

Squash Ireland Safeguarding Policy for Children and Young People in Sport

Introduction

Squash Ireland is committed to ensuring that the best interests of children and young people playing squash is of paramount importance. The Safeguarding Policy for Children and Young People playing Squash is underpinned by national policy and legislation in ROI Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, and the requirements under The Children First Act 2015, and in Northern Ireland – the Children (NI) Order and Cooperating to Safeguarding Children and Young People 2017.

This guidance is also informed by Tusla’s Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, The Child Care Act 1991, The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 and the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016. In Northern Ireland guidance is also from Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 and Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

There are a number of key pieces of legislation that relate to child welfare and protection. For further information see Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People in Sport

<https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/2020-01/safeguarding-guidance.pdf>

The terms “children and young people” and “children” will be used interchangeably in the text to refer to those under 18 years of age. The law in both Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland ensure protection for children under 18.

Safeguarding Principles

BACKGROUND

Children have a lot to gain from sport. Their natural sense of fun and spontaneity can blossom in positive sporting environments. Sport provides an excellent opportunity for children to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own unique potential. These benefits will increase through a positive and progressive approach to the involvement of children in sport that places the needs of the child first and winning and competition second. Winning and losing are an important part of sport but they must be kept in a healthy perspective. A child-centred approach to children's sport will return many benefits in terms of the health and wellbeing of our future adult population. The organisation of squash for children should be guided by a set of core values that provide the foundation for all practice:

PRINCIPLE 1: IMPORTANCE OF CHILDHOOD

The importance of childhood should be understood and valued by everyone involved in sport. The right to happiness within childhood should be recognised and enhanced at all levels of sport.

PRINCIPLE 2: NEEDS OF THE CHILD

All children's sport experiences should be guided by what is best for children. This means that adults should have a basic understanding of the emotional, physical and personal needs of young people. The stages of development and ability of children should guide the types of activity provided within sport.

PRINCIPLE 3: INTEGRITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

Adults interacting with children in sport (referred to as Sports Leaders in this Code) are in a position of trust and influence. They should always ensure that children are treated with integrity and respect, and the self-esteem of young people is enhanced. All adult actions in sport should be guided by what is best for the child and carried out in the context of respectful and open relationships. Physical, emotional or sexual abuse and neglect of any kind or threat of such abuse is totally unacceptable within sport, as in society in general.

PRINCIPLE 4: FAIR PLAY

All children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of 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 commercialisation and corruption. (European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics. Council of Europe, 1993)

This model of fair play should be incorporated into all sport organisations that have juvenile and child members as participants. The principles of fair play should always be emphasised, and organisers should give clear guidelines regarding acceptable standards of behaviour. The importance of participation for each child, best effort and enjoyment rather than winning should be stressed. Children should be encouraged to win in an open and fair way. Behaviour, which constitutes cheating in any form, for example, falling over in football to gain free kicks or penalties, should be discouraged.

PRINCIPLE 5: QUALITY ATMOSPHERE AND ETHOS

Children's sport should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. Standards of behaviour for leaders and children in sports organisations should be as important as the standards set for sports performance. Standards of excellence should extend to personal conduct.

PRINCIPLE 6: COMPETITION

Competition is an essential element of sport and should be encouraged in an age appropriate manner. A child centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place. A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to children's development while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. Through such competition children learn respect for opponents, officials and rules of the sport. Too often competitive demands are placed on children too early, which results in excessive levels of pressure on them. This is one of a number of factors, which contribute to high levels of dropout from sport. It should always be kept in mind that the welfare of children comes first

and competitive standards come second. While under eight is a very different age group to under eighteen the same general principle should apply. As adults we need to strike a balance between a young person's desire to win and a young person's right to participate, irrespective of ability. Remember that success is not the same as winning and failure is not the same as losing.

PRINCIPLE 7: EQUALITY

All children should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of ability, age, gender, 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 potential alongside other children. Sports Leaders should be aware of and seek to gain competence in addressing the needs of young people with disabilities or any other additional needs.

Child Safeguarding and Protection Policies, Procedures and Practice

1. Safe Recruitment Procedures for those working with Children and Young People

It is important that Squash Ireland takes all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with children and young people. The following procedures will apply before appointing coaches, managers, leaders to work with children and young people:

- Applications form must be completed, qualifications verified and role clearly defined
- Two written references should be provided and checked
- Vetting should be completed
- Interview by two appointees of Board
- Board ratifies appointment
- Relevant code of conduct must be signed
- Safeguarding training must be completed

- Knowledge of Squash Ireland policies and procedures, names of Designated Liaison Person and National Children’s Officer

See below for:

- Application Form for volunteers
- Application form for coaches, leaders, managers
- Reference form
- Recruitment check form
- Link <https://www.squashireland.ie/development-resources/safeguarding/> *Go to Staff Recruitment Procedures*

2. Safeguarding Training

Squash Ireland insists that all staff and volunteers working with Children and Young People receive safeguarding training. Sport Ireland offers, through the Local Sports Partnerships, 3 different levels of safeguarding training courses. <https://www.sportireland.ie/participation/lsp-contact-finder> - Click on the website of your LSP and put in ‘Safeguarding 1’ in the search box to find courses.

