

# **Little Legends Sport and Movement**

## **CHILD PROTECTION AND WELFARE POLICY**





## **Glossary**

### **Child**

For the purposes of this policy, a 'child' means anyone who is under 18 years of age. In Ireland, the Child Care Act (1991) defines a child as any person under the age of 18 years, excluding a person who is or who has been married.

### **Statutory Authorities**

These are An Garda Síochána and Child and Family Agency (Túsla). They are obliged under the law to investigate and assess in child abuse cases.

## **Policy statement**

Little Legends Sport and Movement are committed to a child-centred approach to our work with children. We undertake to provide a safe environment and experience where the welfare of the child is paramount.

Little Legends Sport and Movement adhere to the recommendations of The Irish Sports Council's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport and in Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011.

This policy covers the activities organised by Little Legends Sport and Movement and any camps organised by Little Legends Sport and Movement. The work undertaken in schools by Little Legends Sport and Movement as part of the school curriculum will be covered by the schools' own Child Protection policy and procedures.

We have implemented procedures covering:

- Code of behaviour for all coaches and for children
- Reporting of suspected or disclosed abuse
- Confidentiality
- Recruitment and selecting coaches
- Managing and supervising coaches
- Allegations against coaches and children
- Complaints
- Incidents and accidents.

This policy will be reviewed biennially to ensure fitness for purpose and best practice is taken into account as it emerges.

### **Recruitment Procedures**

Little Legends Sport and Movement shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that all coaching staff are carefully selected, trained and supervised to provide a safe environment for all children taking part in our activities.

All Coaches must complete the Basic Awareness Child Protection training course organised by Little Legends Sport and Movement.

### **Supervision, support and training of coaches**

Little Legends Sport and Movement fosters a good working environment for all coaches which ensures all coaches have a number of support systems in place. These support systems include mentoring and support from fellow coaches, administrative support from the office and support, advice and assistance from the Director.

# Code of Behaviour

## Code of Behaviour for Coaches

Coaches should have as their first priority the children's safety and enjoyment of the sport they are participating in. It is important that Coaches should follow the code of conduct to ensure the children's and their own safety.

Little Legends Sport and Movement coaches should:

- Act as a role model (disciplined / committed / time keeping). Remember children learn by example.
- Encourage and be positive during sessions so that the children leave with a sense of achievement.
- Set challenging, realistic but achievable goals.
- Plan and prepare each session appropriately and ensure proper levels of supervision.
- Ensure that all activities are inclusive and allow all children to participate in an enjoyable way.
- Put the welfare and enjoyment of children first and strike a balance between this and winning or achieving results.
- Treat each player equally, with dignity and respect and ensure that all children play within the rules of the game.
- Be aware of the developmental stages and needs of players
- Actively encourage all children not to discriminate on the grounds of religious belief, race, gender, social classes or lack of ability.
- Encourage children to respect and accept the judgement of match officials.
- Challenge bullying in any form.
- Report accidents or incidents of alleged abuse to the Administrator in line with the Child Protection policy.
- Administer first aid in the presence of others.
- Maintain confidentiality about sensitive information.
- Refrain from smoking and consumption of alcohol before and during coaching sessions.
- Never ask anyone to keep secrets of any kind.
- Protect yourself from false accusations by:
  - Not spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others
  - Not taking children alone in a car journeys, however short.
  - Never taking children to their home.
  - Not administering first aid involving removing of children's clothing unless in the presence of others.

Coaches should not:

- Encourage or threaten a player by deed or gesture to act in any unacceptable way towards an opponent or official.
- Allow rough or dangerous play, bullying, or the use of bad language

or inappropriate behaviour.

- Let any allegations of abuse of any kind go unchallenged or unrecorded if appropriate. Incidents and accidents to be recorded in the incident/accident book. Parents will be informed at earliest possible time, unless doing so would endanger the safety of the child.

Coaches should **never**:

- Engage in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- Share a changing room or bath or shower with a child
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- Use foul language or provocative language/gestures to a child, opponent, or match official.
- Allow children to use foul, sexualised or discriminatory language unchallenged
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- Reduce a child to tears in a form of control
- Allow allegations by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- Undertake personal care for children. Ensure that parent or carer is responsible for personal care.
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home.

