



**WEIGHTLIFTING  
IRELAND**

Code of Ethics & Good Practice for  
Children in Weightlifting

**Weightlifting Ireland**

The Irish Amateur Weightlifting Association.

t/a Weightlifting Ireland. Company Registered in Ireland - 189903

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## Forward

The publication of Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children in Weightlifting recognises the commitment of Weightlifting Ireland to ensure that young people are safeguarded in their participation in Weightlifting in Ireland. It is essential that we as an organisation take steps to ensure that the early experiences of young athletes in our sport are positive & enjoyable, irrespective of their ability, gender, social or ethnic background.

This document aims to outline the fundamental principles and policies and address issues relating to the roles and responsibilities of people involved in weightlifting with children. It outlines best practice in working with children to provide a safe and enjoyable environment for all. We hope that everyone involved in weightlifting will take the time to read this document and that together we can work to develop a child-centred approach to weightlifting for young people in Ireland.



President Weightlifting Ireland

The guidelines in this document are based on the national guidelines as outlined in the following documents.

### **For the Republic of Ireland Weightlifting Ireland and Clubs should reference:**

- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015
- Children First Act 2015
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
- Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Dept. of Health & Children 2011
- Our Duty to Care, Dept. of Health & Children 2002
- Criminal Law (sexual offences) Act 2014
- The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998

### **For Northern Ireland Weightlifting Ireland and Clubs should reference:**

- Children (NI) Order, 1995
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children, 2003
- Area Child Protection Committee Regional Policy and Procedures, 2005
- Our Duty to care, DHSSPS 2009 (Updated 2011) • Getting it Right, DHSSPS 2009 (Updated 2011)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007
- Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008
- Criminal Law (NI) Act 1967

### **References and Source Material**

Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport,  
Irish Sports Council and Sport NI, 2005.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children  
Using Social Networking Services & Social Media: Promoting Safe and Responsible  
use (CPSU 2011)

Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Athletics  
IABA Safeguarding Young People in Boxing 2015

## Safeguarding or Child Protection –

The term Child protection has been extended to safeguarding as it reflects the wider responsibility for health safety and prevention as well as just protection from abuse. It may be defined as: Doing everything possible to minimise the risk of harm to children and young people.

Safeguarding is about being proactive and putting measures in place in advance of any contact with children to ensure that children are going to be kept safe. This could include:

- Ensuring staff/volunteers are properly checked when they are recruited
- Guidelines for people who come into contact with children as part of their role to ensure they know what they need to do to keep children safe.
- Guidelines for planning an event or activity with children and putting measures in place to minimize the risk of safeguarding issues occurring.

Date of Issue: 08/03/2018

Date to be reviewed 2 years after formally agreed by executive.

## **Policy Statement**

*Weightlifting Ireland is fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of all its members. Every individual in Weightlifting Ireland should, at all times, show respect and understanding for member's 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 in Weightlifting.*

It is recommended that the above statement is written into the Constitution of the Clubs affiliated to Weightlifting Ireland.

In Weightlifting Ireland, our first priority, is the welfare of the young people and we are committed to providing an environment which will allow participants to perform to the best of their ability, free from bullying and intimidation.

A more detailed policy statement may be drawn up for an individual club.

Once the policy statement is approved and put into the constitution it can guide all other rules and regulations for sport for young people within Weightlifting Ireland.

The above statement is written into the Constitution of Weightlifting Ireland. It acts as a guide for all other rules and regulations for sport for young people within the organisation.

## Glossary

1. **Child:** For this Code, a child is any person under 18 years of age

2. **Sports Leaders:** For this Code, 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/Sports Teacher:** Instructors are involved in the systematic development of the core skills and abilities of an activity, sometimes in a non-competitive context.

**Manager:** A manager is an individual who takes overall responsibility for a team or a group of sports people and who will often have a direct input into the nature and organisation of the activity itself.

**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 weightlifting are adhered to in a formal way. This category includes referees, judges, umpires, etc.

**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.).

**Children's Officers:** Children's Officers are appointed within clubs to act as a resource for children and to represent them at Committee level.

**Relevant Person:** Appointed person in a club who first point of contact for Child Safeguarding. Usually one of the Children's Officers in a Weightlifting Ireland Club.



4. **Mandated/Designated Person:** A person who is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the Statutory Authorities. This person will also be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of young people.

5. **Statutory Authorities:** The authorities who promote the protection and welfare of young people and who have the responsibility for the investigation and/or validation of suspected child abuse, i.e. in the ROI it is An Garda Síochána and Túsla, in NI it is the PSNI and the Social Services.

6. **Statutory Authority Guidelines on Child Protection:** In the Republic of Ireland - Children First Act 2015 (IRL). Northern Ireland - Co-operating to Safeguard Children (NI) 2003.

# Chapter 1 Principles

## 1.1 Principles

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

### i. Importance of Childhood

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

### ii. Needs of the Child

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

### iii. Integrity in Relationships

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

#### iv. Fair Play

All children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. Ireland and the UK have adopted and are committed to the European Code of Sports Ethics which defines fair play as:

*“much more than playing within the rules. It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing within the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just a way of behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of cheating, gamesmanship, doping, violence (both physical and verbal), exploitation, unequal opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption.”*

(European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics. Council of Europe, 1993)

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

#### v. Quality Atmosphere and Ethos

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

#### vi. Competition

Competition is an essential element of weightlifting and should be encouraged in an age appropriate manner. A child centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place. A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to children's development while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction.

Through such competition children learn respect for opponents, officials and rules of weightlifting. Too often competitive demands are placed on children too early, which results in excessive levels of pressure on them. This is one of the factors, which contribute to high levels of dropout from sport. It should always be kept in mind that the welfare of children comes first, and competitive standards come second. While under eight is a very different age group to under eighteen the same general principle should apply. As adults we need to strike a balance between a young person's desire to win and a young person's right to participate, irrespective of ability. Remember that success is not the same as winning and failure is not the same as losing.

#### vii. Equality

All children should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of ability, age, gender, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. Children, irrespective of ability or disability should be involved in sports activities in an integrated and inclusive way, whenever possible, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children. Weightlifting Leaders should be aware of and seek to gain competence in addressing the needs of young people with disabilities or any other additional needs.

#### viii. Legislative Basis

While the Code of Ethics is not a legal document it is based on the Child Care Act (IRL) 1991 and the Children (NI) Order 1993, as well as subsequent related legislation, such as Children's Act 2001, Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults Act (NI) 2003 and the Protection for Persons Reporting Act (IRL) 1998, Children First Act 2015, National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012, Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Dept. of Health & Children 2017, Our Duty to Care, Dept. of Health & Children 2002, Criminal Law (sexual offences) Act 2014, The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 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 Rights 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 weightlifting. It is not a definite legal interpretation of the legislation. While it is not a legal document, failure to comply may have legal implications or consequences.

## **Chapter 2 People**

### **People**

Everyone involved in weightlifting i.e. children, parents/guardians and Sports Leaders should accept the role and responsibilities that they undertake in their commitment to maintaining an enjoyable and safe environment.

#### **2.1 Adults involved in Weightlifting**

The role of every adult involved in weightlifting should be clearly defined. Many leadership roles contribute to the successful development and organisation of children's sport. These may overlap on occasions, but it is very important that each Leader has a clear idea of his/her role and responsibilities. Each person involved in Children's Weightlifting should ensure that the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Weightlifting is agreed, adopted and implemented in the club to which they are affiliated.

The principal leadership roles in sport are outlined in the Glossary.

#### **2.2 Adult-Child relationship in Weightlifting**

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 weightlifting. Whether they are parents/guardians, weightlifting leaders or teachers, they can contribute to the creation of a positive sporting environment for young people. The unique nature of sport allows Leaders to develop positive and special relationships with children. Such relationships have tremendous potential to help children to develop and express themselves in an open and secure way. Positive adult-child relationships will result in growth, development and fulfilment for all those involved in children's weightlifting.

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 important and responsible roles which adults play at many different levels of weightlifting, it is essential that their competence and ability to deal with children in a fair, empathic and ethical way is supported, guided and maintained. A consistent method of recruiting and selecting Weightlifting Leaders should be in place, including seeking references, confirming identity and checking adequacy of qualifications. Effective management of Weightlifting Leaders is also equally central to the promotion of good practice in the club. This should include support, supervision, access to training and effective communication between members of the club.

The adult-child relationship in sport should be:

- Open, positive and encouraging
- Entered into by choice
- Defined by a mutually agreed set of goals and commitments
- Respectful of the creativity and autonomy of children
- Carried out in a context where children are protected and where their rights are promoted
- Free from physical, emotional or sexual abuse and neglect or any threat of such harm
- Respectful of the needs and developmental stage of the child
- Aimed at the promotion of enjoyment and individual progress
- Governed by a code of ethics and good practice in weightlifting that is agreed and adhered to by all members of the club
- Respectful, but not unquestioning of authority
- Mindful of the fact that children with disabilities may be more vulnerable

### **2.3 Child to Child relationships**

Interaction between children should be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and fair play. Adults including parents/guardians, who create an environment in which quality, open relationships are valued and where the integrity of each individual is respected, can promote such interaction.

