



An Droichead Mhaigh Eo C.L.G.



Child Protection Policy

Declaration

This document has been approved by the Club Executive Committee and serves as the working Child Protection Policy document of the club.

Signed (Cathaoirleach) 
Signed (Rúnaí) 

POLICY STATEMENT

Mayobridge GAC aims to promote the participation of children in our club by creating a culture of safety and fun. We recognise that all children have the right to be safe and that this fundamental principle takes precedence over all other considerations.

"Children have the right to be protected from all forms of violence; they must be kept safe from harm, and they must be given proper care by those looking after them."
(Article 19; UN Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Mayobridge GAC recognises that we have a responsibility to:

- Safeguard and promote the interests and well-being of all those under 18 years who are involved in our club activities;
- Take all reasonable steps to protect children from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment;
- Respect the rights, wishes and feelings of all children in our club.

RATIONALE

All children's sport should be conducted with an emphasis on fair play. Ireland and the UK have adopted and are committed to the European Code of Sports Ethics, which defines fair play as:

"much more than playing within the rules. It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing within the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just a way of behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of cheating, gamesmanship, doping, violence (both physical and verbal), exploitation, unequal opportunities, excessive commercialism and corruption."
(European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics, Council of Europe, 1993)

The Children (Northern Ireland) Order (1995) is based on a clear and consistent set of principles designed with the common aim of promoting the welfare of children.

This policy applies to all those involved in Mayobridge GAC: coaches, administrators, officials, volunteers, parents and young people.

Mayobridge GAC has the right to:

- Expect all leaders to comply with its Code of Conduct.
- Expect all youth members to maintain standards of reasonable behaviour.
- Take appropriate action if members breach the Code of Conduct or Child Protection Policy.
- Expect all members to undertake appropriate training when advised to.
- Expect leaders will not abuse members physically, emotionally or sexually.
- Take appropriate action in the event of accusations.

- Acquire pre-employment checks on all coaches as from April 2006, as agreed by the Ulster Council
- Maintain records on individuals in line with advice from the data protection agency i.e. only hold records on individuals when there is a justifiable reason for holding such information.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy we define children as any person under the age of 18 years.

EQUALITY STATEMENT

All children should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of ability, age, sex, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. Children, irrespective of ability or disability should be involved in sports activities in an integrated and inclusive way, whenever possible, thus allowing them to participate to their full potential alongside other children (Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport 2000)

The Club recognises the additional vulnerability of some children and the extra difficulties they may face when seeking help, i.e.

- Dependency due to disability may make some children feel powerless
- Possible limited ability to communicate feelings on occasion
- A negative self-image can make children vulnerable to manipulation by others

To address this vulnerability coaches will seek guidance on working with children with a disability from external agencies, parents/guardians and the children themselves.

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

We at **Mayobridge GAC** will never promise to keep secrets. However, information of a confidential nature will only be communicated on a "need to know" basis, with the welfare of the child paramount.

Considerations of confidentiality will not be allowed to override the rights of children or young members to be protected from harm.

DESIGNATED PERSON

The appointed Child Protection Officer for **Mayobridge GAC**, is **Marie Sherry**.

Marie Sherry shall be made known to young members, coaches and parents alike as the designated person to whom concerns will be addressed. If the concern is about the designated person please report to the Executive Committee Chairperson or another trusted member of the committee, who will be aware of the correct procedures to deal with any concerns.

AWARENESS OF THE ISSUES

Background knowledge in relation to child abuse, the general principles of child protection and the ability to recognise and respond to abuse are important issues. Of primary concern for **Mayobridge GAC** is the issue of Child Protection of our young members within the operation of the club. However being cognisant of the indicators of abuse in respect of young members caused by others outside the club is of an equal importance for the safety and well-being of that child.

The Children (NI) Order 1995 formally recognises four types of abuse

- Physical** Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.
- Neglect** Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
- Sexual** Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities such as involving children in looking at or the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.
- Emotional** Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened

or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Smothering a child's development through over-protection can also be a form of abuse. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill-treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse.

INDICATORS OF ABUSE

The following is a list of some indicators of abuse, but it is not exhaustive:

PHYSICAL INDICATORS	BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas ● Repeated injuries ● Black eyes ● Injuries to the mouth ● Torn or bloodstained clothing ● Burns or scalds ● Bites ● Fractures ● Marks from implements ● Inconsistent stories/excuses relating to injuries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Unexplained changes in behaviour - becoming withdrawn or aggressive ● Difficulty in making friends ● Distrustful of adults or excessive attachment to adults ● Sudden drop in performance ● Changes in attendance pattern ● Inappropriate sexual awareness, behaviour or language ● Reluctance to remove clothing

GUIDELINES IN RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE

DOs

- Stay calm.
- Listen & hear. Give the person time to say what they want.
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling and that it will be dealt with appropriately.
- Record in writing what was said as soon as possible
- Report to someone else in the organisation - "the designated person".
- Record your report.

