

Skerries Town FC

Code of Practice

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, 2000.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Dept. of Health & Children 2011

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

Football Association of Ireland Code of Ethics & Best Practice

This policy may be amended at anytime in the future to reflect changes in the statutory guidelines, Child Welfare best practise methods or as a result of a review of this policy and its operation, undertaken by the club.

This is a "LIVING" document and will evolve over time to reflect all aspects of our Code of Practice as we deal with real issues

Skerries Town FC Mission Statement

The work of **Skerries Town FC** is based on the following principles that will guide the development of sport for young people in this club. Children and young peoples experience of soccer should be guided by what is best for the child or young person. The stages of development and the ability of the child 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 soccer should do so with integrity and respect for the child. All adult actions in soccer 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 soccer.

Quality atmosphere and ethos

Soccer 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. Too often unhealthy competitive demands are placed on children too early and results in excessive levels of pressure on them and as a consequence, high levels of dropout from sport.

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 Irish Sports Councils Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport.

It states that “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. Coaches/managers 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.

Skerries Town FC

Child Protection & Welfare Policy Statement

Introduction.

Skerries Town FC is committed to ensuring that all necessary steps will be taken to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people who participate in soccer. This Policy document clearly demonstrates the importance placed by Skerries Town FC on the protection and safety of children and young people who participate in soccer.

All children and young people¹ who participate in soccer should be able to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment. While doing so they should be protected from any form of abuse be it physical, emotional, sexual, neglect or bullying. The responsibility for protecting children lies with all adults involved in this club and in soccer in general.

Skerries Town FC recognises and accepts its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people by protecting them from physical, emotional or sexual harm and from neglect or bullying.

These clear policies, practices and procedures in addition to relevant training programmes will ensure that everybody in Skerries Town FC knows exactly what is expected of them in relation to protecting children and young people within soccer.

It is vital that children and young people who participate in Skerries Town FC activities are able to do so in a safe, enjoyable and quality environment.

In pursuit of this goal Skerries Town FC will:

- Advise all members of Skerries Town FC (coaches, players, parents and spectators) of their responsibilities in relation to the welfare and protection of children and young people who participate in soccer.
- Operate within the recommended Football Association of Ireland codes of conduct and best practice guidelines.
- Appoint a Club Children's Officer in line with Football Association of Ireland requirements.
- Provide a child protection and welfare module in staff induction and development programmes

¹ Children are defined in Irish Law as being any person under 18 years of age.

The aims of Skerries Town FC Child Protection Policy are:

- To develop a positive and pro-active position in order to best protect all children and young people who participate in soccer, in order for them to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment.
- To provide appropriate guidance and advice to all club members (players, coaches, volunteers, spectators and parents) in all matters concerning child welfare and protection.
- To demonstrate best practice in the area of child welfare and protection.
- To promote ethics and best practice standards throughout soccer.

The key principles underpinning this Policy are that:

- The welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration.
- All children and young people have a right to be protected from abuse of any kind regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual identity.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse/poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. It is essential that we work in partnership with children and young people and their parents/carers. The Child & Family Agency (CFA) has a statutory responsibility to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and Skerries Town FC is committed to cooperating fully with them in accordance with procedures as outlined in “Children First” National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011.
- Any knowledge, belief or information regarding criminal offences against children (sexual offences, violent offences, trafficking offences and child cruelty) must be reported to the Gardaí unless the child (if over 14 years of age) or the child’s parents (if under 14 years of age, and not the suspect of the offence or a family member of the suspect) request otherwise.
- Skerries Town FC will cooperate fully with the Football Association of Ireland National Children’s Officer, Gardai and CFA in any investigation of child abuse in soccer.

The Football Association of Ireland’s regulations in regard to child welfare and protection are defined in the rulebook as:

RULE 71. THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN

(a) In line with legislation and Government Guidelines (The Child Care Act 1991 and the Protection for Persons Reporting Abuse Act 1998) in relation to child protection and welfare, it is mandatory that all participants, clubs, leagues, divisional associations and other football bodies shall be bound by the FAI recommended codes of conduct and best practice guidelines

(b) Any act, statement, conduct or other matter which harms a child or children, or poses or may pose a risk of harm to a child or children, shall constitute behaviour which is improper and brings the game into disrepute.

(c) Breaches shall become a disciplinary offence. Any member issued with a ban from football activity shall have their name notified to all League Secretaries for onward dissemination to all Club Secretaries. The notification shall state the name of the individual and the fact a ban has been issued.

(d) Any participant who is the subject of a Statutory Inquiry in relation to any child welfare concern must stand down from all football activities pending the outcome of that inquiry and any subsequent internal disciplinary proceedings.

(e) Any member convicted of an offence by the Irish Courts or Courts of any other jurisdiction involving the welfare of children shall be automatically banned from membership of the Association. For the avoidance of doubt no disciplinary or other hearing shall be necessary in order to implement this automatic ban.

(f) It is now a criminal offence for a person to fail to report to the Gardaí his or her knowledge or belief that a serious offence (including sexual offences, violent offences, trafficking offences and child cruelty) has been committed against a child. It is also an offence to withhold information which may assist in the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of such an offence. Where any such knowledge, information or belief comes to light, it must be reported to An Garda Síochána. This should be done sensitively and, if appropriate, in confidence, but a written record should be kept of all such reporting. This reporting must be done in all cases unless the child (if over 14 years of age) or the child's parents (if under 14 years of age and not the suspect of the offence, or a family member of the suspect) request otherwise.

