



Code of Ethics & Good Practice

for

SPORT for YOUNG PEOPLE

in

VOLLEYBALL ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND

The guidelines in this document are based on the national guidelines as outlined in the following documents

Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, Irish Sports Council and Sports Council Northern Ireland, 2000, (reviewed in 2006).

Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Dept. of Health & Children 1999

Our Duty to Care, Dept. of Health & Children 2002

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Core Values in Sport for Young People

The work of the Volleyball Association of Ireland (VAI) is based on the following principles that will guide the development of sport for young people in this club, (as outlined in page 9, *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*). Young People's experience of sport should be guided by what is best for the young person. The stages of development and the ability of the young person should guide the types of activity provided within the club. Adults will need to have a basic understanding of the needs of young people, including physical, emotional and personal.

Integrity in relationships:

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

Quality atmosphere and ethos

Sport for young people should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. A child-centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.

Equality

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

Fair Play:

Fair play is the guiding principle of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport.

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

Competition

A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of young people, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. However, often competitive demands are placed on children too early, which results in excessive levels of pressure on them. This can contribute to a high level of drop out from sport. Leaders should aim to put the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second. A child-centred approach will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.

Policy Statement

VOLLEYBALL ASSOCIATION OF IRELAND

The VAI is fully committed to safeguarding the well being of its members. Every individual in the VAI should at all times, show respect and understanding for members rights, safety and welfare and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the organisation and the guidelines contained in the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*.

In the VAI our first priority is the welfare of the young people and we are committed to providing an environment, which will allow participants to perform to the best of their ability, free from bullying and intimidation.

Code of Conduct for Young People

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

Young players are entitled to:

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

Young players should always:

- Treat Sports Leaders with respect
- Play fairly at all times, do their best
- Respect team members, even when things go wrong
- Respect opponents, be gracious in defeat
- Abide by the rules set down by team managers when travelling to away events.
- Behave in a manner that avoids bringing the sport of Volleyball into disrepute
- Talk to the children's officer if they have any problems.

Young players should never:

- Cheat
- Use violence or physical contact that is not allowed within the rules
- Shout or argue with officials, team mates or opponents
- Harm team members, opponents or their property
- Bully or use bullying tactics to isolate another player
- Use unfair or bullying tactics to gain advantage
- Take banned substances
- Keep secrets, especially if they have been caused harm
- Tell lies about adults / young people
- Spread rumours

Guidelines for Parents (See pages 30 – 31 of the Code)

The VAI believes that parents should:

- Be role models for your children and maintain the highest standards of conduct when interacting with children, other parents, with officials and organisers
- Always behave responsibly and do not seek to unfairly affect the game
- Never intentionally expose any young participant to embarrassment or disparagement by the use of flippant or sarcastic remarks
- Always recognise the value and importance of the volunteers who provide sporting/recreational opportunities for your child. Do not publicly question the judgment or honesty of referees, coaches or organisers. Respect referees, coaches, organisers and other players
- Encourage your child to play by the rules. Teach your child that honest endeavour is as important as winning and do all you can to encourage good sportsmanship.
- Set a good example by applauding good play on both sides. Encourage mutual respect for team mates and opponents
- Parents should support all efforts to remove abusive behaviour and bullying behaviour in all its forms. Please read the bullying policy within the VAI guidelines.

Parents Code of Conduct:

1. I will respect the rules and procedures set down in the VAI Code of Ethics for Children in Sport.
2. I will respect my child's team mates, leaders, (e.g. coaches, officials, judges), and parents, as well as players, parents and coaches from opposing teams. I will encourage my child to treat other participants, coaches, selectors, and managers with respect.
3. I will give encouragement and applaud only positive accomplishments whether from my child, his/her team mates, their opponents or the officials.
4. I will respect my child's leader(s) and support his/her efforts
5. I will respect the officials and their authority during sessions and events
6. I will never demonstrate threatening or abusive behaviour or use foul language.

Guidelines for Sports Leaders

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

The VAI recognises the key role leaders (coaches, selectors and team managers, etc.) play in the lives of children in sport.

