

# **IRISH** **Dodgeball**

Irish Dodgeball Association  
Code of Ethics and  
Code of Conduct

## Irish Dodgeball Association – Code of Ethics and Conduct

The reputation and integrity of the Irish Dodgeball Association (IDBA) is maintained when all members act, and are seen to act, in a way which is of the highest standards of professional ethics.

This Code applies to all IDBA members and employees. It is intended to help, not hinder the organisations activities by clarifying our standards of conduct. We believe these standards reflect those of the Irish public and members of the Association expect of amateur sport and of a National Sports Federation.

THE IDBA wishes to maintain a strong reputation for its integrity and as an organisation and business associate, be valued at all levels. Ultimately, our value is reflected in the pride we have in what we do, in the successful achievement of our mission and the willingness of others to work with us in that regard. Our reputation as an ethical NGB is an essential part of what will make us successful.

It is expected that all ordinary members will implement and support the IDBA Code of Ethics and Conduct, Policies and Procedures. All members are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that instils trust and confidence in the Association.

Irish Dodgeball Association's Code of Ethics and Conduct are fully complying with Sport Ireland Code of Ethics and Best Practice for Children's sport in Ireland.

### **Core Values**

The Irish Dodgeball Association is based on the following principles that will guide the development of our sport for young players. The stages of development of the young person should guide the types of activity provided within the Association. Adults will need to have a basic understanding of the physical, emotional and personal needs of young players.

#### **Integrity in relationship**

Adults interacting with young players in dodgeball should do so with integrity and respect for the player. There is a danger that sporting context can be used exploit or undermine children. All adult actions should be guided by what is best for the young players and in the context of quality, and open working relationships. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind is unacceptable within the Irish Dodgeball Association.

#### **Quality Atmosphere and ethos**

Dodgeball involving young players should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. A child-centred ethos will help to ensure that competitions and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.

## **Importance of Childhood**

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

## **Needs of a Child**

All children's sporting experiences should be guided by what is best for children. This means that adults should have basic understanding of the emotional, physical and personal needs of young people. The stages of development and the ability of children should guide the types of activity provided within the sport. In dodgeball these activities are clearly outlined in our Player pathway, which forms the basis of our Unlocking the Potential Coach Development Programme.

## **Equality**

All Children should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of 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. Team mentors should be aware of and seek to gain competence in addressing the needs of young people with disabilities or any other additional needs.

## **Fair Play**

Fair play is the guiding principle of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players in dodgeball. All 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 a way of behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of cheating, gamesmanship, unequal opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption". (European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics, Council of Europe, 1993)

## **Competition**

Competition is an essential element of sport and should be encouraged in an appropriate manner. 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 in sport. It should always be kept in mind that the welfare of the player 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.

### **Legislative Basis**

While the Code of Ethics is not a legal document, it is based on the Child Care act (IRL) 1991, as well as subsequent related legislation, such as Children's Act 2001, Protection of Children and the Protection of Persons Reporting Act (IRL) 1998. Furthermore Ireland is a signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which acknowledges the right of the child to protection from all harm. Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child recognises the right of the child to engage in play and to have the chance to join in a wide range of activities. In order to promote this charter and in response to consultation with young people the Office of the Minister for Children (IRL) includes in its strategy the objective that children will have access to play, sport and recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood. The Office of the Minister for Children appointed an Ombudsman for Children in 2004, while Northern Ireland appointed the Commissioner for Children and Young People in 2003. This Code is intended to provide guidelines for those working with young people in dodgeball. It is not a definite legal interpretation of the legislation. While is not a legal document, failure to comply may have legal implications or consequences.

### **Policy Statement**

The Irish Dodgeball Association is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of its members. Every individual in the Association 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 Association and the guidelines contained in the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players.

In dodgeball, one of our first priorities is the welfare of young players, and we are committed to providing an environment, which will allow players to perform to the best of their ability, free from bullying and intimidation. As part of our commitment, we have adopted a code to protect our underage players (all persons under 18 years of age) and all mentors and members involved with our underage teams.

We are committed to providing an environment, which will allow players to perform to the best of their ability, free from bullying and intimidation.

In Compliance with the Code, the Irish Dodgeball Association will:

- Ensure that the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players is adopted, agreed to implemented and signed up to at Club, County and National Level.
- Amend, as necessary the Constitution to reflect a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting, selecting and managing.
- Appoint a National Children's Officer.
- Ensure that effective disciplinary complaint made to the Statutory Authorities against committee member or mentor.
- Ensure that all clubs are fully affiliated and signed up to the Code.

- Be represented by appropriate personal at all education/training workshops dealing with the Code.
- Review child protection procedures regularly through open discussion to members, Sport Councils and Statutory Authorities.
- Examine and take appropriate action in response to any reports of unusual incidents (high rate of transfer, dropouts) received from clubs.
- Ensure that all personnel working with children are suitable, through vetting processes.

## **Code of Behaviour for all Persons Working with Young People**

This Code of Behaviour complements the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport and addresses the appropriate levels of behaviour, practice and conduct required from our young players, officials, team mentors, supporters, parents/guardians and clubs.

The code of behaviour is promoted by the following National Governing Body so as to enable and assist those who promote and deliver our games to comply with the highest possible standards in our work with children and young people.

We are fully committed to the safeguarding of our members and place the welfare of our players as a key priority. Everyone involved in our sports and activities should accept the roles and responsibilities that they undertake as we commit ourselves to maintaining an enjoyable and safe environment for all.

### **Young Players**

Young players can benefit great from sports in terms of personal development and enjoyment. As part of their participation our players must be encouraged to realise that they also have responsibilities to treat others with fairness and respect. With rights there will be responsibilities. There will be a sign-up procedure, whereby young people agree to abide by the Code of Behaviour and to any other policies and codes in your club and national governing body.

Young players should be entitled to:

- Be safe and feel safe.
- Have fun and experience a sense of enjoyment and fulfilment.
- Be treated with respect, dignity and sensitivity.
- Comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner.
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality.
- Participate in games and competitions at a level which they feel comfortable.
- Be listened to.
- Make their concerns known and have them dealt with in an appropriate manner.

Young Players should always:

- Play fairly, do their best and enjoy themselves.
- Respect fellow team members regardless of ability, ethnic, cultural background or religion.

- Support fellow team members whether they do well or not so well.
- Represent their team, their club and their family with pride and dignity.
- Respect all mentors, officials and their opponents.
- Be gracious in defeat and modest in victory.
- Shake hands before and after the game irrespective of the result.
- Inform their coach/mentor/manager when they are unavailable for training and games.
- Talk to the Club Children's officer with any concerns or questions they may have.
- Adhere to acceptable standards of behaviour and their Club's Code of Discipline.
- Tell somebody else if they or others have been harmed in any way.

Young Players should not:

- Cheat – always play by the rules.
- Shout at or argue with an official, with teammates or opponents.
- Use unfair or bullying tactics to go gain advantage or isolate players.
- Spread rumours.
- Tell lies about adults or other young people.
- Play or train if they felt unwell or are genuinely injured.