### **Disciplinary procedures if a coach is found in breach of Code of Behaviour**

Each breach of the Code of Behaviour will be assessed by the Director of Little Legends Sport and Movement. If a coach is deemed to be in breach of the Code of Behaviour the Director will speak to the individual coach. The Director will determine whether the coach should be given a warning on that occasion but will remind the coach of the standards expected of Little Legends Sport and Movement coaches.

If there is a further breach of the Code of Behaviour by a coach following a warning, the Director will meet with the coach and the Director will ask the coach to leave the programme.

If a serious allegation of abuse is made against a coach, the Director will suspend the coach until such time as the investigation has been completed and the Director will then determine the position of the coach in Little Legends Sport and Movement subject to the findings of the investigation.

### **Code of behaviour for children**

Little Legends Sport and Movement recognises that children have a great deal to gain from sport in terms of their personal development and enjoyment. Children are encouraged to realise that as a result of their participation in sports with Little Legends Sport and Movement that they also have a responsibility to treat other players, coaches and officials with fairness and respect. With rights there will always be responsibilities.

Children participating in sport with Little Legends Sport and Movement are required to abide by this Code of Behaviour.



**Children have the right to:**

- Be safe and feel safe
- Be listened to
- Be believed
- Be treated with respect, dignity and sensitivity
- Be happy, have fun and experience a sense of enjoyment and fulfilment.
- Comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality.
- Participate in games and competitions at levels with which they feel comfortable.

- Be free to approach the coach with any questions they may have.
- Make a complaint in an appropriate way and have it dealt with through an effective complaints procedure.
- Be protected from abuse.

**Children participating in sport with Little Legends Sport and Movement should always:**

- Play fairly, do their best and enjoy themselves.
- Play in accordance with the rules of the game
- Respect fellow team members regardless of ability, cultural or ethnic origin or gender.
- Support fellow team members regardless of whether they do well or not
- Respect all coaches and officials and opponents.
- Be gracious in defeat and modest in victory
- Take their safety seriously by always wearing the appropriate protective equipment while training or playing games.
- Seek permission from coaches to leave the session
- Ensure that camera phones are not used in changing rooms or any changing facilities at any Little Legends Sport and Movement activities.

**Children participating in sport with Little Legends Sport and Movement must not:**

- Cheat or lie
- Shout at, or argue with, coaches, team mates, opponents or officials.
- Use bad or abusive language to coaches, team mates, opponents or officials
- Bully or use bullying tactics to gain advantage.
- Tell lies or spread rumours, about other children or adults.
- Play or train if they feel unwell or are injured.
- Keep secret about any person that has caused them harm or offence.

**Sanctions if child is in breach of code of behaviour**

Little Legends Sport and Movement operate a red and yellow card system.

If a child does not abide by the code of behaviour during sessions, the coach will give the child a yellow card as a warning to control and correct their behaviour.

If a child continues not to abide by the code of behaviour during sessions, the coach will give the child a red card and be told why they are being given the red card. Parents will be called and told not to send the child to the class the following week. After a week's exclusion, the child may return to the class and the matter is forgotten.

If a child receives more than 2 red cards, their parent will be asked to remove their child from the class permanently.

**Code of behaviour for parents**

Parents/guardians should remember that children learn best by example. To assist in the promotion of good practice parents/guardians should:

- Focus on their child's efforts rather than performance
- Focus on the fun and participation of the child in the activity.

- Show appreciation of and respect for coaches and match officials and their decisions
- Respect their child's team mates as well as players and coaches from opposing teams.
- Encourage their child to treat other participants, opponents, coaches and officials with respect.
- Encourage their child to play by the rules
- Encourage their child to appreciate everybody on their team, regardless of ability.
- Behave responsibly on the side-line at training and matches.
- Conduct themselves in such a way which promotes the definition of fair play
- Not take safety for granted but ensure that their child has all the appropriate equipment required for their participation in the sport.
- Not ridicule or shout at a child for losing a game or making a mistake.
- Not enter the field of play unless specifically invited to do so by a coach or official in charge.

# **General Safety and Management**

## Records

Registration forms are completed on-line by parents when booking classes.

Information contained on registration forms are forwarded to the relevant coach for each class/venue.

A roll call will be taken at the start of each class or at the start of each day of camp.