## **2.4 Responsibilities of Parents/Guardians**

Parents/guardians play a key role in the promotion of an ethical approach to weightlifting and young people's enjoyment in sport. Parents/guardians therefore need to be aware, informed and involved in promoting the safest possible environment for children to enjoy their participation in sport. Weightlifting Leaders need the support of parents/guardians in conveying the fair play message.

## **2.5 The Important role of Weightlifting Leaders**

Leaders play a vital role in children's Weightlifting. Clubs should ensure that the work of Leaders which occurs mainly on a voluntary basis, is guided by this Code of Ethics and Good Practice whilst also recognising that they are entitled to obtain a healthy sense of achievement and satisfaction through their involvement in children's sport.

## **2.6 Weightlifting Ireland**

Weightlifting Ireland is the organisation recognised by the EWF and the IWF as being responsible for the administration of Weightlifting on a countrywide basis and the national body responsible for national competition. Weightlifting Ireland is responsible for overseeing the adoption and implementation of this Code by all its affiliated members.

To maximise compliance with the Code, Weightlifting Ireland will

- Ensure that the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Weightlifting is adopted, agreed to, implemented and signed up to by all members
- Amend, as necessary, its Constitution to reflect a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting, selecting and managing
- Appoint a National Children's Officer/Mandated Person. S/he should be a member of the Executive Committee or have access to the Executive Committee
- 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 Weightlifting Leader. Regulations should stipulate that a Weightlifting 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 weightlifting clubs with child members are fully affiliated and signed up to the Weightlifting Ireland's Code of Ethics.
- Be represented by appropriate personnel at all education/training workshops dealing with the Code
- Where children are involved in representative teams, designate an appropriate senior officer in the Governing Body as the person with responsibility for following the guidelines of the Code
- Review its child protection procedures regularly through open discussion with its 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.

## 2.7 Clubs

To ensure that best practice is being followed, all clubs should work closely with Weightlifting Ireland. In promoting best practice in children's sport and in implementing this Code at club level each club should:

- Adopt and implement the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Weightlifting as an integral part of its policy on children in the club
- Have its constitution approved and adopted by club's members at an AGM or EGM

- Promote the voice of the child, in particular through meetings and the AGM. One parent/guardian should have one vote for all their children under 18 years of age, where relevant
- Ensure that the Club Management Committee is elected or endorsed by registered club members at each AGM
- Adopt and consistently apply a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting and selecting Weightlifting Leaders
- Clearly define the role of committee members, all Weightlifting Leaders and parents/guardians
- Appoint at least one Children's Officer. One Children's Officer of each gender would ideally be appointed
- Have a Designated Person to act as liaison with the Statutory Authorities in relation to the reporting of allegations or suspicions of child abuse. Any such reports should be made according to the procedures outlined in this Code
- Ensure best practice throughout the club by disseminating its code of conduct, including the disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures in operation within the club to all its members. The club's code of conduct should also be posted in all facilities used by the club
- Have in place procedures for dealing with a concern or complaint made to the Statutory Authorities against a committee member or Weightlifting Leader or other members of the club. Regulations should stipulate that a Weightlifting 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 relevant Weightlifting Leaders report to the Club Management Committee on a regular basis
- Encourage regular turnover of committee membership while ensuring continuity and experience
- Develop effective procedures for responding to and recording accidents
- Ensure that any unusual activity (high rate of drop-out, transfers, etc.) is checked out and reported by the Club Chairperson to Weightlifting Ireland

- Ensure that all club members are given adequate notice of AGMs and other meetings
- Ensure that all minutes of all meetings (AGMs/EGMs/, Committee) are recorded and safely filed.

## **2.8 Children's Officers**

The appointment of Children's Officers in clubs is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere. They act as a resource with regard to children's issues.

In summary Children's Officers should review current policies in relation to young people, check that all activities are safe and fun, and inform adults of how to deal with any concerns that may arise in relation to the protection of young people.

### **2.8.1 National Children's Officer/ Mandated Person for Weightlifting Ireland**

The National Children's Officer should be a member of the Executive Committee or have access to the committee and its accompanying documents, to ensure that children's interests are kept on, and influence the decisions of, the agenda of the Weightlifting Ireland.

The role of the National Children's Officer involves:

- Familiarisation with Children First and Our Duty to Care to ensure they can act as an information source to other members of Weightlifting Ireland
- As the Mandated Person for Weightlifting Ireland they have 2 main legal obligations under the Children First Act 2015. These are:
  1. To report the harm of children above a defined threshold to Tusla;
  2. To assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.
- Commitment to attendance at appropriate training as required in order to act as a resource to members in relation to children's needs
- Co-ordination of training for others
- The promotion of the values, attitudes and structures which make sport enjoyable for children
- Circulation of all relevant information and resource materials, on children's sport to clubs and affiliates of the sports organisations

- Communication with Club Children's Officers to ensure the distribution of the Code and the promotion of related education programmes, materials events and governing body related codes
- Liaison with all clubs to examine the rules, regulations and structures to ensure that they are child centred, e.g., appropriate competition structures, light weight bars and bumper plates, bullying policy, awareness around self-imposed pressures by the child regarding making weight etc.
- Liaison with clubs, to ensure drop-out rates and transfers are monitored so that unusual developments or trends can be addressed, including transfer of sports leaders
- Assisting in the development of a system of record keeping which maintains confidentiality while allowing for appropriate information to be passed to relevant authorities where necessary
- Ensuring that the Weightlifting Ireland develops an appropriate sport specific code, which includes a policy statement, codes of conduct, disciplinary procedures, bullying policy, safety statement, recruitment and selection policy and reporting procedures.

Sports Council for Northern Ireland recommend that in Northern Ireland the Governing Body appoint a person, dependent on the structure, to one of the following 3 posts:

1. The Governing Body Children's Officer is an executive member in a Northern Ireland stand-alone organisation
2. The Governing Body Children's Officer representing the Ulster Branch/Council/Region of an All-Ireland Governing Body
3. The Governing Body Children's Officer of a Northern Ireland Sporting Organisation with regional affiliation to a UK parent body

### **2.8.2 Club Children's Officer**

Club Children's Officers should be child centred in focus and have as the primary aim the establishment of a child centred ethos within the club. S/he is the link between the children and the adults in the club. S/he also takes responsibility for monitoring and reporting to the Club Management Committee on how club policy impacts on young people and Sports Leaders.

The Children's Officer should be a member of or have access to, the Club Management Committee and should be introduced to the young people in an appropriate forum. The Children's Officer should have the following roles:

- To act as the 'relevant person' (as defined in the Children Act 2015) for the club, with responsibility for the child safeguarding within the club.
- To promote awareness of the code within the club, among young members and their parents/guardians. This could be achieved by: the production / distribution of information leaflets, the establishment of children's/age-group specific notice boards, regular information meetings for the young people and their parents/guardians.
- To influence policy and practice within the club in order to prioritise children's needs.
- Establish contact with the National Children's Officer at governing body level
- To ensure that children know how to make concerns known to appropriate adults or agencies.
- To encourage the appropriate involvement of parents/guardians in the club activities
- To act as an advisory resource to Sports Leaders on best practice in children's sport
- To report regularly to the Club Management Committee
- To monitor changes in membership and follow up any unusual dropout, absenteeism or club transfers by children or Sports Leaders
- To ensure that the children have a voice in the running of their club and ensure that there are steps young people can take to express concerns about their sports activities / experiences.
- Establish communication with other branches of the club, e.g. facilitate parent's information sessions at the start of the season
- Ensure that the leaders have the emergency contact numbers and be aware of any special needs of the young athletes
- Ensure each member signs an annual membership form that includes signing up to the code of conduct

Ensure that the club rules and regulations include: -

- complaints, disciplinary and appeals procedures
- an anti-bullying policy
- safety statement
- rules in relation to traveling with children
- supervision and recruitment of leaders (Note: This may simply mean adopting the regulations set out in this code for children in weightlifting)

### 2.8.3 General Statement on Sport for Young People

Each organisation will have their own specific rules to their own sport, but these are often taken from the adult section and may not be suitable for young people. Below are some suggestions that are related to younger members of the organisation.

- Ensure the equipment and facilities that children use is suited to their age and stage of development
- List competitive structures that will be used with all age groups, e.g. Blitzes, jamborees, skills awards, mini-games etc. Outline competitions that will allow participation and skill development for very young participants
- Set out appropriate adult: child ratios, e.g. 2 leaders to every 16 children (1:8), but no leader works alone (review this with insurance company)
- Members U18 years of age must wear appropriate clothing and footwear. It is recommended to wear a weightlifting shoe. For further guidance please reference the IWF guidelines on their website. Notify parents at the start of the season
- List any criteria for selection to squads, regional, national etc.
- List means by which Sports Leaders will be recruited into the club / organisation and decide who will check references
- Outline a development pathway for your sport, i.e. what skills (technical, tactical, physical, etc.) should the participant have at 8 years, 12 years, 16 years, etc. How many hours of practice and/or competition will each age group participate in? How is it intended to develop a positive attitude for all young people to sport and physical activity?