## **Mentors**

All mentors should ensure that young people and children benefit significantly from our games by providing a positive, healthy and encouraging ethos for all. In developing the skill levels of every player you should always encourage enjoyment, fun and participation in our games and activities. Mentors should always remember that they are a role model for the players in their care.

## **Recruitment of Mentors**

As a mentor working with young people and children you are required to be suitable for your chosen role(s). Appropriate training and coaching will be provided so as to ensure that mentors are fully trained, coached and qualified to fulfil their roles. All persons working or volunteering for such roles will also participate in agreed recruitment and selection procedures as outlined in the policies and procedures of each National Governing Body.

Maintaining a child centred approach

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treat each one equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.
- Be positive during coaching sessions, games and other activities so that participants always leave with a sense of achievement and an increased level of self-esteem.
- Recognise the development needs of young players, by emphasising participation for all while avoiding excessive training and competition. Skills development and personal satisfaction should have priority over competition.
- Develop an understanding of relevant coaching methods and ensure that you have the appropriate level of coaching accreditation.

- Do not equate losing with failure and do not develop a preoccupation with medals and trophies. The level of improvement made by young players is the best indicator of effective coaching.

#### Mentors should lead by example

- Avoid smoking while working with young players.
- Do not consume alcohol or non-prescribed drugs immediately prior to or while young players are in your care.
- Never use foul language or provocative/gestures to a player, opponent or match official.
- Only enter the court of play with the referee's permission and do not question a referee's decisions or integrity.
- Encourage players to respect the judgement of match officials.

#### Conduct of mentors when working with young people

- Do not shout at or lecture players or reprimand/ridicule them when they make a mistake. Children learn best through trial and error. Children and young people should not be afraid to risk error so as to learn.
- Never use any form of corporal punishment or physical force.
- Avoid incidents of horse play or role play or telling jokes etc. that could be misinterpreted.
- Ensure that all physical contact is appropriate and has the permission or understanding of the young person.
- Never undertake any form of therapy – hypnosis etc. in the training of children.

#### Avoid compromising your role as a mentor

- Avoid a situation when you are alone in a car or dressing room with a player.
- Avoid taking coaching sessions on your own.
- Avoid spending excessive amount of time alone with a player or away from others.
- Avoid taking young players to your home.

#### Best practice

- Ensure that all players are suitably and safely attired to play their chosen sport.
- Keep a record of attendance at training and at games by both players and mentors.
- Be punctual and properly attired.
- Rotate the team captaincy and the method used for selecting teams so that the same children are not always selected to the exclusion of others.
- Set realistic – stretching but achievable – performance goals.
- Encourage parents/guardians to play an active role in organising and assisting various activities for your teams and your club.
- Use mobile phones, if deemed appropriate, only via a group text system for communicating with the parents/guardians of players and receive such permission at the commencement of each season.

- Keep a record of each injury and action taken. Ensure that another official referee/team mentor is present when a player is being attended to and can corroborate the relevant details.
- Ensure that all dressing rooms and the general areas that are occupied by your players and other club personnel, prior to, during or immediately following the completion of any match are kept clean and are not damaged in any way.
- If it is necessary to transport a child/young person in your car, ensure that they are seated in a rear seat with seat belts securely fastened.
- Make adequate provision for First Aid services.
- Do not encourage or permit players to play while injured.

### **Parents/Guardians**

Parents/Guardians have an influential role to play in assisting and encouraging their children to adopt a positive attitude and in encouraging them to maintain an involvement in sport. They should always be a good role model for their children.

Parents/Guardians should encourage their child to:

- Play by the rules.
- Improve their skills levels.
- Appreciate everybody on their team, regardless of ability.
- Maintain a balance and healthy lifestyle with regard to exercise, food, rest, and play. Seek advice if necessary from club officials on this issue.

Parents/Guardians should lead by example:

- Respect officials' decisions and encourage children to do likewise.
- Do not exert undue pressure on your child.
- Show approval for effort, not just results.
- Never embarrass a child or use sarcastic remarks towards a player.
- Applaud good play from all teams.
- Do not criticise playing performances. Identify how improvements may be made.
- Do not seek to unfairly affect a game or player.

Parents/Guardians should:

- Avoid asking a child or young person 'How much did you score today or what did you win by or what did you lose by.' Ask them 'did they enjoy themselves.'
- Listen to what young people have to say.
- Show approval whether the team wins, loses or draws a game.
- Never attempt to meet their own needs and aspiration for success and achievement through their children's participation in games.

Parents/Guardians should assist their club by:

- Showing appreciation to volunteers, mentors and club officials.
- Attending training and games on a regular basis.
- Assisting in the organising of club activities and events as requested.
- Respect the right, dignity and worth of every person and treat each one equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.

### **Supporters**

Young players are eager to enjoy and benefit from the support they receive from parents, guardians, friends and other members of the club who attend our games as spectators. Active, loyal and well behaved supporters are always welcome to attend and support our games but should be aware that their conduct will always reflect upon the team, players and clubs that they support. Fellow supporters have a responsibility to ensure that all spectators conduct themselves in an acceptable and well behaved manner at all times when attending under age games and competitions.

Supporters should always realise that young players participate in organised sport for fun.

Supporters add to the enjoyment of our games by:

- Applauding good performance and efforts from your club's players and from your opponents, regardless of the result.
- Condemning the use of violence in any form, be it by fellow spectators, coaches, officials or players.
- Encouraging players to participate according to the rules and the referees' decisions.
- Demonstrating appropriate social behaviour by not using foul language or harassing participants, mentors or officials.
- Respecting the decisions of all officials.
- Never ridiculing or scolding a player for making a mistake during games or competitions.
- Showing respect to your club's opponents. Without them there would be no games or competitions.
- Upholding the principles of Fair Play and Respect for all.

### **The Club**

All clubs that cater for under age players must do so with a child centred approach and philosophy thus ensuring that those chosen by them to work with children and young people are at all times competent and confident as to their roles and responsibilities. Clubs must provide these people with the necessary supports and ensure the best interests of the child, the young person and the adult that all those chosen to work on the club's behalf have been selected following thorough recruitment, selection, training and coaching procedures.

Promote Quality Participation by:

- Adopting this Code of Behaviour as a basic level of agreement between the club and their players, their mentors, parents/guardians and supporters.

- Leading by example and ensuring that you have a user friendly and child centred approach to your work and that you provide an equal opportunity to all who wish to participate in your games and activities, regardless of an individual's ability.
- Developing effective procedures for responding to and recording all attendances, incidents, accidents and injuries.
- Accessing relevant information on Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention Programmes and promoting relevant training in this area of health awareness for relevant club personnel.
- Distributing information on Anti Bullying strategies in our work with young people and by adopting and implementing an Anti-Bullying Statement in the club.
- Ensuring that the Sport Ireland Code of Ethics training is undertaken by all persons working in an official capacity with children and young people on behalf of the club.

Encourage the Participation of club members by:

- Communicating regularly with your mentors and clearly agree and define their roles.
- Adopting and implementing clearly defined recruitment and select procedures when choosing mentors to work with children and young people.