All leaders should have as their first priority the children's safety and enjoyment of the sport and should adhere to the guidelines and regulations set out in the club's Code of Ethics.

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

Leaders working with young people in the VAI should be appropriately qualified. Leaders will be expected to go through appropriate recruitment and selection procedures, (see application and reference forms in appendix 1), that apply to all persons with substantial access to young people, whether paid or unpaid. References will be needed and will be followed up.

There will be a 'sign-up' procedure, whereby the appointed/reappointed leaders agree to abide by the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Sport* and to the policies and code of the club / association.

Leaders will be given a copy of the Association's code of ethics and they should be made aware of the procedures contained within the Association's code.

Once appointed the leader must act as a role model and promote the positive aspects of sport and of Volleyball and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct.

The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco must be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity.

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

Be generous with praise and never ridicule or shout at players for making mistakes or for losing a game. All young players are entitled to respect.

Be careful to avoid the "star system". Each child deserves equal time and attention.

Care must be taken not to expose a child intentionally or unintentionally to embarrassment or disparagement by use of sarcastic or flippant remarks about the child or his/her family.

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

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

Remember that young players play for fun and enjoyment and that skill development and personal satisfaction have priority over highly structured competition. Never make winning the only objective.

Encourage the development of respect for opponents, officials, selectors and other coaches and avoid criticism of fellow coaches.

When travel/overnight travel is involved, the Leaders travelling with children must sign a separate agreement. Parents and participants will also be asked to sign permission forms in these instances.

Leaders are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with players. It is advisable for coaches not to involve young players in their personal life i.e. visits to coaches home or overnight stays.

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

When approached to take on a new player, ensure that any previous coach-student relationship has been ended by the student/others in a professional manner.

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

Leaders who become aware of a conflict between their obligation to their players and their obligation to their governing body must make explicit the nature of the conflict and the loyalties and responsibilities involved, to all parties concerned.

Leaders should communicate and co-operate with medical and ancillary practitioners in the diagnosis, treatment and management of their players' medical or related problems. Avoid giving advice of a personal or medical nature if you are not qualified to do so. Any information of a personal or medical nature must be kept strictly confidential unless the welfare of the child requires the passing on of this information

The nature of the relationship between leader and a participant can often mean that a leader will learn confidential information about a player or player's family. This information must be regarded as confidential and except where abuse is suspected, must not be divulged to a third party without the express permission of the player/family

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

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

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

Leader's / Coaches Code of Conduct

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

Leaders should be

- Positive during session, praise and encourage effort as well as results
- Plan and prepare appropriately
- Put welfare of the young person first, strike a balance between this and winning / results
- Encourage fair play, treat participants equally
- Recognise developmental needs
- Qualified and up-to-date with knowledge and skill of sport for young people
- Involve parents where possible and Inform parents when problems arise
- Keep record of attendance at training
- Keep a brief record of injury(s) and action taken
- Keep a brief record of problem/action/outcomes, if behavioural problems arise

Where possible Leaders should avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others
- Taking sessions alone
- Taking children to their home
- Taking children on journeys alone in their car

Sports Leaders should not:

- Use any form of punishment or physical force on a child
- Exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward
- Engage in rough physical games, sexually provocative games or allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind, and /or make sexually suggestive comments about, or to a child
- Take measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adults
- Undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.) in the training of children

Disciplinary, Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Each club/organisation should put a complaints procedure in place that allows all members who are dissatisfied to register their complaint in a formal way

