providers or Special Schools must adhere to the safeguarding training requirements in place for their sector.

## Process

A list of typical roles which require safeguarding training are outlined below. A person assuming such a role is required to attend the level which is appropriate to their role.

### Amendments 14 Sept 2020

Due to Covid-19, Face to Face training is not possible. In the interim the following measures will be in place:

- ▶ Volunteers in ROI can access Special Olympics Ireland Virtual Safeguarding 1 courses and Volunteers in NI can access Safeguarding Children and Young People Online Virtual Workshop
- ▶ Volunteers who are due for renewal and eligible to attend the Sport Ireland Online Refresher in order to achieve compliancy should do so
- ▶ Please email certs to [volunteers@specialolympics.ie](mailto:volunteers@specialolympics.ie)

## Role Requirements

<b>SAFEGUARDING 1</b> <b>Training (ROI) or</b> <b>Safeguarding Children</b> <b>and Young People (NI)</b>	<b>SAFEGUARDING 2</b> <b>Training (ROI)</b> <b>or Designated</b> <b>Safeguarding</b> <b>Officer(NI)*</b>	<b>SAFEGUARDING 3</b> <b>Training (ROI only)*</b>	<b>TUSLA ONLINE</b> <b>(ROI) or</b> <b>SafeguardingOnline</b> <b>Refresher (NI)</b>
Staff **  New applicant volunteers  ALL registered volunteers	Club Safeguarding Officer  Club Chairperson (NI)  Event Medical Coordinator  Medical & Safeguarding Officer (Team travelling overnight)  Staff **	Designated staff (Deputy Designated Liaison Person)  Club Chairperson (ROI) (Designated Liaison Person)  Programme Mandated Person  Programme Designated Liaison Person  Head of Delegation (HOD)  Staff **	Applicant Volunteers 16/17 years  Event volunteers for their first event if SG1 is not valid

\*Please note Safeguarding 2 and 3 also come with a prerequisite to attend Safeguarding 1

\*\* Staff will be informed by Human Resources of Safeguarding requirements

## Timelines

<b>REQUIREMENT</b>	<b>VALID FOR</b>	<b>TIMEFRAME</b>
Safeguarding 1 or Safeguarding Children and Young People (NI)	3 years. Renewal can be done by attending a face to face refresher or completing the online refresher (ROI) or (NI) also valid for 3 years. If renewal is complete via online options the applicant will need to attend a face to face course for their next renewal	Before taking up role
Safeguarding 2 or Designated Safeguarding Officer attending	3 years. Renewal is done by attending Face to Face training	Before taking up role
Safeguarding 3 ( ROI )	3 years. Renewal is done by attending Face to Face training	Before taking up role

## Responsibilities

Applicant volunteers must attend relevant and SOI approved safeguarding training before their registration is confirmed.

Clubs must provide evidence that the relevant officers (Club Chairperson and Club Safeguarding Officer) have attended the required level of safeguarding training before their club's affiliation is accepted.

Other groups (Intellectual Disability Services Providers, special schools, charities affiliated to Special Olympics Ireland) must advise Special Olympics Ireland of the name of their "Designated Liaison Person" before their Club Affiliation Application is accepted.

## Non-compliance

Volunteers who have not attended approved safeguarding training in advance of the Renewal of Registration process, as it pertains to the individual volunteer, will not have their registration renewed.





# 5



## Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse Policy

### Introduction

Under the Children First legislation it is a requirement to report any knowledge, belief, or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, to the statutory authorities. By working with young people you have a duty of care to keep them safe; understanding child abuse and the procedures for if you have a concern, or if you receive a disclosure from a young person, will support you in your role. It is everyone's responsibility to keep young people safe. The statutory authorities have a threshold of harm for intervention of abuse; this is the level at which a concern must be reported.

**"Harm"** means, in relation to a child:

- (a) assault, ill-treatment or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare

Or

- (b) Sexual abuse of the child.

This policy applies to all Special Olympics Ireland (SOI) employees (including those on permanent or fixed term contracts and work placement) and volunteers. We all have a duty of care to report any allegation, disclosure or concerns of abuse.

This policy seeks to ensure that all employees and volunteers are equipped to recognise indicators of abuse and are aware of the reporting procedures in place for any concerns, allegations or disclosure of abuse to a child.

### Definitions

A designated person should be informed if you witness anything that causes you concern; the following definitions have been taken from the Children First Guidance ( ROI ) and Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland ( NI ):

**Physical Abuse:** is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically, or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. Examples of this might be hitting, pinching, burning etc. It is a reasonable concern if you believe the life of the young person is in imminent danger.

**Emotional Abuse:** is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. In sport, bullying may also fall

under the category of emotional abuse and may occur in the form of online bullying.

**Neglect:** occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. This is commonly reported as deprivation of food, clothing, safety, hygiene or medical care. Over a period of time neglect can have a negative impact on a child's emotional and physical development. A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

**Sexual Abuse:** occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography. Any concern about possible sexual abuse constitutes reasonable grounds for concern.

## Policy Statement

Special Olympics Ireland requires all employees and volunteers to report any knowledge, belief or reasonable suspicion that a child has been harmed, is being harmed, or is at risk of being harmed, to the designated persons or statutory authorities.

## Process

### 1.1 Reporting Child Abuse

There are a number of people who may be involved in making a report to a statutory authority if they have a concern, allegation or disclosure of child abuse.

In Special Olympics Ireland the Mandated Person, i.e. the National Children's Officer, has a legal duty to report concerns which meet the threshold of significant harm to the Statutory Authorities.

Within clubs and regions the Designated Liaison Person also has a responsibility to report to the Statutory Authorities or via a joint report with the mandated person.

However, everyone has a duty of care to report any concern they may have that a child is at risk of harm; they should do so by reporting to the Designated Liaison Person in their club, at an event or the Mandated Person (National Children's Officer) in Special Olympics Ireland.

## Reporting in the Republic of Ireland

Tusla (Child and Family Agency) and An Garda Síochána are the statutory authorities. An informal report can be made by contacting the social worker in the area which the young person resides, contact information can be found [www.tusla.ie/children-first/contact-a-social-worker3/](http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/contact-a-social-worker3/) and you can find the Report Form [www.tusla.ie/children-first/report-a-concern/](http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/report-a-concern/) If it is an emergency and/or out of hours you should contact An Garda Síochána via **112/999**.

## Reporting in Northern Ireland

The Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCT) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) are the statutory authorities. The HSCT can provide advice via their gateway teams to those who have a concern of abuse. A template report form can be requested from the HSCT team during consultation. Out of hours the Emergency Social Work service is available by phone on

**0044 28 9504 999** or if the person is in immediate danger contact the PSNI by phoning **999**.

Between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. the HSCT can be contacted:

**Northern HSCT:** 0044 03001234333

**South Eastern HSCT:** 0044 03001000300

**Southern HSCT:** 0044 08007837745

**Belfast HSCT:** 0044 2890 507000

**Western HSCT:** 0044 2871 314090

**(Out of Hours:** 0044 2895 04999)

Please see the **Reporting Structure for Safeguarding Issues for Clubs (ROI/NI)** below

## Reasonable Grounds for Concern

The following examples meet reasonable grounds for concern and must be reported:

- ▶ Evidence, for example an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way.
- ▶ Any concern about possible sexual abuse.
- ▶ Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- ▶ A child saying or indicating by other means that they have been abused.
- ▶ Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed.
- ▶ An account from a person who saw the child being abused.

It is important to remember that if a child has chosen to disclose something to you it is because they trust you. It is important to note where a child has made a disclosure which meets the threshold of Reasonable Grounds for Concern you have a duty to report it – you cannot keep this a secret. Remember they are looking for help. Actions that can help you manage the situation include:

- ▶ Be sensitive – listen and facilitate vs interview.
- ▶ Stay calm – don't react emotionally.
- ▶ Take the child seriously.
- ▶ Don't promise to keep information a secret.
- ▶ Make no judgmental statements.
- ▶ Use open, non-specific questions.
- ▶ Explain – what happens next?

You should keep a record of the report and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident/s occurred. The next step is to report the allegation to the Designated Liaison Person. If they do not find that it meets grounds for concern you can still choose to report to the statutory authorities yourself. If it is an emergency or you feel the child is in immediate danger you should contact the Gardaí/Police immediately.

**IMPORTANT** – You must employ a “needs to know” approach. This is confidential outside of the reporting structure and must only be passed on if the person needs to know.





## 6

# Recognising and Reporting Abuse of Adults at Risk Policy

## 1. Introduction

Abuse of an adult at risk may be a single act or repeated over a period of time. It may comprise one form or multiple forms of abuse. The lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse. Abuse may occur in a relationship where there is an expectation of trust and can be perpetrated by a person who acts in breach of that trust. Abuse can also be perpetrated by people who have influence over the lives of vulnerable persons, whether they are formal or informal carers or family members or others.

People with disabilities and older people may be particularly vulnerable due to:

- ▶ diminished social skills
- ▶ dependence on others for personal and intimate care
- ▶ capacity to report
- ▶ sensory difficulties
- ▶ isolation
- ▶ power differentials

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to all Special Olympics Ireland (SOI) staff (including those on permanent or fixed term contracts and work placement), and volunteers. We all have a duty of care to report any allegation, disclosure or concerns of abuse to adults at risk.

## 3. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the responsibilities and process for employees and volunteers in response to recognising and reporting abuse of adults at risk.

## 4. Definitions

### Definitions of abuse<sup>1</sup>

**Physical abuse** includes hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.

**Sexual abuse** includes rape and sexual assault, or sexual acts to which the vulnerable person has not consented, or could not consent, or into which he or she was compelled to consent.

**Psychological abuse** includes emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.

**Financial or material abuse** includes theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

**Neglect and acts of omission** includes ignoring medical or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

**Discriminatory abuse** includes ageism, racism, sexism, that based on a person's disability, and other forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment.

**Institutional abuse** may occur within residential care and acute settings including nursing homes, acute hospitals and any other in-patient settings, and may involve poor standards of care, rigid routines and inadequate responses to complex need.

It is critical that the rights of vulnerable persons to lead as normal a life as possible is recognised, in particular deprivation of the following rights may constitute abuse:

- ▶ Liberty
- ▶ Privacy
- ▶ Respect and dignity
- ▶ Freedom to choose
- ▶ Opportunities to fulfil personal aspirations and realise potential in their daily lives
- ▶ Opportunity to live safely without fear of abuse in any form
- ▶ Respect for possessions

It is important that adults who are vulnerable are shown the same respect and dignity as any other adult; and have access to information they need in a manner in which they can understand, to make informed choices.

## 5. Policy Statement

Special Olympics Ireland encourages people to report any safeguarding concerns; if you have a concern about abuse, neglect or coercion. The message from Safeguarding Ireland is to – 'Call out Abuse' and report it.

## 6. Process

### 6.1 How Safeguarding Concerns May Be Raised

How safeguarding concerns may be raised

- ▶ Self-reported
- ▶ Raised by another athlete
- ▶ Observed by a staff member or volunteer
- ▶ Concern of a staff member or volunteer

### 6.2 Reporting Abuse of Adults at Risk

It is essential that there is a collaborative approach to safeguarding through family members, services, sports organisations and statutory authorities. This includes open and transparent processes, and practices that include adults at risk in decision making and discussions that affect them. A person-centred approach should always be taken.

If there is an allegation, disclosure or concern of abuse to an adult at risk you should contact the Designated Liaison person in your club. The Designated Liaison Person will record the concern and take the appropriate steps through the relevant Statutory Authority. In cases of emergency or where there is imminent danger you should follow the guidance below. However, you should then contact the Designated Liaison Person in your club so they can also implement the necessary reporting procedures.

### 6.3 In cases of emergency or where there is imminent danger

#### 6.3.1 Republic of Ireland

If it is an emergency and/or out of hours you should contact An Garda Síochána via **112/999**. If you are experiencing abuse which is placing you or someone you know in immediate danger, you can call the Garda confidential line at **1800 666 111**.

The main provider of services to safeguard adults at risk of abuse in the Republic of Ireland is the HSE which operates an Adult Safeguarding Policy within older person's services and services for people with disabilities. There are nine regional Safeguarding and Protection Teams covering all community health regions in the Republic of Ireland. The teams are tasked to assess allegations of abuse or neglect and may intervene to address concerns (being mindful of the will and preferences of the adult at risk of abuse). In collaboration with the HSE, communication is essential and a multi-agency response will be developed. Upon making a report the HSE will put a plan in place to assess the concern, this plan is live and will be adapted as needed. In some cases the service provider will take the safeguarding lead and the Safeguarding and Protection Team will take an advisory role.