Encourage the participation of young players

- Ensuring that the types of programmes, rules equipment, length of games and training schedules are structured to facilitate greater participation by all young players, are suitable to all age categories, and to the ability and maturity level of young players.
- Respecting the rights, dignity and worth of all players by treating them equally regardless of their age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.
- Creating pathways for young people to participate in your games not just as players but afford other developmental opportunities including training to become a referee, coach etc.
- Ensuring that on the occasions when the team may travel away overnight that separate sleeping facilities must be provided for all adults and similarly for each genders. If both genders are in your group, male and female mentors must be present.

Encourage the participation of parents/guardians by:

- Encouraging parents/guardians to become members of their club and to make themselves aware as to the running of juvenile games and activities and to the rules and codes that direct us in our work.
- Encouraging the participation of parents and guardians in all aspects a club's activities and events and in the organising and delivery of our games.
- Welcome all parents/guardians to attend the games and training sessions that relate to their children. Information relating to such events should be made known to them at all time.
- Information parents/guardians as to the identity of their Children's Officer. This person should be available to assist with any concerns or enquiries that parents/guardians may have regarding the welfare and safety of children and young people in the club.

Develop best practice in club structures and administration by:

- Ensuring that the juvenile section of the club is structured in accordance with good practical guidelines and that young people are afforded a role in decision making at an appropriate level.
- Ensuring that all club members are aware as to their responsibilities to all children and young people.
- Appointing a children's officer whose role shall include liaising with statutory authorities and their governing body in relation to the reporting of allegation and/or suspicions of child abuse.
- Ensuring that all players are covered by their relevant injury scheme and that all premises etc. in use by your club and players are equally covered for property/liability insurance as deemed necessary.
- Ensuring that on the occasions when the team may travel away overnight, that separate sleeping facilities are provided for all adults and similarly for each gender. When a group consists of males and females you will be obliged to have male and female mentors present.
- Seeking the agreement of parents/guardians when their sons/daughters under 18 years of age are invited into adult squads. Boundaries of behaviour in adult groups are normally different from the boundaries that apply to under age teams and squad.

Let us ensure that everyone working on our behalf emphasises Fair Play, Respect, Equal Opportunities and Safety in all aspects of our work with children and young people.

### **Role of Children's Officer**

Young children's officer is key to the implementation of your Code of Ethics and selection of your Children's Officer requires careful attention. The Executive Committee of your club/county board should consider the qualities of and the role of the children's officer when selecting a suitable candidate.

Qualities of a children's officer

- Friendly.
- Approachable.
- Open-minded.
- Good communicator

The children's officer should be player-centred in focus and should have as their primary aim the establishment of a player centred ethos within the club. The children's officer is the link between the young players and the adults in the club. Your children's officer should report regularly to the executive of your club.

### **Role of the club officer**

- To promote awareness of the code of ethics and good practice for young players within the club and particularly among the young players and their parents/guardians and mentors.
- To influence policy and practice within the club in order to priorities young players' needs.

- To ensure all mentors are aware of practices within the code i.e. Travel Permission Forms, Anti-Bullying Policy etc.
- To encourage the involvement of parents/guardians in the club activities and co-operate with parents/guardians in ensuring that each player enjoys their involvement in dodgeball.
- To act as an advisory resource to mentors on best practice in dodgeball.
- To liaise with the female mentors assigned to team, ensuring that she is aware of good practices contained within the code.
- To ensure that young players know how to make concerns known to appropriate adults or agencies.
- To deal with any complaints or suspected child abuse according to the code.
- To report regularly to the club executive committee.
- To monitor changes in membership and follow up any unusual dropout, absenteeism or club transfer by young players or mentors.
- To attend seminars in relation to child protection.

Has your club a children's officer? Please appoint before working through the below framework as the children's officer is key to implementation of your club code.

1. Has your club a code of ethics?
2. Does this code include an Anti-Bullying Policy?
3. Have you undertaken training in relation to the code and child protection?
4. Do you promote awareness of your code within your club?
5. Has your club a policy on selection and recruitment of mentors? Have all your mentors signed mentor recruitment forms, existing and new mentors?
6. Have all your mentors signed a code of conduct?
7. Have all your players signed a code of conduct?
8. Have all your parents signed (a) a code of conduct, (b) parental permission form?
9. Have you held an information evening for all parents of underage players?
10. Have your permission forms for all underage teams which include (a) travel, (b) text messaging, (c) photography and video?
11. Do you report regularly to your executive committee?
12. Do all your players know how to make concerns known and to whom they make them known to?
13. Have you a policy in place to deal with a code of ethics complaint?
14. Have you a system in place to monitor changes in membership and follow up on any unusual dropout, absenteeism or club transfers by underage players?
15. Have you passed your contact details to your county children's officer and national children's officer?
16. Have you a code of ethics folder containing all the above information?

### **Role of Designated Officer**

The designated person will be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children in the club. The designated person is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the IDBA designated person, Health Service executive (ROI), and/or Garda Síochana. It is recommended that this person is a senior club person. However, if there is difficulty identifying a

separate individual to take this role, the children's officer can be appointed as designated person once the club is clear about the responsibility of each role.

### **Role of the national designated person**

- Have knowledge of the code of ethics and statutory guidelines.
- Have knowledge of categories and indicators of abuse.
- Undertake training in relation to child protection.
- Assist with the ongoing development and implementation of the organisation's child protection training needs.
- Provide information and advice on child protection within the organisation
- Be familiar with and able to carry out reporting within the organisation.
- Be aware of national and local services responsible for child protection i.e. principal and duty social workers, etc.
- To inform Health Service Executive and/or An Garda Síochana of relevant concerns about individual children, using the Standard Reporting Form. Keep a copy of this form and ensure acknowledgement of receipt of this form.
- Ensure appropriate information is available at the time of referral and that referral is confirmed in writing, kept under confidential cover.
- Ensure mentors and administrators are aware of allegations against them.
- Ensure that an individual case record is maintained of the action taken by the association, the liaison with other agencies and the outcome.
- Ensure records are kept in confidence in a secure location and access is on a 'need to know' basis

### **Role of club/county designated person**

- Have knowledge of the code of ethics and statutory guidelines.
- Have knowledge of categories and indicator of abuse.
- Undertake training in relation to child protection.
- Be familiar with and able to carry out reporting procedures.
- Communicate with parents and/or agencies as appropriate.
- Assist with the ongoing development and implementation of the club's child protection training needs.
- Liaise with National Children's Officer in relation to child protection i.e. principal and duty social workers and their contacts.
- To inform the local duty social worker in the Health Services Executive Local Area Board/ Local Social Services and/or An Garda Síochana of relevant concerns about individual children, using the Standard Reporting Form. Keep a copy of this form and ensure acknowledgement of receipt of this form. It is important to note that Children's Officers and designated persons do not have a counselling or therapeutic role or a responsibility of investigating or validating child protection concerns within your club or county. Investigations of alleged abuse are carried out by the relevant Statutory Authorities as outlined in Children First and Our Duty to Care or by specially appointed trained personnel in counselling, psychological and child therapeutic services.