## Building Safety

Coaches should be aware of the locations of fire exits and be familiar with the evacuation procedures for any premises in which Little Legends Sport and Movement activities are taking place. A fire drill should be held with each group annually.

Coaches should be aware of where the nearest accessible telephone is, in case of emergency.

Coaches should, where possible, be aware of what medication children are taking.

Coaches should ensure that they have their first aid kit with them when coaching and should also be aware of where the first aid kit is located in each premises in which they are coaching.

## Equipment Safety

Coaches should ensure sports equipment is not damaged or broken.

Coaches should talk about the importance of safety in the class and ensure that all children adhere to any safety rules.

Coaches should ensure that all children have and use any safety equipment appropriate to the sport being undertaken.

Coaches should ensure warm up is done before each class to avoid injury.

## Accident / Incidents.

Every coach will carry with them the contact numbers for parents or designated childminder of every child they teach. (Supplied by the parents on the forms they fill in) A roll call will be taken at the start of every class.

An incident is when a child tumbles, goes over on an ankle, runs into another child and bangs a head. Something that causes the coach to stop the game and ask if the child is alright or wants to sit out for a minute.

**All incidents will be reported to the person collecting the child.**

Minor cuts and bruises will be treated on site with company First Aid kit. The parent or minder being informed of the details when they collect the child.

Notes of incidents and accidents will be recorded in the coach accident book to protect the coach and company.

In the case of a more serious injury, the coach will assess the injury. In the case of blood injuries the coach must protect themselves by wearing the surgical gloves in the First Aid Kit. In the case of a head injury the child will not be moved.

The coach will call the parent or childminder immediately and take instruction from them for further action. Then call the Little Legends Sport and Movement office to report the accident. Should the office be unattended, they leave a message. In the event of a parent or minder being uncontactable the coach will call the Director or the Sport office who will take responsibility for further action.

An accident report will be written up – in the coaches accident book within one hour of the accident occurring. The parents will be called by the office the same evening.

#### Children with special needs

Little Legends Sport and Movement encourages children of all abilities to attend classes. The Director/Coach will talk with parents of children with special needs to find out what those needs are and to see how they can help the child to participate.

When dealing with children with special needs, coaches will bear in mind these action points:

#### Do

- Include (not just by enrolling child into class but by including them in every aspect of what you say or do).
- Treat a child with special needs as you would any other child
- Always speak directly to the child with special needs
- Always ask the child with special needs if you can help them in any way
- Integrate the child into the group
- Try to be aware of a child's hidden disability or condition, such as epilepsy, which may require assistance.
- Assume nothing – always ask! Talk to parents or carers and communicate with child too!

#### Don't

- Exclude (this is demonstrated by your commitment to the child)
- Use language that promotes pity or charity
- Use emotional language such as 'suffers from'
- Consider a parent or carer as a conversational go-between
- Segregate

- Present that you know what children are saying when you cannot understand them  
– ask them to repeat themselves or try another method of communication
- Be embarrassed by using common expressions, for example saying ‘see you later’ when speaking to a child who is blind.

### Supervision

Two coaches are present for all classes, with a ratio of one coach to 10 children.

Parents are welcome to stay on the premises during class time.

Should a person unknown to the coach come to collect the child, the person presenting will be asked to supply a phone number for the child’s parents. If this cannot be done the child will not be handed over. If the number can be produced and it matches the number on the sheet that the coach is carrying, the coach will call the number.

## Complaints

In dealing with complaints, Little Legends Sport and Movement will ensure that the complainant receives:

- Fair treatment.
- Courtesy.
- A timely response.
- Accurate advice.
- Respect for your privacy.

Complaints will be treated as confidentially as possible allowing for the possibility that the Administrative officer may have to consult with other appropriate parties regarding the complaint.

- Reasons for our decisions.

Where the complaint is justified Little Legends Sport and Movement will acknowledge this and advise the complainant of the action that will be taken.

If the complaint; after investigation, it is judged groundless, the complainant will be advised accordingly.

### **RESPONSIBILITIES OF A PERSON MAKING A COMPLAINT**

In making a complaint Little Legends Sport and Movement would expect that the complainant:

- Raise issues in a timely manner with the Little Legends Sport and Movement administrative officer responsible for complaints.
- Treat Little Legends Sport and Movement staff with respect and courtesy.
- Provide accurate and concise information in relation to the issues raised.