- Each club/organisation, on receiving a complaint, should appoint a disciplinary committee to resolve problems relating to the conduct of its members. This should include bullying. The complaint should be in writing to the secretary or Children's Officer and should be responded to within 5 working days. The committee should consist of a representative from the Management Committee, the Children's Officer and ordinary registered members of the club.
- If the complaint involves suspected abuse or a criminal offence the children's officer/designated person should be consulted and the disciplinary committee disbanded. The statutory authorities will then be informed
- The disciplinary committee should review any relevant paper work and hold any necessary meetings with all parties to proceed with complaints into any incident of suspected misconduct that does not relate to child abuse. It should, as soon as possible, inform the Management Committee of the progress of the disciplinary process. This should be done within 10 working days
- The disciplinary committee should furnish the individual with the nature of the complaint being made against him/her and afford him/her the opportunity of providing a response either verbally or in writing, but usually at a meeting with the disciplinary committee
- Written confidential records of all complaints should be safely and confidentially kept and club procedures should be defined for the possession of such records in the event of election of new officers
- Where it is established that an incident of misconduct has taken place, the disciplinary committee should notify the member of any sanction being imposed. The notification should be made in writing, setting out the reasons for the sanction. If the member is under 18 years of age, correspondence should be addressed to the parents/guardians
- If the member against whom the complaint was made is unhappy with the decision of the disciplinary committee s/he should have the right to appeal the decision to an appeals committee (independent of a disciplinary committee). Any appeal should be made in writing within an agreed period after issue, usually 10 days of the decision of the disciplinary committee. The chairperson of the appeals committee should be a member of the Management Committee. The appeals committee should consult with the Children's Officer in relation to issues of child welfare and codes of conduct. the appeals committee should have the power to confirm, set aside or change any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee
- If any party is not satisfied with the outcome the matter can be referred to the Governing Body. However efforts to resolve the issue at local level should be exhausted before the Governing Body is engaged in attempts to resolve the matter

- See Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, page 22 and page 42 for 'Discipline in Children's Sport' (Also available at www.volleyballireland.com)

Recruitment and Selection Policy

The Volleyball Association of Ireland will take all reasonable steps to ensure that leaders are appropriately qualified and suitable to work with young people. These procedures apply to all persons with substantial access to young people, whether paid or unpaid.

The responsibilities of the role and the level of experience/qualifications required should be drawn up and clearly stated beforehand.

Applicants should complete an application form which should include a self-declaration section / form.

Formal vetting procedures should be availed of when and if available.

References should be verified by the club/organisation.

A probationary period is advisable and should be established through an informal interview, which can be used to assess the leader's commitment and interest to the club

Every effort should be made to manage and support appointed Sport Leaders, including awareness of the code of conduct. Adequate supervision should be provided; a leader should not have to work alone.

A decision to appoint a Sports Leader is the responsibility of the club / organisation and not of any one individual within it. The club /organisations committee should ratify all recommendations for appointment.

When storing information in relation to applicant's information should be treated as sensitive and confidential. It should be kept in a secure place that is only accessible to nominated officers.

Bullying Policy

What is Bullying?

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with children and young people. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion behaviour by one or more children against a victim.

How would you know if a child is being bullied?

All bullies operate using furtiveness, 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 it is not safe to do so.

The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied.

- Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities.
- Physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings).
- Stress-caused illness – headaches, and stomach aches which seem unexplained.
- Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to a meeting, going different routes, asking to be driven).
- Frequent loss of, or shortage of, money with vague explanations.
- Having few friends.
- Changes in behaviour (withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed).
- Not eating.
- Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide.
- Anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics).

Note: There are other possible reasons for many of the above

Who should deal with bullying?

While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reported to the HSE (Health Service Executive) or An Garda Síochana, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of all leaders within this club / organisation.

How can it be prevented?

- Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.
- Deal with any incidents as they arise.
- Use a whole group policy or 'no-blame approach', i.e., not 'bullying the bully' but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a 'shared concern' of the group, (see below).
- Reinforce that there is 'a permission to tell' culture rather than a 'might is right'.
- Encourage young people to negotiate, co-operate and help others, particularly new or different children.
- Offer the victim immediate support and put the 'no blame approach' into operation.

- Never tell a young person to ignore bullying, they can't ignore it, it hurts too much.
- Never encourage a young person to take the law into their own hands and beat the bully at their own game.
- Tell the victim there is nothing wrong with them and it is not their fault.

What is the 'No Blame' Approach?