DON'TS

- Panic.
- Promise to keep secrets.
- Enquire into the details of the abuse.
- Make a child repeat the story unnecessarily.

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING ALLEGATIONS/ INCIDENTS OF CHILD ABUSE

- Record all incidents reported or observed on an Incident Form (Appendix 1)
- Forward a copy of the Incident Form to the club's designated person
- Ensure confidentiality – only passing on information on a "need to know basis" (reference confidentiality clause)
- The designated person will be responsible for storing any report in a safe and secure environment
- Please refer to "Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse", Cumann Luthchleas Gael, (Second Edition) March 2001

BULLYING

Mayobridge GAC aims to;

- Respect every child's need for, and rights to, a play environment where safety, security, praise, recognition and opportunity for taking responsibility are available.
- Respect every individual's feelings and views.
- Recognise that everyone is important and that our differences make each of us special.
- Show appreciation of others by acknowledging individual qualities, contributions and progress.
- Ensure safety by having rules and practices carefully explained and displayed for all to see.

Bullying

- Bullying will not be accepted or condoned. All forms of bullying will be addressed. Bullying can include:
 - physical pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, etc.
 - name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing and emotional torment through ridicule, humiliation and the continual ignoring of individuals
 - sectarian/racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
 - sexual comments and /or suggestions
 - unwanted physical contact
- Children from ethnic minorities, disabled children, young people who are gay or lesbian, or those with learning difficulties are more vulnerable to this form of abuse and may well be targeted.
- Everybody has the responsibility to work together to stop bullying – the child, the parent and the coach.
- This club is committed to the early identification of bullying and prompt, collective action to deal with it.
- Policy and practice will be agreed through consultation with the club, parents and children.
- Children should be encouraged to take a role in stopping bullying in the club.
- Policy and practice will be reviewed regularly in the light of changing needs and changes adopted by other agencies.
- Coaches will be given support when dealing with a bullying incident.

Support to the Child

- Children should know who would listen to and support them.
- Any advice and assistance should be given by an experienced coach.
- Children should have access to Helpline numbers.
- Children should be told what is being recorded, in what context and why.
- Systems should be established to open the door to children wishing to talk about bullying or any other issue that affects them. Barriers to talking need to be broken down to enable children to approach adults.
- Anyone who reports an incident of bullying will be listened to carefully and be supported, whether the child being bullied or the child who is bullying.
- Any reported incident of bullying will be investigated objectively and will involve listening carefully to all those involved.
- Children being bullied will be supported and assistance given to uphold their right to play and live in a safe environment which allows their healthy development.
- Those who bully will be supported and encouraged to stop bullying.
- Sanctions involving long periods of isolation, or which diminish and make individuals look or feel foolish in front of others, should be avoided.

Support to the Parents

- Parents should be advised on club policy and practice about bullying.
- Any incident of bullying will be discussed with the child's parent(s).
- Parental advice on action will be sought and agreements made as to what action should be taken.
- Information and advice on coping with bullying will be given.

Support should be offered to the parent(s) including information on other agencies or support lines.

YOUTH MEMBERSHIP

At the start of each training/coaching year we will issue Youth Membership Forms for all our youth members to complete. This will ensure that the coaches have important information for each youth member e.g. contact details for parents, medical information, etc. All information will be treated with the strictest of confidence and will only be used if an emergency situation arises.

SAFE RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES FOR VOLUNTEERS / COACHES

- Volunteers and coaches are carefully selected, trained and supervised. The office bearers of the club committee must vouch for their potential involvement and their participation must be ratified by the unanimous approval of remaining coaches.
- All new coaches/ volunteers working with children or young people must complete an application form (Appendix 2).
- Declaration of past convictions or cases pending and agreement to apply for Access NI clearance is a pre-requisite to approval to begin coaching.
- In cases where a report is returned as part of the Access NI check with information regarding criminal activity the Child Protection Officer and the Chairperson of the Executive Management Committee will consider the contents of the report and make a decision on the suitability of the proposed coach to work with children.
- **ALL** volunteers/coaches must agree to abide by the club's Child Protection Policy and all are required to sign a pro-forma stating this.
- Any concerns or objections with regard to suitability of a coach must be submitted to the "designated person". These matters will be raised with the club committee with appropriate action taken including a formal response in writing to the concerned party if required.

TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS/COACHES

- Governing-Body approved coaching sessions for volunteers/coaches have been scheduled by the County Board and ALL coaches are expected to qualify to at least Foundation level.
- Education and training in the basics of child protection will apply to all coaches/volunteers/committee members working with the children or young members.
- We will ensure that all new coaches have attended child-protection awareness training within six months of taking up their post. This opportunity will also be made available to parents and other volunteers to enable a culture of a child-focused club to prevail.