See Appendix for the local contact details for each of the nine regional teams.

#### 6.3.2 Northern Ireland

The Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCT) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) are the statutory authorities. The HSCT can provide advice via their gateway teams to those who have a concern of abuse. A template report form can be requested from the HSCT team during consultation. Out of hours the Emergency Social Work service is available by phone on **0044 28 9504 999** or if the person is in immediate danger contact the PSNI by phoning **999**.

### 6.4 Responding to a disclosure from an Adult at Risk of abuse

It is important to remember that if a vulnerable adult has chosen to disclose something to you it is because they trust you. It is important to note where a disclosure has been made you have a duty to report it – you cannot keep this a secret. Remember they are looking for help. Actions that can help you manage the situation include:

- ▶ Be sensitive – listen and facilitate vs interview.
- ▶ Stay calm – don't react emotionally.
- ▶ Take them seriously.
- ▶ Don't promise to keep information a secret.
- ▶ Make no judgmental statements.
- ▶ Use open, non-specific questions.
- ▶ Explain – what happens next?

You should keep a record of the report and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident(s) occurred. The next step is to report the allegation as outlined above or to the Designated Liaison Person. If you are not satisfied with the response of the Designated Liaison Person you can still choose to report to the statutory authorities yourself. If it is an emergency or you feel the adult at risk of abuse is in immediate danger you should contact the Gardaí/Police immediately.

**IMPORTANT** – You must employ a “needs to know” approach. Safeguarding information should only be shared with those who need to know for the purpose of safeguarding the adult at risk of abuse.

## 7. Responsibilities

Club Safeguarding Officers work on the ground to implement safeguarding requirements and ensure a safe environment for all. They should be contacted for cases of poor practice or breaches to the Code of conduct.

The Designated Liaison Person will record and report all allegations, concerns or disclosures of abuse. They are the first contact in this instance.

The Regional Director supports and advises the club Designated Liaison Person in the reporting procedures and next steps. They also record all safeguarding allegations, disclosures and concerns of abuse that are reported

The Safeguarding Officer (National Children's Officer) is legally mandated with safeguarding responsibilities. They act as a support to Club Safeguarding Officers and as the next point of contact to the Regional Director whilst dealing with allegations, disclosures and concerns of abuse that are reported. The NCO is the first contact, in non-emergency cases, if a staff member is raising a concern about another staff member.

## 8. Non-compliance

Any non-compliance with this policy will be treated in accordance with legislative / regulatory requirements, the relevant contract and where appropriate, Special Olympics Ireland's Disciplinary Policy.

## 9. Appendices

The local contact details for each of the nine regional teams are:

- ▶ Sligo, Leitrim, Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal:  
safeguarding.cho1@hse.ie / (071) 983 4660
- ▶ Roscommon, Galway and Mayo:  
safeguarding.cho2@hse.ie / (091) 748 432
- ▶ Clare, Limerick, North Tipperary and East Limerick:  
safeguarding.cho3@hse.ie / (067) 464 70
- ▶ Cork and Kerry:  
safeguarding.cho4@hse.ie / 021 492 7550
- ▶ South Tipperary, Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford and Wexford:  
safeguarding.cho5@hse.ie / (056) 778 4325
- ▶ Wicklow, Dun Laoghaire and Dublin South East:  
safeguarding.cho6@hse.ie / (01) 216 4511
- ▶ Kildare, Wicklow, Dublin West, Dublin South City and Dublin South West:  
safeguarding.cho7@hse.ie / (045) 920 410
- ▶ Laois, Offaly, Longford, Westmeath, Louth and Meath:  
safeguarding.cho8@hse.ie / (01) 691 4632
- ▶ Dublin North, Dublin North Central and Dublin North West:  
safeguarding.cho9@hse.ie / (01) 7959528.

# Vetting Policy including Handling Vetting Records and Disclosures

## Rationale for Policy

To assist with the safeguarding and protection of Special Olympics Ireland athletes and volunteers.

## Policy Statement

In compliance with legislation, and as part of the organisation's selection process and ongoing safeguarding initiatives, staff and volunteers are required to complete a vetting application with either AccessNI or the National Vetting Bureau as part of the organisation's selection process and ongoing safeguarding initiatives. Special Olympics Ireland uses the services of the relevant vetting authorities in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to help assess the suitability of applicants for positions of trust in Special Olympics Ireland and our policy is to implement best practice in the correct and safe handling, use, storage, retention and disposal of Disclosure Records.

If, during the processing of an individual's application to become a registered volunteer or staff member, the vetting process results in a disclosure (other than Nil), from the relevant authority, Special Olympics Ireland will ensure any disclosure information and content received is subject to data security arrangements in compliance with Data Protection legislation and the Code of Practice – AccessNI and the Code of Practice – National Vetting Bureau 2017.

In terms of the security of the information, disclosure information is received directly by the Lead Signatory/Liaison Persons and can only be viewed by those entitled to in the course of their duties.

Disclosure information is stored in locked, non-portable storage containers at Special Olympics Ireland's Central Office at Sport Ireland Campus,

Snugborough Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. The Lead Signatory/Liaison Persons are the key holders and access is strictly limited to those required to do so in the course of their duties.

## Retention and Disposal of Disclosure Information

Any disclosure records sent from Northern Ireland applicants are retained by Special Olympics Ireland only until a decision has been made on suitability, after which time, they are returned to the applicant.

All disclosures received from the National Vetting Bureau are retained by Special Olympics Ireland under the same conditions as outlined above until the employee or volunteer is either re-vetted or leaves the organisation. Disclosures for Republic of Ireland (ROI) applicants are made available to applicants on request.

A record of the date of disclosures issued are held on each volunteer's record on Special Olympics Ireland's database, however, no details from the Disclosure Record other than the date the disclosure was issued, are recorded for the purposes of Volunteer Registration.

### Supporting documentation

Supporting documentation required by each jurisdiction, i.e. ID validations, Consent and any supporting copy documents are also retained under the same conditions above. (Copies of documents from Northern Ireland applying through AccessNI are shredded after 90 days in compliance with AccessNI's guidelines)

In compliance with our policy, Special Olympics Ireland has a procedure in place for Handling Disclosure Information and Content.



# Athlete Code of Conduct

**Athlete Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to uphold the following code of conduct

## Spirit of Sport

- ▶ Practice sporting spirit and acknowledge the success of others e.g. congratulate my team mates and others when they perform well in training or competition.
- ▶ Play with control and in a manner that brings respect to myself and my coaches.
- ▶ Refrain from using bad or offensive language or from physically hurting another athlete.

## Training and Competition

- ▶ Train regularly and follow the rules of my sport.
- ▶ Listen to the coaches and the officials and, at the end of competition, thank them and congratulate other athletes or teams.
- ▶ Always try my best and participate fully during training and competition.
- ▶ Shake hands with other athletes and coaches at the end of training and competition – or if health and safety prevents this, your coach will advise of an alternative.

## Responsibility for actions

- ▶ Not make inappropriate or unwanted physical, verbal or sexual advances on others.
- ▶ Not to bully or verbally abuse others online, by phone or in person.
- ▶ Abide by the policies and procedures set out by my club, Special Olympics Ireland and the National Governing body rules of my sport.

## Athlete's Rights

As an athlete you have the right to

- ▶ Receive quality coaching from appropriately qualified coaches.
- ▶ Train and compete in a safe environment.
- ▶ Participate in fair and equitable competition.
- ▶ Have a voice throughout Special Olympics Ireland and your Club.
- ▶ Be safe in any aspect of your Special Olympics Ireland activities.
- ▶ Appeal an action taken in relation to keeping to the Code of Conduct, if required.
- ▶ Report any concern you might have.

# Code of Conduct for Coaches

## By signing below I agree to:

### Requirement in Coaching Standards

- ▶ Ensure coach education qualifications are up to date and meet Special Olympics Ireland requirements

### Respect for others

- ▶ Maintain appropriate boundaries and respect the privacy of athletes, coaches, other volunteers, friends and spectators participating in Special Olympics Ireland activities. Particular care must be taken with respect to places such as changing areas, swimming pools, showers and toilets. There must be adequate and gender appropriate supervision for athletes. Ensure at all times there is more than one adult supervising in these situations.
- ▶ Not engage in inappropriate verbal or physical contact in any form. This should not prevent appropriate contact where it is necessary to comfort athletes and ensure their safety and well-being; neither should it preclude normal expressions of warmth or happiness provided that they are acceptable to all parties concerned.
- ▶ Treat all athletes, volunteers, spectators, officials and Special Olympics Ireland staff with respect. Remember everyone has their part to play and is entitled to a safe environment to do so.
- ▶ Lead by example and be a positive role model for the athletes and other coaches.

### Positive Experience

- ▶ Ensure that the athlete's experience is a positive one.
- ▶ Respect the talent, developmental stage and goals of each athlete.

- ▶ Make certain that each athlete competes in events that challenge that athlete's potential and are appropriate to that athlete's ability.
- ▶ Ensure athletes perform to their maximum effort in divisioning and final rounds of competition.
- ▶ Be fair, considerate and honest with athletes.
- ▶ Communicate with athletes using simple, clear language.
- ▶ Ensure that accurate records are maintained and that accurate scores are provided for entry of an athlete/team into any event.
- ▶ To make sure that athletes are never ridiculed, humiliated or shouted at for making a mistake in training or losing a match or an event.

### Act professionally and take responsibility for actions

- ▶ Thank competition officials, and if clarification is needed, follow the appropriate competition protest and appeals procedure.
- ▶ Ensure that language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation demonstrates the highest best practice standards.
- ▶ Display control, respect, dignity and professionalism to all involved in the sport (athletes, coaches, opponents, officials, administrators, parents, spectators, media, etc.) and encourage athletes to do the same.
- ▶ Abide by all necessary policies and procedures and comply with all Special Olympics Ireland's Regulations Governing Special Olympics Ireland Sport(s).
- ▶ Refrain from any form of abuse towards athletes.
- ▶ Be alert to any form of abuse from other sources directed towards athletes.

## Quality services to the athletes

- ▶ Encourage athletes to develop skills, sportsmanship and to play for fun and enjoyment.
- ▶ Seek continual improvement through performance evaluation and ongoing coach education.
- ▶ Be knowledgeable about the sports rules and the skills being coached.
- ▶ Provide a planned training programme.
- ▶ Maintain and protect the confidentiality of athlete health records.

## Health and safety of the athletes

- ▶ Ensure that the equipment, rules, training and the environment are safe for use and are appropriate for the age and ability of the athletes.
- ▶ In conjunction with the Club Safeguarding Officer, review each athlete registration information and be aware of any limitations noted which may affect their participation.
- ▶ Ensure that appropriate supervision is in place.
- ▶ Ensure that there is access to the following information where appropriate to your role (a) a list of names and contact numbers for parent/guardian/carer (b) up-to-date Athlete Registration Information (c) telephone numbers for immediate contact to emergency services if required (d) any other relevant information concerning the athletes.
- ▶ Abide by all necessary policies and procedures.

- ▶ Never take photographs of athletes that are in breach of the Filming and Photography Policy. The taking of photographs and video recording is prohibited inside changing areas, dormitories, showers and toilets.
- ▶ Be sensitive to the possibility of becoming overly involved or spending a disproportionate amount of time with any particular athlete. In the event where circumstances arise where it is unavoidable to be alone with an athlete a) immediately inform another responsible adult, by telephone if necessary, and b) make a diary note that the meeting/pick up/drop off, etc. of the athlete took place (c) agree a plan with family/club to avoid reoccurrence of the situation.

## Volunteer Rights

As a Volunteer you have the right to

- ▶ Be treated with dignity, respect and be given information about the organisation and the athletes.
- ▶ Have adequate training and volunteer in a place that complies with health & safety regulations.
- ▶ Have the freedom to make suggestions, receive constructive feedback and have access to a complaints procedure.
- ▶ Be assigned to a role (if possible) that recognises your personal preference, life experience, education and employment background as well as recognising the needs of the organisation.

# Code of Conduct for Family Member / Guardian / Carer

## By signing below I agree:

- ▶ That my athlete is involved in sport for their enjoyment and not mine.
- ▶ To ensure that all relevant registration forms are complete and up-to-date.
- ▶ That the athlete's coaches are fully informed of the health needs of my athlete and informed of any changes.
- ▶ To drop off and collect my athlete at the agreed times and inform the coach if there is a change to collection arrangements.
- ▶ That my athlete is properly and adequately attired for the weather conditions for the time of year and the activity they are attending.
- ▶ To help athletes to work towards skill improvement and embrace the spirit of sport; and not force an athlete(s) to participate in any sport unwillingly.
- ▶ To encourage athletes to play by the rules of their sport and teach them that honest endeavour is as important as winning.
- ▶ To make sure that an athlete is never ridiculed, humiliated or shouted at for making a mistake at training or losing a match or an event.
  - ▶ To set a good example by applauding other athletes and encouraging the athlete to have mutual respect for team mates and fellow athletes.
- ▶ Not to use foul or abusive language or harass officials, coaches or other athletes.
- ▶ To accept the official's judgement and recognise the value and importance of volunteers, coaches, and officials.
- ▶ To abide by all necessary policies and procedures.
- ▶ To treat all athletes, volunteers, spectators, officials and Special Olympics Ireland staff with respect. Remember everyone has their part to play and is entitled to a safe environment to do so.