Sport NI offer 2 different levels of safeguarding workshops

Roles and Responsibilities

Squash Ireland is responsible for overseeing the adoption and implementation of safeguarding guidance for children and young people in sport. It is also responsible for overseeing the adoption and implementation of the legal requirements set out by the Children First Act and the good practice and guidelines and standards in NI by all its affiliated members.

See below for the following roles within safeguarding:

Link: <https://www.squashireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/roles-and-responsibilities-3-1.pdf>

- National Children’s Officer
- Club Children’s Officer
- Relevant Person
- Designated Liaison Person

- Mandated Person
- Role of Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland
- Adult to Child relationships in sport
- Child to Child relationships in sport.

3. Reporting and Protection

All those involved in sport have a moral duty to report concerns to help create a safer environment for children, Staff and volunteers should be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact may be being abused or at risk of being abused. They should know how to recognise and respond to the possibility of abuse or neglect.

The safety and wellbeing of the child must take priority over concerns about adults against whom an allegation may be made.

Reports of concern should be made without delay to Tusla/HSCT.

Tusla (ROI): www.tusla.ie/children-first/contact-a-social-worker3

An Garda Síochána: 999/112

In Northern Ireland it is the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) Gateway Team. Alternatively you can contact the NSPCC helpline to discuss any concern about a child: Telephone: 0808 800 5000 Text: 88858 Email: help@nspcc.org.uk

Visit gateway contacts:

www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/gatewayservice-teams-contact-details

See here <https://www.squashireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Reporting-and-Protecting-2-1-1.pdf>

for more detailed information on:

- Responding to child abuse.
- Recording.
Reasonable grounds for concern.
- Responding to a child/young person who discloses abuse.
- Confidentially.
- Reporting concerns about a child.
- Reporting to Statutory Authorities.

- Procedure for the management of allegation of abuse against a coach/volunteer.
- Categories of abuse.
- Signs of abuse.
- Statutory Contacts Republic of Ireland.
- Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trusts.

4. Disciplinary, Complaints and Appeals of Code of Behaviour Breaches

Squash Ireland has put disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures in place. It is important to note that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the Statutory Authorities and should not be undertaken by the National Children's Officers/ Designated Liaison Persons or Sports' Leaders.

- A code of conduct reflecting a child centred ethos has been drawn-up, widely disseminated to all Sports Leaders and members.
<https://www.squashireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Policy-06-Code-of-Conduct-BA-2023-08-14.docx.pdf>
- On receiving a complaint, Squash Ireland will refer to the disciplinary committee to resolve problems relating to the conduct of its members in accordance with the Disciplinary Procedures of Squash Ireland. See appendix 8 - <https://www.squashireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Policy-04-Disciplinary-Procedures-of-Irish-Squash-1-1.pdf>
- This should include bullying.
- The disciplinary committee will include the NCO for all complaints referring to or involving Juniors. The complaint should be in writing to the Hon Secretary or National Children's Officer.

See Appendix 4 for Complaints Report Form

<https://www.squashireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Complaints-Report-Form-1.pdf>

If the complaint involves suspected abuse or a criminal offence the children's officer/designated liaison person should be consulted and the

disciplinary committee disbanded. The statutory authorities will then be informed.

- All communications with Juniors shall be through their parent or guardian

5. Safeguarding Guidance

Squash Ireland has drawn up documents that detail how it provides a safe environment for children and young people:

See Appendix 5 for more information on:

- Overnight, staying away and hosting
- Supervision, ratios and environments
- Registration, dropouts and club transfers
- Incident and accidents reporting form
- Transport and Travel
- Filming and photography
- Inappropriate images
- Social media
- Use of mobile phones
- Physical contact
- Bullying
- Facilities

Link: Go to [Safeguarding Guidance](#) on this page –

<https://www.squashireland.ie/development-resources/safeguarding/#section-2>

6. Bullying

Bullying is defined by the Department of Education and Skills guidelines as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

Squash Ireland recognises its duty of care and responsibility to safeguard all participants from harm and seeks to ensure that bullying behaviours is not accepted or condoned.

See Squash Ireland Anti Bullying Policy

Link: <https://www.squashireland.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Anti-Bullying-Policy.docx-2.pdf>

7. Codes of Conduct

Codes of conduct set a standard of behaviour that reflect Squash Ireland and make it easier to deal with conduct and behaviour issues as they arise. Codes of conduct set expectations for everyone involved – from administrators, coaches and officials to players, parents and spectators.

- Code for young people
- Code for parents/guardians
- Code for sports leaders
- Code for committees

See here: <https://www.squashireland.ie/documentation-download/>
Go to Safeguarding Docs

This policy and associated documents will be reviewed every three years.

Jan 23