### **Role of County Children's Officer**

- To ensure that each club within the County has elected a Children's Officer.
- To liaise with all club children's officer on a regularly basis.
- To ensure that all county teams have adapted the code and all players and mentors have signed up to the code.
- To ensure that all county teams are aware of and have signed travel permission forms and overnight permission forms where relevant.
- To act as an advisory resource to mentors on best practice in dodgeball.
- To deal with any complaints or suspected child abuse according to the Code.
- To attend National Seminars in relation to child protection.
- To coordinate child protection courses within county.
- To report regularly to the IDBA Executive.

### **Role of National Children's Officer**

- Ensuring that the Irish Dodgeball Association develops an appropriate sport specific code, which includes a policy statement, codes of conduct, recruitment and selection policy, etc.
- Familiarise children's officers with our duty to care, to ensure they can act an information source to other members of the organisation.
- Commitment to attendance at appropriate training as required in order to act as a resource to members to children's needs.
- Coordination of training of others.
- The promotion of the values, attitudes and structures which make sport enjoyable for children.
- Circulation of all relevant information and resource materials to clubs.
- Communication with club's children's officers to ensure the distribution of the code and the promotion of related education programmes.
- Liaison with all clubs to examine the rules regulations and structures to ensure that they are child centred, e.g. equal playing time, appropriate competition.
- Liaison with clubs to ensure dropout rates and transfers are monitored so that unusual developments or trends can be addressed, including transfer of mentors.

### **Best Practice**

- Produce information leaflets establish age group specific or underage team notice boards.
- Hold regular information meetings for the young players, their parents/guardians and mentors.
- Hold a registration day (for example first Sunday of month) as each under age player register they informed of the code and bullying policy. The players and their parent/s sign up to the code on registration.
- Hold a code of ethics information night, inviting youth members, parents and mentors. It is important that the young players are aware of who the children's officer is and how to contact them, e.g. mobile number of children's officer is placed in dressing rooms or club notice boards.

- Distribute an information sheet on training times, pick up times, club rules and regulations, codes of conducts, safety policies, guidelines for away trips.
- Distribute a list of games/fixtures planned for the year parents and young players.
- Provide one permission slip for parents' signature at the beginning of the year containing all games and fixtures, both home and away.
- Hold a 'sign up' night for mentors – inform mentors of guidelines in code and good practice procedures.

## **Mentor Recruitment and Selection Policy**

### **Adult – Child Relationships in Sport**

The trust implicit in adult – child relationships in sport places a duty of care on all adults, voluntary or professional, to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the child while engaged in their sporting activity. Adults have a crucial leadership role to play in sport. Whether they are parents/guardians or mentors or teachers, they can contribute to the creation of a positive sporting environment for young people. Positive adult – child relationships will result in growth, development and fulfilment for all those involved in children's sport.

The Irish Dodgeball Association relies on the time commitment of adults to our underage structures and is greatly indebted to those that give freely of their time on behalf of the association. Most adults who become involved in children's sport do so in their own free time. There may, therefore, be a reluctance to make impositions upon them with regard to either conditions of training or reproaches for any misdemeanours. However, given the importance and responsible roles which adults play at many different levels in sport, it is essential that the competence and ability to deal with children in a fair, empathic and ethical way is supported, guided and maintained.

The following recruitment and selection guidelines are put in place to ensure that there adults roles are seen as a positive contribution to the development of young players, regardless of age, and that the Irish Dodgeball Association adheres to the best possible standards when recruiting persons to work with young people on our behalf at club and national level.

All our personnel who work with children, young people or vulnerable adults should have appropriate child awareness training and be vetted through the Garda Vetting Unit which is coordinated via the National Children's Office of the Irish Dodgeball Association.

### **Recruitment**

It is essential that all adults taking responsibility for young people, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, in the club or elsewhere in the Association should undergo a recruitment and selection process. The recruitment of adults to work with under age teams should be coordinated by a senior and experienced member of the club and should be done in a confidential manner. A consistent method of recruiting and selecting mentors should be in place, including seeking references, confirming identity and checking adequacy of qualification. Effective management of mentors is also equally central to the promotion of good practice in your club. This should include support, supervision, and access to training and effective communication between members of the club.

The following procedures are recommended to assist clubs and counties when choosing coaches and other personnel for positions to which they are best suited.

- The decision to appoint a mentor is the responsibility of the club and not of any one individual within it. The club committee should ratify all recommendations for appointment.
- Responsibilities of the role and the level of experience/qualifications required should be drawn up and clearly stated beforehand – it is recommended that all mentors hold appropriate qualifications, e.g. fundamentals coaching certificate, first aid certificate, etc.
- Each mentor should undergo a 'signup' procedure, whereby the appointed/reappointed mentors agree to abide by the code of ethics and good practice for young people and to the policies of the club and the Association.
- All mentors, new and existing, should fill in an application form, giving names of two referees that may be contacted, and where possible all new mentors should be interviewed and probationary period is advisable.
- It is good practice to meet with new mentors and conduct a short interview to ensure the mentor has the appropriate qualifications, etc.
- All applicants will be required to complete Garda Vetting, as appropriate, prior to the commencement of their role(s) with young people in the Association.
- It is good practice to follow up on named referees, especially if the new mentor is a stranger to the club.
- Existing mentors should not be excused from either the 'signup' or application form procedure. It is not necessary for existing mentors to undergo an interview.
- No exceptions should be filed as a matter of record by the club.
- All mentors should be given a copy of the code of ethics and good practice for young people and they should be made aware of good practice procedures contained within the code.
- Every effort should be made to manage and support appointed mentors. Adequate supervision should always be provided – a mentor should not have to work alone.

### **Garda Vetting**

The Irish Dodgeball Association administers the Garda Vetting of all persons who on behalf of the association work in any capacity with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This service is but one part of the overall recommended recruitment and selection procedures for those who on our behalf work in areas of responsibility with children and young people, or who may do at a later stage.

Garda vetting, which is the pre-checking of an applicant's background for criminal convictions or prosecutions recommended by the Sport Ireland, and as part of children first – the national guidelines for the protection and welfare of children.

Garda vetting applications will only be accepted from organisations that have been recognised by the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU). The Irish Dodgeball Association is an organisation recognised by the GCVU to process vetting on behalf of our members and an Authorised Signatory has been selected by the Irish Dodgeball Association to fulfil this role.

The Irish Dodgeball Association has agreed to the implementation of vetting of all persons who on behalf of the Association work in any capacity with children, young people and vulnerable adults in

the delivery of our games or activities. In effect this means that any person working on behalf of the association or on behalf of any of our clubs with people under the age of 18 years of age will be required to be vetted. Vetting via the Garda Central Vetting Unit is outlined below.

How can a member of the Irish Dodgeball Association avail Garda vetting?

Step 1: A vetting applicant i.e. coach, mentor, manager etc. of an underage team, will receive an Irish Dodgeball Association Vetting Application Form from the club's children's officer or from a nominated person in their club. This form has to be completed in full by the applicant and collected at club, or forwarded directly to the national children's officer of the Irish Dodgeball Association.