## Family Members / Guardians / Carers have a right to

- ▶ Know your athlete is safe.
- ▶ Be informed of problems or concerns relating to your athlete.
- ▶ Be informed if your athlete is injured.
- ▶ Have your consent sought for issues or trips regarding your athlete etc.
- ▶ Have your opinions heard in relation to relevant Special Olympics Ireland



# Code of Conduct for Volunteers

## By signing below I agree to:

- ▶ Comply fully with the Volunteer Registration process and receive clearance to work as a volunteer.
- ▶ Ensure that the facilities used are safe, secure and that appropriate supervision is in place.
- ▶ Request any relevant information concerning the athlete that I might need for my role.
- ▶ Abide by all necessary policies and procedures.
- ▶ Ensure the welfare and well-being of athletes is paramount and activities are run in a safe and fun environment.
- ▶ Not engage in inappropriate physical contact in any form. This should not prevent appropriate contact where necessary to comfort athletes and ensure their safety and well-being; neither should it preclude normal expressions of warmth or happiness.
- ▶ Maintain appropriate boundaries and respect the privacy of athletes. Particular care must be taken with respect to places such as changing areas, swimming pools, showers and toilets. Adequate and gender-appropriate supervision must be made for athletes and more than one volunteer should be supervising in these situations.
- ▶ Not take photographs of athletes that are in breach of the Filming and Photography Policy. Taking of photographs and video recording is prohibited inside changing areas, dormitories, showers and toilets.
- ▶ Be sensitive to the possibility of becoming overly involved or spending a disproportionate amount of time with a particular athlete. In the event where circumstances arise where it is unavoidable to be alone with an athlete (a) immediately inform another responsible adult, by telephone if necessary, (b) make a diary note that the meeting/pick up/drop off etc., of the athlete took place (c) agree a plan with family/clubs to avoid reoccurrence of the situation.
- ▶ Support and promote the ethos of your club, region and Special Olympics Ireland; you are a role model.
- ▶ Adhere to medical advice received from practitioners concerning the health and well-being of an athlete.
- ▶ Treat all athletes, volunteers, spectators, officials and Special Olympics Ireland staff with respect. Remember everyone has their part to play and is entitled to a safe environment to do so.

## Volunteer Rights

As a Volunteer you have the right to

- ▶ Be treated with dignity, respect and be given information about the organisation and the athletes.
- ▶ Have adequate training and volunteer in a place that complies with health & safety regulations.
- ▶ Have the freedom to make suggestions, receive constructive feedback and have access to a complaints procedure.
- ▶ Be assigned to a role (if possible) that recognises your personal preference, life experience, education and employment background as well as recognising the needs of the organisation.

# Safeguarding Roles

Special Olympics Ireland (SOI) is committed to promoting and ensuring the safety of all athletes involved in our activities. All volunteers who take up roles which require them to work with children or vulnerable adults will be vetted and will partake in Safeguarding training which is relevant for their role. Safeguarding is the responsibility of all, however there are a number of roles with specific requirements in relation to safeguarding:

## Safeguarding Officer (National Children's Officer)

- ▶ Is the Mandated person and National Designated Liaison Person, in accordance with the Children First Legislation.
- ▶ Oversees the completion of the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) and Risk Assessment and is The Relevant Person referenced in the CSS.
- ▶ Informs and updates staff and volunteers in the area of child protection, athlete welfare and safeguarding policies and practices.
- ▶ Ensures the implementation of legislative requirements.
- ▶ Updates, develops and distributes policies relating to safeguarding in Special Olympics Ireland.
- ▶ Advocates for the welfare and rights of athletes within the Special Olympics Ireland Programme.
- ▶ Supports Club Safeguarding Officers to carry out their role within clubs.

## Regional Director

- ▶ Is the Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for the region responsible for reporting concern, disclosures or allegations of abuse to statutory authorities.

- ▶ Supports and advises the Club Designated Liaison Person (Chairperson) on the above.
- ▶ Advocates the implementation of safeguarding policies in clubs.
- ▶ Supports Regional Development Officers to ensure appropriate safeguarding training and vetting requirements are in place within clubs.

## Chairperson

- ▶ Completes Safeguarding 1 Training (ROI) or Safeguarding Children and Young People (NI) AND Safeguarding 3 Training (ROI) or Designated Safeguarding Officer (NI).
- ▶ Primary representative for the club.
- ▶ Ensures club activities are in line with Special Olympics Ireland and club rules, policies and procedures.

## Designated Liaison Person<sup>1</sup>

- ▶ A resource person for the club on child protection or welfare concern.
- ▶ Responsible for ensuring that the reporting procedures are followed.
- ▶ Be familiar with and able to carry out reporting procedures as outlined in Sport Ireland's Safeguarding Guidance for Children & Young People in Sport.
- ▶ Records all concerns brought to their attention and the actions taken in relation to a concern or allegation of abuse.
- ▶ Contacts the Mandated Person in Special Olympics Ireland if a report has been made.
- ▶ Advises club administrators on issues of confidentiality, record keeping and data protection.

<sup>1</sup> Sport Ireland Safeguarding Guidance for Children & Young People in Sport

## Club Safeguarding Officer

- ▶ Safeguarding 1 Training (ROI) or Safeguarding Children and Young People (NI) AND Safeguarding 2 Training (ROI) or Designated Safeguarding Officer (NI).
- ▶ Will be a member of the club committee.
- ▶ Oversees and coordinates the implementation of safeguarding policies and ensures adequate first aid cover is provided at all times.
- ▶ Oversees the completion of the Club's Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment.
- ▶ Ensures an athlete-centred environment in training and competition.
- ▶ Advocates for athletes' rights and well-being.
- ▶ Provides opportunity for engagement with athletes and space for their voice to be heard.
- ▶ Deals with safeguarding issues. This is not to be confused with concerns of abuse or disclosure which must go to the Designated Liaison Person (Chairperson).
- ▶ Be familiar to athletes so they can contact you if they need to.
- ▶ Engages with the Safeguarding Officer (National Children's Officer) and initiatives offered to support the role.

## Coach

- ▶ Provides regular, quality training activity and participation in competition by the athletes.
- ▶ Must hold the standard coaching qualification, be vetted and attended Safeguarding 1 Training (ROI) or Safeguarding Children and Young People (NI)
- ▶ Provides a space for feedback and opportunities for athletes to raise concerns.
- ▶ Reports any concerns or disclosures of abuse to the Designated Liaison Person.



FIGURE 1:  
**Committee Management Team (CMT)  
Structure**



# Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers

## Policy Statement

To safeguard all stakeholders and to comply with Special Olympics Ireland's Safeguarding Policies, the organisation requires that all volunteers are vetted and that a register of all volunteers is maintained.

Special Olympics Ireland welcomes the involvement and contribution that individuals can make as volunteers. Regardless of whether an individual is recruited to volunteer or expresses an interest in volunteering; all individuals need to apply to Special Olympics Ireland in accordance with this Recruitment and Selection policy.

An individual, 15 years of age\* or over, who wishes to volunteer with Special Olympics Ireland must make an application to Special Olympics Ireland, complete the Volunteer Registration Process, be accepted, and designated as a registered volunteer before they may undertake a volunteer role/duties with the organisation at any level.

The Volunteer Registration Process requires that the individual agrees to undergo a vetting process. Special Olympics Ireland provides sports training and competition opportunities for people with an intellectual disability and, as the safety of Special Olympics Ireland Athletes is paramount, all applicants, will be required to submit an application to the relevant authorities. Applicants 16 years and over must apply via Special Olympics Ireland, to disclose criminal history information or none if applicable. Residents of the Republic of Ireland are subject to vetting through the National Vetting Bureau and Residents of Northern Ireland are subject to an Enhanced Check through AccessNI.

In summary, the Volunteer Registration Process requires that an applicant undertakes the following steps:

- i. Complete and submit a Special Olympics Ireland Volunteer Application online
- ii. If resident in the Republic of Ireland, complete and submit a Garda Vetting Application or if resident in Northern Ireland, complete and apply for an Enhanced Check through Access NI.
- iii. Submit the names and contact numbers of two referees
- iv. Complete the Special Olympics Ireland Volunteer Online Induction Training Course
- v. Submit a recent photograph.
- vi. Volunteer applicants 16 years and over must attend a Sport Ireland or Sport NI approved safeguarding course i.e. Safeguarding 1 or Safeguarding Children and Young People (NI)

## Enhanced Disclosure (Northern Ireland)

Under the Safeguarding of Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007, Special Olympics Ireland is eligible to request an Enhanced Check through AccessNI in Northern Ireland as volunteer roles require working with children or vulnerable adults in regulated and unsupervised activity. An Enhanced Disclosure Certificate may contain details of any spent and unspent convictions as well as cautions, informed warnings where such information is held on the Police National Computer. It may also have relevant non-conviction information from police records. It may also have information from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) if the applicant volunteer is prevented from working with children or vulnerable adults. All applicants for volunteer roles with Special Olympics Ireland will be required to request an Enhanced Check through Access NI.



## **Garda Vetting (Republic of Ireland)**

From 29th of April 2016, in compliance with the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016, anyone who wishes to volunteer with SOI over 16 years of age is subject to vetting legislation. Applicants in the Republic of Ireland will be required to apply for a Vetting Disclosure Certificate through the National Vetting Bureau (An Garda Síochána). Disclosure Certificates will show any convictions (subject to the Administrative Filter) or none.

## **Equality of Opportunity**

Special Olympics Ireland is committed to equality of opportunity for all applicants including those with criminal convictions. Disclosures are requested by Special Olympics Ireland in order to assist the selection process and will be taken into account only when the conviction is considered relevant to the role. Any disclosure will be seen in the context of the nature of the offence and the responsibility for the care of athletes/volunteers and employees.

## **Selection**

If a decision is made by Special Olympics Ireland not to accept an individual as a volunteer, for reasons of information disclosed and/or suitability for the role, then the individual will be contacted.

The decision to accept an individual as a volunteer lies entirely with Special Olympics Ireland, i.e. the vetting process in itself is not the sole factor that determines if an individual will be accepted as a volunteer. Having a criminal record will not necessarily debar an applicant from being a registered volunteer with Special Olympics Ireland. This will depend on the circumstances and background of the offence(s) or other information contained on the Disclosures or provided directly to us by the PSNI and NVB.

## **Registered Volunteer Status**

An applicant will be notified in writing when they have been designated as a registered volunteer with Special Olympics Ireland.

\*Please note a 15 year old resident in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland cannot be vetted. A 15 year old is eligible to temporarily volunteer once they have completed the other steps in the Volunteer Registration process. Special Olympics Ireland will make contact with the applicant volunteer after their 16th birthday asking them to complete the vetting and safeguarding process at that point. Volunteer applicants between 16 years and 18 years must complete appropriate safeguarding training which will be signposted on application.

## **Definitions/ Additional Details**

### ***Identification Check***

ID validation checks are required by both the National Vetting Bureau and AccessNI as part of their disclosure processes. Confirmation of ID validation and copies of appropriate documentation presented at time of ID check must be sent to Special Olympics Ireland before a vetting application can be reviewed. A list of required documentation relevant to each jurisdiction can be reviewed on the relevant ID Validation Form for the region.

Special Olympics Ireland considers serious offences to include, but not be limited to:

- ▶ Offences of a sexual nature
- ▶ Violent offences
- ▶ Drugs offences

Offences of a sexual nature will automatically prohibit an applicant from being successfully recruited as a volunteer.

### ***Code of Practice – AccessNI***

As an organisation using Access Northern Ireland to help assess the suitability of applicants for positions of trust, Special Olympics Ireland, complies with AccessNI's Code of Practice. For more details you can view AccessNI's code of practice here <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/accessni-code-of-practice.pdf> and a copy can be made available on request through Special Olympics Ireland.