Step 1 – Interview with the victim

If you find that there has been an incident of bullying, first talk to the victim. At this stage find out who was involved and what the victim is now feeling. Try asking the following questions:

- Was it verbal or physical intimidation?
- How hurt is the victim?
- Was it within his/her own peer group?
- Assure the victim that his/her name will not come out in the investigation.
- Actively listen.

Step 2 – Meet with all involved

Arrange to meet with all those involved; this should include some bystanders, those who may have colluded, those who joined in and those who initiated the bullying.

- Have a maximum of six to eight in the group – keep the number controllable.
- Make a point of calling a 'special' meeting.
- Ensure the severity of the topic is understood by all.
- Speak only of the hurt caused in general terms with no reference to the victim.
- Play on the conscience of all – ask questions like: How would you feel? Would you like it done to you?

Step 3 – Explain the problem

The distress being suffered as a result of the bullying incident is explained. At this stage the details of the incident or the allocation of the blame is not discussed.

Explain the feelings of loneliness, feeling left out, rejected, laughed at. Try asking questions:

- Would they like it if it happened to them?
- "Someone here in this group was bullied by someone within the group, what could we do to see it does not happen again?"
- Listen, watch out for reactions, and pick up on any without isolating anyone.

Step 4 – Share the responsibility

Explain what steps / controls may have to be introduced to prevent further incidents and how everyone will lose out as a result.

Step 5 – Ask the group for their ideas

At this stage the group is encouraged to suggest ways that would make the victim feel happier. All positive responses are noted. Use phrases "if it were you" to encourage a response. Listen to all suggestions and note them.

Step 6 – Leave it to them

Now the problem has been identified, solutions suggested, the problem is now handed over to the group to solve. Arrange to meet again in a week's time. Pass

responsibility over to the group and give a time frame within which something must be done.

Step 7 – Meet them again

Each member of the group, including the bully, discuss how things are going, who is doing what and have there been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and also keeps all involved in the process.

Again enforce the idea of the 'team' looking after each other at regular intervals to ensure it is known that bullying or intimidating behaviour will not be tolerated.

Guidelines on General Issues

Transport

There is extra responsibility on leaders when they transport young people to events.

Adults should:

- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover on their car, they follow the rules of the road, including legal use of seat belts.
- Not carry more than the permitted number of passengers.
- Avoid being alone with one participant, put passenger in the back seat, have central drop off locations or seek parental permission to transport an individual participant on a regular basis and clearly state times of pick- up and drop off. Parents should check with young people about the plans and be happy with the transport arrangements.

General Supervision

- Make sure there is an adequate adult: child ratio. Leaders should try to have more than one adult present. The number of adults needed will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the participants and any special needs of the group. As a guide a ratio of 1:8 for under 12 years of age and 1:10 for participants over 12 years of age. This is only a guide and will change depending on the circumstances.
- Where there are mixed groups there should be leaders of both genders
- Avoid being alone with one participant, if you need to talk separately do so in an open environment, in view of others.
- In changing rooms, ask parents to take responsibility and supervise in pairs of appropriate gender.
- Leaders should not need to enter the changing rooms unless children are very young or need special assistance, where supervision should be in pairs of appropriate gender.
- Clearly state time for start and end of training sessions or competitions. Leaders should not be left alone with young people at the end of sessions. If there are late collections leaders should remain in pairs until participants have left.
- Keep attendance records and record of any incidents / injuries that arise.
- Ask parents to stay and supervise sessions, (for safety and supervision, not necessarily for their 'technical' expertise).

Overnight and Away trips

- Separate permission forms should be signed by parents and participants, containing emergency contact numbers.
- Young participants should sign a behaviour agreement.
- Appoint a group leader who will make a report on returning home.
- A meeting with parents and participants is useful to communicate travel times, competition details, other activities, gear requirements, medical requirements, special dietary needs and any other necessary details.
- Rooming arrangements – adults should not share rooms with children, children share rooms with those of same age and gender and adults should knock before entering rooms.
- All group socialisation should take place in communal areas (i.e. no boys in girls' rooms and vice versa).
- Alcoholic drink, smoking or other illegal substances are forbidden to players. Leaders should act as role models in this respect.