## **2.9 Designated Person in Weightlifting Ireland this Designated Person will also be the Children's Officer/Relevant Person (Children Act 2015)**

Every club should designate a person to be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children. The designated person/relevant person is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to Tusla-Child and Family Agency or Social Services (NI) and/or An Garda Síochána / PSNI. 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 responsibilities of each role. The child protection policy and procedures should include the name and contact details of the designated person and the responsibilities attached to the role.

### **2.9.1 The National Designated Person is the Mandated Person in Weightlifting Ireland and should: -**

- Have knowledge of the Code of Ethics and statutory guidelines
- Have a 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 procedures
- Communicate with parents and/or agencies as appropriate
- Be aware of national and local services responsible for child protection, i.e. principal and duty social workers, etc.
- To inform Tusla / Social services and/or An Garda Síochána/PSNI 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 the referral is confirmed in writing, kept under confidential cover
- Liaise with Statutory Authorities and other agencies as appropriate
- Organise the implementation of procedures designed to deal with concerns regarding poor practice within the sport

- Ensure Sports Leader(s) are aware of allegations against them
- Ensure that an individual case record is maintained of the action taken by the organisation, 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
- Affiliated clubs and groups should report suspected abuse in relation to Sports Leaders or persistent poor practice to the national governing body's designated person who will then have the responsibility of advising the organisation of ways to ensure that other clubs are protected from re-occurrence of situations of abuse
- The designated person/children's officer will assist the administration on issues of confidentiality, record keeping and data protection.

#### 2.9.2 The Club Designated Person is the relevant person in a Weightlifting Ireland club and they should: -

- Have knowledge of the Code of Ethics and statutory guidelines
- Have a knowledge of categories and indicators of abuse
- Undertake training in relation to child protection
- Be familiar with and able to carry out reporting procedures as outlined in this Code
- 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 the national children's officer in relation to child protection training needs
- Be aware of local contacts and services in relation to child protection, i.e. principal and duty social workers and their contacts
- To inform local duty social worker in the Health Services Executive Local Area Board / local Social Services and/or An Garda Síochána/PSNI 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
- Report persistent poor practice to the National Designated Person



- Advise club administrators on issues of confidentiality, record keeping and data protection.

Children's Officers/Designated Persons do not have the responsibility of investigating or validating child protection concerns within the club and have no counselling or therapeutic role. These roles are filled by the Statutory Authorities as outlined in Children First and Our Duty to Care. It is, however, possible that child protection concerns will be brought to the attention of the Children's Officer. In this event, it is essential that the correct procedure is followed.

## Chapter 3 Policies & Procedures

### Policies and Procedures

*Everyone taking part in sport, irrespective of his or her role, should be able to do so in a safe environment. The purpose of creating and adhering to policies and procedures is to facilitate and encourage best practice.*

#### 3.1 Constitution

A quality weightlifting club will operate on the basis of a Constitution, which directs its ethical approach and promotes good practice. The Constitution should include a policy statement, which reflects good practice and relates to the divisional structure of the sports club. The Constitution should also reflect a commitment to providing quality leadership for children in the weightlifting club by having a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting, selecting and managing Leaders. It should make provision for regulations in respect of effective disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures. The convening and conduct of an AGM should also have a constitutional basis.

#### 3.2 Structure

Membership of the Management Committee of weightlifting clubs should be for a fixed period to encourage regular turnover of committee membership. Each club should work out its own system of rotation to ensure that continuity and a level of experience are maintained. Effective methods of communication within the organisation are vital to the successful implementation of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Weightlifting. Within each club a system of record keeping should be established and adhered to in the interests of confidentiality and good practice. A current mailing list and a schedule of meetings, including the AGM, are the two most basic requirements. Any organisation unable to reach its membership will struggle to implement good practice. All weightlifting clubs with child members should be fully affiliated to the Weightlifting Ireland and therefore bound by the guidelines enshrined in the constitution of Weightlifting Ireland. Each member of the club should sign up to the Constitution. They should also sign an agreement to adhere

to the rules and regulations of the club which includes a commitment to upholding the Code and all of the agreed complaints, disciplinary and appeals procedures within the club. This commitment should form part of the annual membership process to avoid adding to the administrative burden of officials in organisations.

### **3.3 Regulations**

The regulations adopted by a Sports Club should clearly define the tasks to be undertaken by Leaders and parents/guardians. The regulations should define the roles and responsibilities of elected officials. This information should be widely disseminated within the club. Regulations, based on the constitution, should legislate for effective disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures. Guidance on the use of sanctions could also be outlined in the regulations.

### **3.4 Disciplinary, Complaints and Appeals Procedures**

Each club/organisation should ensure that it has adequate disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures in place.

It is important to note that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the Statutory Authorities and should not be undertaken by Children's Officers/Designated Persons or other club Leaders.

The standard reporting procedure outlined in the Statutory Authorities guidelines should be followed by each sports club/organisation and adhered to by its members

#### **3.4.1 Recommended procedures**

A club will operate based on good practice to include a complaints/appeals procedure similar to the following:

- a code of conduct reflecting a child centred ethos should be drawn-up, widely disseminated and returned from and applied to all Leaders and members
- each club, on receiving a complaint, should appoint a disciplinary committee to resolve problems relating to the conduct of its members. This should include bullying. The complaint should be in writing to the secretary or Children's Officer and should be responded to within 5 working days. The committee should consist of a representative from the Management

Committee, the Children's Officer and ordinary registered members of the club.

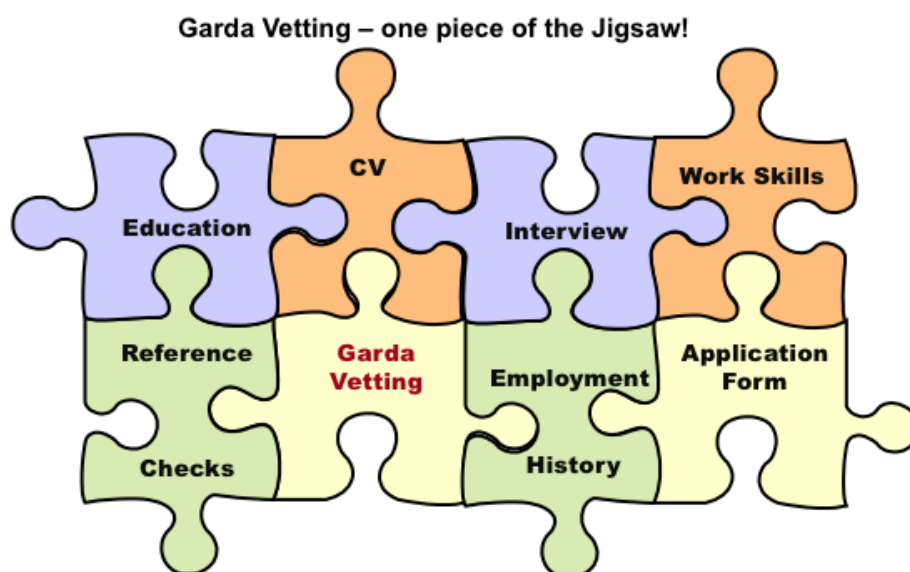
- If the complaint involves suspected abuse or a criminal offence the children's officer/designated person should be consulted, and the disciplinary committee disbanded. The statutory authorities will then be informed
- The disciplinary committee should review any relevant paper work and hold any necessary meetings with all parties to proceed with complaints into any incident of suspected misconduct that does not relate to child abuse. It should, as soon as possible, inform the Management Committee of the progress of the disciplinary process. This should be done within 10 working days
- The disciplinary committee should furnish the individual with the nature of the complaint being made against him/her and afford him/her the opportunity of providing a response either verbally or in writing, but usually at a meeting with the disciplinary committee
- Written confidential records of all complaints should be safely and confidentially kept and club procedures should be defined for the possession of such records in the event of election of new officers
- Where it is established that an incident of misconduct has taken place, the disciplinary 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 the parents/guardians
- If the member against whom the complaint was made is unhappy with the decision of the disciplinary committee s/he should have the right to appeal the decision to an appeals committee (independent of a disciplinary committee). Any appeal should be made in writing within an agreed period after issue, usually 10 days of the decision of the disciplinary committee. The chairperson of the appeals committee should be a member of the Management Committee. The appeals committee should consult with the Children's Officer in relation to issues of child welfare and codes of conduct
- The appeals committee should have the power to confirm, set aside or change any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee

- If any party is not satisfied with the outcome the matter can be referred to the Governing Body. However, efforts to resolve the issue at local level should be exhausted before the Governing Body is engaged in attempts to resolve the matter

### 3.4.2 Each Club Should Have:

- I. Constitution
- II. Child Safeguarding Statement, including Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment.
- III. Codes of Conduct (Volunteers/Parents/Athletes)
- IV. Membership Form
- V. Safe Recruitment Policy
- VI. Bullying & Disciplinary Procedures
- VII. Attendance Records
- VIII. Accident/Incident Report Procedure
- IX. Qualified Coaches
- X. At least one Children Officer (Male and Female is preferable). This person is the relevant person in the club regarding the requirements of Children First Act 2015.

