

Fencing Ireland

Pionsóireacht Éireann



FENCING
I R E L A N D

Volunteer Handbook

Fencing Ireland

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Child Protection Policy

Policy Statement

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

Introduction

Fencing Ireland believes that:

- the welfare of any child is paramount
- anyone, whatever their age, gender, family status, religion, disability, and/or race (including race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origins) has the right to protection from abuse
- all suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice must and will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately

As the organisation recognised by the international federation, as being responsible for the administration of our sport, we are responsible for overseeing the adoption and the implementation of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, by our members. To maximise compliance with the Code, as set out in Section 2.6 we shall:

- ensure that the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport is adopted, agreed to, implemented and signed up to by all members.
- amend, as necessary, our Constitution to reflect a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting, selecting and managing.
- appoint a National Children's Officer/Designated Person. S/he will be a member of the Executive Committee or have ease of access to attend meetings when required.
- ensure that effective disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures are in place.
- have in place procedures for dealing with a concern or complaint made to the Statutory Authorities against a committee member or a Sports Leader. Regulations should stipulate that a Sports Leader who is the subject of an allegation, which has been reported to the Statutory Authorities, should stand aside while the matter is being examined. S/he should be invited to resume full duties when and if appropriate internal disciplinary procedures are completed.
- ensure that all sports clubs with child members are fully affiliated and signed up to the Fencing Ireland constitution.
- be represented by appropriate personnel at all education/training workshops dealing with the Code.

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- where children are involved in representative teams, designate an appropriate senior officer within Fencing Ireland as the person with responsibility for following the guidelines of the Code.
- review our child protection procedures regularly through open discussion with our members, Sports Councils and Statutory Authorities.
- promote contact with representatives of the Statutory Authorities. The building of these relationships will contribute to the creation of an environment in which education and knowledge of child protection issues and procedures are widely known.
- examine and take appropriate action in response to any reports or observations of unusual incidents (high rate of transfers, dropouts) received from clubs.

Everyone in the Irish Fencing Community has a duty of care to safeguard children involved in activities from harm. Everyone has a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be considered. Fencing Ireland will do their utmost to ensure the safety and protection of all everyone involved in any fencing activity whether that is at clubs, events competition, trips, activity sessions or anywhere else that fencing takes place.

Definitions

Child: For the purposes of these policies, a child is any person under 18 years of age.

Position of Trust: refers to anyone with a position of responsibility over a child.

Sports Leaders: For the purpose of this Code and all associated policies, all adults involved in children's sport are referred to as Sports Leaders. All have a role to play in ensuring that procedures as described in the Code are put in place, agreed, followed and reviewed on a regular basis. The principal leadership roles (some of which overlap) include the following:

- Club/Organisation Officers: President, Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and Committee members are appointed to oversee club activities and the development of the club/organisation.
- Administrators: While administrators may not be actively involved in children's sport, they may be involved in organising activities and events.
- Coach/Trainer: A coach is a person who assists the young participant to develop his or her skills and abilities in a progressive way.
- Instructor: Instructors are involved in the systematic development of the core skills and abilities of an activity, sometimes in a non-competitive context.
- Mentor: A mentor is an individual who undertakes an overseeing role with a group of participants under 18 years of age, often in co-operation with other mentors.
- Selector: A selector is an individual who has responsibility for the selection of participants under 18 years of age for teams and events.
- Official: An official is an individual charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the rules of an activity are adhered to in a formal way. This category includes referees, DTs, armoury, etc.

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- **Assistants:** Assistants are those people who provide back-up to any of the roles outlined in this section and often such assistants are involved on an intermittent basis (e.g. provision of lifts to matches or competitions; checking equipment, etc).

Definitions of Abuse

There are four main types of abuse. These are:

Physical Abuse – this may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. Examples of physical abuse in sport may be when a child is forced into training and competition that exceeds the capacity of his or her immature and growing body; or where a child is given drugs to enhance performance or delay puberty.

Sexual Abuse – involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (e.g. rape, buggery or oral sex) or non- penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways. In sport, coaching techniques that involve physical contact with children can potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. The power of the coach over young performers, if misused, may also lead to abusive situations developing.

Emotional Abuse – is the persistent emotional maltreatment 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 feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying, causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Examples of emotional abuse in sport include subjecting children to constant criticism, name calling, and sarcasm or bullying. Putting them under consistent pressure to perform to unrealistically high standards is also a form of emotional abuse.