- There must be at least one adult of each gender with a mixed party, there should be a good adult – child ratio, 1:5/6, and proper access to medical personnel.
- Lights out times should be enforced.
- Young players should be under reasonable supervision at all times and should never leave the venue or go unsupervised without prior permission.

Safety

All clubs / organisation should have a safety statement, including specific and potential risks attached to their sport. They should also have procedures in place for safeguarding against such risks. In addition clubs should:

- Ensure activities are suitable for age and stage of development of participants.
- Keep a record of any specific medical conditions of the participants.
- Keep a record of emergency contact numbers for parents / guardians.
- Ensure any necessary protective gear is used.
- Ensure First Aid kit is close at hand with access to qualified first-aider.
- Know the contact numbers of emergency services.
- Keep First Aid kit stocked up.
- Ensure easy access to medical personnel if needed and have a emergency plan.
- If an incident occurs, make a brief record of injury and action taken. Make a brief record of the problem/action/outcome. Contact the participants parents and keep them informed of all details.
- Officials (umpires, referees, etc.) should ensure good conduct of the game.
- Participants should know and keep the rules of their sport, keeping in mind that many rules are there for safety.
- Leaders should hold appropriate qualifications required by the governing body
- Ensure there is adequate insurance cover for all activities.
- Ensure parents / guardians are present at the finishing times of sessions or events.

Physical Contact

Physical contact during sport should always be intended to meet the child's needs, NOT the adult's. The adult will probably use appropriate contact when the aim is to assist in development of the skill or activity or for safety reasons, e.g. to prevent or treat an injury. This should be in an open environment with the permission and understanding of the participant. In general

- Contact should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the participant - Don't do something that a child can do for themselves
- Never engage in inappropriate touching such as touching of groin, genital areas, buttocks, breasts or any other part of the body that might cause a child distress or embarrassment.

For information on hosting guidelines, insurance and use of sanctions see Code of Ethics page 34 and 35.

Use of Photographic and Mobile Equipment

Each club should adopt a policy in relation to the use of images of athletes on their websites and other publications, as there have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people. Adults and sports leaders need to work together to prevent those wishing to cause such harm to young people. Remember having photographic and filming guidelines is not about preventing parents from taking pictures, it is to ensure that only those who have a right to take photographs do so. Anyone concerned about photography taking place at events or training sessions can contact the Children's Officer/ designated person and ask them to deal with the matter.

The purpose is to reduce the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and outside the sport. Group photographs where the club is identified rather than individuals are good for publicity without creating a risk to those in the photographs. As a guide try to remember the following: -

- If the athlete is named, avoid using their photograph.
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the athlete.
- Ask for the athlete's permission to use their image to ensure that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport.
- Ask for parental permission to use the athlete's image to ensure that parents are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. A permission form could be used or make an announcement at the start of an event.
- To reduce the risk of inappropriate use, only use images of athletes in suitable dress. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child.
- Talk to Children's Officer/designated person if you are worried about use of images.

Amateur photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the Children's Officer, event organiser or leader of session. Permission forms should be available on site.

To ensure spectators and participants are informed of the policy, the club/event/organisation should display the following information prior to the start of an event and where possible make an announcement over a public address system.

"In line with the recommendation in the _____ (name of club / association's) Code of Conduct, the promoters of this event request that any person wishing to engage in any video, zoom or close range photography should register their details with the organisers. It is not advisable that children are photographed or filmed without their permission and/or the permission of their parent/guardian".

Working in Partnership to protect young people

Photographs, when used with personal information, can be used as a means of identifying children. This practice can make a child vulnerable to an individual who may wish to "groom" that child for abuse. Furthermore the content of the photo can be used or adapted for inappropriate use. There is evidence of this adapted material finding its way onto child pornography sites. Adults and sports leaders need to work together to prevent those wishing to cause such harm to young people.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are often given to children for security, enabling parents to keep in touch and make sure they are safe. Young people value their phones highly as it offers them a sense of independence. In addition mobile phones allow quick and easy contact, which can make a safe and efficient way to carry out club business. However such technology has also allowed an increase in direct personal contact with young people, in some cases used to cross personal boundaries and cause harm to young people. Within clubs there is a need to encourage responsible and secure use of mobile phones by adults and young people.