### **RIGHTS OF PARTIES INVOLVED DURING THE INVESTIGATION**

The process is non-adversarial and does not provide a role for any other statutory or non-statutory body.



## **LEGAL REPRESENTATION**

Legal representation or representation by person(s) acting in a Professional capacity is not permitted within this procedure. This however, does not take away the statutory rights of any of the participants.

## **WHO WILL DEAL WITH YOUR COMPLAINT?**

At the informal stage complaint should be raised and dealt with by the Little Legends Sport and Movement Administrative Officer responsible for complaints.

## **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

### **INFORMAL STAGE: STAGE 1**

In the first instance a Parent/guardian who wishes to make a complaint should telephone the Little Legends Sport and Movement office and ask for the administrative officer responsible for complaints.

Where the parent/guardian is unable to resolve the complaint with the administrative officer she/he should ask for the Director to call the parent with a view to resolving it.

Note: In some circumstances the Director may not be able to deal effectively with your complaint immediately and may require some time to investigate and prepare a response. If time is required you will be informed of the timescale and the likely date by which a response will be issued.

## **MALICIOUS OR VEXATIOUS COMPLAINTS**

Where the Little Legends Sport and Movement management consider the actions of a parent/group of parents to constitute frivolous or vexatious behaviour, they will suggest that parents remove their children from Little Legends Sport and Movement classes.

# **Record keeping, access and storage of information**

## **Child Protection Records**

The Designated Liaison Person is responsible for keeping the following records relating the Child Protection and Welfare Policy in a locked fire-proof filing cabinet.

- Personnel records for all coaches including application form, notes from interview, references, Garda Vetting and details of appointment and training undertaken.
- Any disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse.
- Records relating to disclosures, concerns or allegations of abuse including reports from coaches, reports to the Child and Family Agency, including informal advice from the Child and Family agency, informing parents/guardians, reports to Gardaí, advice given to coaches.
- Any complaints about the safety and welfare of children whilst at Little Legends Sport and Movement activities.
- Any disciplinary procedures taken against a coach

The Designated Liaison Person is the only personnel who has access to these records: Coaches may request, in writing, to view the records held by the Designated Liaison Person relating to them.

All Child Protection records will be held by Little Legends Sport and Movement in perpetuity.

## **Children's Records**

Records (registration forms and attendance records) are held in the Little Legends Sport and Movement offices. Access to information is limited to Director, Administrator and coaches.

All information is kept private and confidential and at no stage is it shared with a third party. Information is stored on computer with back up to hard drive and held in perpetuity.

Other records

Records (accident and incident report forms) are held in the Little Legends Sport and Movement offices. All information is kept private and confidential and is only shared with third parties on a need to know basis.

Such information is stored on computer/in a filing cabinet and is held in perpetuity.

# **Confidentiality and sharing of information**

## **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is about managing sensitive information that arises in a trusting relationship and doing so in a manner that is respectful, professional and purposeful.

All information provided to Little Legends Sport and Movement by parents/guardians, a child or coach must be treated in a confidential manner.

Little Legends Sport and Movement are committed to ensuring people's rights to confidentiality. However in relation to child protection and welfare we undertake that:

- Information will only be forwarded on a 'need to know' basis in order to safeguard the child
- Giving such information to others for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality;
- We cannot guarantee total confidentiality where the best interests of the child are at risk;
- Parents/guardians and children have a right to know if personal information is being shared and/or a report is being made to the statutory authorities, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk.

## **Information Sharing.**

On joining Little Legends Sport and Movement, parents/guardians and children will be provided with information on the organisation and its activities. They will also be provided with information leaflets on the Child Protection and Welfare policy.

Parents / Guardians will be required to complete an online registration form for their child (ren) giving contact details, relevant medical conditions and special requirements.

# Appendices

## RELEVANT LEGISLATION

### Children Act 2001

The Children Act 2001 replaced provisions of the Children Act 1908 and associated legislation with a modern comprehensive statute. The 2001 Act covers three main areas of the law. Firstly, and predominantly, it provides a framework for the development of the juvenile justice system. Secondly, it re-enacts and updates provisions in the 1908 Act protecting children against persons who have the custody, charge or care of them. Thirdly, it provides for family welfare conferences and other new provisions for dealing with children where there is a real and substantial risk to their life, health, safety, welfare and development.