### 3.5 Recruitment of Sports Leaders



Clubs rely heavily on the time and commitment freely given by volunteers and without this the opportunities for children and young people to participate in sport may not exist. In order to make these opportunities a positive experience it is recommended that all adults taking responsibility for young people in sport should undergo a recruitment process. The following recruitment steps will help to protect young people and assist in placing leaders in the position to which they are suited and supported.

- List tasks that Sports Leaders need to perform, and the skills needed for those tasks
- Make all vacancies openly available to interested and qualified applicants
- Each applicant should complete an application form. This should include a self-declaration section/ form.
- In Ireland and Northern Ireland coaches who work with under 18's are deemed to be 'regulated positions' regardless of whether they are paid or not. SCNI recommend that coaches should be checked by the Protection of Children (NI) Service, formally known as the Pre-Employment Consultancy Service (PECS). Weightlifting Ireland's e-Vetting includes Access NI vetting for members living in Northern Ireland.
- In the Republic of Ireland, the Children First Act 2015 stipulates that people who work in a 'Regulated Activity' **must** be checked by the Garda vetting service prior to working with children. This regulated activity includes the coaching of children or vulnerable adults. Weightlifting Ireland provides e-Vetting for affiliated clubs see appendix regarding evetting procedure. For more information see Tusla on <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/> which includes the most up to date guidance, and/or Sport Ireland's Safe Sport App
- It is not the responsibility of any one person to recruit a leader. References should be verified by the club's Management Committee and should be kept on file as a matter of record.
- All recommendations for appointment should be ratified by the club's management committee. The decision to appoint a Leader is the responsibility of a sports club, and not of any one individual within it.

- Once recruited into the sports club/organisation, all Leaders should be adequately managed and supported, and any statutory guidelines should be adhered to.
- A probationary period is advisable and should be established, ideally through an informal interview, which can be used to assess the leader's commitment to promoting good practice in relation to young people
- Verify qualifications, experience and gaps in employment history
- Confirm identity of leader by checking formal identification. This is also part of the vetting procedure.
- When storing information in relation to applicants, information should be treated as highly sensitive and confidential. It should be kept in a locked cupboard that is accessible only to a nominated officer and a deputy nominated officer.
- After making a final decision about the applicant, the original information sent to vetting authorities must be destroyed immediately by shredding or burning. Organisations may, however, include a note on any personnel file stating that a check was carried out and that the person's conditional offer of appointment was confirmed/withdrawn as a result. • Weightlifting Ireland's Evetting includes AccessNI vetting. For further information regarding policies in Northern Ireland please Access the Safeguarding Board of Northern Ireland SBNI on <http://www.proceduresonline.com/sbni/index.html> and the Child Protection in Sport Unit CPSU on <http://thecpsu.org.uk/>

### **3.6 Education and Training**

Clubs should ensure that Leaders are competent to provide safe and rewarding experiences for those in their care and that Leaders are provided with the appropriate training for their activity.

Due to the nature of the sport Weightlifting Ireland requires that all leaders involved in Coaching must have a current Weightlifting Ireland Coaching Qualification. To this end, many courses are running throughout the year.

Training and education opportunities should also be made available to parents/guardians as appropriate, for example, encouraging the completion of

Safeguarding 1 training, referee training, in-house training on running a competition board, etc.

It is important that National Children's Officers/Designated Persons and Club Children's Officers/Designated Persons receive appropriate training for their role. In addition, **all leaders** working with young people must attend the 'Child Protection in Sport' Awareness training (Safeguarding 1), which includes information on codes of conduct, recruitment and selection and awareness of the appropriate club response to allegations of child abuse.

Club Children's Officers can then complete the 3-hour Children's Officer training (Safeguarding 2).

Club Designated Officers must complete Safeguarding 1 and, the 3 hour Designated Person Training Safeguarding 3 or the TUSLA online e-learning on <http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme>.

In Northern Ireland The Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) has been created through a partnership between the Sports Council and the NSPCC to promote the rights of children along with ensuring their protection and continued enjoyment of sport. In Northern Ireland Child Protection training is available by contacting Sports Northern Ireland, (028 90 381222) who offer the following workshops:

- Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport
- Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer (DSCO)



## Chapter 4 Practice

### 4.1 Practice

Leaders should always strive to interact positively with children, enhancing the child's involvement and enjoyment of the sporting activity and promoting the welfare of the participant. The Code assists in the achievement of these aims and can also help to protect Leaders in their various roles by providing a framework for the promotion of good practice.

### 4.2 Guidelines for Leaders

Leaders have an important role to play in promoting good practice in weightlifting. They should have as their first priority, the children's safety and enjoyment of the sport. The Leaders' success should not be evaluated by performance or results of competition. They should enjoy a sense of achievement and pleasure through their work with young people. After undertaking appropriate education and training, Leaders will be well prepared to operate in a safe sporting environment with a knowledge and understanding of their role and responsibilities. They should be supported in their work by the club and parents/guardians. Leaders are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with young participants. Leaders should operate to the club's agreed code of conduct, which emphasises enjoyment, equality, fair play and the general well-being of young people. This model of good practice should help children to demonstrate an awareness of equality, fair play and respect for Leaders, other members of their group and the rules of the sport. The club and parents/guardians should afford Leaders the respect they deserve and make them aware of any special needs of the child. Club procedures should support the Leaders' model of good practice, thus ensuring protection for both the Leader and the participant. In so doing, Leaders should feel able to make a complaint in an appropriate manner and have it dealt with through an effective complaints procedure. They should be able to appeal any decision through an effective appeals procedure.

In order to act as a role model and to promote their safety and the safety of young people Sports Leaders should:

- Be positive, praise and encourage effort as well as results

- Put the welfare of young people first, strike a balance between this and winning
- Encourage fair play and treat participants equally
- Have the relevant knowledge and experience to work with young people
- Understand developmental needs of young people

Where possible, and for their own safety, Leaders should avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others
- Taking sessions alone
- Taking children on journeys alone in their car
- The use of alcohol before coaching, during events and on trips with young people

Sports Leaders should not:

- use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a child
- take children to their home
- exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward
- engage in rough physical games, sexually provocative games or allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind, and/or make sexually suggestive comments about, or to, a child
- take measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adult
- undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.) in the training of children
- put pressure on young athletes to 'make weight'

### **4.3 Physical Contact**

Physical contact during sport should always be intended to meet the child's needs, NOT the adult's. The adult will probably use appropriate contact when the aim is to assist in development of the skill or activity or for safety reasons, e.g. to prevent or treat an injury. This should be in an open environment with the permission and understanding of the participant.

In general

- Contact should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the participant - Don't do something that a child can do for themselves
- Never engage in inappropriate touching such as touching of groin, genital areas, buttocks, breasts or any other part of the body that might cause a child distress or embarrassment

Misleading or inaccurate information relating to physical contact can undermine the confidence of adults working with children and young people. This can also have serious safety implications for children. For leaders, coaches, volunteers or any adults and children to feel comfortable the following should be followed:

#### 4.3.1 Appropriate Physical Contact

Appropriate contact is when:

- **The aim is to teach or develop a skill or technique that the child cannot accomplish without help;** the nature and the reason for the physical contact must be explained by the adult to the child and must be within the scope of the qualification of the adult, primarily here is the requirement to keep the back tight during the lifts.
- **An injury requires treatment** – the child should be informed about what is happening and encouraged to hold dressings etc., however for emergency first aid treatment this may not be possible
- An accident can be prevented from occurring – this will be in reaction to an emergency situation

#### 4.3.2 Respect for a young person

- All children must be treated with dignity and respect with any level of physical contact required. A young person's permission should be requested where any physical contact is required, the adult and child involved will feel more comfortable.
- Leaders should convey approval with verbal encouragement and praise, rather than the use of often repetitive physical contact.
- Any contact should be in an open environment and children should be encouraged to voice any concern if they feel uncomfortable or threatened.

- Children should know how to voice any concerns – through their parents or the Club’s Children’s Officer.
- Any form of physical contact as a punishment or as a response to misbehaviour is unlawful.
- Only necessary and appropriate physical intervention may be used to prevent a child or young person from harming themselves, others or damaging property.
- Misbehaviour may need to be dealt with under breaches of the code of conduct through the complaints and disciplinary procedures.

#### 4.3.3 Managing the Young Persons Emotions

A child in distress may require comfort and reassurance as in a manner that would normally be provided by a parent or guardian. A young person may also react to victory or success with an expression of affection to an adult, a hug for example. Adults must ensure that their reaction to the child in distress or because of a success does not become unnecessary and unjustified physical contact, particularly with the same young person over a period of time. Any contact should be in response to the needs of the child NOT the adult and always in an open environment.

#### 4.3.4 Parents/Guardians

Ensure the parents are aware of the need for physical contact from time to time and they are comfortable with what is required (examples of this includes: young weightlifters often become very nervous before entering a [competition platform](#) or very despondent after missing lifts and can look toward their coach for reassurance and support. This can sometimes include physical contact such as an arm around the shoulder or pat on the back. Such physical contact is appropriate as long as it occurs in an open environment and is in line with the rest of the guidelines surrounding physical contact as identified in this document.

#### 4.3.5 Medical and Sports Science Practitioners

Within the sport of weightlifting there is sometimes a requirement for physical contact from medical staff and sports science professionals. This should only be undertaken by properly trained and qualified personal that are following the specific guidelines and codes of practice for their profession. Any queries in this regard should be directed to the National Children’s Officer.