As a young person remember

- If you receive an offensive photo, email or message, do not reply, save it, make a note of times and dates and tell a parent or Children's Officer/designated person within the club.
- Be careful about who you give your phone number to and don't respond to unfamiliar numbers.
- Change your phone number in cases of bullying or harassment.
- Don't use the phone in certain locations; inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person, e.g. changing rooms.
- Treat you phone as you would any other valuable item so that you guard against theft.

As a Leader remember

- Use group texts for communication among athletes and teams and inform parents of this at the start of the season.
- It is not appropriate to have constant communication with individual athletes.
- Don't use the phone in certain locations; inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person, e.g. changing rooms.

Child Welfare and Protection Procedures

The VAI accepts that organisations, which include young people among its members, are vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. Below are the procedures for dealing with any welfare or protection issue that may arise. Child welfare and the protection of young people is the concern of all adults at all times, irrespective of their role within the organisation.

If there are grounds for concern (Code, page 44), about the safety or welfare of a young person you should react to the concern. Persons unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive and therefore reportable, should contact the duty social worker in the local health service executive or social services department where they will receive advice. Grounds for concern include a specific indication from a child, a statement from a person who witnessed abuse or an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse.

A report may be made by any member in the club but should be passed on to the Designated Person / Children's Officer, Doireann Coughlan, who may in turn have to pass the concern to the local Statutory Authorities. It is not the responsibility of anyone working within the VAI, in a paid or voluntary capacity, or those working in affiliated organisations, to take responsibility or decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. That is the job of the local statutory authorities. However, there is a responsibility to protect children by assisting the appropriate agencies so that they can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the young person.

Everyone should follow both procedures outlined below, firstly the procedure for responding to a child in distress and secondly the procedure for reporting the concern.

Response to a Child Disclosing Abuse (see Code page 46)

When a young person discloses information of suspected abuse you should:

- (a) Deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened
- (b) Stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the child is saying seriously
- (c) Understand that the child has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation
- (d) Be honest with the child and tell them that it is not possible to keep information a secret
- (e) Make no judgmental statements against the person whom the allegation is made
- (f) Not question the child unless the nature of what s/he is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as "Can you explain to me what you mean by that"
- (g) Check out the concerns with the parents/guardians before making a report unless during so would endanger the child or compromise an investigation
- (h) Give the child some indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents/guardians, health service executive or social services. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.
- (i) Carefully record the details

- (j) Pass on this information to the Designated Person, the VAI Children's Officer, Doireann Counihan.
- (k) Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.

Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse

The following steps should be taken in reporting child abuse to the statutory authorities:

- (a) Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.
- (b) Report the matter as soon as possible to the designated person with responsibility for reporting abuse, The VAI Children's Officer, Doireann Counihan. If the Designated Person has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, s/he will make a report to the health service executive/social services who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse.
- (c) In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Designated Person is unable to contact a duty social worker, the police authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.
- (d) If the Designated Person is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist s/he can informally consult with the local health board/social services, (see code page 47). S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

A designated person reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities will first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation.

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the Health Service Executive or the Gardai (See 5.13.1 – ISC. Code). The act also covers the offence of 'false reporting'. The main provisions of the Act are:

1. The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to designated officers of Health Service Executive or any member of An Garda Síochána.
2. 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.
3. 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.

Allegations Against Sports Leaders

The VAI has agreed procedures to be followed in cases of alleged child abuse against Sports Leaders. If such an allegation is made against Sports Leader working within the club, two procedures should be followed:

- The reporting procedure in respect of suspected child abuse (reported by the designated person / Children's Officer), see previous page.
- The procedure for dealing with the Sports Leader (carried out by the club Chair or senior officer, or a person not already involved with the child protection concern).

The safety of the child making the allegation should be considered and the safety of any other children who may be at risk. The club should take any necessary steps that may be necessary to protect children in its care.