RULE 95. PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN

1. All participants, clubs, leagues, divisional associations and other football bodies shall be bound by the FAI rules, codes of conduct and guidelines governing the protection and welfare of children, and breaches of such rules, codes and guidelines shall be subject to disciplinary sanction.

2. The disciplinary body may impose any sanction it deems appropriate.

3. Any act, statement, conduct or other matter which harms a child or children, or poses or may pose a risk of harm to a child or children, shall constitute behaviour which is improper and brings the game into disrepute.

4. Any participant who is the subject of a statutory inquiry in relation to any child welfare concern must stand down from all football activities pending the outcome of that inquiry and any subsequent internal disciplinary proceedings.

Skerries Town FC through confirming this policy document has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that children and young people can participate in all soccer activities with their safety and welfare being of paramount importance.

It is essential that this document represents a process of continual improvement in the area of child protection and welfare in soccer.

It is the responsibility of all adults involved in soccer to actively promote safe and best practice standards whilst being ever vigilant and aware of their responsibilities to children and young people in their care.

Skerries Town FC

Procedure for dealing with Child Abuse Concerns or Allegations

It is important to note that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the Statutory Authorities (Gardai, CFA) and should not be undertaken by Children's Officers or any other Club/League. All allegations of child abuse **must** be referred to the Statutory Authorities.

When an allegation is received it should be assessed promptly and carefully. It will be necessary to decide whether a formal report should be made to the CFA and this decision should be based on reasonable grounds for concern. In accordance with requirements of Children First all concerns with relation to suspected child abuse will be passed on to the relevant statutory authorities.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- (i) a specific indication from a child that (s)he was abused;
- (ii) a statement from a person who witnessed abuse;
- (iii) an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse;
- (iv) a symptom which may not in itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is support by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence;
- (v) consistent signs of neglect over a period of time.

Ref. Children First 2011

Therefore in practice, concerns will be passed on by the Clubs designated person to the statutory authorities if we receive:

- (i) a specific indication from a child that (s)he was abused;
- (iii) a statement from a person who witnessed abuse;

or have evidence in relation to:

- (iii) an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse;
- (iv) a symptom which may not in itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is support by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence;
- (iv) consistent signs of neglect over a period of time.

Step One

Any allegation of abuse must in the first instance be brought to the attention of the Child Welfare Officer (CWO) of the Club. Should the CWO be unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist s/he can informally consult with the local CFA duty social worker. S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

Coaches/volunteers may be subjected to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore, any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively and appropriate support should be provided for staff/volunteers including counselling where necessary.

Step Two

Should Skerries Town FC become aware of an allegation of abuse of a child or children by a coach/volunteer during the execution of that coaches/volunteers duties, the CWO will privately inform the coach/volunteer of the following:

- ❖ the fact that the allegation has been made against him/her;
- ❖ the nature of the allegation.

Step Three

The coach/volunteer should be afforded an opportunity to respond. The CWO will note the response and pass on this information when making the formal report to the CFA.

The report to the CFA should contain observations, dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.

In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the CWO is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Gardai shall be contacted.

Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities

Step Four

Our CWO, if 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 any statutory investigation.

It should be noted that should a formal notification be made, we are not accusing anyone of child abuse, rather we are passing on concerns for investigation by the appropriate statutory authorities in keeping with the principle that “the welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration”.

Step Five

All subsequent actions following an allegation of abuse against a coach/volunteer will be taken in consultation with the CFA and An Garda Síochána. An immediate meeting will be sought with these two agencies for this purpose. The Football Association of Ireland National Children’s Officer is also available to provide support and advice.

Step Six

Under Football Association of Ireland rules, any coach/volunteer/manager who is the subject of a statutory investigation into alleged child abuse, is required to stand down from all soccer activities until the investigation is completed. Therefore the FAI National Children's Office must be informed immediately of any formal notification to the Statutory Authorities.

When a person is asked to stand down it should be made clear that it is only a precautionary measure in keeping with standard procedures/guidelines and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings.

The coach/volunteer concerned should be advised that the procedures being undertaken are in accordance with statutory requirements. He or she should be treated with respect and fairness, and also be assured that all information will be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

Step Seven

The Club will carefully consider the outcome of the statutory investigation and will then assess if there are any outstanding disciplinary issues in relation to their internal rules or infringements of the Football Association of Ireland best practice guidelines. It must be remembered that 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.

Internal Club disciplinary proceedings can only be initiated after the Statutory Authorities have completed theirs.

Skerries Town FC

2.4 Club Disciplinary, Complaints and Appeals Procedure

(Covers all matters other than suspected child abuse which has to be referred to the Statutory Authorities)

While many concerns can be dealt with in an informal manner to the satisfaction of all concerned, it is advisable that detailed records are maintained in respect of all complaints and that all parties are advised of the formal complaints and appeals procedure. All reasonable efforts to resolve matters should be exhausted at local level before accessing the appeals procedure.