### ***Recruitment of Ex-Offenders***

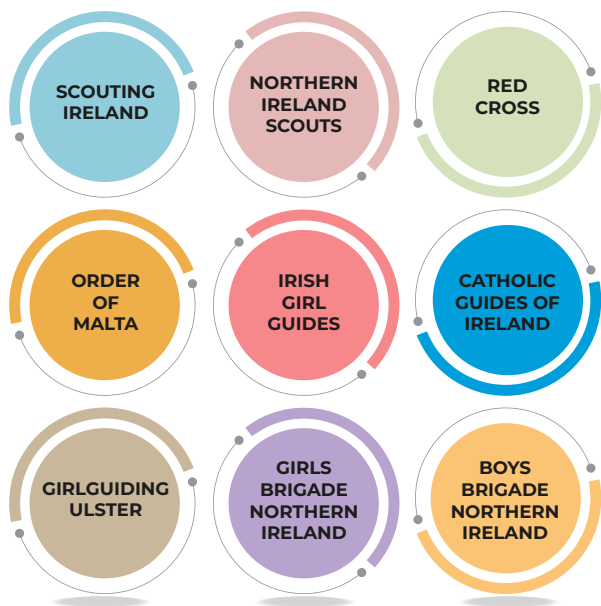
In line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1979 (as

amended in 2014) Special Olympics Ireland has a policy on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders is available from Special Olympics Ireland upon request, before submitting your AccessNI form.

## Exceptions to the volunteer registration process

The only exceptions to the registration process are as follows:

- ▶ **Second-level students** aged between **15-18 years** who are volunteering as a group at an event/activity. These volunteers do not need to complete the full screening process but it is the responsibility of the school to assign a nominated adult to supervise this group while they carry out their volunteering duties on behalf of Special Olympics Ireland. This adult must be a Special Olympics Ireland registered volunteer over 18 years old. Ratio of supervisor: student group should be 1:20.
- ▶ For the **Youth groups** below, volunteers aged between **12-14 years** will be permitted to act as volunteers



These volunteers do not need to complete the full screening process but there must be a group liaison person from their relevant organisation with them while they carry out their volunteering duties on behalf of Special Olympics Ireland. This adult must be a Special Olympics Ireland registered volunteer over 18 years old. Ratio of supervisor: group should be 1:20.

1. **Gaisce/Duke of Edinburgh participants**  
See Special Olympics Ireland Protocol on Engaging with Gaisce/Duke of Edinburgh/ Prince's Trust participants.
2. **For the groups below**, permission will be granted for them to act as volunteers when they are in full uniform and on duty:



## Consequence of breach of policy

If a person is found to be volunteering for Special Olympics Ireland without becoming fully registered they will be asked to cease their volunteer role until such time as registration is complete.

# Coach Education and Qualification Requirements

(Taken from Regulations Governing Special Olympics Ireland Sport 2021-2025)

## Coaching Qualifications & Head Coach role

- a) Each Club must have a coach with the required level of qualifications present and leading each training session. Clubs that offer team sports i.e. floorball, football and basketball, the same requirements must be in place for each team. Please refer to Special Olympics Ireland Coaching Standards (Appendix 18.9).
- b) Assistant coaches must hold the required coaching qualification in line with Special Olympics Ireland Coaching Standards Document.
- c) A club attending a sports competition, development day or other similar sports activity must appoint an individual to act as Head Coach per sport/ team to act as a single point of contact with the event organisers in order for the club to take part in competition.
- d) It is ideal to have the Head Coach role independent of the supervision ratio.
- e) All athletes should be offered a minimum of 1 hour training per week per sport.

## Coach Education Requirements for Special Olympics Ireland Clubs

This document outlines the qualifications for Assistant Coaches, Coaches and Head Coaches for clubs affiliated to Special Olympics Ireland. These updated standards will bring Special Olympics Ireland clubs in closer alignment to Sport Ireland Coaching recommendations for all National Governing Bodies. Each Special Olympics Ireland club must have an assigned Head Coach with the appropriate qualification.

It is obviously desirable that Special Olympics Ireland coaches are as well trained as possible. This means that all coaches should regularly upskill and strive to increase their qualification levels.

## In Addition:

- ▶ No General Volunteer will be assigned as an Assistant Coach, Coach or Head Coach without the relevant qualification.
- ▶ Every Assistant Coach, Coach and Head Coach is required to have a minimum Sport Ireland - Safeguarding 1 - Child Welfare & Protection Basic Awareness Course or Sport Northern Ireland - Safeguarding Children & Young People in Sport (basic awareness raising) prior to attending a Special Olympics Ireland coaching course or being assigned to these positions.

- ▶ Assistant Coaches are any volunteer/s assisting with the delivery of the sports programme in the club, in any manner. They may be required to assist the Coach or Head Coach.
- ▶ All Assistant Coaches and Coaches should only be coaching under the guidance of a Head Coach who is qualified to the appropriate level.
- ▶ All Assistant Coaches, Coaches and Head Coaches should only be coaching within the parameters that their qualifications allow.
- ▶ In Special Olympics Ireland clubs with team sports, it is recommended that a suitably qualified Head Coach is assigned per team.

- ▶ With the exception of Swimming and Kayaking, a relevant qualification of Level 1 or above from another recognised National Governing Body will suffice as a Head Coach qualification. This qualification may be from a sport other than the official sports offered by SOI.

All Clubs will require these standards for all Assistant Coaches, Coaches and Head Coaches to deliver a sports session. Special Olympics Ireland Regional Development Officers for Sport will guide you on where to obtain the relevant qualifications.

Sport	Assistant Coach (Minimum)	Coach (Minimum)	Head Coach (Minimum)	Ideal Head Coach in line with Sport Ireland Coaching (if different from recommended)
Alpine Skiing *	Introduction to Coaching Practices	Irish Association of Snowsports Instructors Level 1	Irish Association of Snowsports Instructors Level 1	Irish Association of Snowsports Instructors Level 2
Swimming	Swim Ireland Helpers Certificate (Certified only when working under an ASA Level 1/2 qualified teacher/coach)  IWS Level 1 – Aquatics Assistant for People with Disabilities (Certified only when working under a qualified ASA Level 1/2 qualified teacher/coach)	ASA Level 1 Teacher of Disabilities* ASA Level 1 Swim Teacher*  ASA Level 1 Coaching* *Certified only when working under an ASA Level 2 qualified teacher/coach (same qualification)  IWS Assistant Swim Teachers* Certified only when coaching under a fully qualified Swim Teacher  IWS Level 2 – Aquatics Teacher for People with Disabilities (one to one coaching only)  ASA Level 2 Teacher of Disabilities	ASA Level 2 Swim Teacher  ASA Level 2 Coaching  IWS Swim Teachers  IWS Level 3 - Aquatics Leader for People with Disabilities	

Sport	Assistant Coach (Minimum)	Coach (Minimum)	Head Coach (Minimum)	Ideal Head Coach in line with Sport Ireland Coaching (if different from recommended)
Athletics	Introduction to Coaching Practices	Athletics Leader or Assistant Coach Athletics Ireland (AI) Leading Athletics or Assisting Coaching, (UKA)	Athletics Coach Level 1(AI) Athletics Coach (UKA)	Athletics Ireland Level 2, 3 Athletics NI Athletics Coach
Floorball*	Introduction to Coaching Practices	International Floorball Federation (IFF) Floorball Seminar Introductory to Floorball Course Special Olympics Ireland Workshop	International Floorball Federation (IFF) Floorball Seminar Introductory to Floorball Course Special Olympics Ireland Workshop	Introductory to Floorball Course
Football	Introduction to Coaching Practices Irish Football Association (IFA) Grassroots Introductory / IFA Level 1 Coaching Disabled Footballers	Football Association Ireland (FAI) – Kick Start 1 & 2 Adult Intro CPD Workshop (e.g. 7v7 Workshop)	FAI PDP 2 CPD Workshop (e.g. 7v7 Workshop) IFA Level 1 Award	FAI UEFA D license
Golf	Introduction to Coaching Practices	Special Olympics Ireland Golf Leader Course	Special Olympics Ireland Golf Leader Course	PGA Level 1

Sport	Assistant Coach (Minimum)	Coach (Minimum)	Head Coach (Minimum)	Ideal Head Coach in line with Sport Ireland Coaching (if different from recommended)
Gymnastics	Introduction to Coaching Practices	Gym Start Level 1, Gym Edge, Introductory/ Introductory Women's/ Men's Artistic Gymnastics  British Gymnastics – Awards Scheme Coach	Gymnastics Ireland - Level 1 Coaching Award in relevant Gymnastics discipline  Gym Start Level 2  British Gymnastics – Level 1 Coach in relevant Gymnastics discipline	Gymnastics Ireland - Level 2 + Coaching Award in relevant Gymnastics discipline  British Gymnastics – Level 2 in relevant Gymnastics discipline
Kayaking	“Learn to Paddle” Level 1 Coaching Award	Level 1 Kayak Instructor Award	Level 2 Kayak Instructor Award	Level 3 Kayak Instructor Award
Table Tennis	Introduction to Coaching Practices	Irish Table Tennis Association (ITTA) Introduction to coaching Table Tennis	ITTA Level 1 Coaching Award	ITTA Level 2 Coaching Award
Pitch and Putt	Introduction to Coaching Practices	Introductory Pitch and Putt Coaching Award	Level 1 Pitch and Putt Coaching Award	
Motor Activities Training Programme (MATP)	Introduction to Coaching Practices	MATP Workshop (delivered on a regional basis)	MATP Workshop (delivered on a regional basis)	



# Mental Health & Wellbeing

Special Olympics Ireland has a duty to promote an environment and culture that supports positive mental health and wellbeing for athletes.

Everyone has mental health, in the same way that we have physical health. Mental health is our ability to cope with what happens in life, physically, emotionally and socially. For an athlete, their mental health will affect their involvement and performance in sport, at any level. We understand the need to be physically well to participate and achieve certain goals, and we need to be mentally well to cope with our sporting outcomes.

Mental Health Ireland quotes mental health as:

*A balance between all aspects of life - social, spiritual, emotional and physical*

*When individuals are coping and in control of their lives*

*Ability to meet the demands of life and adapt to change*

Participating in sport can be a positive contribution to a person's mental health and wellbeing by creating a safe and fun environment with access to support structures. This could include:

- ▶ Training staff in basic mental health awareness.
- ▶ Ensuring staff and volunteers have a general understanding of the pressures athletes might face as a result of competitive sport.
- ▶ Creating a welcoming, inclusive environment for everyone.
- ▶ Challenging poor practice that puts any unnecessary pressure on athletes.
- ▶ Offering opportunities for athlete voices to be heard.

- ▶ Respecting members and their feelings.
- ▶ Promoting a healthy competitiveness that embraces personal development.
- ▶ Being available to listen if an athlete has a concern.
- ▶ Support athletes to protect and strengthen their mental health and wellbeing through our Health Promotion Programme and partnership with Mental Health Ireland, using education and empowerment as the key tools.

## Additional concerns due to coronavirus

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and social distancing measures are placing a number of additional pressures on people's mental health and wellbeing. They may be experiencing increased feelings of anxiety or loneliness and some will need additional support at this time.

## Need Help or Support?

If you or someone you know is suffering please visit [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie) for information on support services available.



# Record Keeping and Storage of Safeguarding Information Policy

## Policy Statement:

Special Olympics Ireland retains a record of safeguarding incident reports and any subsequent correspondence that may arise from the reported incidents. Clubs affiliated to Special Olympics Ireland should also follow the same procedures.

It is the policy of [Insert Club Name] to retain records of safeguarding incident reports in line with the SOI procedures detailed within this policy.

## Record Keeping & Storage of Safeguarding Information:

The reporting of safeguarding incidents is regarded as a confidential and sensitive matter. Any allegations or disclosures that may be made in the course of dealing with the incident, and any actions resulting from the report, must be recorded as soon as is reasonably possible. All records must be kept in a safe and secure environment applicable to a digital or hard copy report.

### a. Record Keeping

The following details should be recorded:

1. Date and Time
2. Type of record i.e. allegation, disclosure
3. Details of the allegation, disclosure
4. Names of all people who were involved
5. Advice sought and who from
6. People informed
7. Actions
8. Follow up

### b. Storage

When storing personal and/or sensitive information it is important to understand why you are storing it. In order to keep them secure they should be labelled and organised carefully.

Special Olympics Ireland store digital copies of records on a secure section of the organisation's server with access restrictions in place and controlled by IT staff. The Designated Liaison Person in a club should ensure that this information is stored securely and only used for the purpose of making a report to a Statutory Authority, a Regional Director or Special Olympics Ireland Mandated Person. The information should be password protected and on a computer with virus protection and encryption.

Hard copies of safeguarding records should be kept in a locked file in a secure area with limited access. Any notes or printouts used prior to recording information digitally should be shredded and disposed of securely. Files should be separated by individual.