Step 2: All forms are then sent by secure post to the national children's officer of Irish Dodgeball Association. The national children's officer will then process all correctly completed forms with the GCVU. Processed forms will on their return contain a statement that there are no convictions recorded against the individual in the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere, or a statement of all convictions and/or prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed, in the State or elsewhere as the case may be.

In most instances it is convictions and/or prosecutions of a most serious nature and particularly against children/minors that may deem a person unsuitable to work with children in the Irish Dodgeball Association. Please note that a stated conviction or unsuccessful prosecution may have no bearing whatsoever on the acceptance of an individual in the Association and it is recommended that all cases be treated individually and confidentially and that they be assessed as per the requirements of the post/role and the work that it entails.

Step 3: Following the processing of the vetting form it is the Irish Dodgeball Association's national Children's Officer who will inform each applicant individually by letter if their application is or is not being recommended for acceptance.

Step 4: If the recommendation is positive the applicant will receive a letter confirming this and requesting them to furnish their club with the letter of acceptance.

Step 5: If the recommendation is negative and if the applicant is not being recommended for acceptance a letter informing them of this decision will be sent to them by the Irish Dodgeball Association's National Children's Officer. The applicant will be afforded an opportunity to appeal this decision within 14 days and the process of appeal will be outlined to the applicant. A specially appointed Appeals Group will hear this appeal and will issue their findings directly to the applicant.

Step 6: If the Appeals Committee recommends acceptance of the vetting application Step 4 comes into operation.

Step 7: If the Appeals Committee upholds the recommendation of rejection the applicant and their club will be duly informed. Over a period of time all persons who on behalf of the Irish Dodgeball Association, work in any capacity with children and young people will have furnished their club with a Garda Vetting letter of acceptance. The absence of such a letter will deem a person ineligible to work in such a capacity. The Irish Dodgeball Association's central data base will retain the vetting

application outcomes. Clubs will be issued with a list of persons who receive the Garda Vetting 'letter of acceptance' from National Children's Officer.

#### Protocol on Vetting Application Outcomes

There are established procedures in place to conduct vetting of all persons who work in any capacity with children, young people and vulnerable adults in the delivery of our games and activities. Irish Dodgeball Association recognises that there is a standardised vetting system operated by European Dodgeball Federation, which functions for the purpose of determining the suitability of personnel to deliver our games and activities in setting which may facilitate unsupervised access to children and/or vulnerable adults, within each of the above bodies. The status and validity of decisions acknowledged and accepted by each of the other bodies.

#### Outline of Garda Vetting Process in the Irish Dodgeball Association

- Applicant received and completes vetting form.
- All completed forms are forwarded to the Irish Dodgeball Association's National Children's Officer.
- Application processed by NCO with Garda (GCVU)
- Yes/No
- Applicant received vetting acceptance letter.
- Applicant to inform club
- Club receives list of all acceptable applicants
- Applicant not accepted due to vetting concerns
- Applicant is informed and has 14 days to appeal decision
- Applicant may participate in IDBA in accordance with club's direction etc.
- Following Appeal(s) procedures the applicant and the club receive a copy of the decisions reached.

#### **Supervision**

Make sure there is an adequate adult: child ratio. This will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the players and any special needs of the group. As a recommended guide a ratio of 1:8 for under 12 years of age and 1:10 for players over 12 years if age. (This is only guide and will change depending on the circumstances, e.g. very young players, players with special needs or during away trips.)

- All teams should have at least one female mentor. Female mentors should ensure that all areas of the Code are adhered to at all times.
- Avoid being alone with any player, if you need to talk separately do so in an open environment, in view of others.
- In changing rooms, where possible ask parents to take responsibility and supervise in pairs of appropriate gender.
- Mentors should not need to enter changing rooms unless the players are very young or need special assistance and such supervision should be done by parents or in pairs of appropriate gender.

- Mentor should remain in pairs until all players have been collected at the end of training or matched.
- Keep attendance records and any incidents/injury that arise.

### **Travelling with Young Players**

There is extra responsibility taken on by mentors when they travel with young players to games/tournaments. When travelling with young players you should:

- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover
- Not carry more than the permitted number of passenger
- Ensure use of safety belts at all times
- Avoid travelling alone with one player. Where this is unavoidable the player should always sit in the back seat
- Ensure all mentors, parents and players have signed Travelling Permission Forms – these forms should include emergency contact number for players' parents. Form may be modified accordingly
- It is recommended to include, at the start of year where possible, all fixtures which involves travel, so that one travel permission form will be valid all year
- Permission forms should be signed on a yearly basis
- All forms should be kept on file within the club by the Children's officer
- Each club/county should remain all players of Code of Conduct when travelling to games

### **Away trips/Overnight Stays**

- When a game/tournament requires an overnight stay a separate permission form should be signed by parents and players, containing emergency contact number for parents.
- Each overnight stay requires a separate permission form as details will vary
- All players should sign a Code of Conduct agreement
- Appoint a mentor who will make a report on returning home
- A meeting with parents and players is useful to communicate travel times, competition details, other activities, gear requirement, medical requirement, special dietary needs, and any other necessary details
- Rooming arrangement – adults should not share rooms with young players, players share rooms with these of same age and gender and adults should knock before entering rooms
- All group socialization should take place in communal area (i.e. no boys in girls' rooms and vice versa)
- Alcoholic drink, smoking or other illegal substances are forbidden to players
- At least one female should travel with each team
- There should be a good adult – player ratio, 1:5/6, and proper access to medical personnel
- Lights out times should be enforced
- Players should be under reasonable supervision at all times and should never leave the venue or go unsupervised without prior permission
- Parents should be encourage to travel to assist with supervision especially with young players

## **Safety**

All clubs should have a safety statement, including specific and potential risk attached to Irish Dodgeball. They should also have procedures in place for safeguarding against such risks. Safety statements should be specific to the club and the club grounds/facilities.

In addition clubs should:

- Ensure activities are suitable for age and stage of development of players
- Keep a record of any specific medical conditions of the players
- Keep a record of emergency contact number for parents/guardians – such records such be readily attainable
- Ensure any necessary protective gear is used
- Keep First Aid kit stocked up and ensure it is close at hand with access to qualified first-aider
- Know the contact number of emergency services and easy access to medical personnel if needed is recommended. All clubs should have an emergency plan, which all club members are aware of
- If an incident occurs, make a brief record of injury and action taken. Note the problem, action and outcome. Contact the players parents and keep them informed of all details

## **Touching**

Coaching, at certain times, may require a 'hand on approach' e.g. it may necessary to support a player learning a new skill but the following should be taken into consideration:

- Avoid unnecessary physical contact. Never engage in inappropriate touching
- Any necessary contact should be in response to the needs of the player and not the mentor
- It should be in an open environment with the permission and understanding of the player
- It should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the player – do not do something that s player can do for themselves

## **Photography and Filming Guide Lines**

The Irish Dodgeball Association has adopted a policy in relation to the use of images of players on our website and in other publications. This policy does not seek to eliminate the use of photography or video but rather to minimise the risk and threats that inappropriate use of photographs or the recording of images may pose directly or indirectly, particularly for young people.