Step One

Any person who has a complaint or concern should bring it to the attention of the secretary under the relevant rules of the body concerned.

The complaint or concern should be in writing and should outline all relevant details and other parties involved in line with procedure.

Step Two

The complaint or concern should then be brought to the attention of the appropriate person in line with club rules who will convene the disciplinary committee/panel (best practice would advise that this committee/panel would consist of three members) **unless the complaint or concern relates to a child abuse matter or criminal offence that meets criteria for formal reporting to the statutory authorities.**

Where there are potential contentious issues, due consideration should be given to ensure the independence of the disciplinary committee/panel and therefore, it is advisable that members of the disciplinary committee/panel should not be Offices/Directors of the body concerned as lack of independence is often cited as a ground for appeal.

(The Chairperson of the Club should not sit on the Disciplinary Committee)

Step Three

The disciplinary committee/panel should furnish any participant with details of the complaint being made against them and afford them the opportunity of providing a response either verbally or in writing. In the event of a complaint against a child, the parents/guardians should be informed and advised of the process.

Step Four

The disciplinary committee/panel should then hear the case of all parties involved and decide if a rule or regulation has been infringed.

Step Five

The disciplinary committee/panel should then inform in writing those involved of their decision and any sanctions if any that are to be imposed. This notification should be in writing, setting out the reasons for the sanction. (Written notification should be forwarded to parents if the proceedings involve a participant under eighteen years of age)

Step Six

Any party unhappy with the findings of the disciplinary committee/panel can appeal the decision in writing to their respective superior body as per rules. Clubs, leagues, divisional associations and other football bodies should review their rules to ensure they contain a provision that facilitates an appeals procedure in this respect.

Step Seven

The appeal body should then rehear the case and all evidence, should be considered. The appeals body should have the power to uphold or reject the appeal or to vary, alter or set aside any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee/panel.

Written confidential records in relation to disciplinary proceedings should be safely and confidentially kept on file (procedures should clearly define the possession of such records in the event of election of new officers)

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with, however they cannot be ignored. All complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour/poor practice should be brought to the attention of the CWO of the Club. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child/children is paramount.

All complaints should be checked out and handled in a confidential manner. It is important to record all such complaints and actions taken. Specific advice on dealing with anonymous complaints can be got from your local CFA duty social worker or alternatively the Football Association of Ireland National Children's Officer.

Rumours

Rumours should not be allowed hang in the air. Any rumour/s relating to inappropriate behaviour/s circulating in the club should be brought to the attention to the CWO and checked out promptly. All ensuing information should be handled confidentially and with sensitivity.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is about managing information in a respectful, professional and purposeful manner. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected. Therefore, appropriate confidentiality will be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in concerns about the welfare of a child or bad practice within the club.

The following points will be borne 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 only be discussed with those who need to know
- Information will be conveyed to the parents/guardians of a child about whom there are concerns 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

Skerries Town FC Recruitment Policy

Our Duty to Care

Safe practice starts with safe recruitment procedures and involves:

- Always applying thorough selection procedures, no matter who the applicant happens to be
- Judging the suitability of applicants in relation to a broad range of matters
- Taking all reasonable steps to eliminate people who are not suitable for working with children
- Providing training. Most people who apply to work with community and voluntary organisations on either a voluntary or paid basis are interested, well motivated and suitable for the various tasks involved. However, it is very important that organisations take all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited. Unfortunately, people with a tendency to abuse children can be attracted to the type of work that gives them the opportunity to be with children, and this always has to be borne in mind when recruiting new workers.

Recruiting Coaches/Volunteers

This section outlines an approach to safe recruitment and selection practices. The actual procedures may vary according to the requirements of different organisations or groups but the following key processes should be included:

(i) **Clear definition of the role of employees or volunteers:** This means clarifying and agreeing expectations regarding the role of a new worker, and involves identifying the minimum level of personal qualities and skills required to fill the post.

(ii) **Application Form:** An application form, with a clear job description and information about the organisation should be supplied. The form should be designed, as far as possible, to collect all relevant information about the applicant, including past experience of working with children.

(iii) **Declaration:** All applicants should be required to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with young people, and declaring any past criminal convictions or cases pending against them. The organisation must have a clear policy regarding the type of factors that would exclude applicants.

(iv) **Interview:** All applicants should be interviewed by a panel comprising of at least two representatives of the organisation. Interviewers should explore the information stated on the application form and assess the applicant's suitability for the post. The information supplied by the applicant and any other information supplied on their behalf should only be seen by persons directly involved in the recruitment procedure.

(v) **References:** An applicant should be expected to supply the names of two referees (not family members) who will testify as to their character, their suitability to the role of employee/volunteer, or any other issues which may affect their ability to perform the tasks required of them. At least one referee should have first-hand knowledge of the applicant's previous work or contact with children. An acceptable reference will indicate that the person is known to the referee and is considered suitable by them to work with young people. All references should be received in writing and later

confirmed by telephone, letter or personal visit. Any additional information should be attached to the application form. If the applicant has had a previous involvement in sport, one of these names must be that of an administrator/leader of your last club/place of involvement.

(vi) Identification: The organisation should ensure that the identity of the applicant is confirmed against some documentation (ID card, driving licence or passport) which gives his or her full name, address together with a signature or photograph. This should be compared with the written application.