Neglect – the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance misuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- Provide adequate food, clothing or shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- Protect a child from physical harm and emotional harm or danger
- Ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care – givers)
- Ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

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Examples of neglect in sport could include: not ensuring children are safe; exposing them to undue cold or heat, or exposing them to unnecessary risk of injury.

Child Abuse Concerns

Signals of Child Abuse

Signs of abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental.

A cluster or pattern of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. Indicators should be noted. It is important, however, to realise that all of these indicators can occur in other situations where abuse has not been a factor, and that the list is not exhaustive.

Category	Indicators	
	Physical	Behavioural
Physical	Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas Bites, burns and scalds	Becoming withdrawn or aggressive Reluctance to change clothing
Emotional	Drop in performance Crying	Regressive behaviour Excessive clinginess
Neglect	Weight loss Untreated fractures	Change in attendance Reluctance to go home
Sexual	Torn or bloodstained clothing Inappropriate sexual awareness, behaviour or language	Distrustful of adults Sudden drop in performance

Responding to Disclosure, Suspicions and Allegations

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

If there are grounds for concern about the safety or welfare of a young person you should react to the concern. Persons unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive and therefore reportable, should contact the Club Children's Officer or the National Children's Officer. Grounds for concern include a specific indication from a child, a statement from a person who witnessed abuse or an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse.

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

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

Response to a Child Disclosing Abuse

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

- deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive manner through listening to the child rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened.
- stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately and take what the child is saying seriously.
- understand that the child has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling must be a positive one so that the child will continue to trust in adults involved in the investigation.
- make no judgmental statements about the person whom the allegation is made against.
- not question the child unless the nature of what he or she is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as "Can you explain to me what you mean by that".
- check out the concerns with the parents or guardians before making a report unless doing so would endanger the child or compromise an investigation.
- be honest and tell the child that it is not possible that keep information a secret.
- give the child some indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents or guardians, the Health Service Executive or Social Services. The child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable so may not want you to inform any other adult. Listen to the child's concerns but reassure them that this is a necessary step and will help to keep them safe.
- carefully record the details.
- reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- pass on this information to the Designated Person of Fencing Ireland.
- not confront the alleged abuser yourself before seeking guidance from the Designated Person.

Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse

When reporting suspected child abuse to the Statutory Authorities, the following procedures should be followed:

- Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.
- Report the matter as soon as possible to the designated person with responsibility for reporting abuse within Fencing Ireland. If the Designated Person has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, he or she will make a report to the Health Service Executive or Social Services who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse.
- In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk

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- and the Designated Person is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Gardaí or police authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.

If the Designated Person is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist he or she can informally consult with the local health board or social services. The Designated Person will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

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

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the Health Service Executive or the Gardaí. The act also covers the offence of 'false reporting'.

The main provisions of the Act are:

- The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to designated officers of Health Service Executive or any member of An Garda Síochána;
- The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including, dismissal;
- The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities "knowing that statement to be false". This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

Allegations Against Sports Leaders

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

- The reporting procedure in respect of suspected child abuse (reported by the designated person), see previous page
- The procedure for dealing with the Sports Leader (carried out by the Chairperson of Fencing Ireland or a senior officer, or a person not already involved with the child protection concern)

The safety of the child making the allegation and any others who are or may be at risk should be ensured and this should take precedence over any other consideration. In this regard, the club should take any steps which may be immediately necessary to protect the child.

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

The Reporting Procedure

If the designated person has reasonable grounds for concern, the matter should be reported to the local health board or social services, following standard reporting procedures.

The Sports Leader

While the Designated Person makes the report to the local health board, the Chairperson should deal with the Leader in question.

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

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

Confidentiality

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

The following points should be kept in mind:

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

Code of Conduct for Coaches and Club Officials

Fencing Ireland is fully committed to providing a safe and fair environment for all young fencers. Your cooperation is essential to be able to fulfil this commitment.