This information should be retained for 6 years in line with Special Olympics Ireland data retention.





# Club Communications

Clubs have a duty to ensure that all communication takes place in a safe manner and does not place young people or athletes at risk of harm. Any communication that takes place between adults and young people or adults and athletes should be open, transparent and relative to the club and sport. Having effective communication methods allows all stakeholders to engage and hear about your club's activities.

## Communication

One of the key components of running a successful club is effective communication which may be broken down into distinct categories: Internal and External.

It is important to ensure that everyone who needs to access information can do so and any additional needs they may have; consider this when choosing the method of communication and how it will be displayed.

## Internal Communication

In any club there are a number of groups who will need to be communicated with:

- ▶ Club Management Team and Sub Committees
- ▶ Athletes
- ▶ Volunteers
- ▶ Families
- ▶ Coaches
- ▶ Fundraising and Supporters
- ▶ Regional Office Staff

It is vital that for each grouping the club identifies the following:

- ▶ Who will take responsibility for managing communication?
- ▶ What are the best method(s) for communication with each specific group; usually Email, Text message, newsletter or notice board?
- ▶ Who will develop and maintain contact lists for each communication group?
- ▶ Who will oversee and monitor the ongoing communication?

A Club Induction Pack should be given to all new members of a club on their first visit, which should include training times, Club Management Team structure/contacts, reporting procedures and a code of conduct to be signed and returned. It is important that all stakeholders know what the club communication channels are and where they can feedback, this helps to reduce and manage issues in the club.

## External Communication

While it is important to have effective internal communication, it is also important to build good, positive communication channels with the local community. There is tough competition for radio and newspaper space but if clubs provide relevant, efficient and dependable news in the right format, it should be possible to get coverage in the following:

- ▶ Social Media Website
- ▶ Website
- ▶ Local Press
- ▶ Newsletters
- ▶ Radio and TV
- ▶ Special Olympics Ireland Communications
- ▶ Links with external partners such as Local Authority Sports Development, Local Sports Partnerships and local schools can support clubs by signposting athletes or volunteers and providing alternative funding opportunities.

See Online Safety and Social Media Guidance for Clubs for further information.

## Communicating with Young People and Athletes

If athletes are under eighteen years of age it is important that parent/guardian/carer consent has been given prior to communication via email or text message. Communication in this way should be open and transparent and preferably not one-to-one. If it is necessary to communicate with an individual who is under eighteen years of age another adult should also be copied, usually a parent.

Remember that tone is difficult to convey via text and email, ensure the language used is plain and simple and avoids using emojis or terms of endearment which may be misunderstood. Texts should be used for the purposes of reminding young people/athletes about upcoming events/training sessions. If it turns into a conversation, communication should be ended and suggest discussing the subject at the next event/training session.

When responding to messages received, do so to acknowledge receipt or answer direct questions e.g. what time is training? Conversations requiring more detailed responses should be done face-to-face and with a parent/guardian/carer present, if appropriate.

Coaches and volunteers should not use social media platforms to engage with young people or athletes. It is not appropriate to friend/follow athletes and this should be avoided. If an athlete sends you a request or a private message, you should only respond if you feel there is a safety or welfare concern. You should then proceed according to the club reporting procedures. Otherwise, you should not reply and instead talk to the athlete at the next event/training session; remind all athletes that you cannot accept friend requests in your role.

Athletes and young people should be encouraged, and feel the club is a safe place, to speak to someone if they have an issue or concern. Contact information for the Club Safeguarding Officer should be clearly available. Athletes, volunteers and parents/guardians/carers should be encouraged to contact the Club Safeguarding Officer if they need advice or have a concern about club practices.

## Communicating with people with an intellectual disability

Communication may be more difficult for people with an intellectual disability, particularly if they are non-verbal. They may be unable to understand communications and/or communicate their own intentions in a way that you can understand.



When communicating with athletes:

- ▶ Speak slowly and clearly and leave pauses for the person to process your words and respond
- ▶ Use one idea per sentence
- ▶ People with an intellectual disability may not have as large a vocabulary as you
- ▶ Use every day words and sentences
- ▶ Use tools such as Lámh/Makaton/PECS
- ▶ Use pictures
- ▶ To communicate messages use:
  - voice tone
  - gestures
  - body language
- ▶ Do not use abstract phrases like throw it or shoot. Say “throw the ball” or “kick the ball”
- ▶ Do not shout as this does not help someone to understand what you are saying

## Appendix

### 10 Communication Tips

1. Speak to me, not my parent/carer/guardian
2. Shake my hand
3. Identify yourself to a person who is blind
4. If you offer help, wait until I say yes
5. Treat adults as adults
6. Don't lean on or hang over someone's wheelchair
7. Listen carefully to someone who is speaking and let them finish
8. Talk at eye level
9. Tap a person who is deaf on the shoulder
10. Relax, don't be embarrassed, it doesn't matter what you say



18

# Club Prevention and Resolution of Bullying Policy

## Policy Statement:

Bullying is a behaviour that will not be tolerated. [Insert Club Name] recognises its duty of care and responsibility to safeguard its stakeholders.

It is the policy of [Insert Club Name] that bullying will be dealt with as soon as any signs come to the attention of any club member. With extreme forms and cases of bullying there may be a need to link directly to statutory bodies i.e. An Garda Síochána/TUSLA/Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)/Social Services. Everyone is encouraged to speak to a trusted adult if they have a concern about bullying behaviour.

Bullying is behaviour which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and is conducted by an individual or group against others whether it is verbal, psychological or physical. Examples of bullying include:

- ▶ Physically pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching etc.
- ▶ Taunting, teasing, name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing and emotional torment through ridicule, humiliation or the continual ignoring of individuals
- ▶ Posting of derogatory or abusive comments, videos or images on social network sites
- ▶ Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures, sectarianism

- ▶ Sexual comments, suggestions or behaviour
- ▶ Unwanted physical contact
- ▶ Threatening behaviour
- ▶ Extortion by one or more individuals against a victim

People with a disability, from ethnic minorities, young people who are gay or lesbian, or those with an intellectual disability are more vulnerable to this form of abuse and are more likely to be targeted.

Bullying is not a once-off incident but based on continuous behaviour by an individual or group. It can affect athletes, volunteers and staff. It is how a victim perceives this behaviour that is important in gauging if behaviour is bullying or not. Other examples of bullying can include but are not limited to:

- ▶ Use of technology – mobile phones/social networks/emails
- ▶ Spreading rumours
- ▶ Being attacked on the basis of gender, race, religion, disability, age or sexuality

This behaviour is not acceptable by anyone and is a breach of Special Olympics Ireland Codes of Conduct and, if observed, the club reporting structure should be adhered to.

## Purpose of the policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that members of *[Insert Club Name]* can participate in activities in a safe environment without fear of being bullied; and outline the club's preventative measures and actions for resolution.

The club aims to prevent bullying by endeavouring to:

- ▶ Promote a clear 'No Bullying' policy within the club
- ▶ Outline and clarify Codes of Conduct with all members of club, this includes athletes, coaches, volunteers and parents/guardians/carers
- ▶ Ensure an annual signing of a Code of Conduct for Athletes, Volunteers, Coaches and Families
- ▶ Encourage athletes to take a role in preventing and stopping bullying in their club.
- ▶ Maintain a log of attendance at training sessions and club activities (determining patterns of absences)
- ▶ Ensure adequate supervision at all times
- ▶ Reinforcing a culture of speaking up and telling a trusted adult about any bullying behaviour.

## Awareness of this policy

Our Club Safeguarding Officer will raise awareness on a regular basis and build an ethos within the club that encourages individuals to report any incidents of bullying. This approach should be an open discussion about possibilities of people being bullied, focusing on the fact that anyone could be a victim of bullying and that it is not a sign of weakness in a person.

### a. How do you know it is happening?

Bullies operate using secrecy, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which they feel it is not safe to tell. These are some warning signs which may indicate that an individual might be getting bullied:

- ▶ Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities.

- ▶ Re-occurring absences from training and or club activities.
- ▶ Physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches or damage to belongings).
- ▶ Stress-caused illness- e.g. headaches, stomach aches which seem unexplained.
- ▶ Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to club, asking to be driven).
- ▶ Frequent loss of or shortage of money with vague explanations.
- ▶ Having few friends.
- ▶ Changes in behaviour (usual behaviours exaggerated, new behaviours - withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed).
- ▶ Changes in eating habits (not eating or overeating).
- ▶ Anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness).
- ▶ Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide.

Sometimes when an athlete with an intellectual disability is being bullied they do not understand what is happening and may think that being treated badly is just a part of their everyday life.

The Bully may be:

- ▶ A parent who pushes too hard.
- ▶ A coach who adopts a win-at-all costs philosophy.
- ▶ A young player who intimidates inappropriately.
- ▶ An older player who intimidates inappropriately.
- ▶ An official who places unfair pressure on a person.

### b. Who should deal with it?

Everybody in the club has a responsibility to work together to prevent and stop bullying. If a club participant becomes aware of any bullying occurring it should be brought directly to the attention of the Club Safeguarding Officer who is the appropriate person to manage any issues that may arise and may link in with the Regional office.

## How to deal with bullying?

Bullying is in breach of the Code of Conduct; it could be dealt with through disciplinary procedures but initially there may be more effective ways of dealing with the matter; a more informal and conciliatory approach. However extreme forms and cases of bullying - may need to be reported to the statutory bodies.

### a. Guidance on steps to be taken by the Club Safeguarding Officer

- ▶ Individual being bullied should be given time to describe what is happening to them.
- ▶ They should be reassured that they are right to tell someone.
- ▶ Club Chairperson to be kept informed of any incident and actions to be taken but otherwise confidentiality to be maintained.
- ▶ Keep the individual and/or their families informed of proposed actions and responses.
- ▶ Take into account feelings and perspective of individual who is being bullied.
- ▶ All conversations to be documented and kept in the Club Safeguarding Officer's confidential records.
- ▶ A 'No Blame' approach to be worked through on a club level whilst maintaining individuals' confidentiality.
- ▶ If there is a resolution, continue raising awareness and promoting good conduct.

### b. Supports for Parents / Guardians / Carers

Insert Club Name will support parents / guardians / carers in the following way:

- ▶ They will be advised of the club's prevent and resolution of bullying policy and practice.
- ▶ Any experience of bullying behaviour will be discussed with the child / athlete's parents / guardians / carers.

- ▶ They will be consulted on action to be taken (for both victim and child / athlete displaying the bullying behaviour) and we'll agree on these actions together.
- ▶ Information and advice on coping with bullying will be made available.
- ▶ Support will be offered to parents / guardians / carers including information from other agencies or supports.

## Definitions

The Northern Ireland Anti -Bullying Forum (NIABF) define bullying as: "the repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights of another or others."

Bullying can be peer-to-peer, adult-to-child or child-to-adult.

- ▶ **Cyber Bullying** is the use of technology to harass, threaten embarrass or target a person. This type of bullying is becoming more frequent as the bully can have access to their victims at any time and young people spend so much of their time online. Cyberbullying can allow bullies to hide behind a screen and not face their victims, often offering anonymity and reduced risk of being caught; sometimes giving them more courage. For their victims it can feel like there is no escape.
- ▶ **Physical bullying** involves hurting a person's body or belongings. It can be direct aggression by hitting, kicking spitting at or punching someone; or it can be tripping or pushing someone. It is also the act of taking and/or damaging someone's belongings.
- ▶ **Verbal bullying** can be difficult to identify and often occurs when there are no witnesses or adults present. Bullies will persistently insult their victim to belittle or hurt them; often focusing on differences. This includes name calling and taunting.

- ▶ **Gesture bullying** is a non-verbal way of threatening, intimidating or ridiculing a person. It can include making rude or mean hand gestures which communicate a message of intent to harm or insinuates something about a person. It can also be a constant stare which maintains a continuous threat to someone.
- ▶ **Exclusion bullying** occurs when someone is intentionally made to feel like they are not part of a group or when someone tells others not to be friends with them. Social exclusion may also involve spreading rumours to isolate people from a group.
- ▶ **Extortion bullying** is a way of taking something from someone that they do not want to give or getting them to do something they do not want to do by threatening, forcing or blackmailing.