Although a very thorough selection procedure is one of the most sensible and effective ways of assessing a person's suitability to work with children and may itself act as a deterrent to potential abusers, it is often felt as an unnecessary burden...

"But sure he only comes in one morning a week"

"I couldn't ask them all those questions when they're not even getting paid"

"She wouldn't give up so much of her time if she didn't mean well"

"All our volunteers are from the area"

"It's so hard to get volunteers these days – I don't want to put people off"

Workers are not less likely to abuse children because they are part-time or because they are not getting paid or because they have been giving their services for years, or even because they are a friend of a friend. You must apply the same procedure consistently with paid and unpaid staff, part time and full-time workers alike. Although being very thorough about assessment can seem like an unnecessary burden, the more it becomes routine throughout all organisations working with children, the less intimidating it will be to genuine and well-motivated applicants. At the same time, it may act as a deterrent to potential abusers, as well as assisting in the choice of appropriate staff and volunteers.

Induction and training

When an applicant has been accepted, the following processes should apply:

(i) Induction: If, following the application and interview process the applicant is accepted, they should then be required to undertake an induction course. Induction should be a planned programme that enables workers to get to know the organisation, their colleagues, their job and other organisations doing the same type of work. It should also cover expectations, conditions and procedures for dealing with discipline, grievances and allegations, and the organisation's child protection policy.

(ii) Trial period: Appointment should be conditional on the successful completion of a trial period, the length of which should be decided at the outset. It gives an opportunity to assess the suitability of a new worker to work with children and his or her commitment to the organisation's policies on safe practices.

(iii) Records: details of selection and induction should be recorded, along with notes on any matters arising during any part of the process.

(iv) Additional training: To maintain quality standards and good practice, training should be provided on an ongoing basis for all workers Your Local Sports Partnerships provide training in the form of the Child Welfare in Sport Basic Awareness Workshop and subsequent Children's Officer training.

Consider how your organisation could:

- Adopt a clear and consistent procedure for taking on new staff and volunteers
- Plan a programme for the induction of new staff and provision of ongoing training

Skerries Town FC will take all reasonable steps to ensure that coaches, managers and volunteers are suitable to work with children and young people.

All coaches, managers and volunteers are required to complete an application/self declaration form, giving the names of two referees who will then be contacted. Written references will then be verified and kept on file. Applicants are also required to produce valid photo ID.

(If you have had a previous involvement in sport, one of these names must be that of an administrator/leader of your last club/place of involvement)

All coaches/volunteers will be subject to vetting with the Gardai/ National Vetting Bureau

All applicants to be interviewed by Club Recruitment Committee

Following interview all appointments are subject to approval and ratification by the committee of Skerries Town FC

All coaches, managers and volunteers will be subject to a sign up procedure in which they undertake to abide by Skerries Town FC rules and FAI codes of conduct and good practice.

(Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained in regard to all application and reference forms)

Once recruited, Skerries Town FC will make all efforts to support and manage coaches, managers and volunteers ensuring that no person is expected to work alone.

Induction: If, following the application and interview process the applicant is accepted, they are required to undertake Skerries Town FC Induction Course. Induction will be a planned programme that covers:

- Familiarisation with the Clubs policies procedures and protocols procedures for dealing with discipline, grievances and allegations, and the organisation's child protection policy.
- Coaches to get to know the organisation, their colleagues, their role
- Expectations of the Club, Coaches/Children's Code of Conduct
- Rules of the Club, coaching philosophy, Team Selection Criteria, Record Keeping Guidelines,
- Safety procedures, safe use of equipment and facilities

**Skerries Town FC
Reference Form
Private and Confidential**

Re.

Name: _____

Address: _____

The above has applied for a post within the Skerries Town FC and has supplied your name as a referee. As an organisation committed to the safety/protection and happiness of children, we are anxious to know if you are satisfied that this person is suitable to work with children in a sporting capacity.

How long have you known this person? _____

In what capacity?

Are you satisfied that the above named person is suitable to work with children in a sporting capacity?

Yes	
No	

(If you have answered no, we will contact you in confidence)

Please rate this person on the following (please tick)

	Poor	Average	Good	V Good	Excellent
Maturity					
Self Motivation					
Motivation of others					
Energy					
Trustworthiness					
Reliability					

Signed _____ **Date** _____

Any further Comments

Please return completed Form to:
Karen McCaffrey,
Secretary Skerries Town FC,
Park Lane
Skerries,
Co. Dublin.

Skerries Town FC Coach, Manager, Volunteer Education & Support Policy

The Committee of Skerries Town FC are indebted to our coaches, managers and volunteers who give freely of their valuable time in providing a stimulating, challenging, supportive and fun soccer experience to children and young people in the Club.

The Committee will endeavour to support these coaches, managers and volunteers in their work by providing an environment where all activities are carried out in a safe, fun manner at all times conducted in the spirit of “Fair Play”.

Skerries Town FC will make all efforts to assist all new volunteers, managers, coaches in whatever way they can.

Skerries Town FC will provide an induction pack to all new volunteers/coaches which will familiarise them with Club rules, policies and procedures and expected codes of behaviour for children, coaches and parents/spectators.