### Child Care Act 1991

The purpose of the Child Care Act 1991 is to 'update the law in relation to the care of children who have been assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or who are at risk'. The main provisions of the Act are:

- (i) the placing of a statutory duty on the HSE to promote the welfare of children who are not receiving adequate care and protection up to the age of 18;
- (ii) the strengthening of the powers of the HSE to provide child care and family support services;
- (iii) the improvement of the procedures to facilitate immediate intervention by the HSE and An Garda Síochána where children are in danger;
- (iv) the revision of provisions to enable the Courts to place children who have been assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or who are at risk, in the care of or under the supervision of the HSE;
- (v) the introduction of arrangements for the supervision and inspection of pre-school services;
- (vi) the revision of provisions in relation to the registration and inspection of residential centres for children.

### Criminal Justice Act 2006

Section 176 of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 introduced the criminal charge of 'reckless endangerment of children'. It states: 'A person, having authority or control over a child or abuser, who intentionally or recklessly endangers a child by –

- (a) causing or permitting any child to be placed or left in a situation which creates a substantial risk to the child of being a victim of serious harm or sexual abuse, or
- (b) failing to take reasonable steps to protect a child from such a risk while knowing that the child is in such a situation, is guilty of an offence.'

The penalty for a person found guilty of this offence is a fine (no upper limit) and/or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 10 years.

The Act also states that it is an offence to engage in a sexual act, or attempt to engage in a sexual act with a child under the age of 17 years.

### Domestic Violence Act 1996

The Domestic Violence Act 1996 introduced major changes in the legal remedies for domestic violence. There are two main types of remedies available:

- (i) Safety Order: This Order prohibits a person from further violence or threats of

violence. It does not oblige that person to leave the family home. If the parties live apart, the Order prohibits the violent person from watching or being in the vicinity of the home.

(ii) Barring Order: This Order requires the violent person to leave the family home. The legislation gives the HSE the power to intervene to protect individuals and their children from violence. Section 6 of the Act empowers the HSE to apply for Orders for

which a person could apply on his or her own behalf but is deterred from doing so through fear or trauma. The consent of the victim is not a prerequisite for such an application, although he or she must be consulted. Under Section 7 of the Act, the Court may, where it considers it appropriate, adjourn proceedings and direct the HSE to undertake an investigation of the dependent person's circumstances with a view to:

- (i) applying for a Care Order or a Supervision Order under the Child Care Act 1991;
- (ii) providing services or assistance for the dependent person's family; or
- (iii) taking any other action in respect of the dependent person.

#### Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998

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

- (i) the provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of the HSE or to any member of An Garda Síochána;
- (ii) the provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to, and including, dismissal;
- (iii) the creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse, where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities 'knowing that statement to be false'. This is a new criminal offence, designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

A wide range of nursing, medical, paramedical and other staff has been appointed as designated officers for the purposes of this Act (*see Appendix 10 of the Children First: National Guidance*). Section 6 of the Act is a saving provision, which specifies that the statutory immunity provided under the Act for persons reporting child abuse is additional to any defences already available under any other enactment or rule of law in force immediately before the passing of the Act.

#### Data Protection Acts 1988 and 2003

The Data Protection Act 1988 applies to the processing of personal data. It gives a right to every individual, irrespective of nationality or residence, to establish the existence of personal data, to have access to any such data relating to him or her, and to have inaccurate data rectified or erased. It requires data controllers to make sure that the data they keep are collected fairly, are accurate and up-to-date, are kept for lawful purposes and are not used or disclosed in any manner incompatible with those purposes. It also requires both data controllers and data processors to protect the data they keep, and imposes on them a special duty of care in relation to the individuals about whom they keep such data.

#### Education Act 1998

The Education Act 1998 places an obligation on those concerned with its implementation to give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children as they relate to education and, as far as practicable and having regard to the resources available, to make available to pupils a level and quality of education appropriate to meeting their individual needs and abilities. Education (Welfare) Act 2000 The Education (Welfare) Act 2000, which was fully commenced in July 2002, replaced previous school attendance legislation and provided for the creation of a single national agency, the National Educational Welfare

Board (NEWB), which has statutory responsibility to ensure that every child either attends school or otherwise receives an education or participates in training. The NEWB also assists in the formulation and implementation of Government education policy.