You must follow the points stated in the code of conduct as described below:

- Be familiar with and follow the required procedures in the Code of Ethics, the Code of Conduct, and any other policies as published by Fencing Ireland
- Carry out your duties and responsibilities in the understanding that the welfare of children is paramount
- Create a safe and enjoyable environment for young fencers by:
 - Planning and preparing appropriately and being positive during sessions
 - Making sure all levels of participation should be enjoyable and fun
 - Prioritising skill development and personal satisfaction over highly structured competition.
 - Setting age appropriate and realistic goals
 - Avoiding favouritism – each child deserves equal time and attention, regardless of their ability
 - Praising and encouraging effort as well as results
 - Showing respect for all involved, children and adults
- Recognise and ensure the welfare of children by:
 - Keeping attendance records
 - Not exposing a child to criticism, hostility or sarcasm
 - Never swearing at, ridiculing, shouting unnecessarily or arguing with a child
 - Working in an open environment
 - Ensuring there is adequate supervision
 - Involving and updating parents on a regular basis, especially if a problem has arisen
 - Respecting a child's sensitivity to their ability and/or physical stature
 - Never using physical punishment or force
 - Not using verbal or physical punishments or exclusion for mistakes
 - Keeping a brief record of any injuries and actions taken
 - Keeping a brief record of any issues arising and actions taken
- Do not allow or engage in bullying behaviour, rough physical games, or sexually provocative games
- Never allow or engage in inappropriate physical contact of any kind or make sexually suggestive comments about or to a child
- Co-operate with the recommendations from medical practitioners in the management of a child's medical or related problems. You may request a certificate of medical fitness to ensure safe continued participation
- Keep any information in relation to a fencer of a personal or medical nature strictly confidential unless the welfare of the child requires the passing on of this information.

Code of Conduct for Coaches and Club Officials

- Never exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward.
- Avoid the use of alcohol at all times whilst responsible for young people e.g. training sessions, events and on trips with young fencers.

Where possible Coaches/Club Officials should avoid:

- spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others.
- taking sessions alone.
- taking children to their home.
- taking children on journeys alone in their car.

Code of Conduct for Parents

Fencing Ireland is fully committed to providing a safe and fair environment for all young fencers. We strive to provide an environment which will allow fencers to perform to their best ability, free from bullying and intimidation.

You can help and support the implementation of best practice policies in your child's/ children's Club by following the code below.

Parents should:

- understand and ensure their child abides by The Code of Conduct for Young Fencers
- maintain the highest standards of conduct when interacting with children, other parents and with officials or organisers
- encourage their child to play by the rules
- teach their child that giving their best is as important as winning
- do all they can to encourage good sportsmanship by acknowledging good play on both sides
- always behave responsibly and do not seek to unfairly affect the outcome
- always recognise the value and importance of the volunteers and consider contributing their time and effort when volunteers are required
- respect referees, coaches, organisers and other participants
- not publicly question the judgment or honesty of referees, coaches or organisers
- encourage mutual respect for team-mates and opponents
- support all efforts to remove abusive behaviour and bullying behaviour in all its forms
- be familiar with and follow all Fencing Ireland policies, in particular the travelling policy, the Social Media policy and the Photography Policy

Anti-Discrimination & Anti-Harassment Policy

Policy Statement

Fencing Ireland has in place practices which are designed to ensure that all staff and members are protected from discrimination and harassment, and that claims of discrimination and harassment are dealt with speedily and constructively.

Rationale

Fencing Ireland believes that in a civil society discrimination and harassment are unacceptable and, furthermore, that staff and patrons can be adversely affected by incidents of discrimination and harassment in facilities. Staff have a responsibility to provide an environment that is free from harassment and discrimination in all forms, including those based on race, ethnicity, gender, ability, disability, sexuality and religion.

This policy is intended as a framework document, allowing Fencing Ireland the flexibility to accommodate local needs and circumstances. However, the policy directs that Fencing Ireland take responsibility for establishing mechanisms and procedures to actively counter discrimination and harassment. This recognizes the increasing involvement of management to local level.

This Anti-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy is further supported by a range of legislation.

Definitions

1. Discrimination

- Refers to any behaviour or practice which reflects an assumption of superiority of one group over another;
 - Is behaviour which disadvantages people on the basis of their real or perceived membership of a particular group; and
 - Includes such behaviour as less favourable treatment, unfair exclusion, and asking discriminatory questions.
- 1.1. Direct discrimination takes place when a person treats another person, on the basis of an attribute or characteristic, less favourably than a person without that attribute or characteristic. These attributes or characteristics could include gender, marital status, pregnancy, parental status, family responsibilities, sexuality, ethnicity, age or disability.
- 1.2. Indirect discrimination takes place when a person imposes a condition, requirement or practice which is unreasonable or disadvantages a member of a group who shares or is believed to share an attribute on the basis of gender, marital status, pregnancy, parental status, family responsibilities, sexuality, ethnicity, age or disability. Indirect discrimination can also occur when groups or individuals are treated as being the same, although they are different. By not taking differences into account, one group or individual benefits at the expense of the others.