The issue of confidentiality is important. Information is on a need to know basis and the Sports Leader should be treated with respect and fairness.

The reporting procedure

If the designated person has reasonable grounds for concern, (page 44, Section 5.10, Code), the matter should be reported to the HSE / social services, following the standard reporting procedure, (Section 5.12.1, page 45).

The Sports Leader

While the designated officer makes the report to the local health board, the Chair of the club should deal with the Sports Leader in question.

- The Chair should privately inform the leader that (a) an allegation has been made against him / her and (b) the nature of the allegation. He / she should be afforded an opportunity to respond. His / her response should be noted and passed on to the health board / social services.
- The leader should be asked to step aside pending the outcome of the investigation. When a person is asked to step aside it should be made clear that it is only a precautionary measure and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings.

The governing body should be informed by the Designated Person that the leader has been asked to stand aside .

Governing bodies can consider disciplinary action on the leader but should ensure that this does not interfere with the investigation of the Statutory Authorities. It is important that governing bodies consider the outcome of the investigation and any implications it might have. The fact that the alleged abuser has not been prosecuted or been found guilty does not mean that they are appropriate to work with young people in the future.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in cases of abuse, welfare or bad practice. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected.

The following points should be kept in mind:

- A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the child will supersede all other considerations.
- All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know.
- Information should be conveyed to the parents / guardians of the child in a sensitive way.
- Giving information to others on a 'need to know' basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.
- All persons involved in a child protection process (the child, his/her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family, Sports Leaders) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure.
- Information should be stored in a secure place, with limited access only to designated people.
- The requirements of the Data Protection laws should be adhered to.
- Breach of confidentiality is a serious matter.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but should not be ignored. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child/children is paramount. Any such complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the VAI Children's Officer, Doireann Cúiníán. The information should be checked out and handled in a confidential manner.

Rumours

Rumours should **not** be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the National Children's Officer, Doireann Cúiníán, and checked out without delay.

**Appendix 1
New Leader Information Form:**

Applicants should also complete Appendix 2

Full Name: _____ Any surname previously: _____

Current Address: _____ Date of Birth: _____

List all other previous addresses _____ Place of Birth: _____

Telephone No.(s): _____ National Insurance No: / PPSI _____

List previous experience / involvement in any other club. Include experience of working with young children in a voluntary or professional capacity.

Volleyball or Sporting Qualifications:

Do you agree to abide by the guidelines contained in the Code?
of Ethics for Volleyball for Young People? Yes No

Have you ever been asked to leave a sporting organisation? Yes No
(If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence)

References:

Please supply the name and address of two people who we can contact and who, from personal knowledge, are willing to endorse your application. One of these names should be, where possible, the name of an administrator / leader in your last club / place of involvement

Name and Address of Referee 1:

Name and Address of Referee 2:

Signed _____ Date: _____

Appendix 2

DISCLOSURE OF CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS & PERMISSION FOR STATUTORY CHECKS FOR THOSE WORKING WITH CHILDREN (Please read this information carefully)

Statement of non-discrimination:

The VAI is committed to equal opportunity for all applicants including those with criminal convictions. Information about criminal convictions is requested to assist the selection process and will be taken into account only when the conviction is considered relevant to the post. Any disclosure will be seen in the context of the job criteria, the nature of the offence and the responsibility for the care of existing clients\customers and employees.

For the purposes of your application for the post of:

_____ it is our policy to ask for a check to be carried out by the statutory organisation responsible for this task in the jurisdiction in which you are working/volunteering

Advice to Applicants:

Please complete this form as accurately as possible and return it marked "**Confidential**" in the envelope provided. An arrangement will be made with you to discuss any clarification if required.

Thank you for your co-operation.

You **should** tell us now if you have a case pending or if you have ever been convicted of a criminal offence, or cautioned by the police, or bound over. You **should** include all offences, even minor matters such as motoring offences, and 'spent' conviction, that is, things which happened a long time ago. If you leave anything out it may effect your application. The disclosure of a criminal record or other information will not debar you from registration / appointment unless the NGB considers that the conviction renders you unsuitable. In making this decision the sport will consider the nature of the offence, how long ago it was committed and what age you were at the time and other factors which may be relevant.