Specifically in relation to those with no soccer background, the Committee have introduced a “Buddy” system whereby new members will accompany one of our existing coaches for a 4 week period during which they can familiarise themselves with the Club and its members adult and children and introduce them to some basic training routines and practice models.

The Committee of Skerries Town FC recognise the value of having appropriately qualified personnel in the club, and therefore will endeavour to support any of our coaches in the coach education process.

At no time will any coach, manager, volunteer be expected to work or deal with any problem alone and they will be assured of Committee assistance and support at all times. Also, coaches, managers and volunteers are encouraged to share ideas, expertise and support other club personnel in any way they can.

Skerries Town FC Safety Policy

All coaches/managers in Skerries Town FC have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the players with whom they work as far as possible within the limits of their control. Therefore coaches should seek to create a safe and enjoyable environment in which to play and train.

In this respect:

- Adequate supervision must be maintained at all times. Best practice advice would advocate adult:child ratios of 2 Leaders to every 16 children (1:8), but no coach, manager or volunteer works alone
- Regular safety checks should be carried out in relation to premises, training facilities and equipment. Ensure that the FAI Goalpost safety policy is strictly adhered to at all times
- Skerries Town FC safety rules should be adhered to at all times
- Parents/guardians should be informed of the starting and finishing times of training sessions and matches.
- A first aid kit should be available at all training sessions and matches and injuries should be recorded, with a note of action taken in relation to each one. Never play injured players.
- Parents/Guardians should be notified of injuries/illness which their children incur while participating in any Skerries Town FC soccer activity.
- Records of attendance should be maintained

Ensure the use of any recommended safety equipment

Skerries Town FC Substance Abuse Policy

In Skerries Town FC the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco shall be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity.

Coaches/managers shall not smoke when taking a session or drink alcohol before taking a session.

In relation to our under-age teams Skerries Town FC shall endeavour to organise receptions and celebrations in a non alcoholic environment and in a manner that is suitable for the age group concerned.

Where this is not possible, the Club will comply with the **Football Association of Ireland directive that under no circumstances whatsoever can any person under the age of 18 years consume alcohol and any and all appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that this policy is strictly adhered to.**

Our coaches/managers/committee shall act as role models for appropriate behaviour and refrain from drinking alcohol at such functions

Skerries Town FC Club Children's Officer/s

The appointment of Club Children's Officers is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere in any club. They act as a resource to members with regard to children's issues and also ensure that children have a voice in the running of the club and can freely talk of their experiences.

Government guidelines advise that a children's officer should be appointed by all clubs and this should be done in accordance with recommended selection and recruitment procedures. The appointment of this person should be carried out in consultation with juvenile members and their parent/guardians.

The League/Club Children's Officer should

- Have good communication skills, be approachable and open minded
- Have good knowledge and be familiar with their Child Welfare and Protection Codes and Guidelines Children First 2011
- Have an understanding of relevant child welfare/protection legislation,
- Have undertaken a Garda Vetting application (when available)
- Have attended the relevant awareness training on child welfare and protection and availed of Children's Officer training

The League/Club Children's Officer will have the following functions:

- To promote the Code of Ethics & Good Practice
- To influence policy and practice and to prioritise children's needs
- To ensure that children know how and whom they can report their concerns to within the club. Information disclosed by a child should be dealt with in accordance with the Department of Health and Children's Guidelines "*Children First*"
- To encourage the participation of parents/guardians in club activities
- To co-operate with parents to ensure that each child enjoys his/her participation in soccer
- To act as a resource with regard to best practice in children's soccer
- To report regularly to the Club Management Committee
- To monitor changes in membership and follow up any unusual dropout, absenteeism or club transfers by children or coach/volunteers

Club/League Children's Officers do not have the responsibility of investigating or validating child protection concerns within the club and have no counselling or therapeutic role. This responsibility lies with the CFA and Gardai.

Skerries Town FC have appointed Francis Jordan, as Child Welfare Officer and he can be contacted at 086 3187259

Skerries Town FC
Guidance on the Use of Photographic and Filming Equipment

Many people use cameras and video equipment at soccer activities and the vast majority, do so for perfectly legitimate reasons. However there is evidence that people have used sporting events to take inappropriate photographs and video footage of children and young people in vulnerable positions.

Skerries Town FC has adopted a policy in relation to the use of images of players on their websites and in other publications.

Where possible we will try to use models or illustrations when promoting an activity and avoid the use of the first name and surname of individuals in a photograph. This reduces the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and outside the sport.

Rules to guide use of photography:

- If the player is named, avoid using their photograph.
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the player.
- Ask for the player's permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. A player's permission form is one way of achieving this.
- Ask for parental permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. A parental permission form is one way of achieving this.
- Only use images of players in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child

Create recognised procedures for reporting the use of inappropriate images to reduce the risks to player's. Follow the child protection procedures, ensuring either the designated person or, if necessary, the health boards and/or gardai are informed.

Amateur photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek permission/accreditation with the children's officer, team manager/coach and/or event organiser of session. This club / organisation will display the following information prior to the start of an event to inform spectators of the policy:

"In line with the recommendation in the Skerries Town FC 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. Children and young people should only be photographed or filmed with their permission and/or the permission of their parents/guardian".

