



## Sport and Young people

Leaders become involved in sport for young people for a variety of different reasons, from a variety of sporting backgrounds and take on varying roles within clubs and organisations. Yet irrespective of the role or responsibility, all leaders share a common goal in their commitment to sport for young people.

*We want sport to be safe, we want sport to be fun and we want to ensure that no matter what sport young people are involved in, that it takes place in the spirit of 'fair play'.*

Fair play is the guiding principle of *The Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport* which is designed to provide guidance for those working with young people in sport. It outlines for sports organisations the type of issues that need to be discussed and addressed to provide the safest and most enjoyable environment for young people.

Parents/Guardians have the primary responsibility for the care and welfare of young people. As such there are a number of steps you can take to ensure a fun and safe sporting environment for children.

**1. Examine the role you can play to enhance the quality of your **child's involvement** in sport.**

Encourage your child to:

- Put in their best effort – have a go
- Improve their skills
- Make friends
- Play by the rules
- Appreciate/accept everyone in the group, regardless of ability, race, religion, gender etc.
- Accept winning and losing as part of the game



**2. Examine your behaviour** and involvement in your child's sport. You should:

- Be a **role model** - your child will learn best by example
- Show appreciation of, and respect towards, sports officials and their decisions
- Encourage children to play within the rules
- Behave responsibly on the sidelines and in all interactions involving children
- Focus on the child's efforts rather than on performance
- Focus on the fun and participation of the child in the activity
- Know the names and qualifications of the leader
- Liaise with the sports leaders in relation to the times, locations etc, of training sessions

### Strike a Balance

We need to keep in mind the reasons why young people want to take part in sport. They want to learn new skills, make new friends, be part of a group, to win and be successful, experience excitement, challenges and action. They need input and guidance by adults to achieve these aims but parents need to ensure that young people's fun remains the central focus. In providing for the needs of young people in sport parents **should not:**

- Put undue pressure on the child to please or perform well
- Ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake or losing a game
- Treat the club as a child-minding service
- Take a child's safety for granted. Never ignore or dismiss genuine complaints or concerns expressed by a child which relate to his/her involvement in sport



**3. The Sports Leader** is the other important influence on the child's enjoyment of sport. It is important that we support the leader where possible. Parents should take note of the following aspects of the leader's approach:

- The emphasis on fun as well as competition
- The opportunities for children to make friends and for everyone to be included
- The opportunities to improve skills
- The use of modified games or equipment, where possible

Communicate often with the leaders even though you may not be in a position to attend every session. Show an interest in their efforts to make your child's involvement in sport safe and enjoyable. Show that you consider their role important - they are not baby-sitters.

**4. Parents can work with the club/organisation** to ensure that procedures of good practice are created and adhered to. Parents should:

- Check that the club has a copy of *the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*. A copy will be made available to every club in the country. It will also be available on the Irish Sports Council's web site
- Check that the Code has been adopted by the club
- Be willing to become a member of the club and be committed to upholding a code of good practice
- Take an active interest or offer to help in the running of the club, club events or any sporting activities in which your child takes part
- Be willing to become the Club Children's Officer or offer to help the officer
- Be aware of their child's training and/or competitive programmes and its suitability for the child
- Be aware of the club's procedures and policies, in particular where changes are made that effect your child.



### Parent Friendly Club

The club will seek your involvement, particularly in relation to issues that directly relate to your child's supervision. For example, you should:

- Be informed if your child sustains an injury during activities
- Be informed of all problems or concerns relating to your child
- Be informed in advance or have your permission sought in relation to matters regarding away trips, camps or specially organised activities

In keeping young people at the forefront of all activities you can be confident that your child is enjoying their sporting experiences. By following the steps above you will be helping to enhance the quality of their involvement in sport.



Sport provides an excellent pathway for young people to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own potential. These benefits will occur through a positive approach to the involvement of children in sport that places the needs of the child first and winning and competition second.

Winning is an important goal but winning at all costs does not meet the needs of young participants. Help them to enjoy the thrill of competing, to improve their skills, to try hard, to have a good time, to have the courage to compete and to come back for more.

Focus on the importance of participation for each child, best effort and enjoyment. If participants enjoy their earlier experiences of sport they are more likely to stay involved, returning many benefits in terms of the health and well being of our future adult population.

**For Further Information:**

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*The Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in Ireland*

# Parents