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a caution; a Bound Over Order; or are you at present the subject of criminal investigations?

Yes No

If so, please state below the nature, date(s) and sentence of the offence(s)

Please provide any other information you feel may be of relevance such as:

- the circumstances of the offence
- a comment on the sentence received
- any relevant developments in your situation since then
- whether or not you feel the conviction has relevance to this post.

I declare that all answers are complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and I will inform the designated person of any future convictions or charges. I consent to the check being made via the statutory authorities in which I intend to

work/volunteer. I am also aware that the umbrella organisation carrying out the check, may, following discussion with myself, share the information returned with the designated person.

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Please return completed forms in an envelope marked Private and Confidential to:
Paul McKeever
VAI
141, Thomas Street,
Dublin 8.

Appendix 3 Existing Leaders Information Form

Leaders should familiarise themselves with the Code, in particular the code of conduct, page 9. Leaders should read below and agree to abide by these terms. Leaders should update the self-declaration questions annually.

As a leader in Volleyball I agree that I should

- Be positive during sessions and competitions, praise and encourage effort as well as results.
- Put welfare of young person first, strike a balance between this and winning / results.
- Encourage fair play and treat participants equally.
- Recognise developmental needs, ensuring activities are appropriate for the individual.
- Plan and prepare appropriately.
- Have experience relevant to working with young people or hold up-to-date qualifications and be committed to the guidelines in this Code.
- Involve parents where possible and inform parents when problems arise.
- Keep a record of attendance at training and competitions.
- Keep a brief record of injury(s) and action taken.
- Keep a brief record of problem/action/outcomes, if behavioural problems arise.
- Report any concerns in accordance with this Code's reporting procedures.

Where possible I will avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others.
- Taking sessions alone.
- Taking children on journeys alone in my car.

Sports Leaders should not:

- Use any form of physical punishment or physical force on a child.
- Exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward.
- Take children to their home.
- Engage in rough physical games, sexually provocative games or allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind, and /or make sexually suggestive comments about, or to a child. This includes innuendo, flirting or inappropriate gestures and terms.
- Take measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adult.
- Undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.) in the training of children.

Self-Declaration

Do you agree to abide by the guidelines contained in the Code of Ethics for Volleyball for Young People?

Yes No

Have you ever been asked to leave a sporting organisation?
(If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence)

Yes No

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence or been the subject of a caution; a Bound Over Order; or are you at present the subject of criminal investigations?
(If you have answered yes, we will contact you in confidence)

Yes No

Signed _____ Date: _____

Appendix 5
Sample Application Form for New Junior Members

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name _____

Male / Female

Address _____

Telephone – Home _____

Telephone - Mobile (in case of emergency) _____

E-MAIL _____

Date of Birth _____

MEDICAL HISTORY INFORMATION (details of any know allergies, conditions, etc.)

In the event of illness, having parental responsibility, I give permission for medical treatment to be administered where considered necessary by a nominated first-aider, or by suitably qualified medical practitioners. If I cannot be contacted and my child needs emergency hospital treatment, I authorize a qualified medical practitioner to provide emergency treatment or medication.

Other information

Any other special needs, requirements or directions that would be helpful for leaders to know about.

PARENTAL/GUARDIAN CONSENT

I am the Parent/Guardian of _____

Photographs

I understand that photographs will be taken during or at sport related events and may be used in the promotion of sport.

Drug Testing (for elite players only)

I give permission for my child(ren) to be tested for prohibited substances in accordance with the Irish Sports Council Anti Doping Rules (where applicable).

I hereby consent to the above child(ren) participating in activities of the organisation in line with the Code of Ethics for Young People. I will inform the leaders of my children's activities of any changes to the information above.

I confirm that all details are correct and I am able to give parental consent for my child(ren) to participate in and travel to all activities.

SIGNATURE _____ Date _____