When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to an activity or event we will aim to ensure they are clear about our expectations of them in relation to child protection.

Professional photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the children's officer/event organiser/team manager by producing their professional identification for the details to be recorded.

We will then:

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour
- Issue the photographer with identification which must be worn at all times
- Keep a record of accreditations

- Inform players and parents that a photographer will be in attendance at an event and ensure they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs
- Not allow unsupervised access to athletes or one to one photo sessions at events
- not approve/allow photo sessions outside the events or at an athlete's home

Videoing as a coaching aid: Video equipment can be used as a legitimate coaching aid. However, permission should first be obtained from the player and the player's parent/carer.

Clubs should also be aware of the dangers of permitting camera phones in dressing rooms and should apply appropriate safety rules.

Anyone concerned about any photography taking place at events/matches or training sessions should bring their concerns to the attention of the committee/team manager/coach children's officer.

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. Therefore, we need to encourage responsible and secure use of mobile phones by adults and young people.

Therefore club personnel should advise children:

- 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 your phone as you would any other valuable item so that you guard against theft

As a coach/manager remember:

- Use only group texts for communication among players and teams and inform parents of this at the start of the season
- It is not appropriate to have constant communication for individual players

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

Skerries Town FC Travelling Guidelines

When travelling with young people coaches/volunteers of Skerries Town FC should:

- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover
- Not carry more than the permitted number of passengers
- Ensure the use of safety belts
- Keep to the rules of the road
- Avoid being alone with one player; if with one player you could: put the passenger in the back seat, drop off at central locations, get parental permission for transporting children on a regular basis, and clearly state times of pick off and drop off.

Skerries Town FC Touching Guidelines

All managers/volunteers of Skerries Town FC are advised that:

Any necessary physical contact should be in response to the needs of the child and not the adult

It should be in an open environment with the permission and full understanding of the player

It should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the player. You should not anything that a child can do for him/herself

Coaches should not treat injuries out of sight of others. Use a "Two-Deep" (two personnel, or two players) supervision system. Only personnel who are qualified in administering First Aid or treating sports injuries should attempt to treat an injury.

The comfort level and dignity of the player should always be the priority. Example: Only uncover the injured area, or cover private areas of the athlete's body.

Any doubts of a medical nature should be passed on to a suitably qualified medical person.

Coaches should not play injured players.

Comforting/congratulating players is an important part of the relationship between coaches and players.

Guidelines for this type of touch are:

Limit touching to "safe" areas, such as hand-to-shoulder. It should not involve touching genital area, buttocks, breasts, or mouths.

Make your intention to congratulate or comfort clear to the player.

Get permission from the player before embracing them - remember that personnel are in the position of power.

Respect a players discomfort or rejection of physical contact.

Be sure that touching occurs only when others are present.

Avoid unnecessary physical contact and never engage in inappropriate touching

Skerries Town FC Guidance on the use of Sanctions

Discipline in Soccer

Discipline in soccer should always be positive in focus, providing the structures and rules that allow players to set their own goals and strive for them. It should encourage players to become more responsible for themselves and their actions and therefore more independent.

Discipline should be a positive reinforcement for effort. It should encourage the development of emotional and social skills as well as skills in soccer. Players have to be helped to become responsible for the decisions and choices they make within soccer, particularly when it is likely to make a difference between playing fairly or unfairly.

There is no place in soccer for fighting, bullying, over aggressive or dangerous behaviour.

At all times, players should treat others in a respectful manner. They should never bully, interfere with or take unfair advantage of others.

The use of sanctions is an important element in the maintenance of discipline. However Coaches/Managers/Volunteers and Administrators should have a clear understanding of where and when particular sanctions are appropriate.

It should be remembered that effectively controlled organisations and successful coaches/managers/volunteers are characterised by the sparing use of sanctions. The age and developmental stage of the child should be taken into account when using sanctions.

Sanctions should always be fair, consistent and applied evenly, and in the case of a persistent offence, should be progressively applied.

The following steps are suggested:

- Rules should be clearly stated and agreed
- A warning should be given if a rule is broken
- A sanction (use of time out for example) should be applied if a rule is broken for a second time
- If a rule is broken three or more times, the child should be spoken to and parents/guardians involved if necessary
- Sanctions should only be used in a corrective way that is intended to help children improve both now and in the future. They should never be used in retaliation or to make coach/manager/volunteer feel better or more powerful

- When violations of the team rules or other misbehaviours occur, sanctions should always be applied in an impartial and fair manner
- Sanctions should never be used as threats. If a rule is broken, the appropriate sanction/s should be implemented consistently, fairly and firmly
- Sanctions should not be applied if the coach/manager/volunteer is not comfortable with them. If an appropriate action cannot be devised immediately, the child should be told that the matter will be dealt with later, at a specified time and as soon as is possible
- Once a sanction/s has been imposed, it is important to make the child feel s/he is a valued member of the team again
- A child should be helped, to understand if necessary why sanction/s are imposed
- A child should not be sanctioned for making errors whilst playing soccer
- Physical activity (e.g. running laps or doing push ups) should not be used as a sanction as to do so may cause a child to resent physical activity which is something that s/he should learn to enjoy throughout his/her life. Remember Soccer has to be Fun if participants are to continue playing
- Sanctions should be used sparingly. Constant criticism and sanctioning can cause participants to turn away from Soccer