Remember having photographic and filming guidelines is not about preventing parents from taking pictures, but rather to ensure that only those who have a right to take photographs do so.

As part of the Parental Consent form, all club's should receive signed recognition from the player's parents or guardians for the recording of photographic and recorded images etc. as part of the player's registration process.

It should be noted that we have little or no influence on what photographs may be taken and published in local or national newspapers as such photographs is covered by a different set of guidelines. Should we ever be unhappy with the publication of such photographs or images we can address this matter with the individual newspaper or the Press Council of Ireland.

Photography and the recording of images in a public place do not generally require explicit or prior

consent. However if an event e.g. a game or training session is taking place, involving under age players, in a public, private or local authority park, and if you are in charge of such an event you are entitled to request a person to resist from taking photos if you feel that such action or photography may be inappropriate. Many of our clubs have developed websites that enable them promote their club and club activities to their members, local community and national level. The internet is an exciting and user friendly communication outlet for young people. It is important that while not wishing in any way to restrict the use of and accessibility to such sites that we recognise our responsibility in maintaining sites that are purposeful, educational, newsworthy, attractive in design and use and above all else are safe.

Video equipment can be used as a legitimate coaching aid. Anyone concerned about any photography, taking place at events or training sessions, should contact the Children's Officer in relation to the matter.

Best Practice guidelines:

- First and foremost ensure parents/guardians and the young people themselves have granted their consent for the taking and publication of photographic images. This permission should be sought by the club when the player registers on an annual basis.
- All children/young people featured in recording must be appropriately dressed.
- The photograph or recording should focus on the activity rather than a particular young person. No personal details relating to the young person should be revealed as accompanying materials to the photograph or recorded image.
- Parents and spectators taking photographs/recording should seek permission in advance from the club and should also be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state the purpose for their photography/filming.
- Group and team photographs may be taken but it is not necessary to match a player's name with the position in which they may be standing or seated in the team photograph.
- It is recognised that on certain occasions individual young people may receive recognition and may be presented with an award. When this happens in the case of an underage player certain levels of sensitivity and indeed of common sense are required and a balance should be drawn between the publication of a photograph of an individual, who may or may not be named, and the safety aspects of publication. Any such photography or recording of events that involves individual presentations should be discussed in advance of the event and agreement reached with all parties, including the club, parents and the young person themselves, as to what is and what is not permitted.
- Create recognised procedures for reporting the use of inappropriate images to reduce the risks to under age players. Any instances of the use of inappropriate images should be reported to the Club's Children's Officer and/or Designated Person and also to the relevant statutory authorities as deemed appropriate.
- Appoint a webmaster to manage your website on behalf of the club and ensure that the webmaster is answerable to the club's executive.
- The club executive should agree at the outset the style, design and content policy of the website with the appointed webmaster, prior to going online.
- Consult with the club's children's officer when designing the website and ensure that the age of club members is considered when deciding the website policy.

## **Mobile Phones**

Mobile phones are often given to children for security, enabling parents to keep in touch and make sure they are safe. In addition mobile phones 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. Within clubs there is a need to encourage responsible and secure use of mobile phones by adults and young people.

### **Use of Mobile Phones**

Those whose work with children and young people need to be aware of the opportunities for abuse through the misuse of mobile phones and text messaging. While good use of such media can be beneficial we must be vigilant and alert to the possibilities of misuse and consequent harm that can result to young people. Leaders must also take care to protect themselves.

1. Leaders involved in youth and children's work should only have children's and young people's mobile numbers if the nature of their involvement requires them to phone or text them. (Such leaders might include those running an organisation for older teenagers, or an employed youth worker or a volunteer involved in co-ordinating youth work.)
2. Parental permission should be sought if the leader in this role will be contacting children or young people via mobile phone.
3. A method of accountability should be arranged e.g. copies of texts could also be sent to the minister or to parents.
4. If a leader had a child/young person's phone number it should only be used for the purposes it has been given, i.e., the leader should not share this information.
5. It is recommended that an employed youth worker had a separate phone for work purposes rather than using their personal phone for contacting children and young people.

### **Texting – Communication not Conversation!**

1. Texts should be used for the purposes of reminding children or young people about events which are forthcoming.
2. Texts can also be used as a means to encourage children or young people if it is appropriate it, e.g., 'Hope exam goes ok.'
3. If it turns into a conversation, communications should be ended. A leader can suggest discussing the subject further at the next event or, if they are concerned about the child/young person, arrange to meet up to talk further (within the usual child protection parameters).

## **Camera Phones**

Camera phones should be used safely and responsibly. Pictures can be very powerful and stir up strong emotions. Camera phone users should respect the private lives of others and not take or distribute pictures of other people if it could invade their privacy. Leaders and children/young

people should not send pictures that are obscene, indecent, or menacing and should be sensitive about other people's gender identity, sexual identity, racial heritage, religion, or personal background. Both leaders and children/young people should be made aware that it is a criminal offence to take, make, and permit to be taken, distribute, show, or possess an indecent or sexually explicit image of a child under 18. For further guidance please see attached 'Sexting and the Law' leaflet. When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to an activity the leader in charge should ensure they are clear about expectations of them in relation to child protection. Professional photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an activity should seek accreditation from leaders by producing their professional identification for the details to be recorded. The leader should then:

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour
- Issue the photographer with identification which should be worn at all times.
- Keep a record of accreditations.
- Inform leaders, children/young people, and parents, that a photographer will be in attendance is at the activity and check that they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs.
- Not allow unsupervised access to children/young people or one-to-one photo sessions.
- Not approve/allow photo sessions outside the activity or at a child/young person's home.
- Anyone concerned about any photography taking place should discuss his or her concerns with the leader in charge or a member of the parish or central events panel.

Camera phones can be used to make children/young people safer. Older children, for example, using a taxi can send a picture of the car's registration to a friend before they begin the trip, or can simply use the phone to show parents where they are.

- Children/young people can only be photography when permission has been provide in writing from their parent/guardian.
- The scope of the use of photographs must also be stated as part of the parental permission.
- Children/young people should not be named individually in photographs unless necessary, for example, if the child/young concerned was winning a prize worthy of publication.
- When posting photographs on social media settings should be such that children/young people cannot be individually tagged.
- All photographs must be stored in secure places either electronically in a password protected file or physically in a locked cabinet.
- If any electronic device/memory which contains photographs is disposed of or passed on, then the device must be wiped of all photographs in such a way that they cannot be recovered on that device.

#### Use of Mobile phones during activities

Groups should, with parents and children/young people, develop a policy on the use of mobile phones during youth activities. This policy should be communicated to all parents and youth members. This policy could include:

- Confirmation that when on activities a named leader is the primary point of communication and is to be contacted if there is an emergency or change to previously agreed arrangements.
- That the usage of mobiles phones including text messaging or playing games cannot be allowed to be a distraction from a safe awareness of the environment or be allowed to interfere with full participation in the activity.
- That when on camps or overnight activities, there is a stated preferred time period when parents may make contact, if they wish. Parents should be advised that contact outside of this time may not be possible due to activities.
- Consider that use of phones while away can worsen rather than alleviate homesickness. In this context it can be good to encourage children/young people to consider that 'no news is good news.'

