

APPENDIX 6 - Roles, Responsibilities and Relationships in Sport

Children’s Officer

Parks Tennis Ireland will appoint a Designated Liaison Officer and Two Children’s Officers (one male and one female), who will have access to the executive committee and its accompanying documents to ensure that children’s interests remain on the agenda of the Organisation and influence its decisions.

The role of the Children’s Officers involves:

- Have knowledge of the Safeguarding Code and relevant child protection legislation (Children First Act 2015 (ROI)/ National Vetting Bureau Act 2012-2016, Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017)
- commitment to attendance at appropriate training as required with a view to becoming a resource to members in relation to children’s needs
- signposting all potential Children’s Officers and Designated Liaison Persons to safeguarding training
- the promotion of the values, attitudes and structures which make tennis enjoyable for children
- liaison with all stakeholders to examine the rules, regulations, and structures to ensure that they are child centred, e.g., equal playing time, appropriate competition structures, and modified equipment to allow a sense of achievement and success. This would also include a bullying policy, etc.
- liaison with these stakeholders to ensure drop-out rates and transfers are monitored so that unusual developments or trends can be addressed, including transfer of sports leaders
- assisting in the development of a system of record keeping which maintains confidentiality while allowing for appropriate information to be passed to relevant authorities where necessary
- ensuring that Parks Tennis Ireland develops an appropriate sport specific policy, which includes a policy statement, codes of conduct, disciplinary procedures, bullying policy, safety statement, recruitment and selection policy, and reporting procedures

The Children’s Officers are responsible for leading the implementation of Child Protection Policies and Procedures. They will be members of the organisation’s Executive Committee and will keep safeguarding on the Agenda of the monthly meetings.

The Children’s Officers act as a resource on children’s issues and should review current policies in relation to young people, check that all activities are safe and fun, and inform adults of how to deal with any concerns that may arise in relation to the protection of children and young people. Children’s Officers should be child centred in focus and have as the primary aim the establishment of a child centred ethos within the programmes. They are the link between the children and the adults in the Programmes. They also take responsibility for monitoring and reporting to the executive committee on how the safeguarding policy impacts on young people and Sports Leaders.

The role of the Children's Officer will be:

- to promote awareness of safeguarding guidelines among young members and their parents/guardians. This will be achieved by informing parents when they are registering children and will be posted on our website.
- to influence policy and practice within the organisation to prioritise children's needs
- to establish a good relationship with the National Children's Officer
- to ensure that children in the programmes know how to make concerns known to appropriate adults or agencies.
- to encourage the appropriate involvement of parents/ guardians in activities
- to act as an advisory resource to Sports Leaders on best practice in our sport
- to report regularly to the Executive Committee.
- to monitor changes in participation within the programmes and follow up any unusual dropout or absenteeism by children or Sports Leaders
- to ensure that the children have a voice in the running of the programmes and ensure that there are steps young people can take to express concerns about their sports activities/experiences
- keep records of each participant on file, including contact numbers and any special needs of the child that should be known to leaders
- ensure each participant, their parents/guardians, coaches, and other relevant leaders sign up to the code of conduct.

Ensure that the rules and regulations include:

- a Complaints, Disciplinary and Appeals procedure
- an anti-bullying policy
- a safety statement
- procedures for supervision and recruitment of leaders
- Rules in relation to travelling with children.

Children's Officers (CCO)

The appointment of two gender-specific Children's Officers is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere, and a big part of their responsibility is to act as a resource regarding children's issues.

In summary, Children's Officers should review current policies in relation to young people, check that all activities are safe and fun, and inform adults of how to deal with any concerns that may arise in relation to the protection of children and young people.

Children's Officers should be child-centred in focus and have as the primary aim the establishment of a child-centred ethos within the Organisation. They are the link between the children and the adults in the Organisation. They also take responsibility for monitoring and reporting to the Executive Committee on how this policy impacts on young people and Sports Leaders.

The Children's Officers will be members of the Board and should be introduced to the young people in the organisation in an appropriate forum.

The Children's Officer's role is:

- to promote awareness of safeguarding guidelines among participants and their parents/guardians
- to influence policy and practice within the Organisation in the interests of prioritising children's needs
- to establish contact with the National Children's Officer
- to ensure that children know how to make concerns known to appropriate adults or agencies
- to encourage the appropriate involvement of parents/guardians
- to act as an advisory resource to Sports Leaders on best practice in children's sport
- to report regularly to the Executive Committee of Parks Tennis Ireland
- to monitor changes in membership and follow up any unusual dropout, absenteeism, or transfers by children or Sports Leaders.
- to ensure that the children have a voice in the running of their Organisation
- to ensure that there are steps young people can take to express concerns about their sports activities/experiences
- to keep records of each participant on file, including their contact numbers and any special needs of the child that should be known to leaders
- to ensure each parent signs a registration form that includes signing up to the Code of Conduct for Sports Leaders and children.
- Ensure Tennis Irelands Policies and Procedures for managing trips away and hosting children are implemented

The Organisation's rules and regulations will include:

- a complaints, disciplinary, and appeals procedure
- an anti-bullying policy
- a safety statement
- rules in relation to travelling with children.
- supervision and recruitment of leaders.