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2. Harassment

- Is the exercise of power by one person over another, which often presents as bullying behaviour
- Involves physical, verbal or psychological behaviour which makes another person feel embarrassed, offended, upset, devalued, degraded, afraid, frustrated or angry.
- Includes insulting, demeaning, humiliating, offensive, vilifying or intimidatory behaviour or behaviour which incites hatred.
- Includes a wide range of conduct that causes another person to feel offended, humiliated, insulted or ridiculed.
- Is behaviour which is unwelcome, unreciprocated, uninvited and usually repeated
- May cause damaging stereotypes to be maintained
- Is a breach of proper standards of conduct and professional behaviour;
- May be based on misunderstanding or be a deliberate act based on a subjective perspective.

Goal - It is intended that Fencing Ireland will provide a supportive environment which is free from discriminatory practices and harassment and which promotes personal respect and physical and emotional safety.

3. Requirements

Fencing Ireland Management will be responsible for:

- Implementing this policy within all Clubs affiliated to it
- Being aware of the legislative requirements relating to discrimination and harassment
- Ensuring that the preparation and review of plans and grievance procedures involve consultation with all Clubs affiliated to Fencing Ireland and include the range of discriminatory behaviours
- Ensuring that patrons, club members are familiar with Fencing Ireland's approach, and understand their rights and responsibilities in relation to it
- Promoting this policy within all Clubs affiliated to Fencing Ireland
- Monitoring Fencing Ireland's plans to counter discrimination and harassment, including documenting reported grievances, and initiating reviews of the approaches at regular intervals
- Ensuring sensitivity and confidentiality, and the protection of the rights of all individuals, and
- Practising non-discriminatory behaviours

Affiliated Clubs will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that activities are congruent with and support this policy
- Helping people to develop competencies to challenge discriminatory attitudes and behaviours in themselves and others
- Being aware of the legislative requirements relating to discrimination and harassment
- Ensuring that claims of discrimination and harassment are speedily and constructively addressed according to Fencing Ireland's strategies; and
- Practising non-discriminatory behaviours

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- Providing advice and support materials for the enactment of this policy
- Assisting with professional development

Vetting Policy

Vetting is a requirement for certain roles working with young people who are under the age of eighteen. This is required by law and is in line with the best practice within our organisation.

Forms can be obtained from Nuala McGarrity (admin@irishfencing.net) and should be returned to her by post to Fencing Ireland, Branksome Dene, 1A Frankfort Park, Dundrum, Dublin 14 together with I.D. as set out on the form.

Legislation and further information:

The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 to 2016 together with the Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 Part 3 provides the legal framework for persons working in relevant work or activity to undergo a vetting check prior to working with young people.

Relevant legislation

Civil Service Commissioners Act 1956

Child Care Act 1991 – Sections 5; 61; 65

Data Protection Act 1988/2003 Children's Act 2001 – Section 258

Private Security Authority Act 2004

National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 to 2016 Criminal Justice (Spent Convictions and Certain Disclosures) Act 2016 Part 3

Photography Policy

Introduction

The Filming and Photography Policy provides guidance on taking and using appropriate images. This policy is not about preventing parents/guardians and supporters from taking pictures, but rather to ensure that only those who have a right to take photographs do so. This policy is designed to promote safeguards for any photographic or filming/video activity to minimise the risk of inappropriate taking and use of images.

Permission for Photography/Filming

Permission for fencers/parents/guardians to take images is granted by way of membership with Fencing Ireland. The permission granted is for personal use only under the terms of this policy, and no commercial photography is permitted under this license.

Third party photographers, videographers or other organisations employed to take images must seek permission from event organisers, providing photographic identification.

Permission for press and/or commercial photography/videography must be sought prior to the event from the Secretary of Fencing Ireland.

Prohibited Photography/Filming

Taking images using any type of equipment is banned in an area where people are changing or would normally have a reasonable expectation of privacy. Examples of such areas would include:

- Changing rooms
- Individual changing/private cubicles
- Toilets
- Medical/physio treatment rooms

Flash photography is prohibited in an environment where any performance may be affected or there is the potential for its use to cause harm.

Acceptable Photography/Filming

Images can be taken for a variety of purposes, including for administration or personal use, publicising the sport or aiding skill development.

Types of images and appropriate use:

a) Personal images – images taken by parents/guardians or other family members during an event as a celebration of a young person's attendance or achievement. This includes the use of a professional photographer, with permission, taking images for the personal use of those attending. Other people may be included in an image and we expect parents/guardians and other family members to respect this by not distributing images publicly.