#### 4.4 Guidelines for Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians have the primary responsibility for the care and welfare of their children within sport. Parents/guardians should encourage their children to participate in weightlifting for fun and enjoyment and should ensure that their child's experience of weightlifting is a positive one. Lessons learned in children's sport will shape values and attitudes in adult life. They should always remember that children play sport for their own enjoyment not that of the parents/guardians. Parents/guardians have a duty to ensure that the context in which their child is participating is appropriate.

Parents/guardians and Leaders will ideally work in partnership to promote good practice in children's weightlifting and to support all efforts to protect against neglect, emotional, physical or sexual abuse in sporting activities. To do so, parents/guardians should ensure that sports clubs treat their children with fairness, respect and understanding, and that the club is fulfilling its responsibility to safeguard children. They should encourage their children to tell them about anyone causing them harm. They should become aware of club procedures and policies, in particular where changes are made that affect them, or their children, and be informed of all matters relating to ethics and good practice. They should check that the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Weightlifting has been adopted and implemented in the club/organisation.

Parents/guardians should remember that children learn best by example. To assist in the promotion of good practice with the club they should:

- Be aware of the relevant Sports Leaders and their role within the club
- Show appreciation of and respect for Sports Leaders and their decisions
- Encourage their child to play by the rules
- Behave responsibly in the audience
- Focus on their child's efforts rather than performance
- Focus on the fun and participation of the child in Weightlifting
- Liaise with the Leaders in relation to the times/locations of training sessions, medical conditions of their children and any requirement for their child's safety.

To promote the procedures of good practice parents/guardians should be:

- Encouraged to become members of the club, where feasible, and take an active interest in the running of the club or any sporting activities in which their children take part
- Willing to become the Club Children's Officer or assist in the running of the club
- Informed of the training and/or competitive programmes and be satisfied with the general environment that is created for their children
- Informed if their child sustained an injury during activities
- Informed of problems or concerns relating to their children.
- Informed in advance and have their consent sought in relation to matters regarding away trips, camps or specially organised activities
- Comments and suggestions by parents/guardians should always be considered and their complaints acknowledged and dealt with as they arise through an effective and confidential complaints procedure.

Parents/guardians should not:

- Ignore or dismiss complaints or concerns expressed by a child which relate to his/her involvement in weightlifting
- Ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake or missing a lift
- Put undue pressure on their child to please or perform well, including forcing a child to participate when ill
- Encourage or facilitate the use of banned substances by their child
- Support disordered eating patterns to 'make weight' by the child
- Take safety for granted
- Treat the club as a child-minding service

## 4.5 Guidelines for Children

*Children have a great deal to gain from sport in terms of their personal development and enjoyment. The promotion of good practice in sport will depend on the co-operation of all involved, including child members of clubs. Children must be encouraged to realise that they also have responsibilities to treat other children and their Leaders with fairness and respect.*

### 4.5.1 Children in Weightlifting are entitled to:

- Be listened to
- Be believed
- Be safe and to feel safe
- Participate in activities on an equal basis, appropriate to their ability and stage of development
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- Be happy, have fun and enjoy sport
- Experience competition at a level at which they feel comfortable and the desire to win as a positive and **healthy outcome** for striving for best performance
- Comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner
- Make a complaint in an appropriate way and have it dealt with through an effective complaints procedure
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality
- Be represented at decision making bodies/meetings within their sports club
- Have a voice in the running of their club
- Approach the Children's Officer/Designated Person with any questions or concerns they may have

### 4.5.2 Children should undertake to:

- Play fairly, do their best and have fun
- Shake hands before and after the event, whoever wins - and mean it
- Respect officials and accept their decisions with grace, not a grudge
- Respect fellow team members; give them full support both when they do well and when things go wrong
- Respect opponents, they are not enemies, they are partners in a sporting event

- Give opponents a hand if they are injured or have problems with equipment
- Accept apologies from opponents when they are offered
- Exercise self-control and tolerance for others, even if others do not
- Be modest in victory and be gracious in defeat
- Show appropriate loyalty to weightlifting and all its participants
- Make high standards of fair play the example others want to follow

#### 4.5.3 Children should not:

- Cheat
- Use violence
- Shout at, or argue with, the referee, officials, team mates or opponents
- Take banned substances to improve performance
- Dehydrate themselves to make weight
- Bully or use bullying tactics to isolate another child
- Use unfair or bullying tactics to gain advantage
- Harm team mates, opponents or their property
- Tell lies about adults or other children
- Spread rumours
- Keep secrets about any person who may have caused them harm

## 4.6 Supervision and General Guidelines

### 4.6.1 Transport

There is an extra responsibility on adults and leaders when they transport young people to events. Adults should:

- Ensure there is adequate insurance on their car and that they follow the rules of the road, including the legal use of seat belts
- Ensure they do not carry more than the permitted number of passengers
- Avoid being alone with one passenger, put passengers in the back seat, have central drop off locations or seek parental permission when transporting on a regular basis.



- Parents should check with young people about the plans, listen to what the young people are saying, be sure they are happy with the transport arrangements.
- Encourage the use of the Travel Tracker utility within the Safe Sport App when transporting young people (note-data use and increased battery usage)

#### 4.6.2 General Supervision

- Ensure adequate Adult: Child ratios. Good practice dictates that a leader should try to ensure that more than one adult is present. This will help to ensure the safety of the children as well as protect adults
- Adult: Child ratios will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the participants and any special needs of the group, a general guide might be 1:8 for under 12 years of age and 1:10 for over 12 years of age
- There should be at least one adult of each gender with mixed parties
- Away trips will need higher rates of supervision and these should be checked out with the governing body. Children and young people should be supervised at all times.
- Avoid adults being left alone with young participants, if a leader needs to talk separately to a participant this should be done in an open environment, in view of others
- Respect the privacy of young people while changing, leaders may only need to enter changing rooms where the participants are very young or require special assistance. When necessary, leaders should supervise in pairs or seek assistance, it is the safety and welfare of the participants that is of paramount importance
- Leaders should not be left alone with young people at the end of a training session. Clearly state times for start and finish of training and/or competitions. If late collections occur leaders should remain in pairs until participants have left. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to make arrangements for the collection of young people, it should be made clear that the club is responsible only for club activities
- If a child suffers an injury or accident the parents/guardians should be informed.

#### 4.6.3 Overnight & Away trips

- Written permission of parents/guardians should be obtained for all overnight away trips, this should include permission to travel, behaviour agreement and any medical/special needs of the group, (including permission to treat the participant) The agreement should be signed by both parents and participants
- A meeting with parents and participants is useful to communicate travel times, competition details, other activities, gear requirements, special needs (medical or dietary), and any other necessary details, contact details, codes of conduct, etc.
- Weightlifting Ireland should share any appropriate information with leaders of the group
- All adults who travel on away trips should be carefully chosen, using the recruitment and selection procedure of this code
- The roles and responsibilities of adults participating in away trips should be clearly defined
- A Team Manager/Head of Delegation should be appointed for away trips. S/he should have overall responsibility for the children's well-being, behaviour and sleeping arrangements. S/he should be appointed as an official of the club for the duration of the trip
- The Team Manager should submit a written report to the organisers as soon as possible after the end of the trip
- On away trips, coaches should be accountable to the Team Manager in all non-performance related matters
- Where there are mixed teams there should be leaders of both genders (at least one female and/or male in the management/coaching structure)
- Adults should not share a room with a child. Where the presence of an adult is needed there should be more than one child in the room with the adult. If children are sharing a room, it should be with those of the same groupings, age and gender
- Managers should check out the venue beforehand, so that separate and appropriate sleeping arrangements can be made in advance

- Alcoholic drink, smoking and other illegal substances / activities are forbidden to participants. Leaders should act as role models in this respect

#### 4.6.4 Hosting

Being a host family or being hosted is an integral part of many sports and, if handled appropriately, can add to a child's enjoyment and experience at a competition.

Hosting can be a challenging role but also very rewarding. Special care should be taken in the selection of homes for overnight stays.

A host should be provided with as much information about the child/children staying with them and details of the competition. Where practicable more than one child should be placed with each host family. The family in turn should agree to provide references and be vetted. In addition, clubs should follow the recruitment and selection procedures outlined in this Code. When arranging for events/trips abroad, the club or Governing Body will be dependent on the ability of the host organisation to access vetting services and obtain appropriate references.

It is the responsibility of the trip organiser to provide the hosts with the relevant information on the child and details of what is expected.

Host families should

- Agree to abide by the weightlifting Ireland's Code of Conduct
- Consent to appropriate checks and references
- Attend host family meetings before competitions or events
- Provide a safe and supportive environment for young people

Clubs should

- Provide a travel pack to hosting families
- Check out references with hosting families
- Provide an itinerary of the trip
- Gather information on destination and venue

Young People

- Should sign a behaviour agreement
- Should not be asked to share a bed or a room with an adult
- Should be happy with the arrangements
- Should show respect to the host families

## 4.7 Safety

Weightlifting Ireland and all Clubs should ensure that a clear Risk Assessment statement of specific and potential risks attached to weightlifting is widely publicised to all members. They should also have a Risk Assessment Document as part of the Child Safeguarding Statement of the Club as required by the Children First Act 2015. They should also have specific procedures in place for safeguarding against such risks.