Relevant Person

Parks Tennis Ireland will appoint a Relevant Person. A relevant person defined in the Children First Act 2015 (ROI) as a person who is appointed by a provider of a relevant service to be the first point of contact in respect of the provider's Child Safeguarding Statement.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

Parks Tennis Ireland will appoint a Designated Liaison Person (DLP). This person may or may not also fulfil the role of Children's Officer. The DLP will be one of the Organisation's Senior Officers.

- The DLP is a resource for volunteers/coaches and should ensure that the Organisation's reporting procedures are followed. The DLP reports any suspected cases of child neglect or abuse to the Duty Social Worker in Child and Family Agency/Túsla or An Garda Síochána/ Gateway team or PSNI.

The DLP will also inform the NCO that a report has been submitted without identifying details.

- The DLP will be knowledgeable about Child Protection and undertake any training considered necessary i.e. Safeguarding 3
- The DLP will familiarise themselves with the statutory and support services within their locality
- Should have knowledge of the Safeguarding Code and relevant child protection legislation (Children First Act 2015 (ROI)/National Vetting Bureau Act 2012-2016 (ROI) and Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017.

Mandated Person

The Mandated person is a person named under schedule 2 of Children First Act 2015 (ROI). They have a legal responsibility to report concerns or allegations that reach or exceed the threshold of harm of abuse to Tusla (refer to National Governing Body/Organisation for list of updated persons).

Legal Obligations of a Mandated Person:

Mandated persons have two main legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015 (ROI). These are:

- To report the harm of children above a defined threshold to Tusla
- To assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.

Role of Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland

Sport Ireland and Sport NI will ensure the widest possible dissemination of the safeguarding guidance and ask that this guidance is adopted and implemented by all sports Organisations/ organisations. This approach is based on the need for All Island consistency in advice offered to Organisations, Sports Leaders, parents/guardians, children, and in particular, National Governing Bodies of Sport who are responsible for the administration of their sports.

Sport Ireland and Sport NI have jointly agreed that a common approach is essential in promoting good practice in children's sport.

This approach is based on the following underpinning principles:

- children's involvement in sport should be an enjoyable experience.
- the safety of children should always be the paramount concern of those adults responsible for providing sporting opportunities at whatever level an individual adult is involved.
- the appropriateness of the experience provided for children should be determined by and based on a child-centred ethos which place the needs and interests of the child as paramount.

- all adults have a responsibility to be aware of child protection as an issue.
- Sports Leaders should be properly recruited and managed and that appropriate training should be made available to them.
- the provision of support by the Councils will be subject to the adoption and implementation of this Safeguarding Code by National Governing Bodies of Sport and all its Stakeholders.

Adult-child relationships involved in sport

The trust implicit in adult-child relationships in sport places a duty of care on all adults, voluntary or professional, to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of the child while engaged in their sporting activity. Adults have a crucial leadership role to play in sport. Whether they are parents/ carers, Sports Leaders, or teachers, they can contribute to the creation of a positive sporting environment for young people. The unique nature of sport allows Sports Leaders to develop positive and special relationships with children. Such relationships have tremendous potential to help children to develop and express themselves in an open and secure way.

Safe recruitment practices and selection of Sports Leaders should be in place, including vetting, seeking references, confirming identity, and checking adequacy of qualifications. Effective Board of Sports Leaders is also equally central to the promotion of good practice in the Organisation. This should include support, supervision, and access to training and effective communication between members of the Organisation.

Adult-child relationships in Sport should:

- be open, positive, and encouraging.
- be entered into by choice.
- meet the need of the child and not the adult.
- be defined by a mutually agreed set of goals and commitments.
- be respectful of the creativity and autonomy of children.
- be carried out in a context where children are protected and where their rights are promoted.
- be free from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse and neglect or any threat of such harm.
- be respectful of the needs and developmental stage of the child.
- be aimed at the promotion of enjoyment and individual progress.
- be governed by a code of ethics and good practice in tennis that is agreed and adhered to by all members of the Organisation.
- be undertaken on the premise that some children may be more vulnerable than others.
- be undertaken on the premise that there are appropriate boundaries.
- be undertaken on the premise that the importance of equality of relationships with children and the potential for favouritism/special treatment is understood

Child to child relationships

Interaction between children should be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect, equality, and non-discrimination and with a spirit of fair play. In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, you should consider it a child welfare and protection issue for both children, and you should follow safeguarding procedures for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

Tennis Coaches

Tennis Coaches play a vital role in children's tennis. Parks Tennis Ireland will ensure that the work of Coaches is guided by this safeguarding guidance and best practice whilst also recognising that they are entitled to obtain a healthy sense of achievement and satisfaction through their involvement in children's tennis.

Parks Tennis Ireland will engage Tennis Ireland Licensed Coaches where possible.