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b) Training images – these are images or footage taken during a training session or during an event specifically to aid in the development of a skill or technique. We expect these images to be taken by a qualified coach or a person specifically appointed by the coach. These images may be used as examples of technique or mastery of a skill for teaching/coaching purposes and should not be distributed outside this specific use.

c) Media images – these are images taken by an individual from the media, i.e. TV, newspaper or professional photographer where the images are to be used for publicity or promotion of the event or future events.

d) Administration images – these are images taken for general administration purposes; including images used for membership cards, competition entries, images for Fencing Ireland or the club's website or Facebook page.

Use of images on Social Media

(Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc)

Where images of young fencers are used on social media, the person responsible for posting an image must be aware of the potential for an image to be used inappropriately. The following safeguards must be in place to protect young people:

- i) Children will not be named in full – first name will suffice. Should their full name be used at any stage, permission will be sought by parents/guardians.
- ii) No child shall be photographed and named under that photograph if they are the only fencer photographed.
- iii) Captions should be in keeping with the sport represented
- iv) The posting and any purpose should not breach the codes of conduct
- v) The type of image should not breach guidance in this policy.

Protected Disclosure Policy

What is a Protected Disclosure

A protected disclosure occurs when a member, volunteer, or employee, raises a concern or discloses information which relates to wrongdoing, illegal practices, or unethical conduct, which has come to his or her attention through membership of, or employment or volunteering with, Fencing Ireland.

Fencing Ireland encourages volunteers, or employees, to raise concerns within Fencing Ireland rather than ignoring a problem or reporting the matter externally in the first instance. Under this policy a member, volunteer, or employee, is entitled to raise concerns or disclose information without fear of penalisation or threat of less favourable treatment, discrimination or disadvantage.

Fencing Ireland's Commitment

Fencing Ireland commits to maintaining an open culture with the highest standards of honesty and accountability where a member, volunteer, or employee, may report any concerns in confidence.

To whom does the policy apply?

This policy applies to all members, volunteers, or employees.

Any problems which arise for members, volunteers, or employees, relating to employment, the workplace, competitions, or the management of Fencing in general, should be raised through Fencing Ireland's grievance procedures available at <https://www.fencingireland.net/governance>

It is also important to note that this policy does not replace any legal reporting or disclosure requirements under other legislation. Where statutory reporting requirements and procedures exist these must be fulfilled.

Purpose of the Protected Disclosure Policy

- To encourage members, volunteers, or employees, to feel confident and safe in raising concerns and disclosing information;
- To provide methods to raise concerns in confidence and receive a response on any action taken;
- To ensure that a response issues, where possible, addressing the concerns raised and information disclosed;
- To reassure the Discloser that he or she will be protected from penalisation or any threat of penalisation.

What types of concerns can be raised?

A concern or disclosure should relate to a relevant wrongdoing such as possible fraud, crime, danger or failure to comply with any legal obligation which has come to your attention in connection with your employment, your membership, or volunteering with Fencing Ireland.

Protected Disclosure Policy

It is important to understand the Discloser must have a reasonable belief in the truth of the matter which is disclosed.

What types of concerns should not be raised under this Procedure?

A personal concern, for example a grievance around a contract of employment, would not be regarded as a concern requiring protected disclosure and would be more appropriately processed through the policies in the Employees' Handbook.

Safeguards and Penalisation

A member, volunteer, or employee, who makes a disclosure and has a reasonable belief of wrongdoing will not be penalised by Fencing Ireland, even if the concerns or disclosure turn out to be unfounded.

Penalisation includes suspension/dismissal, disciplinary action, demotion, discrimination, threats or other unfavourable treatment arising from raising a concern or making a disclosure on the basis of reasonable belief for doing so.

If you believe that you are being subjected to penalisation as a result of making a disclosure under this procedure, you should inform the Chairman or Secretary of Fencing Ireland immediately. Should you believe that the penalisation comes from the Board or any member of the board, you should inform the Audit Committee.

Members, volunteers, or employees who are demonstrated to have penalised or retaliated against those who have raised concerns under this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

Member, volunteer, or employees must have a reasonable belief that there are grounds for their concern. It should be noted that appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against any member, volunteer, or employee, who is found to have raised a concern or raised a disclosure with malicious intent.

Confidentiality

Fencing Ireland is committed to protecting the identity of the member, volunteer, or employee, raising a concern and ensures that relevant disclosures are treated in confidence.