The following practices should apply in order to promote safety:

- Activities being undertaken should be suitable for the ability, age, and experience of the participants
- Equipment and facilities should meet the highest possible standards and be appropriate to the maturity of the participants
- First Aid should be available for all-training sessions and events. There should be a proper First Aid Kit. First Aid information should be a basic element of a coaching leadership course and is a requirement of Weightlifting Irelands Level 1 Club Coach qualifications.
- Injuries should be recorded, with a note of the action taken in relation to each one. It is recommended that each club maintain an accident book with a specific incident form for completion by Sports Leaders, with due regard for confidentiality
- Parents/guardians should be notified, by the Leader, of injuries/illness which children incur while participating in an activity
- All clubs should have a simple and widely known emergency plan to ensure safety procedures
- Officials should ensure that the conduct of competition conform to the standards set by Weightlifting Ireland
- Children should be taught the rules of weightlifting at club level and be encouraged to abide by them, keeping in mind that many rules are there for safety

- It is important that before children participate in weightlifting, they have learned and agreed personal safety rules e.g., being vigilant of other lifters around you, keeping your lifting area clear, etc.
- Parents/guardians should know, and abide by, the starting and finishing times of sessions and events

#### **4.8 Insurance**

All clubs should ensure that appropriate insurance cover is in place to cover the activities of the club, Leaders and participants. Away trips should be included in such cover. For away trips parents/guardians should be made aware of the need for comprehensive insurance to cover their child, e.g. health /medical insurance etc. Adults transporting children in their cars should be aware of the extent and limits of their motor insurance cover, particularly in relation to acceptable numbers and liability.

#### **4.9 Registration, Dropout and Club Transfers**

Loss of club members, including adult transfers, should be monitored. Any unusual or unexpected dropout or club transfer of children or Leaders should be checked out by the Club Children's Officer and/or Weightlifting Ireland. If any concerns regarding a child or children's welfare are raised the matter should be handled in accordance with procedures outlined in this Code.

#### **4.10 Discipline in Weightlifting**

Discipline in sport should always be positive in focus, providing the structure and rules that allow participants to learn to set their own goals and strive for them. It should encourage young people to become more responsible for themselves and therefore more independent. Children should be helped to become responsible about the decisions and choices they make within weightlifting, particularly when they are likely to make a difference between playing fairly and unfairly. There should be no place for fighting, over-aggressive or dangerous behaviour in weightlifting.

##### **4.10.1 The Use of Sanctions**

The use of sanctions is an important element in the maintenance of discipline. The age and developmental stage of the child should be taken into consideration when using sanctions. Sanctions should be fair and consistent and in the case of persistent

offence, should be progressively applied. They should never be used to retaliate or to make a Leader feel better. The following steps are suggested and should always be used in conjunction with the code of conduct for young people:

- Rules should be stated clearly and agreed
- A warning should be given if a rule is broken
- A sanction (for example, use of time out) should be applied if a rule is broken for a second time. The use of green, yellow and red cards is encouraged
- If a rule is broken for the third time the child should be spoken to, and if necessary, the parents/guardians may be involved
- Sanctions should not be applied if a Leader is not comfortable with them. If an appropriate action cannot be devised right away, the child should be told that the matter will be dealt with later, at a specified time and as soon as possible
- A child should not be sanctioned for making errors. Physical activity (e.g. doing push-ups) should not be used as a sanction. To do so only causes a child to resent physical activity, something that s/he should learn to enjoy throughout his/her life
- Sanctions should be used sparingly. Constant sanctioning and criticism can cause a child to turn away from sport
- Once sanctions have been imposed, it is important to make the young person feel s/he is a valued member of the group again
- Where relevant some sanctions may need to be recorded and parents informed

#### **4.11 Use of photographic and mobile equipment**

Each club should adopt a policy in relation to the use of images of athletes on their websites and other publications, as there have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people. Adults and sports leaders need to work together to prevent those wishing to cause such harm to young people.

Remember having photographic and filming guidelines is not about preventing parents from taking pictures, it is to ensure that only those who have a right to take photographs do so. Please see expanded version of Weightlifting Irelands Photography and filming guidelines within the Appendices, which include the appropriate permission forms etc.

Anyone concerned about photography taking place at events or training sessions can contact the children's officer/ designated person and ask them to deal with the matter. The purpose is to reduce the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and outside the sport. Group photographs where the club is identified rather than individuals are good for publicity without creating a risk to those in the photographs. As a guide try to remember the following: -

- If the athlete is named, avoid using their photograph.
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the athlete.
- Ask for the athlete's permission to use their image to ensure that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport.
- Ask for parental permission to use the athlete's image to ensure that parents are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. A permission form could be used or make an announcement at the start of an event.
- To reduce the risk of inappropriate use, only use images of athletes in suitable dress. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child
- Talk to children's officer/designated person if you are worried about use of images
- Amateur photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the children's officer, event organiser or leader of session. Permission forms should be available on site.
- To ensure spectators and participants are informed of the policy, the club/event/organisation should display the following information prior to the start of an event and where possible make an announcement over a tannoy.

“In line with the recommendation in the Club's/Weightlifting Ireland's Code of Conduct, the promoters of this event request that any person wishing to engage in any video, zoom or close-range photography should register their details with the organisers. It is not advisable that children are photographed or filmed without their permission and/or the permission of their parent/guardian”.

#### 4.11.1 Working in Partnership to protect young people

Photographs, when used with personal information, can be used as a means of identifying children. This practice can make a child vulnerable to an individual who may wish to “groom” that child for abuse. Furthermore, the content of the photo can be used or adapted for inappropriate use. There is evidence of this adapted material finding its way onto child pornography sites. Adults and sports leaders need to work together to prevent those wishing to cause such harm to young people.

#### 4.11.2 Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are often given to children for security, enabling parents to keep in touch and make sure they are safe. Young people value their phones highly as it offers them a sense of independence. In addition, mobile phones allow quick and easy contact, which can make a safe and efficient way to carry out club business. However, such technology has also allowed an increase in direct personal contact with young people, in some cases used to cross personal boundaries and cause harm to young people. Within clubs there is a need to encourage responsible and secure use of mobile phones by adults and young people.

Therefore, Club personnel should advise young people:

- If you receive an offensive photo, email or message, do not reply, save it, make a note of times and dates and tell a parent or children’s officer/designated person within the club.
- Be careful about who you give your phone number to and don’t respond to unfamiliar numbers
- Change your phone number in cases of bullying or harassment
- Don’t use the phone in certain locations; inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person, e.g. changing rooms
- Treat you phone as you would any other valuable item so that you guard against theft
- When using your phone to access the internet in particularly the use of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc you are expected to do so in a safe, friendly and respectful manner. Cyber or online bullying will not be tolerated.



As a Leader remember

- Use group texts for communication among athletes and teams and inform parents of this at the start of the season
- It is not appropriate to have constant communication with individual athletes
- Don't use the phone in certain locations; inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person, e.g. changing rooms

## **4.12 Good practice guidelines for the safe use of social media**

*Understand the safety aspects including what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour on a social networking service*

Social Media offers great potential to promote activities and showcase success. It can be an effective way to communicate but rules should be applied by clubs and competitors to ensure positive promotion. Weightlifting Ireland expects its members to use social media in a responsible, respectful and friendly manner. When using sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc members should not post negative comments about referees/judges/opponents/team mates/coaches or any other member of their own club or any other club. Cyber/online bullying is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated and poor behaviour online will be treated as a breach of the Code of Behaviour in real time.

### **4.12.1 The risks**

With all emerging technologies there is also the potential for misuse. Risks associated with user interactive services include: cyber bullying, grooming and potential abuse by online predators, identity theft, and exposure to inappropriate content includes self-harm, racism, sexting (which is the creation or uploading of inappropriate sexual material). The capabilities of social networking services may increase the potential for sexual exploitation of children and young people. There have been a number of well-reported cases where adults have used social networking and user interactive services as a means of grooming children and young people for sexual abuse.

Online grooming techniques include:

- Gathering personal details, such as age, name, address, mobile number, name of school and photographs;

- Promising meetings with sports idols or celebrities or offers of merchandise;
- Offering cheap tickets to sporting or music events;
- offering material gifts including electronic games, music or software;
- paying young people to appear naked and perform sexual acts;
- bullying and intimidating behaviour, such as threatening to expose the child by contacting their parents to inform them of their child’s communications or postings on a social networking site, and/or saying they know where the child lives, plays sport, or goes to school;
- Asking sexually-themed questions, such as “Do you have a boyfriend?”, or “Are you a virgin?”;
- Asking to meet children and young people offline;
- Sending sexually themed images to a child, depicting adult content or the abuse of other children;
- Masquerading as a minor or assuming a false identity on a social networking site to deceive a child; or
- Using school or hobby sites (including sports) to gather information about a child’s interests likes and dislikes. Most social networking sites set a child’s webpage/profile to private by default to reduce the risk of personal information being shared in a public area of the site.