## Useful contacts

**NSPCC Helpline** 0808 800 5000

**Sticks and Stones** 087 90 15199

or [www.sticksandstones.ie](http://www.sticksandstones.ie)

**ChildLine UK** 0800 11 11 / [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**ChildLine Republic of Ireland** 1800 66 66 66

or Text Talk to 50101 / [www.childline.ie](http://www.childline.ie)

**Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum**

[www.niabf.org.uk](http://www.niabf.org.uk)

**Kidscape** [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

**Anti-Bullying Alliance**

[www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)

**Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)** [www.ispcc.ie/shield](http://www.ispcc.ie/shield)



# Supervision

## Supervision

Special Olympics Ireland recommends a ratio of support at any training session and Area/ Regional Competitions/ Development Days of one volunteer/coach for every four athletes (1:4) with a minimum of two volunteers/coaches at all times. This ratio applies to training/ competition activities and also to the activities that facilitate participation such as access to locker or changing rooms before or after these sessions.

Activities which involve young people must have the appropriate supervision in line with best practice requirements. Athletes should expect, and have the right to, participate in a safe environment. Ratios depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the participants and any special needs of the group, a general guide is 1:8 for under 12 years of age and 1:10 for over 12 years of age, however Special Olympics Ireland recommends up to 1:4 depending on the situation.

It is recognised that the club may be required to increase or decrease this ratio taking the following considerations into account;

- ▶ A minimum of two (2) volunteers must be present at all times regardless of the athlete numbers. Particular attention should be paid to the time before and after session when people are arriving and being picked up
- ▶ The club should seek to ensure that the gender of the athletes is considered when allocating volunteers, i.e. male volunteers with male athletes and female volunteers with female athletes, as is practical. In mixed gender groups, volunteers should also be a mix of genders
- ▶ The level of risk associated with the sport and or the additional needs/ability of the athlete/s may bring the ratio of volunteers to athletes lower, e.g. 1:2 or higher e.g. 1:6
- ▶ Some National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs) have sports specific guidelines in place for coach: athlete ratio, e.g. swimming, kayaking. Where there is conflict between

the NGB and Special Olympics Ireland on the coach: athlete ratio guidelines, the higher supervision ratio should apply.

- ▶ Coaches should avoid one to one situations with athletes; where it is needed to speak to an athlete individually this should be done in an open environment where others can see

It is the responsibility of the Head Coach of the sport, along with the Club Safeguarding Officer, to ensure training is conducted in a safe environment and adequate support is in place. Coaches should seek additional advice from parents/ guardians where applicable but remembering that safety is the number one priority. The objective of any session is for it to be safe and fun for all athletes and volunteers. Where adequate individual support is not possible due to the resources and expertise of the coaches and volunteers, it may not be possible for individual athletes to partake in club training or competitions.

## Changing facilities

It may not always be possible to supervise these areas as they may be accessible by the public. When supervising changing areas



there must be 2 volunteers of the appropriate gender who are vetted by Special Olympics Ireland and have attended the appropriate safeguarding training. The space should not be entered unless in a supervisory role unless there is an emergency reason for it. In this case the paramountcy principle applies and the athlete's need for protection comes first.

## Away Trips and Overnight Stays

Athletes, volunteers and coaches who travel overnight to events, competitions and Games, expect that all practical safeguarding measures have been taken into consideration in planning, preparing and executing travel and accommodation arrangements while they are away from their home. This includes having adequate supervision for the duration of the time they are away. A risk assessment should be completed by the organisers to ensure there is enough, and adequate, supervision; it may be necessary to take into account the additional needs coaches and volunteers may have when doing the risk assessment. Please refer to Away Trips and Overnight Stays guidance.

## Missing and Found Person

It is important to have procedures in place in the event that a child or athlete/spectator with an intellectual disability is missing and/or found at an event or club session. Good communication between organisers, facilities and Gardaí / PSNI is essential in carrying out these procedures. PA announcements should not be made unless specifically requested by the Gardaí or PSNI.

### Dealing with a missing person report

Child, athlete or spectator with intellectual disability

- ▶ Report is made to the Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager.
- ▶ To avoid putting a missing person at risk, members of the public should not be made aware of the incident.
- ▶ The Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager will:

1. Ensure that all other athletes continue to be supervised appropriately (if applicable), while a search for the missing person is carried out. Never send other athletes or people under eighteen years of age to assist in the search for a missing person.
2. Organise the remaining available responsible volunteers /adults to conduct a search of the surrounding area and allocate each individual/team to a specific area.
3. Allocate an individual team to remain at the location where the report was received for 10 minutes with person who made the report, advising them that full search is in progress.
4. Allocate an individual /team to remain at all exits where possible; to prevent the individual leaving the premises.
5. At an event, the Event Manager will radio the Venue Communications Centre (VCC) and the VCC will make an all-call across the relevant radio channel with the missing person description.
6. Request all those searching to report back within a short, specified time. Ensure those involved in the search have your contact phone number.

Reports from individual/teams in their specific area should go directly to the Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager who can update other parties in the search.

7. If the missing person cannot be found after an initial search of the immediate surroundings, contact the individual's parents to advise them of the concern and reassure them that everything is being done to locate the missing person.
8. Record the circumstances in which the person has gone missing and where they was last seen and prepare a detailed physical description of the individual, to include their hair and eye colour, approximate height and build and clothing they was wearing.
9. Report the concern to the Gardaí / PSNI if the search is unsuccessful and no later than 20 minutes after the initial missing person report if the search is ongoing. Follow Gardaí / PSNI guidance if further action is recommended and maintain close contact with the Gardaí / PSNI.

- 10. Ensure that you inform all those involved including the parents, searchers and Gardaí / PSNI when the missing person is located.
- 11. Individual is handed over to person who made initial report.
- 12. Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager Incident Report Card and returns it to the Event Safety Officer or Club Safeguarding Officer at earliest opportunity.

## Adults missing for less than 1 hour

- ▶ This procedure does not apply to reports of any adult missing/separated from friends/family for less than a period of one hour.
- ▶ In the above cases, attendees should be advised that they need to wait or look for the missing person themselves and that announcements cannot be made.
- ▶ If adult is missing for over 1 hour, the steps above also apply.

## Dealing with a found person report

If a child, athlete or spectator with an intellectual disability is found or identifies themselves as lost; the following procedure will apply:

- ▶ Report is made to the Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager.
- ▶ The individual should not be escorted away from where they were found.
- ▶ The volunteer should remain in the area with the individual for 10 minutes (found person always to remain under direct supervision of a volunteer, and in view of at least one other adult volunteer).

- ▶ Establish the name of the athlete and the name of their coach / club / parent and if they have a contact number for their Coach or Club Safeguarding Officer or parent.
- ▶ Ask where they last saw their coach / team members / parent etc. and if they were trying to get to a specific area.
- ▶ Engage the athlete in general conversation with the aim of subtle distraction from the situation.
- ▶ Alert another volunteer and ask them to notify the coach / event manager. An announcement may be made on the PA to ask the coach / parent to go to a specific location.

To avoid putting the found person at risk, members of the public should not be made aware of the incident.

- ▶ The coach / parent should immediately proceed to the location of the athlete.
- ▶ Alternatively the Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager will discreetly inform their team members, who then carry out search for coach / guardian.
- ▶ Ensure that all other athletes continue to be supervised appropriately (if applicable), while a search is carried out. Never send other athletes or people under eighteen years of age to assist in the search.
- ▶ Organise the remaining available responsible volunteers /adults to conduct a search of the surrounding area and allocate each individual/ team to a specific area.
- ▶ Report the concern to the Gardaí / PSNI if the search is unsuccessful and no later than 20 minutes after the initial found person report, if the search for coach/guardian is ongoing.
- ▶ Ensure that you inform all those involved including the parents, searchers and Gardaí / PSNI when the missing person is located.
- ▶ Individual is handed over to their coach/ guardian. At all times the comfort and wellbeing of the individual must be of paramount concern. If the person appears unwilling to be reunited with an individual proof of identify may be requested or consider contacting the Gardaí / PSNI for further advice.
  - ▶ Head Coach, Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Manager Incident Report Card and returns it to the Event Safety Officer or Club Safeguarding Officer at earliest opportunity.



## Dealing with an Unsupervised Athlete leaving a venue

If a volunteer notices an unaccompanied athlete attempting to leave the club's training / activity venue or event; they should:

- ▶ Establish the name of the athlete and the name of their coach / club
- ▶ Ask if the athlete is lost or needs directions to a specific area within the building e.g. toilets
- ▶ Stay with the athlete and ask another volunteer to alert the coach / event manager.
- ▶ Engage the athlete in general conversation with the aim of subtle distraction from the intention to leave the venue.
- ▶ The coach should immediately proceed to the location of the athlete.
- ▶ All other coaches should ensure all other athletes are appropriately supervised.
- ▶ Athlete is reunited with coach and returns to join their team / club.
- ▶ If athlete refuses to engage the volunteer in conversation and proceeds to leave venue, the volunteer should alert the coach / event manager by phone / radio to inform of urgency of coach's attendance and to describe the direction taken by the athlete on leaving the venue.
- ▶ The coach is responsible for following athlete and returning them to the safety of their team/ club.

# Away Trips and Overnight Stays

Clubs have a duty of care towards athletes, volunteers and coaches who are representing the club and travelling away from home to events, competitions and Games.

Athletes, volunteers and coaches who travel overnight to events, competitions and Games, expect that all practical safeguarding measures have been taken into consideration in planning, preparing and executing travel and accommodation arrangements while they are away from their home.

## Requirements

Prior to the club participating in any away trips or overnight stays the following requirements must be in place:

- ▶ Clear selection criteria for attendance on the trip.
- ▶ Athletes must be registered with Special Olympics Ireland.
- ▶ Parental consent is required for athletes under 18 years of age, including filming and photography consent.
- ▶ The supervision ratio of 1:4 (coach: athlete) must be met.
- ▶ There should be a male and female coach, for a mixed gender group.
- ▶ All coaches and volunteers accompanying athletes on an away trip overnight must be registered volunteers with Special Olympics Ireland, have attended Safeguarding 1 (ROI) or Safeguarding Children and Young People (NI) training and completed their vetting.
- ▶ All coaches, volunteers and athletes must sign a code of conduct.
- ▶ Ensure athletes know who to contact with a concern or who to report an allegation of abuse to whilst away.

## Planning

In planning for any away trips or overnight stays; our club will:

- ▶ Ensure all arrangements are in place and communicated to all involved before departing for the away trip.
- ▶ Complete the Club's Trip/Activity checklist and risk assessment.
- ▶ Comply with the 1:4 Supervision Ratio when forming the management team.
- ▶ If a parent/guardian/carer is travelling of their own volition we request that they respect the processes put in place for the trip by the Club and not interfere with the itinerary. The organisers will be happy to discuss specific concerns in advance.
- ▶ Prepare a detailed programme of activity.
- ▶ Re-consider safeguarding requirements when changing plans where unforeseen circumstances cause plans to be altered.

## Accommodation

If accommodation is used:

- ▶ Coaches and athletes are not permitted to share a room.
- ▶ Athletes should be roomed with athletes of the same gender and similar age.
- ▶ The sharing of accommodation by an athlete who is over 18 years with an athlete who is under 18 years must be discussed in advance of the trip and the consent of each athlete, parent or carer obtained with appropriate and agreeable arrangements put in place.
- ▶ The club / organiser may consider specific needs in terms of accommodation. However, it may not be possible to facilitate all requests within the safeguarding and logistical needs of the trip.

- ▶ Accommodation will be checked in advance for access to chargeable facilities i.e. mini bar, inappropriate TV options, which may be unsafe for athletes.
- ▶ Family members will be made aware that, where the athlete's accommodation is part of a larger event accommodation offering and the accommodation is being managed by an Event or Games team, access to the Athlete Accommodation will NOT be permitted with the exception if called upon in the case of an emergency.
- ▶ Alcohol consumption is strictly prohibited on away trips for all members of the travelling group.

### **Some other considerations may include:**

1. Communication channels to those on the trip and also to those at home awaiting news.
2. Social Media – what may/may not be posted online and who is responsible.
3. Complaints and Disciplinary process, in the event something arises during an away trip.

### **Supporting documents:**

- ▶ Club Away Trip and Travel to Activity Checklist



21

# Physical Contact in Special Olympics Ireland Sports

These guidelines on Physical Contact in Special Olympics Ireland Sports are important points for every coach/volunteer to understand and support in their delivery of sports training to an athlete. Your club has a duty of care to all athletes and volunteers in relation to physical contact during the delivery of sports training to athletes, e.g. when demonstrating a sporting technique to them, there may be a need to use physical contact. Concerns can arise among coaches about what level of physical contact is permitted and what is safe and appropriate to use in this training. The following guidance is provided for coaches to ensure that they are aware of the safe appropriate methods of physical contact they may have in training with their athletes.

Coaches should make themselves aware of sport-specific physical contact guidance through the National Governing Bodies of their relevant sports.