Adapted from the Irish Sports Councils Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport (2005)

Skerries Town FC Code of Conduct for Spectators

- Remember that although children play organised soccer they are not miniature professionals. Don't place excessive pressure on children to perform to unrealistically high expectations. Children play soccer to develop their skills, to have fun and enjoy the game.
- Be on your best behaviour and lead by example. The behaviour of a teams supporters will often be remembered long after the result of the game. Be remembered for the right reasons.
- Applaud good play, sportsmanship and best effort by the visiting team as well as your own.
- Welcome and respect all your teams opponents. Without them there would be no match.
- Condemn the use of violence in all forms at every opportunity.
- Verbal abuse of players, match officials or opposing supporters cannot be accepted in any shape or form. Players or match officials should never be regarded as fair targets for ignorant or abusive behaviour.

Skerries Town FC

Players Code of Conduct

Children in Skerries Town FC are entitled to:

- Be safe
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- Participate in soccer on an equal basis, appropriate to their ability and stage of development.
- Skerries Town FC have decided that all players are entitled to a minimum playing time of minutes per match. (Consult League rules in this regard) Criteria for team selection should be clearly defined.
- Be happy, have fun and enjoy soccer
- Make a complaint in an appropriate way and have it dealt with through a proper and effective complaints procedure
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality
- Be listened to and to be believed
- Have a voice in the running of the club

Children should also be encouraged to realise that they also have responsibilities to treat other children, fellow players, coaches and volunteers with the same degree of fairness and respect.

In this regard children in Skerries Town FC should undertake to:

- play fairly, do their best and have fun
- be on their best behaviour at all times
- abide by all club rules
- make high standards of Fair Play the standard others want to follow
- respect opponents, they are not the enemy, they are partners in a sporting event
- shake hands before and after the match, whoever wins
- give opponents a hand if they are injured, put the ball out of play so they can get attention
- accept apologies from opponents when they are offered

- respect fellow team members and support them both when they do well and when things go wrong
- treat players from minority groups with the same respect you show other people
- be modest in victory and be gracious in defeat- *“Be A Sport”*
- approach the club Children’s Officer with any questions or concerns they might have. Coaches and parents should encourage children to speak out and support them in doing so

Children in Skerries Town FC should not:

- cheat
- use abusive language, or argue with, the referee, officials, team mates or opponents
- use violence, use physical contact only when it is allowed within the rules
- bully** (see Anti-Bullying Procedures)
- tell lies about adults or other children
- spread rumours
- take banned substances to improve performance
- keep secrets about any person who may have caused them harm
- behave in any manner that may bring the name of Skerries Town FC into disrepute

In Skerries Town FC we want to have fun and develop skills in a safe and *Fair Play* environment where standards of behaviour are just as important as winning.

We recognise that competition and winning is an important goal, but winning at all costs does not meet the needs of young players.

Skerries Town FC are aware that recent research would suggest that increasing numbers of children leave sport between the ages of eight and thirteen. A number of the most common reasons given were; that sport was no longer fun, they did not get to play and over-emphasis on winning.

Therefore we have to make every effort to ensure that we keep a balanced approach to competition, make sure all players get a chance to play and strive to keep the fun in soccer.

Making sport fun.

In promoting “Sport for Fun” we in Skerries Town FC will insist on:

- Encouraging participation and fun

- Promoting the development of skills as opposed to winning at all costs
- Ensure a minimum playing time of 15 minutes per match per player (time may vary according to League Rules)
- Emphasising and praising effort
- Acting as a good role models
- Insisting on **Fair Play** (we will take off offending players)
- Being realistic with our expectations
- Being aware of children's feelings
- Teaching players to respect different cultures
- Teaching players that standards of behaviour are just as important as winning

Anti-Bullying Procedures

Bullying can be defined as repeated verbal, psychological or physical aggression conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with children.

It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting or extortion behaviour by one or more children against a victim. While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reportable to Health Board or Gardai, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of the club where it is taking place.

In situations where the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, clubs should consult the relevant CFA contact with a view to drawing up an appropriate response such as a management plan. (Children First 1999)

All coaches/managers/volunteers/players/parents have a part to play in ensuring that nobody in soccer is the victim of any type of "bullying behaviour". Everyone should be aware that bullying of any kind will not be tolerated and they have a duty to report any such behaviour to our managers/coaches/volunteers who will in turn report to the Committee.

Child - Child Peer Abuse

In most cases of child bullying, the alleged perpetrator will be a child. In these situations, the child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and alleged abuser, that is, it should be considered a child protection issue for both children.

Work must be done to ensure that perpetrators of abuse, even when they are children themselves, take responsibility for their behaviour and acknowledge that the behaviour is unacceptable.

It is important that clarity exists in respect of which behaviours constitute peer abuse, particularly child sexual abuse. Consultation with the health board should help to clarify the nature of any sexual behaviour by children which gives rise to concern.

Bullying is often defined in terms of three components.

- It must occur over time, rather than being a single aggressive act.
- It involves an imbalance of power, the powerful attack the powerless.
- It can be psychological, verbal, or physical in nature.