### Non-Fatal Offences against the Person Act 1997

The two relevant provisions of this Act are:

- (i) it abolishes the rule of law under which teachers were immune from criminal liability in respect of physical chastisement of pupils;
- (ii) it describes circumstances in which the use of reasonable force may be justifiable.

### Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003

The Freedom of Information Acts 1997 and 2003 enable members of the public to obtain access, to the greatest extent possible consistent with the public interest and the right to privacy, to information in the possession of public bodies. The specific provisions of the Acts include:

- (i) to provide for a right of access to records held by such public bodies, for necessary exceptions to that right and for assistance to persons to enable them to exercise it;
- (ii) to enable persons to have corrected any personal information relating to them in the possession of such bodies;
- (iii) to provide for independent review by an Information Commissioner both of decisions of such bodies relating to that right and of the operation of the Acts generally;
- (iv) to provide for the publication by public bodies of guides to their functions and national guidelines, such as these, for the public.

Under the Acts, a person about whom a public body holds personal information has:

- (i) right of access to this information, subject to certain conditions;
- (ii) the right to correct this information if it is inaccurate.

Where a public body makes a decision that affects an individual, that individual has a right to relevant reasons and findings on the part of the body reaching that decision.

The Acts are also designed to protect the privacy of individuals and, in general, requires the prior consent of an individual before releasing personal information about them.

Where the release of social work or medical records contains information that would be harmful to a person's well-being, the release may be made to a health professional who acts on the person's behalf. Under the Acts, there are regulations and guidelines relating to access by parents to their children's records; these emphasize that the overriding concern is the best interests of the child.

The exemptions and exclusions that are relevant to child protection include the following:

- (i) protecting records covered by legal professional privilege;
- (ii) protecting records that would facilitate the commission of a crime;
- (i) protecting records that would reveal a confidential source of information.

### UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Adopted unanimously by the United Nations in November 1989, Ireland signed up to the convention in 1992. The convention has no legal or statutory powers. All the rights detailed in the UN Convention apply to children without exception, Obligation to protect the child from any form of discrimination. All action concerning the child shall take account of his or her best interest. The state shall provide the child with adequate care when parents or other conferred with such responsibility fail to do so. Every child has the inherent right to life and the state has an obligation to ensure the child's survival and development. The child has the right to express his/her opinion freely and to have that opinion taken into account in any matter or procedure affecting the child. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has impacted on legislation here in Ireland



particularly in recent years.

#### Sex Offenders Act 2001

Under this legislation those who are convicted of certain sexual offences are now obliged to provide certain information to the Gardai including the address at which they are living

following their release from prison. There are also a number of requirements for sex offenders to fulfil when seeking employment where unsecured access to child is involved.

#### Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012

The Criminal Justice (Withholding of Information) Act makes it a criminal offence for a person to fail to disclose information to the Gardaí that would assist in prosecuting a person who commits a serious offence against a child or vulnerable adult. Any person who withholds information faces a minimum jail term of five years. The Minister has stated the main aim of the Act was to close a loophole in our current law. The Offences Against the State (Amendment Act) 1998 provides for an offence of withholding information in relation to serious offences, but specifically excludes sexual offences. The legislation contains defences for parents and others where a victim of an offence requests that the details not be passed on to authorities.

#### National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012

The Act provides a legislative basis for the vetting of persons who seek positions of employment relating to children or vulnerable persons. The Act states specifically that vetting applies to 'any work or activity which is carried out by a person, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children in any work or activity which consists of the provision of educational, training, cultural, recreational, leisure, social or physical activities....'It also provides for the disclosing of 'specified information' where there is a bona fide concern that a person may harm a child or vulnerable adult.

#### Children First Act 2015

The Act contains three main elements relating to child welfare and protection and also includes a provision to abolish the common law defence of reasonable chastisement.

Firstly, the Bill obliges certain professionals and others working with children to report child protection concerns to the Child and Family Agency and to assist the Agency, if requested to do so, in its assessment of a child protection risk.

The second key element of this Bill obliges a provider of services to children to undertake an assessment of the potential for risk of harm to a child while that child is availing of its services and to prepare an appropriate Child Safeguarding Statement in accordance with the Bill.