*Note: Special Olympics Ireland is the National Governing Body for Bocce, Motor Activity Training Programme and Floorball*

Physical contact should only be used to support the skills or activity in which an athlete is training, unless it is in an emergency situation.

It is not required for a coach/volunteer to do something for an athlete which they are able to do for themselves; this is dependent on the ability level of the individual athlete.

A coach/volunteer should ensure that when physical contact with the athlete is required:

- ▶ Permission of the athlete is given.
- ▶ The athlete understands the reason for the physical contact.
- ▶ Contact is carried out in an open environment.
- ▶ The athlete is treated with dignity and respect.
- ▶ Inappropriate physical contact or touching is never tolerated.

If a physical intervention is required it must be in an emergency situation to prevent an athlete from harming themselves or harming others or damaging property.

A coach/volunteer should understand that:

- ▶ Touching an athlete, including a well-intentioned arm on the shoulder, on a regular basis, may lead to misunderstandings or an athlete accepting similar contact from others who may not have their welfare as paramount consideration, placing the athlete at increased vulnerability.
- ▶ Use of physical intervention as a form of punishment is unlawful.
- ▶ They must act in line with the Special Olympics Ireland Safeguarding Policies and maintain appropriate boundaries between athletes and themselves. Athletes should be supported to understand and maintain the appropriate physical boundaries expected.
- ▶ There are some volunteer roles, e.g. medical volunteers, where physical contact may be used as part of the assessment and treatment of a possible injury. These roles should be filled by appropriately trained and qualified personnel who act under their own disciplines' codes of practice.

Special Olympics Ireland acknowledges that a number of our athletes may require additional support with toileting and personal care on occasion and this may require some functional intimate physical contact. Coaches/volunteers should only carry out this personal care with the athlete's permission and information from family or primary carers as to the appropriate manner in which to carry out this personal care. The Club Safeguarding Officer and Medical Officer in the club can act as a liaison in this area.

This contact should meet the athlete's need and not the needs of a coach/volunteer. Athletes should be encouraged to speak to a parent/carer/guardian/Club Safeguarding Officer or Event Safeguarding Officer if they are not comfortable with the physical contact being made.

Some athletes can be demonstrative in their behaviour and can express this through hugging etc. It is best practice for all volunteers to encourage an alternative such as fist bumps, elbow taps or hand shaking as the appropriate expression of congratulations at all times. Athletes should be made aware of this practice thereby minimising the risk of perceived rejection on their part.

Appropriate contact is defined as physical contact for a particular purpose, e.g.

- ▶ Supporting an athlete to improve sports techniques, skills and practice
- ▶ Treating an injury
- ▶ Preventing an accident from occurring



# Filming and Photography Policy

This policy applies to all SOI volunteers and employees, including those on a permanent or fixed term contracts and work placement and the general public. Special Olympics Ireland has a duty to protect athletes from inappropriate use of photographic images and video recordings. This policy will provide guidance on appropriate use and permission to take images.

The Filming and Photography Policy provides assistance to all stakeholders on taking and using appropriate images. This guidance is not about preventing parents/guardian and supporters from taking pictures, but rather to ensure that only those who have a right to take photographs do so. This guidance is designed to promote safeguards for any photographic or filming/video activity to minimise the risk of inappropriate taking and use of images

## Definitions

The word **image** refers to all photography and film or video footage, including those used on social media platforms which may no longer be visible.

**Storage** refers to soft copies (on computers, portable storage devices, on cameras or phones) or hard copies of images (printed images, newspaper archives or promotional materials). This also includes online storage and social media posts.

## Getting permission to take images

Clubs, Regions and Special Olympics Ireland must obtain permission to take images to ensure that people are aware of when images might be taken and how they might be used. If the person is under 18 years parental consent must also be obtained.

Often, this consent is built into registration or event entry forms, however if this is not the case then a separate consent form is required. e.g. where a shoot has been organised specifically to capture images.

Third parties wishing to capture images at any Special Olympics Ireland activity must first complete a self- declaration form and register the device/s they will use. This also applies to those doing so on behalf of Special Olympics Ireland at events; this should be announced at the event to make people aware.

A person wishing to capture images at events should register their device with the event organiser and provide photographic identification when doing so.

## Environments where taking images is prohibited

Taking of photographs and video recording is prohibited inside changing areas, dormitories, medical treatment areas, showers and toilets.

This includes the use of mobile phones to record or take images in these areas. Privacy is and should be expected in these spaces and it may be, in some cases, an offence to breach this.

Flash photography should not be used in competition areas as it may cause distraction or harm to the participants.





## Photographs and video recordings that may be taken

- ▶ If they are in suitable dress only i.e. wearing a t-shirt/top and shorts/bottoms
- ▶ If they are taking part in an Awards Presentation and the above is in place
- ▶ Whilst actively participating in their sport or activity, i.e. action shots
- ▶ Where the pose is appropriate and would not cause harm or embarrassment
- ▶ By parents/guardians or other family members during an event as a celebration of an athlete's attendance or achievement.

## Process

### Using images safely

Where images are taken for personal use by family members they should be aware of people who may be visible in the image also. The images should not be used in a public platform without permission or before cropping/blurring the image to remove those who have not given permission.

Images taken for media or publicity use must be in line with this policy and Special Olympic Ireland Safeguarding policies. The correct permissions must be obtained and the image must be appropriate.

**Important!** - Images of persons under eighteen (18) years of age used on social media should not include personal details and should be in keeping with the Codes of Conduct, Special Olympics Ireland Safeguarding Policies and the guidance in this policy. It may be necessary to include more information for promotional activities or news outlets, however this should be done with safety as a priority.

When the image is no longer needed it should be deleted from all locations including the location of deleted items on storage devices. Hard copies should be shredded and disposed of in a safe location.

## Reporting concerns of inappropriate use or unauthorised taking of images

If you have a concern that someone is taking unauthorised images at an event, this should be reported to the event organiser as soon as possible. The event organiser will have a record of registered devices and can identify the person and request that they present their identification and register their device, if this has not already been done.

If you are concerned about how images are being used in Special Olympics Ireland you should contact your Club Safeguarding Officer (club), Regional Director (region) or Safeguarding Officer (National Children's Officer) according to where the image has been posted. The appropriate action will then be taken in removing the inappropriate image and making any necessary reports to the statutory authorities or commencing the complaints and disciplinary process.





23

# Online Safety and Social Media Guidance for Clubs

Clubs affiliated to Special Olympics Ireland and their members must behave according to the Code of Conduct they signed when becoming a member and this applies to online environments also. The aim of this guidance is to support our members to engage safely online and reduce the risks associated with social media and online platforms, if they choose to engage with them.

## Guidance for Club Moderators/ Committees

Social media and online platforms are a great way for clubs to celebrate their achievements, promote their activities and share information with their members and supporters. Adhering to guidelines and ensuring a safe and transparent environment via these mediums allows clubs to benefit from the positive outcomes whilst minimising the risks associated with doing so. The following recommendations are advised:

- ▶ Moderators should familiarise themselves with the platforms they will use for the club
- ▶ 2 or 3 moderators on each platform with password privileges
- ▶ Ensure privacy and location settings are activated on each platform – this prevents posts from being linked to a location
- ▶ When following and befriending remember you are doing so on behalf of the club – selections should be relevant to club activities and checked as trusted pages/profiles in advance
- ▶ Coaches and volunteers should not follow/ befriend athletes on social media via personal accounts
- ▶ Make sure members are aware of your comment policy and disclaimer
- ▶ When sharing or posting content consider if it reflects with your clubs ethos and the Special Olympics Ireland philosophy. If you are unsure then you should not post it and might discuss it with the other moderators
- ▶ Ensure photos are in line with the Filming and Photography Policy
- ▶ Remember your post sets a tone for members/ public to engage with
- ▶ Public platforms can be a space for complaints; comments should not be deleted unless they are in breach of the comment policy. Reply and offer an alternative method to continue the conversation, e.g. via email or the procedures outlined in the Club Complaints Policy

- ▶ Moderators should avoid personal conversations in private messaging. If you feel someone needs support or help you should follow the appropriate safeguarding reporting procedures
- ▶ Clubs should talk to athletes about positively and safely using social media
- ▶ Set boundaries around communications within groups created for club information only
- ▶ Members should know who to contact if they are uncomfortable with interactions or posts, and be encouraged to do so



## Athlete engagement

If the club engages via social media platforms athletes may also wish to engage with you in this way. It is important that the club informs athletes of any rules or policies they have for online engagement. The following recommendations are suggested to support athlete engagement on social media.

### Athletes should:

- ▶ Follow/befriend club pages and not request personal pages of volunteers/coaches
- ▶ Set up security settings and deactivate location settings on social media platforms.
- ▶ Not share personal information with strangers or people they have met online
- ▶ Not arrange to meet someone you have met online in person, or via online meeting platforms (Zoom, WebEx etc.) unless accompanied by a trusted adult/parent/guardian
- ▶ Remember that information posted to social media is public and they should be comfortable with that before posting
- ▶ Know who to contact, and be encouraged to tell a parent/coach/volunteer, if they feel uncomfortable with any interactions online
- ▶ Tell a parent/coach/volunteer if you receive a message or photo/video which is offensive or inappropriate; you should not reply
- ▶ Remember that the Code of Conduct applies to your online behaviour

- ▶ Not take or save indecent imagery and understand that this is abuse. Taking, possessing, sharing of this image is illegal and there are consequences. Check Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU)/National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) website.

## Cyber bullying

Cyber Bullying is the use of technology to harass, threaten embarrass or target a person. This type of bullying is becoming more frequent as the bully can have access to their victims at any time and people spend so much of their time online. Cyberbullying can allow bullies to hide behind a screen and not face their victims, often offering anonymity and reduced risk of being caught; sometimes giving them more courage. For their victims it can feel like there is no escape. This is a strict breach of the Code of Conduct and should be reported to parents/coaches/guardians as soon as possible.

## Below is a Template for a Comment Policy/ Disclaimer

### Comment Policy/Disclaimer

**[CLUB NAME]**'s page is a place where we post news about our club and communicate with our members and followers. We welcome comments, questions and feedback from our supporters and members of the public. We will endeavour to answer your questions as quickly as we can but an immediate response may not always be possible as the club is run by volunteers. Comments to our page do not represent the official position of **[CLUB NAME]**

We ask that you always treat the other people on the page with respect. We welcome constructive criticism and respectful debate but do not allow abusive comments.

We reserve the right to delete comments that are off-topic, offensive, inaccurate or potentially libellous including the following:

- ▶ Comments, links, images or videos that are obscene, profane or hateful in nature
- ▶ Posts that may be offensive to other community members
- ▶ Comments that threaten any person or organization or company
- ▶ Comments that defame or harass an individual
- ▶ Successive off-topic posts by a single person
- ▶ Repetitive posts copied and pasted or duplicated by single or multiple people
- ▶ Solicitations or advertisements
- ▶ Comments, links, images or videos that encourage illegal activity
- ▶ Any materials that infringe upon the rights of any third party
- ▶ False comments or claims about **[CLUB NAME]** or Special Olympics Ireland
- ▶ Provocative, inappropriate, offensive or otherwise objectionable content

Any comments that contain the names of or personal information about Special Olympics Ireland athletes, coaches, volunteers, family members or staff may be deleted to protect their privacy. Commenters who repeatedly leave inappropriate or off-topic comments will be blocked. Facebook will sometimes hide comments if it thinks that they contain spam. Comments that are very long or contain multiple links or email addresses will sometimes be perceived as spam. We check the page for this regularly and will try to unmark any comments that have been incorrectly marked as spam.

### Additional Resources

Net Aware: Your guide to social networks, apps and games ([net-aware.org.uk](https://www.net-aware.org.uk))

[www.webwise.ie](https://www.webwise.ie)

[www.thecpsu.org.uk](https://www.thecpsu.org.uk)

[www.h2bsafetycentre.com](https://www.h2bsafetycentre.com)

[www.o2.co.uk/help/nspcc/child-protection](https://www.o2.co.uk/help/nspcc/child-protection)

[www.ceop.police.uk](https://www.ceop.police.uk)

[www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers](https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/advice-centre/parents-and-carers)

# Safeguarding in a Virtual Learning Environment

We are all spending more time online, and transforming how we interact, due to social distancing. These guidelines are further considerations during this time and should be applied alongside the policies and procedures which usually govern best practice standards and legal requirements for Special Olympics Ireland activities. Volunteers must continue to fully comply with the registration process and receive clearance to work as a volunteer in a virtual world. Adherence to the individual Codes of Conduct, Social Media Guidelines and General Data Protection Policy must also be applied. As this is a changing environment, and an ongoing learning process, Special Olympics Ireland will continue to update and adapt this document and welcome feedback from our member experiences.