#### 4.12.2 Easy rules to remember

If someone has their own personal profile on a social media website, they should make sure that others cannot access any content, media, or information from that profile that:

- a) They are not happy for others to have access to; and/or
- b) Which would undermine their position as sports coach/volunteer representing their club and Weightlifting Ireland.

As a basic rule, if you are not happy with others seeing particular comments, media or information, then simply **do not post** these materials on a public forum site. When using social media sites, the following should be considered:

- Change your privacy setting on the profile so that only people you have accepted as friends can see your comments. Individuals should lock down their page to non-friends;

- Review who is on your “friends list” on your personal profile. In most situations, you should not accept “friend requests” if you do not actually know the person(s) concerned;
- Ensure personal blogs have clear disclaimers that the views expressed are personal and not representative of a particular Club or sport;
- Ensure that information published on social media sites complies with the club/organisations Code of Conduct;
- Be aware of how your actions could be captured via images, posts or comments online as these will reflect on the sport or your Club;
- Respond to online bullying - what is said online should be treated as if said in real time;
- Those in authority should not have under 18’s they coach as their friends and do not comment on individual players you are coaching through your personal page.

#### 4.12.3 Principles

- If you are representing your sport or club in an official capacity, it is important that your posts convey the same positive spirit that your club/sport would instil in all of its communications. Be respectful of all individuals, races, religions and cultures. How you conduct yourself online not only reflects on you; it also reflects directly on your sport/club.
- When disagreeing with the opinions of others online, keep it appropriate and polite. If you find yourself in a situation that might become antagonistic, do not get defensive or disengage from the conversation abruptly. It is also important not to respond in the heat of the moment in a way you may regret later. Feel free to seek advice or disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner that reflects well on your sport/club.

Some online sites for further Information

<https://www.hotline.ie/internet-safety/safety-tips>

<https://www.webwise.ie/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/safeguarding/>

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/online-abuse/>

<https://thecpsu.org.uk/resource-library/?topic=1104>

## 4.13 Managing your Club's Webpage/Profile

Become familiar with user interactive services before setting up your club's presence on a social networking or other interactive service. This should specifically include privacy and safety tools, the terms of service (the terms of service usually contain what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour), and how users can contact the service if they should have a concern or complaint.

### 4.13.1 Management of the profile

Decide who will have responsibility for: the setting up, management, and moderation (overseeing, reviewing and responding to posted content) of the webpage/profile. This includes the content you upload to appear, what you accept to be linked to your webpage/profile, and the communication or interaction with users. This person is most likely to have online contact with younger users, interacting with the webpage/profile

### 4.13.2 Vetting and training

This person should be appropriately vetted and receive recognised safeguarding or child protection training. Training should also address online safeguarding issues, including what warning signs to look out for.

### 4.13.3 Involve your Children's Officer

If you are engaging a social media or moderation company to manage and moderate your webpage/ profile it is important that your Children's Officer also has responsibility for the management and moderation of the webpage/profile to ensure that any online safeguarding concerns are handled in line with your existing safeguarding policies and procedures.

### 4.13.4 Registration or 'signing up' your club

#### *Choose an appropriate email address to register/set up a profile/account*

This requires an email address – use a club email address rather than a personal email address. This will reduce the risk of the establishment of impostor or fake profiles, and is important in relation to any liability or risk for an individual required to set up the profile on behalf of the club. Similarly ensure that only club rather than personal email addresses are made available on or through a profile.

#### 4.13.5 Security

Keep the log-in details to the account (including the password to the account and webpage/profile) secure within your club. This will reduce the risk of the club webpage/profile being hacked into.

#### 4.13.6 Privacy and safety settings:

*Set the appropriate privacy level* Consider each of the privacy and safety settings available across all aspects of the services i.e. photos, blog entries, image galleries and set the appropriate level of privacy taking into consideration your target audience and who you wish to see the content. Failing to set appropriate privacy levels could result in messages which are defamatory, libellous or obscene appearing on your profile before you have a chance to remove it. This may result in significant personal distress, risk to the reputation of the individual and/or the club.

#### 4.13.7 Accept 'friends' setting and minimum user age

You may wish to check a user profile before accepting them. Do not accept friend request from children under the minimum age for the service (usually 13 years). Report underage users to the service provider and to the young person's parents (perhaps via the Children's Officer).

#### 4.13.8 'Accept comment' setting

This allows a user to approve or pre-moderate a comment from another user, usually a 'friend' before it appears on their webpage/profile. Ensure that all messages are checked before they appear on your club's webpage/ profile to ensure that any inappropriate messages are blocked and if necessary reported to the service provider. This may not be possible with all social networking services. You may wish to contact the prospective service provider to establish if steps could be taken to adjust the privacy and safety settings for your needs.

*Ensure that coaches and athletes are aware of the need to protect their privacy online.*

Make sure that your members are aware of the need to protect their own privacy online. They should understand the risks in posting and sharing content which may

damage their reputation before they link their webpage/profile to the club's profile.

*Address safety when adding content to your webpage/profile:*

#### 4.13.9 Clubs contact details

Add information about how to contact your club including a website address, if available. Also include offline contact details for your club. This allows users to contact your club directly.

#### 4.13.10 Promote your sports webpage/profile

Feature details of your clubs social networking webpage/profile on your clubs website. A webpage/profile address on a social networking service is sometimes referred to as the URL. This helps users to easily locate your club's presence online and reduce the risk of locating the wrong webpage/profile including any fake profiles. Do not target children and young people who are likely to be under the minimum requirement age for the social networking service in any promotion of the clubs webpage/profile.

#### 4.13.11 Promote safe and responsible use

Consider promoting safe and responsible use of social networking to your clubs audience online. This could include uploading safety videos, messages or links onto the club's webpage/profile. If you do not yet have a safe and responsible use policy or safety tips for your club, there is a considerable amount of safety material available.

#### 4.13.12 Sports events and competitions

Consider the integration of offline events with your club's presence online. Extra care should be taken when advertising these events online and where information about users, including children and young people is collected. In these circumstances you will need to follow the legal requirements concerning the collection of personal information, as set out in the Data Protection Act 1998 and updated with the General Data Protection Regulations GDPR see <http://gdprandyou.ie/> for information

#### 4.13.13 Avoid taking personal details of children and young people

Do not ask users to divulge personal details including home and email addresses, schools, mobile numbers that may help locate a child. It is best to provide the details of the event and signpost to where users can obtain further information.

#### 4.13.14 Uploading Content – 'think before you post'

Consider any messages, photos, videos or information – do they comply with existing policies within your club? (e.g. use of photographs of children). Is the content e.g.

photographs and text appropriate to the audience? Always seek young person/parental permission to use the photos of those featured before adding to the club's webpage/profile.

#### 4.13.15 Fake or impostor webpage/profiles

Beware of fake or impostor profiles of well-known or celebrity sports people. It has been known for fake or impostor profiles to be set up on social networking services. Sometimes this is intended to be fun, however fake profiles can be set up with malicious intent to ridicule and harass an individual. It can also be used to groom children by those seeking to gain a child's trust and attempt to set up a meeting offline. It is best to first make contact offline with the sports person and check if they have an official webpage/ profile.

#### 4.13.16 Promote your sports webpage/profile

Once you have set up the sport webpage/profile and are in the process of adding content it may be useful to contact the service provider. Some service providers 'register' a range of charitable organisations. This can ensure that a profile is not deleted as potentially fake or in breach of their own safety policies e.g. an 'adult' profile with a number of children and young people linked as 'friends' may raise concerns on the part of the service provider about online grooming activity.

You can also explore with the social networking service how they can promote your profile and help you reach new users. Social networking services are set up with various sections of interest. This can include music, comedy, events and more recently areas that promote social responsibility, inclusion, health and well-being. These areas or sections are usually featured on the home page of the site with a selection of the most popular web pages/profiles. These are sometimes themed or linked to a global or national event or campaign which gives exposure to potentially millions of users worldwide.

#### 4.13.17 Contacting the social networking provider

There is usually a 'contact us' at the bottom of every page with an email address to explore how they can promote your sports profile.

#### *Remember*

Setting up a presence on social media involves providing interactive content which engages and connects with people.

## Chapter 5 Protection



### Protection

Child protection policies and procedures should be adopted by all Clubs and supported by their constitutions. A central goal for all involved in children's sport is to provide a safe, positive and nurturing environment where children can develop and enhance their physical and social skills. Promoting a child-centred ethos should go hand in hand with identifying and eliminating practices that impact negatively on safe and enjoyable participation in weightlifting.