#### Use of computers/tables/web-enabled games consoles/smart TVs

If such devices are used as part of activities within the organisation, guidelines should be produced to ensure that they are used for the correct purpose, and include, for example, what websites are suitable for the age of children/young people that the leaders are worth with.

#### **Social Media Usage Policy**

In all their contacts and communications with the members of their organisation/group, leaders must be seen to be open and transparent. This is the case whether communications are by traditional means or by electronic means.

Leaders must not communicate with children or young people via leader's personal social networking profiles, email accounts, or chat rooms.

For an Organisation using/ Publishing a Social Networking Site the following principles should be applied:

1. The page/profile must be password-protected, and the password must be held by at least three leaders of the organisation.
2. The site should be monitored by a designated supervisor. This person should have access to the login details of the site. This supervisor will be appointed by the Designated Person/Safeguarding Panel in Charge of Child Protection.
3. Any inappropriate posts by children/young people or leaders should be removed by the designated supervisor. Reasons should then be explained to the person who posted the content. Where possible sites should be monitored before content is put up.
4. The site should be kept 'Private' i.e. only permitted members or 'friends' can see what is posted on the site.
5. The use of personal addresses and telephone numbers etc. should be avoided as, while sites are 'private', there is the potential for items to be copied and shared. 6. Content of any postings should be consistent with the aims of the organisation. In cases of doubt leaders should seek advice from church leaders or ministers.

For Leaders Using a Social Networking Site:

1. Leaders should not 'friend' or 'follow' children or young people on social media. (Children or young people may 'follow' leaders on social media so leaders should make sure any content they post is appropriate.)
2. Messages left to or from children or young people on social network sites should be written on an open page (e.g. Facebook 'Wall') and not in a private message or by using 'chat' [one-on-one].
3. Leaders should not network with members of their organisation/group via closed [one-on-one] chats e.g. Facebook messenger, WhatsApp, etc. This should be done only through 'Group Chat.'
4. Any events or activities run by the organisation that are organised or publicised on the site should be a closed event so as non-members cannot access the event without suitable permission by the site administrators.
5. Any emails sent to children or young people via the site must be sent to at least one other leader. (This can be done by 'bcc' if necessary.)
6. Leaders should avoid communicating with children or young people in their organisation/group via email late at night.
7. In signing off a post or email leaders should not do so in a way that could be misconstrued or misinterpreted by the recipient, e.g. "Luv X"; "xoxoxo". Simply sign your name.
8. Parents/guardians should be asked to give their approval for leaders to communicate with their children/young people via social networking sites, or by any other means of internet communications (e.g. email).
9. Parental permission is required before pictures or videos of children or young people are posted online.
10. Any disclosures of abuses reported through a social networking site must be dealt with according to your reporting procedures.

Registration, Dropout and Transfers

Loss of club members, including adult transfers, should be monitored. Any unusual or unexpected dropout or transfer of young players or mentors should be checked out by the club children's officer and/or national children's officer. If any concerns regarding a child or children's welfare are raised the matter should be handled in accordance with procedures outlined.

## **Child Protection and Procedures**

Irish Dodgeball Association accepts that organisations, which include young people among its members, are vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. Child welfare and the protection of young players is the concern of all adults at all times, irrespective of their role within the organisation.

Below are the procedures for dealing with any welfare or protection issue that may arise. A report may be made by any member in the club or county but should be passed on to the children's officer who may in turn have to pass the concern to the Local Statutory Authorities. It is not the responsibility of anyone working within the Irish Dodgeball Association in a paid or voluntary capacity, or those working in affiliated organisations, to take responsibility or decide whether or not child abuse is taken place – that is the job of the Local Statutory Authorities. However, there is a responsibility to protect young players by assisting the appropriate agencies so that they can take any necessary action to protect the young person. All members should follow both procedures outlined below, firstly the procedure for responding to a young player in distress and secondly the procedure for reporting a concern.

Written records of all complaints should be kept safely and confidentially

The mentor/officer/player/parent against whom the complaint has been made should be notified of the complaint and the nature of the complaint, by telephone and also in writing.

- The letter of complaint remains the property of the Body to whom it was submitted i.e. the club. The letter should be treated as confidential, therefore it is not read at a meeting or distributed to any person, and this includes the person against whom the complaint is made. If the complaint has been investigated.
- This is to protect the players and the mentor.
- A care-taker mentor should be put in place.

If complaint is submitted at club level, it is the responsibility of the club to deal with the complaint. If the complaint is submitted at national level the IDBA committee must take responsibility to deal with the complaint.

Dealing with a complaint:

1. Forming a complaint
2. Appointment of Disciplinary Committee
3. Complaint Procedure
4. Sanctions
5. Appeal Procedure

1. Forming a complaint

All complaints should be submitted in written either to the children's officer or to the Chairperson. (No action can be taken on hearsay. Hearsay should be noted in a record book) Club chairperson should be notified of the complaint. All complaints should be responded to within 5 working days by the children's officer. If in the opinion of the chairperson/children's officer, there are grounds for concern, the Statutory Authorities should be contacted immediately to receive professional guidance.

2. Appointment of Investigation Committee

The investigation committee should consist of the chairperson, the children's officer and an ordinary registered member of the club.

- If the children's officer, chairperson or any other member of the investigation committee in any way connected to the complaint they should step down from the committee
- If the children's officer is involved, the chairperson should contact the national children's officer to seek advice on dealing with the complaint
- Regular turnover of this committee is recommended.
- The issue of confidentiality is important.
- Information is on a need to know basis.

It recommended that this committee is out in place at the beginning of the year

3. It is the responsibility of the Investigation Committee to resolve problems relating to the conduct of its member.

A complaint of any incident of suspected misconduct, including bullying, but does not relate to child abuse should be dealt with by the investigation committee.

The investigation committee should inform the individual with details of the complaint being made against him/her and afford him/her the opportunity of providing a response verbally at a meeting with the investigation committee.

- If (s)he does not attend the agreed meeting, offer him/her the opportunity of providing a response in writing
- If he/she fails to cooperate with either opportunity the investigation committee must continue with the investigation of the complaint and note in their report the opportunities offered and the responses received.

It is recommended that the disciplinary committee meet with all parties involved, affording each party the same rights and opportunities.

An underage player must be accompanied by parents/guardians

If parents/guardians are involved in the complaint, the underage player should be accompanied by an independent adult of their choice.

The Disciplinary Committee should form a written report outlining the procedure followed, findings conclusions and any disciplinary actions or recommendations to be taken.

All parties should receive a copy of this report. This report should be signed by all the disciplinary committee members and kept on record.

The disciplinary committee should as soon as possible inform the management committee of the conclusions of the investigation process.

4. Sanctions

Where it is established that an incident of misconduct has taken place, the investigation committee should notify the member of any sanction being imposed.

The notification should be made in writing, setting out the reasons for the sanction.

If the member is under 18 years of age, correspondence should be addressed to parents/guardians.