Studies have found that the most common experiences of bullying and discrimination reported by young people was at the hands of other young people.

This included:

- Being called names, insulted or verbally abused;
- Being deliberately embarrassed and humiliated by other children;
- Being made to feel different or like an outsider;
- Being lied about;
- Being physically assaulted or threatened with violence;
- Being ignored.

In the study, boys were most likely to experience physical bullying or threats, have property stolen or damaged. Girls on the other hand, were more likely to be ignored or not spoken to.

Response to Bullying

Vigilance is the most potent deterrent against bullying so that children and young people who bully will know that it will be dealt with, and the victims of bullying will have confidence in this.

There needs to be open discussion about bullying and a clear statement of its unacceptability. Managers/coaches/children/parents should be advised at the start of every season that “bullying” in any shape or form is not acceptable or permitted in (insert club name here).

For Managers/ Coaches; In confronting the bully or bullies in relation to specific incidents it is important to:

- Be absolutely certain about the known facts
- Confront the “bully/bullies” with the allegations
- Make it clear that the behaviour is unacceptable
- See each “bully” separately if appropriate
- Be specific about sanctions if the bullying does not stop
- Follow up to check that the behaviour has ceased
- Record all instances of bullying and action taken.

Who should deal with bullying?

While the more **extreme** forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and will be reported to the CFA or An Garda Síochana, dealing with other bullying behaviour CAN be dealt through the clubs normal disciplinary process via the CWO.

How can it be prevented?

- Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.
- Ensure adequate supervision at all times
- 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.
- 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 children with different abilities.
- 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

All incidents of “bullying” should be reported to the Child Welfare Officer and who CAN deal with the issue through either the clubs normal disciplinary process or a whole group process.

Codes of behaviour between Coaches/Volunteers and children

- All Clubs/Leagues should establish a code of behaviour between workers and children, to avoid the possibility of misunderstanding, or the potential for allegations of misconduct. Such codes should include the following guidance:
- Coaches/Volunteers should be sensitive to the risks involved in participating in contact sports or other activities
- While physical contact is a valid way of comforting, reassuring and showing concern for children, it should only take place when it is acceptable to all persons concerned.
- Coaches/Volunteers should never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child, nor should they even tell jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children.
- Coaches/Volunteers should be sensitive to the possibility of developing favouritism, or becoming over involved or spending a great deal of time with any one child.
- Children should be encouraged to report cases of bullying to either a designated person, or a Coach/Volunteer of their choice. Complaints must be brought to the attention of management Committee.
- Everyone involved in the Club/League should respect the personal space, safety and privacy of individuals.

It is not recommended that volunteers give lifts in their cars to individual young people, especially for long journeys.

All volunteers should agree this code and it should form part of any future induction training introduced by the Club/League

Best Practice-Coaches

In keeping children and young people at the forefront of planning and practice, our coaches can be confident that participants will enjoy their football experiences and that their actions are regarded as safe and in keeping with the principle that the safety and welfare of children is of paramount consideration.

Our Coaches are given a position of trust by parents/guardians and players, and are expected to operate to the highest standards of behaviour (Act as a Good Role Model) whilst in the company of under age players (under 18years). Our coaches are also expected not to engage in any activity that could reasonably be viewed as bringing the club or soccer in general into disrepute.

It is important for our coaches to note that in adhering to these guidelines ensures not only a safe environment for children but also a safe environment in which coaches and volunteers can operate.

Most coaches work in an environment where it is recognised that, in a sporting context, certain types of coaching require a „hands on approach“, i.e., it may be necessary to support a participant in order to physically demonstrate a particular technique. This should only occur when necessary and in an open and appropriate way with the knowledge, permission and full understanding of the participant concerned and his/her parents/guardians.

Coaches must realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted, not only by the player, but by outsiders motivated by jealousy, dislike or mistrust and could lead to allegations of sexual misconduct or impropriety. Therefore coaches should be aware of, and avoid all situations conducive to risk.

Where possible, our coaches/volunteers should avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others.
- Taking sessions alone (always employ “Two Deep” supervision).
- Taking children to their homes.
- Taking children on journeys alone in their care.

Our Coaches/volunteers should never:

- Exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward.
- Share a room with a young person alone on away trips.
- 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.
- Use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a young person.
- Take measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adult and permission from the Committee
- Undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.) in the training of young people. •

Safety

Coaches have a responsibility to ensure the safety of all players possible within the limits of their control. Therefore, coaches should seek to create a safe and enjoyable environment in which to play and train.

In this respect:

- Regular safety checks should be carried out in relation to premises, training facilities and equipment. Any problems should be brought to the attention of the Committee
- Appropriate safety rules should be adopted and implemented and protective equipment should be used in any contact training session.

- Parents/guardians should be informed of the starting and finishing times of training sessions and matches.
- A first aid kit should be available at all training sessions /matches and injuries should be recorded, with a note of action taken in relation to each one.
- Parents/Guardians should be notified of injuries/illness which their children incur while participating in any football activity
- Never play injured players.
- **Ensure that the FAI Goalpost safety policy is strictly adhered to at all times**

This policy may be amended at anytime in the future to reflect changes in the statutory guidelines, Child Welfare best practise methods or as a result of a review of this policy and its operation, undertaken by the club.