However, there are circumstances, as outlined in the Act, where confidentiality cannot be maintained particularly in a situation where the member, volunteer, or employee, is participating in an investigation into the matter being disclosed. Should such a situation arise, Fencing Ireland will make every effort to inform the member, volunteer, or employee, that his or her identity may be disclosed.

Raising a Concern Anonymously

A concern may be raised anonymously. However, it will be difficult to investigate such a concern, and such allegations give rise to the possibility of grave injustice to third parties. Fencing Ireland requires a member, volunteer, or employee, to identify himself or herself when raising a concern in order to facilitate appropriate investigation of the disclosure. This will make it easier for Fencing Ireland to assess the disclosure and take appropriate action including an investigation if necessary.

If a member, volunteer, or employee believes that he or she cannot make an open disclosure to Fencing Ireland, the member, volunteer, or employee should make it to

Protected Disclosure Policy

their solicitor or other suitable third party in confidence. Once their solicitor or other suitable third party has satisfied itself that a protected disclosure has been made, he should make the disclosure to Fencing Ireland on their behalf.

Procedure

Raising a Concern

As a first step, appropriate concerns should be raised with the Board of Fencing Ireland through the Secretary or Chairperson for the time being in office.

Members, volunteers, and employees, should be aware that should the disclosure relate to the conduct of clubs, the disclosure should be made in the first instance to the club.

How to raise a concern

Concerns must be raised in writing. Should you raise a concern verbally we will keep a written record of the conversation and provide you with a copy after our meeting.

Fencing Ireland asks you to give the background and history of the concern, giving relevant details, insofar as is possible, such as dates, sequence of events and description of circumstances.

The earlier you express the concern the easier it will be for Fencing Ireland to deal with the matter quickly.

Having raised your concern, Fencing Ireland will arrange a meeting to discuss the matter with you on a strictly confidential basis. Fencing Ireland will need to clarify at this point if the concern is appropriate to this procedure or is a matter more appropriate to its other procedures. You can choose whether or not you want to be accompanied by a representative. In regard to confidentiality, it is important that there should be an awareness of respecting sensitive information, which, while unrelated to the disclosure, may be disclosed in the course of a consultation or investigation process.

How Fencing Ireland will deal with your disclosure

Having met you in regard to your concern and clarified that the matter is in fact appropriate to this procedure, Fencing Ireland will assess and examine the allegations. This may involve simply clarifying certain matters, clearing up misunderstandings or resolving the matter by agreed action without the need for an investigation.

If Fencing Ireland concludes that there are grounds for concern that cannot be dealt with at this point, it will conduct an investigation which will be carried out fairly and objectively. The form and scope of the investigation will depend on the subject matter of the disclosure.

Disclosures may, in the light of the seriousness of the matters raised, be referred immediately to the appropriate authorities. If urgent action is required (for example to remove a health and safety hazard), this action will be taken.

Fencing Ireland assures you that any disclosure made by you under this policy will be taken seriously and you will be kept informed of steps being taken in response your

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disclosure. In this regard Fencing Ireland undertakes to communicate with you as follows:

Fencing Ireland will acknowledge receipt of your disclosure and arrange to meet you as outlined above;

1. Fencing Ireland will outline the investigation procedure to you.
2. As far as possible you will be informed of progress. However, sometimes the need for confidentiality and legal obligation may require Fencing Ireland to maintain confidentiality.
3. Fencing Ireland will inform you of the indicative time scales in regard to each of the steps being taken.
4. Should further consultation be required of you, Fencing Ireland expects that you will co-operate with it.
5. Where a concern is raised or a disclosure is made in accordance with this policy, but the allegation is subsequently not upheld by an investigation, no action will be taken against the member, volunteer, or employee, making the disclosure and the member, volunteer, or employee, will be protected against any penalisation.
6. It is important to note that if an unfounded allegation is found to have been with malicious intent, then disciplinary action may be taken.

How the matter can be taken further

The aim of this Policy is to provide an avenue to deal with concerns or disclosures in regard to wrongdoing. Fencing Ireland hopes that any disclosures may be dealt with internally and it encourages members, volunteers, or employees, to report such concerns internally.

There may be circumstances where any members, volunteers, or employees, want to make a disclosure externally, and the legislation governing disclosures, The Protected Disclosures Act 2014, provides for this eventuality.

It is important to note however that while you need only have a reasonable belief as to wrongdoing to make a disclosure internally, the standard for making an external disclosure may not be the same.