## 5. Appeal Procedure

If the member against whom the complaint was made is unhappy with the decision of the investigation committee he/she should have the right to appeal the decision to an Appeals Committee (independent of the investigation committee).

Any appeal should be made in writing within 7 days after issue of the decision of the investigation committee.

The Chairperson of the Appeals Committee should be a member of the Management Committee or elected by the members at an AGM.

The Appeals Committee have the power to confirm, set aside or change any sanction imposed by the investigation committee.

If any party is not satisfied with the outcome, the matter can be referred to the National Children's Officer.

However efforts to resolve the issue at local level should be exhausted before the National Children's Officer is engaged in attempts to resolve the matter.

The National Managers Committee will hear any Appeal submitted at National level, with their decision being final.

## 6. Filing of Complaints

Written confidential records of all complaints should be safely and confidentially kept club procedures should be defined for the possession of such record in the event of election of new officer.

## Dealing with suspected abuse

1. Reporting abuse
2. Response to a young player
3. Allegation against mentors
4. Steps within organisation
5. False Reporting
6. Confidentiality
7. Anonymous Report
8. Rumours

### 1. Reporting Abuse

If there are grounds for concern about the safety or welfare of a young player you should react to the concern.

If unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive, and therefore reportable you should contact the duty social worker in the local Health Board or Social Services Department where you will receive advice.

Ground for concern includes a specific indication from a player, a statement from a person who witnessed abuse or an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse.

Steps for reporting suspected abuse.

- 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 officer within the club responsible for reporting abuse, e.g. Children's officer. If the Children's officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the player has been abused or is at risk of abuse, she/he will make a report to the Health Board/Social Services who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse.
- In case of emergency, where a player appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Children's Officer are unable to contact a duty social worker, the Garda Authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a player be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.
- If the Children's Officer is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist she/he can informally consult with the local health board/social service. She/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report any children's officer reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities should first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the player or undermine an investigation.

## 2. Response to a young player

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

- Deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the player to talk about the problem, rather than interviewing about details of what happened.
- Stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the player is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the player is saying seriously.
- Understand that the player has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the player will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation.
- Be honest with the player and tell them that it is not possible to keep this information a secret.
- Make no judgmental statements against the person whom the allegation is made.
- Not question the player unless the nature of what 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/guardians before making a report unless doing so would endanger the player.
- Give the player some indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents/guardians, Health Board or Social Services. It should be kept in mind that the player may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.
- Carefully record the details.

- Pass on this information to the Children's Officer/Designated Officer within the club. Always reassure the player that they have done the right thing in telling you

### 3. Allegation Against Mentor

If an allegation of alleged child abuse is made against a mentor working within the Club or Association, the following procedures should be followed:

- The reporting procedure in respect of suspected child abuse.
- The procedure for dealing with the mentor.

The safety of the player making the allegation should be considered and the safety of any other players who may be at risk. The club should take any necessary steps that may be necessary to protect its players. The issue of confidentiality is important – the mentor should be treated with respect and fairness.

### 4. Dealing with the Mentor

While the designated Children's Officer makes the report to the local Health Board, the Chairperson of the club should deal with the mentor.

The Chairperson should privately inform the mentor that:

- An allegation has been made against him/her
- The nature of the allegation

He/she should be afforded an opportunity to respond

His/her response should be noted and passed on to the Health Board/Social Service

The mentor should be asked to step aside pending the outcome of the investigation. When a mentor 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.

The club children's officer should inform the national children's officer that the mentor has been asked to stand aside.

It is also the duty of all Association members to inform the National Children's Officer of a mentor who is under investigation by a Statutory Authority.

The Irish Dodgeball Association can consider disciplinary action on the mentor but should ensure that this does not interfere with the investigation of the Statutory Authorities – the outcome of the investigation and any implication it might have/ will be considered during the Disciplinary procedure.

It should be noted 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.

## 5. False Allegations

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 Board 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 Boards or any member of An Garda Síochana.
- 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 primal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

## 6. Confidentiality

Confidentiality should 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 player 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 player will supersede all other considerations.

## 7. Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but should not be ignored. In all cases the safety and welfare of the player(s) is paramount. Any such complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the children's officer. The information should be checked out and handled in a confidential manner.

## 8. Rumours

Rumours should not be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the children's officer and checked out without delay.

## **Bullying Policy**

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression would be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with children and young

people. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, and hitting and extortion behaviour by one or more children against a victim.

### **How to know if a child is being bullied?**

All bullies operate using furtiveness, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so. The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied.

- Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities
- Physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings)
- Stress-caused illness – headaches, and stomach aches which seem unexplained
- Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to a meeting, going different routes, asking to be driven)
- Frequent loss of, or shortage of, money with vague explanations
- Having few friends
- Changes in behaviour (withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed)
- Not eating
- Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide
- Anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics)

### **Who should deal with bullying?**

While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reported to the health board or An Garda Síochána, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of all Leaders within this club / organisation.

How can it be prevented?

- Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.
- 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, (see below)
- 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 different children
- 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

## **What is the 'No Blame' Approach?**

### **Step 1 – Interview with the victim**

If you find that there has been an incident of bullying, first talk to the victim. At this stage find out who was involved and what the victim is now feeling. Try asking the following questions:

- Was it verbal or physical intimidation?
- How hurt is the victim
- Was it within his/her own peer group?
- Ensure the victim that his/her name will not come out in the investigation
- Actively listen

### **Step 2 – Meet with all involved**

Arrange to meet with all those involved; this should include some bystanders, those who may have colluded, those who joined in and those who initiated the bullying.

- Have a maximum of six to eight in the group – keep the number controllable
- Make a point of calling a 'special' meeting
- Ensure the severity of the topic is understood by all
- Speak only of the hurt caused in general terms with no reference to the victim
- Play on the conscience of all – ask questions like: How would you feel? Would you like it done to you?

### **Step 3 – Explain the problem**

The distress being suffered as a result of the bullying incident is explained. At this stage the details of the incident or the allocation of the blame is not discussed. Explain the feelings of loneliness, feeling left out, rejected, laughed at. Try asking questions:

- Would they like it if it happened to them
- "Someone here in this group was bullied by someone within the group, what could we do to see it does not happen again?"
- Listen, watch out for reactions, and pick up on any without isolating anyone

### **Step 4 – Share the responsibility**

Explain what steps / controls may have to be introduced to prevent further incidents and how everyone will lose out as a result.

### **Step 5 – Ask the group for their ideas**

At this stage the group is encouraged to suggest ways that would make the victim feel happier. All positive responses are noted. Use phrases "if it were you" to encourage a response. Listen to all suggestions and note them.

#### Step 6 – Leave it to them

Now the problem has been identified, solutions suggested, the problem is now handed over to the group to solve. Arrange to meet again in a week's time. Pass responsibility over to the group and give a time frame within which something must be done.

#### Step 7 – Meet them again

Each member of the group, including the bully, discuss how things are going, who is doing what and have there been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and also keeps all involved in the process.

Again enforce the idea of the 'team' looking after each other at regular intervals to ensure it is know that bullying or intimidating behaviour will not be tolerated.