GOOD AND SAFE WORKING / PLAYING PRACTICES

Mayobridge GAC aim to ensure:

- Proper supervision of children within the club with a satisfactory ratio of coaches: children. A **maximum** ratio of 1 coach to 20 children will be adhered to. (This will vary dependent on the age group being trained)
- Use of proper, recommended equipment including.
 - Sport specific guidelines e.g. goal posts etc.
 - identification markers/ cones, clearly visible
 - playing /coaching surfaces, free from debris
- Use of equipment only when supervised by a coach.
- A clearly defined area of play/ in bounds and safe from vehicular traffic.
- Public Liability Insurance in place, covering all members of the club.
- Only children within same/ similar age bands will be selected for team-playing/ coaching.
- A first aider and first aid kit will be on hand in event of an accident, with the accident incident book/folder to be marked up at every accident. **All** accidents will be reported to parents at collection (Appendix 3).
- In the event of transport being required this will be provided and supervised by coaches/ volunteers in possession of a valid driving license and roadworthy vehicle only. Permission must be sought from parents prior to any transport being facilitated.
- A safe environment for members.
- Ongoing training and information for coaches and volunteers.
- Implementation of Club policies and procedures
- Facilitation of open discussion on member protection issues.
- Support to all members who report accusations of abuse.
- Confidential treatment of information regarding suspected abuse.
- Appropriate action if members breach standards of reasonable behaviour in line with our code of conduct policy.
- The establishment and maintenance of a coaching register.
- The setting of standards of good practice.
- The designated child protection officer has knowledge of statutory child protection procedures and their responsibility in reporting concerns
- That parents are kept informed

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING ACCIDENTS

In the event of an accident, the following procedure will be carried out:-

- Fill in a copy of the Accident Form for **ALL** accidents.
- Contact emergency services/ GP if required.
- Inform parents/guardians if a young person has been injured.
- Record in detail all facts surrounding the accident: witnesses, etc.
- Add a copy of form to incident book/folder.
- An accident book/folder is required for all coaching sessions for Under 12s, Under 14s, Under 16s and Minors.
- If any coach identifies an action required to prevent a similar accident occurring they are encouraged to inform the Youth Committee/Executive Committee as soon as possible.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND IMAGES OF CHILDREN

Mayobridge GAC feel it is important to recognise the achievements and successes of our youth and of the club as a whole. One of the ways to do this is to publish photographs and details of achievements in our local press. As a club we would like to use pictures of our youth members in the local press and at times, on the club website.

We take the issue of child safety very seriously and this includes the use of images of the children in our care. Our duty to our young members is paramount and this form of publicity must be carefully monitored to ensure that it is consistent with our Child Protection Policy and the Data Protection Legislation.

For this reason we have put the following guidelines into place:

- We ask parental consent for the club to take and use photographs of their children and for permission to use the press and media to promote youth participation (Appendix 4).
- Photographs and interviews will at all times take place in the presence of a coach.
- We will only use team photographs and action photographs on our website.
- Action and individual photographs will only be used, with individual parental consent, prior to the inclusion on the club website or in the local press.

USE/MISUSE OF MOBILE PHONES

Mayobridge GAC understands and respects the importance that parents/guardians place on the use of mobile phones as a means of contacting their children when away from the home setting. However, there are times that the use of mobile phones must be limited in order to protect all children within the club. For this reason we have placed the following limitations on the use of mobile phones in our club activities;

- It is recommended that children are discouraged from bringing mobile phones to training sessions to avoid loss and damage.
- It is the responsibility of parents and children to ensure that mobile phones are kept in a safe and secure place at all times.
- The club holds no responsibility for mobile phones lost or stolen while on club premises or while away from club premises attending away games.
- Children are forbidden to use mobile phones, and, in particular, picture/video phones in dressing rooms while on club grounds or while attending away games.
- The misuse of mobile phones will be taken seriously by all club members and persistent misuse will be brought to the attention of the Child Protection Officer to be actioned.

SUPERVISION OF DAY TRIPS AWAY FROM THE CLUB

- Written permission of parent/guardians should be obtained for all away day trips (Appendix 5).
- Medical conditions or special needs details of children should be sought from parents/guardians.
- Emergency contact details of parents/guardians should be sought and recorded.

Details of the away day trip should be given to parents/guardians e.g. location, guidelines in respect of clothing, provision of lunches etc.

SUPERVISION OF OVERNIGHT TRIP AWAY FROM HOME

- Written permission of parent/guardians should be obtained for all overnight trips (Appendix 6).
- This form should be completed by a parent/guardian before a child can participate in an overnight trip away from home.
- Medical conditions or special needs details of children should be sought from parents/guardians.
- Emergency contact details of parents/guardians should be sought and recorded.

APPENDIX 1

WHAT STEPS NEED TO BE TAKEN WHEN REPORTING CONCERNS

When the complaint is about possible abuse outside the organisation