The third element provides statutory underpinning for the Children First Inter-departmental Implementation Group which will promote cross-sectoral implementation and compliance with Children First. This Group, which comprises a representative of each Government Department, and a representative each of the HSE, An Garda Síochána and the Child and Family Agency will be required to keep the implementation of this legislation under review and to report on an annual basis to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.

This Act represents an important addition to the child welfare and protection measures already in place and will help to ensure that child protection concerns are brought to the attention of the Child and Family Agency, and that the Agency gets the information and cooperation that it requires, in order to deal with any child welfare or protection concerns.

## Child Protection Reporting Form

*To be filled out by coach in the event of an alleged or suspected abusive situation*

Date : \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Reporting: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of child involved \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parents/Guardians Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address (if different from above): \_\_\_\_\_

Contact telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person allegedly causing concern: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the incident or situation, which is causing concern

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Source of information (i.e. child, adult, injury/distress noticed):

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Any explanation offered to account for injury / distress etc.: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's own statement (if relevant)

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Anti-bullying policy**

Bullying has no place in Little Legends Sport and Movement. Coaches should promote a positive anti-bullying ethos in their classes and raise awareness amongst coaches and children that bullying will not be tolerated. By emphasising the Code of Behaviour, coaches should create an environment in which children are valued as individuals and are encouraged and affirmed.

### **What is bullying?**

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological, or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. Bullying is intentional and it includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, exclusion, tormenting (e.g. hiding possessions, threatening gestures), threatening, spreading rumours, hitting and extortion, by one or more persons against a victim.

Bullying contains 7 key features:

- An intention to be hurtful;
- The intention is carried out;
- The behaviour harms the target;
- The bully overwhelms the target with his or her power;
- There is often no justification for the action;
- The behaviour repeats itself again and again;
- The bully derives a sense of satisfaction from hurting the target.

Bullying is usually carried out secretly and in an atmosphere of fear. A child who is being bullied may be too afraid to tell anyone about it or may have difficulty communicating that they are being bullied for a variety of reasons.

It is important then that coaches should be aware of the signs that might indicate a child is being bullied.

### **Potential Indicators of Bullying**

- Physical signs (unexplained bruises or scratches);
- Damage to personal belongings;
- Having money or personal belongings stolen;
- Frequent loss of subs or pocket money;
- Having few friends;
- Frequently the target of jokes;
- Cyber Bullying – receiving threatening/abusive texts, emails or comments on social networking sites;
- Hesitant of coming to meetings or taking part in activities;

- Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to meeting, taking a different route or asking to be driven);
- Unexplained changes in behaviour (stressed, withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed);
- Not eating;
- Anxiety (indicated by nail biting, fearfulness)

### **What can a coach do if a child tells them they are being bullied?**

- Listen calmly and accept what is said.
- Take notes following the conversation and keep on files as this forms the basis of the bullying report. Notes should include nature of incident, date, time, location, names of those involved, witnesses, relevant history and child's response.
- Reassure that help is available, action will be taken, the child was right to tell, it is not their fault and it could happen to anyone.
- Negotiate confidentiality – be clear you'll only tell people who need to know.
- Ensure the child's safety. The coach should be aware that the safety of the child is paramount and this can be maintained through appropriate supervision. Liaise with the parents/guardians in relation to a solution and possible actions.
- Tell the child that you will keep them informed and how you intend to proceed.
- Make an intervention – all actions should be guided by the needs of the child. Inform the coach of your concerns. Decide what action to take (choose response from options listed below) and by whom.
- Make a record of facts rather than opinions. Include details from the bullying report, details recounted by others involved, any agreements made, an account of action taken and suggestions for follow up and monitoring.

### **Practical Steps to Prevent and Counter Bullying**

- Use children as a resource in countering bullying and to foster a "permission to tell" culture in the group.
- Let children know who they should tell if they are being bullied themselves or if someone else is being bullied.
- Reassure children that they will be listened to and that an intervention will be made if they are being bullied.
- Teach children to co-operate, negotiate and help others, particularly new or different children.
- Never tell a child to ignore the bullying or to take the law into their own hands by retaliating.
- Make every member aware of how a bullying incident will be dealt with in the group. Parents and guardians should also be made aware of this.
- Apply these procedures fairly and consistently.