## Guidelines

- ▶ Consider the safety and accessibility of athletes.
- ▶ Choose a platform you can use effectively and safely.
- ▶ Test the platform and explore the capabilities and risks before launching with participants.
- ▶ Use the maximum security features in order to ensure the highest levels of safety.
- ▶ If you choose to record online sessions you will

need to fully consider and manage the risk of doing so. If you are certain that it is necessary to record or stream something live, please ensure all participants and their parents/guardians are informed. Consent must be sought, and stored, prior to the event. Consider the Virtual Activity Consent Form Template.

- ▶ Engage parents/guardians to ensure security measures and safeguarding standards are met in the physical environment, e.g. home, office or school. Some useful links for parents/guardians:
  1. Digital age of consent ROI NI
  2. Online Safety Advice for Parents

## Planning

- ▶ Think about numbers and what is suitable for good interaction.
- ▶ Consider the age of your participants and remember some platforms may have minimum age requirements and the digital age of consent in Ireland and UK.
- ▶ Ask participants to re-familiarise themselves with the relevant code of conduct.
- ▶ Consent should be sought for all participants. An online form is an easy way to gather this.

- ▶ You might consider building in an online code of conduct into this form, if necessary.
- ▶ Keep records of attendance.
- ▶ Include supports prior to the activity – clear instructions, real time support logging on, a moderator to answer any questions etc.
- ▶ Request contact information for a parent/guardian who will be physically present with the participant during the activity.
- ▶ Send the Club Safeguarding Officer and chairperson contact information to parent/guardian and participant in advance of the activity; in the event anything comes up during the activity.
- ▶ Participants should be advised of their right to leave the activity if they are feeling uncomfortable or agitated and signposted to the Club Safeguarding Officer and Chairperson.
- ▶ Consider your ratios and have an adequate number of moderators\* i.e. min of 2 volunteers.

## The Environment

- ▶ Athletes should be in a shared and open space i.e. living room, dining room, and kitchen not bedroom. However, also be mindful that other young people, who may be in the room, are not visible on screen
- ▶ A parent/guardian should be present during the activity. They do not need to be on camera but should be in the same space for the duration of the activity
- ▶ Participants/Leaders should be advised of using appropriate background imagery, if applicable to the platform being used
- ▶ Other household members should also be aware that there is a camera on in the event that they may cross the camera or their voice may be picked up on the microphone
- ▶ A virtual “waiting room” will allow you to screen participants before admitting them
- ▶ Consider disabling private chats for attendees
- ▶ Consider automatically switching off cameras or microphones if not needed

## Maintaining professional relationships

- ▶ Re-familiarise yourself with the Code of Conduct as this still applies in a virtual/online setting
- ▶ It is recommended that Club accounts are set up and you avoid using personal accounts
- ▶ Ensure that more than 1 person has access to club accounts for safeguarding purposes
- ▶ Establish clear boundaries around communication with you in a virtual environment e.g. times you are available for questions and how you should be contacted.

## Disclosures

A young person may choose to make a disclosure in a virtual or online platform, please remember the usual safeguarding processes and procedures still apply. We would recommend that you re-familiarise yourself with these prior to the activity. Leaders and moderators should be aware that online or virtual activity may evoke certain reactions which will need to be managed by someone physically present with the participant. Consider the following:

- ▶ Begin each activity by reminding participants that their Club Safeguarding Officer and chairperson can be contacted if needed
- ▶ If a participant becomes agitated or uncomfortable you should call the emergency contact person and arrange to end the call safely
- ▶ Advise the Club Safeguarding Officer of all activities in advance and follow up if needed

**REMEMBER** not everyone has the ability to be online, this may be due to:

- ▶ Parental choices not to allow internet access
- ▶ Lack of access to digital devices
- ▶ Data limitations and costs may make accessing a live platform difficult
- ▶ Remote location may mean poor accessibility to internet

## Activity Leader/Facilitator should:

- ▶ Welcome the group – Introduce the other moderators online
- ▶ Advise that private information should not be shared
- ▶ Inform participants how and when to ask questions during a session
- ▶ Note if there will be breaks during the session
- ▶ Outline any rules necessary for the activity to go smoothly and consequences of a breach
- ▶ Tell participants what to do if the session needs to end early due to emergency, etc.
- ▶ Give safeguarding contact information on screen
- ▶ Advise what happens should a safeguarding issue arise. A moderator will contact your parent/guardian by mobile

## Moderators should:

- ▶ Be familiar with the platform being used
- ▶ Support participants/Facilitator/Leader to log on to the platform
- ▶ Help with specific features e.g. raising your hand, muting microphone
- ▶ Assess participants during the session to note any concerns
- ▶ Address any disciplinary issues during the session e.g. via chat function with the individual or via the emergency contact for that participant

## Useful links

- ▶ [Online safety](#) – CPSU topic page
- ▶ [Undertaking remote teaching safely](#) – NSPCC Learning
- ▶ [Coronavirus advice and support for parents and carers](#) – NSPCC
- ▶ [Coronavirus – safeguarding and child protection](#) – NSPCC Learning

# Personal Intimate Care Needs of Athletes

In line with its values of encouraging and promoting greater independence, Special Olympics Ireland supports athletes to manage their own intimate care to the best of their ability. The organisation recommends that, at club training and at events, this responsibility is undertaken by a family member and/or carer. Where this is not feasible, an athlete's parent(s) or carer has a responsibility to advise the Club Safeguarding Officer and to share an intimate care support plan outlining how the support needs are met.

Every endeavour should be made by the club to work in partnership with the athlete and their parents/guardians/carers to support the intimate care needs. However, it is recognised where the expertise may not be available to support an athlete's intimate care needs an athlete and or family /carer may need to decide if Club attendance is viable.

## Definitions

Intimate care may be defined as any activity required to meet the personal care needs of an athlete.

### This can include:

- ▶ Feeding
- ▶ Oral care
- ▶ Washing
- ▶ Dressing/undressing
- ▶ Toileting
- ▶ Menstrual Care
- ▶ Supervision of an athlete involved in intimate self-care

Except in cases of emergencies volunteers should not undertake any aspect of intimate care that has not been agreed between the parents / carers and athlete (if appropriate). Try to encourage an athlete's independence as far as possible in their intimate care. Where the athlete is fully dependent, talk with them about what is going to be done and give them choice where possible.





# Monitoring Leavers and Transfers

## Monitoring leavers and transfers

Monitoring leavers and transfers to other clubs is an important part of safeguarding in Special Olympics Ireland. This will help us to identify any trends which may indicate an issue or concern.

Special Olympics Ireland will monitor leaver, transfer and renewal information through their database and identify any trends which may be occurring in clubs or at events. It is important to track both athletes and volunteers. This information will support safeguarding initiatives and could highlight issues or concerns which may, or may not, have been raised previously. This is relevant only where a decision not to continue has been made as opposed to a volunteer or athlete who has unintentionally become inactive.

## Exit Interview and Record Keeping

Clubs should also monitor this information and carry out Exit Interviews with athletes or volunteers who are moving clubs or no longer wish to be involved with Special Olympics Ireland. Individuals under eighteen (18) years of age should be contacted through their parent/guardian/carer.

Within clubs, the Club Safeguarding Officer should carry out the interview and complete the template form. The interviews will allow clubs and Special Olympics Ireland to record reasons for transfer or leaving; there are numerous reasons for this and many will not be cause for concern, however keeping records is a fundamental step in minimising risks and safeguarding members. This is in keeping with procedures for members who cease their role due to misconduct or behaviour contravening Special Olympics Ireland Safeguarding Policies, as outlined in the Model Club Constitution Template.

The information should be recorded using the Exit Interview template and stored securely in line with your Record Keeping and Data Retention policies.

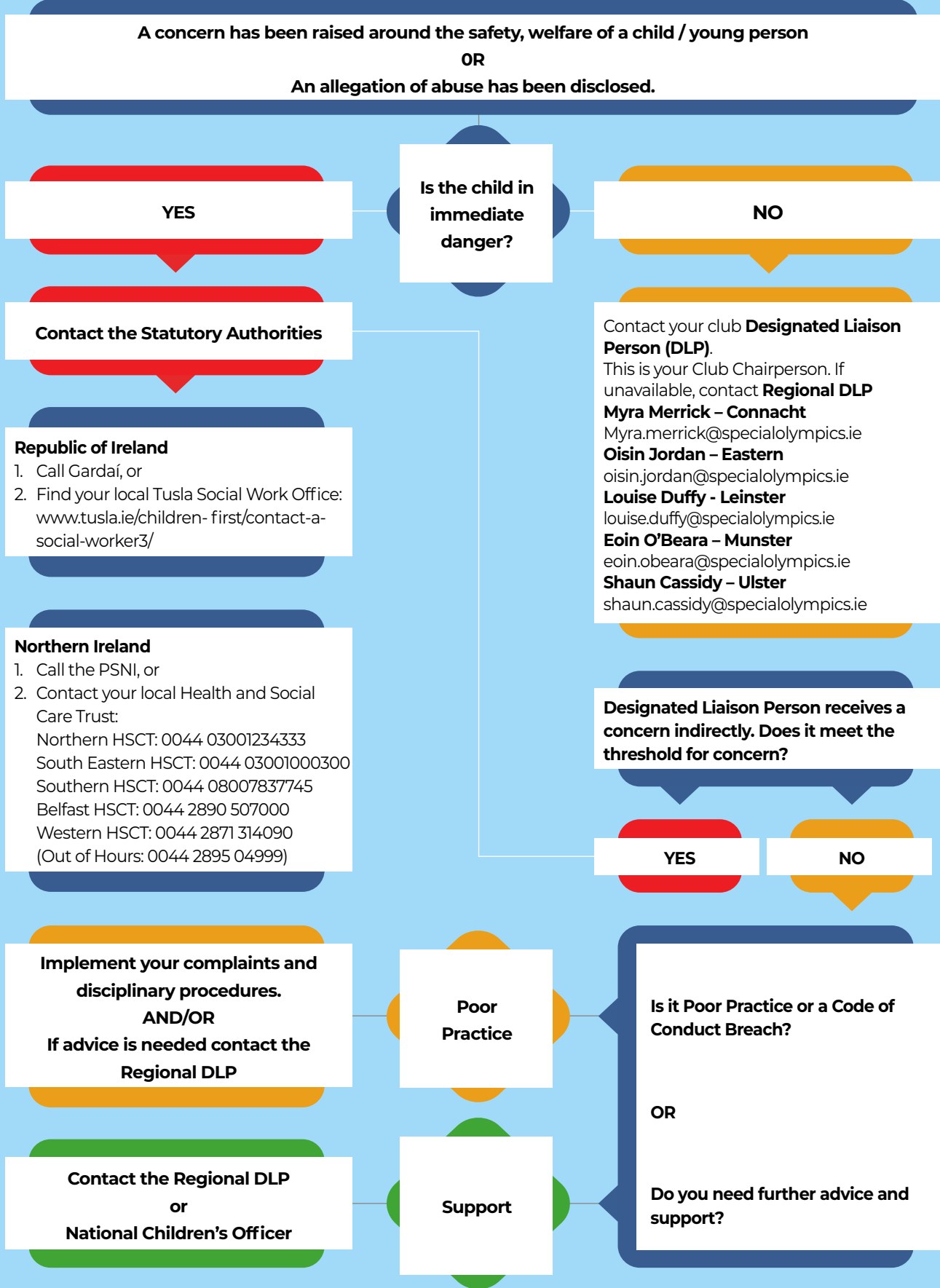
Often the reasons given during Exit Interviews will not be a safeguarding concern but could instead identify poor practice which needs to be addressed within a club or event setting. The information may help us to improve how we do things and better understand the needs of members; and how we provide opportunities within Special Olympics Ireland.

As with all concerns it is important that volunteers are vigilant to indicators which might cause reasonable grounds for concern and continue to provide an open environment for reporting and raising awareness of issues. Capturing this data is important however, it is also important to continually provide opportunities for athlete/volunteer engagement and feedback whilst they are currently event or club members.



# Appendix

# Reporting Structure for Safeguarding Issues for Clubs (ROI/NI)



**Implement your complaints and disciplinary procedures.**  
**AND/OR**  
If advice is needed contact the **Regional DLP**

**Contact the Regional DLP or National Children’s Officer**

**Poor Practice**

**Support**

**Is it Poor Practice or a Code of Conduct Breach?**

OR

**Do you need further advice and support?**

## Non-compliance

Any non-compliance with this policy will be treated in accordance with legislative / regulatory requirements, the relevant contract and where appropriate, SOI’s Disciplinary Policy.