### 5.1 Areas of Risk for Children in Weightlifting

Awareness of risk to children's happiness and welfare in weightlifting should be seen as central to protection against harm. Such risk could include the following:

- Children suffering significant harm by being deprived of proper supervision and safety
- Sports Leaders, parents/guardians subjecting children to constant criticism, sarcasm, rejection, threatening behaviour or pressure to perform at unrealistic levels
- The infliction of any form of non-accidental injury or other forms of child abuse



## 5.2 Substance Abuse in Weightlifting

- The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco should be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sport
- The use of alcohol before coaching, during sessions and events and on away trips should be avoided
- Clubs should be encouraged to organise receptions and celebrations in a non-alcoholic environment and in a manner that is suitable for the age group concerned. Adults should act as role models for appropriate behaviour and refrain from drinking alcohol at such functions
- Sports Leaders should promote fair competition through the development of sound training practice and should actively discourage the use of any substance that is perceived to offer short cuts to improved performances or to by-pass the commitment and hard work required to achieve success
- It is the responsibility of all Sports Leaders to educate and inform those in their care as to the short and long-term effects of substances taken to enhance performances.
- Officials should also ensure that those in their charge are aware of the harmful side effects or the illegality of proscribed drugs or other banned performance-enhancing substances
- Leaders in children's sport should refrain from seeking sponsorship from the alcohol and tobacco industries
- Children and parents/guardians involved in sport should be aware of Sport Ireland's and UK Sports Anti-Doping Programmes,

Further information is available on Sport Ireland's and UK Anti-doping's websites.

<http://www.sportireland.ie/Anti-Doping/> <http://ukad.org.uk/>

## 5.3 Psychological Stress, Burnout and Dropout of Children in Weightlifting

Burnout may be defined as a process resulting from an activity that was once a source of fun and personal satisfaction, but later becomes associated with progressive physical and psychological distress. There is a range of factors, which may cause this change, some of which are not associated with the child's sporting activities. Burnout

itself may result from a combination of the number of hours involved in physical training with high expectations and pressure from Sports Leaders and parents/guardians. It represents a loss of energy and enthusiasm for sport and is characterised by anxiety and stress. The child no longer has fun and becomes overwhelmed by the demands of competition and training. S/he may wish to drop out of sport.

Within a sporting context the following practices are harmful to children's health and welfare:

- Pressuring a child to perform at a level which is beyond his/her capacity based on age or maturation level
- Over-training or the making of demands on a child that lead to burnout
- Knowingly permitting an injured child to participate in a sporting activity
- Failure to take adequate precautions to protect a child from environmental hazards
- Failure to take account of known ailments or relevant weaknesses of a child

Psychological stress within the sporting context can be caused by:

- Over-emphasis on winning
- Age-inappropriate expectations
- Excessive criticism
- Inappropriate use of sanctions/discipline
- Rejection
- Disapproval of skill/performance ability
- Failure to provide support and encouragement for effort and achievement
- Failure to involve child/children as fully as possible in the activity
- The use of coarse, inappropriate language

#### 5.3.1 Signs of psychological stress and burnout

- Sleep disturbance
- Irritability
- Tension
- Lack of energy
- Sadness/depression
- Frequent illness

- Loss of interest and enthusiasm
- Absenteeism, arriving late, leaving early
- No pleasurable anticipation of participation in sporting events

### 5.3.2 Combating psychological stress and burnout.

Children who show an early aptitude for sport are very often asked to participate in a range of team sports or across a range of age groups. This can put them at risk of stress and burnout.

Stress and burnout can be prevented, and dropout rates reduced by measures such as:

- Listening to and respecting children's views about participation
- Parents/guardians and Sports Leaders de-emphasising the importance of winning and encouraging the development of individual skills and effort instead
- Attaining an appropriate match between the individual child's ability and the activity in which s/he is participating
- Ensuring that the physical or sporting abilities of the child are not viewed by the child as indications of his/her self-worth
- Ensuring that children have fun and enjoy activities in which they are involved
- Encouraging younger children to play a variety of different sports both at individual and at team level. This promotes variety and encourages a range of different sport skills in participants
- Using modified lifts
- Ensuring that children are not participating in adverse climatic conditions

## 5.4 Bullying

The risk of bullying and harassment by adults and by children should be anticipated by taking active steps to prevent it occurring. A prompt and decisive response should be made to any indications that it is taking place.

### 5.4.1 What is Bullying?

Bullying is repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical, which is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour, which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools, sports clubs and other organisations working with children. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting or

extortion by one or more children against a victim. It is the responsibility of Leaders to deal with bullying that may take place. Each club should have a clear policy on bullying which is known to members and implemented by Leaders. Incidents of bullying should be dealt with immediately and not tolerated under any circumstances. Many children are reluctant to tell adults that they are being bullied. Older children are even more reluctant. This underlines the need for constant vigilance and encouragement to report bullying.

#### **5.4.2 Combating Bullying**

All clubs/organisations should have an anti-bullying policy, (see sample Anti-Bullying Policy within the Appendices), which includes the following measures:

- Raising awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour
- Creating a club ethos which encourages children, Leaders and parents/guardians to report bullying and to use the procedures of the complaints mechanism of the organisation to address this problem
- Providing comprehensive supervision of children at all sporting activities
- Providing a supportive environment for victims of bullying
- Obtaining the co-operation of parents/guardians to counter bullying

#### **5.5 Child Abuse**

A club, like any other organisation that includes children among its members, is vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. This possibility should be openly acknowledged and addressed in its formal policies and procedures. An environment, in which awareness of what constitutes abusive behaviour and a willingness to tackle the issue head on, is the most likely to contribute to the implementation of effective child protection measures. It is only by discussing and agreeing procedures and best practice that all Leaders can be assured that they are providing the safest and most enjoyable experiences in sport for the children and for themselves.

#### **5.6 Child Protection in Weightlifting**

The prevention and detection of child abuse depends on the collaborative effort of everyone concerned. The following factors are central to effective child protection in sport:

- Acceptance by all involved with children, that abuse, whether physical, emotional, neglect or sexual is wrong, severely damages children and must be confronted
- Awareness of the behavioural and physical indicators of various forms of abuse
- Knowledge of the appropriate response and action to be taken where abuse is revealed or suspected
- Vigilance, and avoidance of all situations conducive to risk
- Open, trusting and co-operative relationships within the club/organisation, and with parents/guardians and others concerned with children's progress or welfare
- Willingness to co-operate with the Statutory Authorities (police authorities, health services executives or Tusla), in relation to sharing information about child protection concerns at any time

## 5.7 Harm

Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by his/her health and the development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age, (Children First 2015 or Children (NI) Order 1995 Article 66 3.2.2).

## 5.8 Categories of Abuse

All Sports Leaders should be familiar with signs and behaviours that may be indicative of child abuse. Though a child may be subjected to more than one type of harm, abuse is normally categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. For detailed definitions of abuse, refer to Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children [http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children\\_First\\_National\\_Guidance\\_2017.pdf](http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Children_First_National_Guidance_2017.pdf) (R.O.I.) and Co-operating (N.I.) to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-operating-safeguard-children-and-young-people-northern-ireland>.

The categories of abuse may be briefly summarised as follows:

## 1. Child Neglect

Neglect is normally defined in terms of an omission, where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care. It may also include neglect of a child's basic emotional needs. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For instance, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having his or her needs for supervision and safety met. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/guardian.

## 2. Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between an adult and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms. For children with disabilities it may include over-protection or conversely failure to acknowledge or understand a child's disability.

Examples of emotional abuse include:

- a) Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- b) Where the level of care is conditional on his or her behaviour;
- c) Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or unrealistic expectations of a child;
- d) Premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- e) Over or under protection of the child;
- f) Failure to provide opportunities for the child's education and development;
- g) Use of unrealistic or over-harsh disciplinary measures;
- h) Exposure to domestic violence.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/guardian.

**3. Physical Abuse** Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child, including:

- a) Shaking, hitting or throwing

- b) Use of excessive force in handling;
- c) Deliberate poisoning;
- d) Suffocation or drowning
- e) Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where parents/guardians fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness);
- f) Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child;
- g) For children with disabilities it may include confinement to a room or cot, or incorrectly given drugs to control behaviour
- h) Burning or scalding

#### 4. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others, For example:

- a) Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child;
- b) Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
- c) Masturbation in the presence of a child or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation;
- d) Sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal;
- e) Sexual exploitation of a child;
- f) It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

#### 5.9 Signs 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. For further information see Chapter 2 Children First National Guidance doc (R.O.I.) or Appendix 2, ACPC Regional Policy & Procedures (NI).

Some examples include: -

<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>SOME INDICATORS</b>	
<b>Abuse</b>	<b>Physical</b>	<b>Behavioural</b>
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	Health/Weight Loss Untreated fractures	Changes in attendance Reluctance to go home
SEXUAL	Torn or bloodstained clothing Inappropriate sexual awareness, behaviour or language	Distrustful of adults Sudden drop in performance

### 5.10 Grounds for Concern

Consider the possibility of child abuse if there are reasonable grounds for concern.

Reasonable grounds for concern (page 38, Children First 4.3.2, ACPC Regional Policy and Procedures Appendix 2), exist when there is:

- A specific indication from a child that s/he has been abused
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way
- An injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour;
- Consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect

### 5.11 Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 (IRL)

The Protections 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 (now Health Services Executives) or the Gardaí. This means that, even if a reported suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an



action would have to prove that the reporter had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

This Act came into operation on 23rd January 1999. The main provisions of the Act are:

1. 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 (now HSE), Tusla or any member of An Garda Síochána;
2. 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;
3. 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. This law does not exist in Northern Ireland, but an individual who reports a concern in ‘good faith’ is not deliberately attempting to slander another person’s name. In Northern Ireland there is legislation, the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967 which places the responsibility on everybody to report offences or to forward information to the police by emphasising the, ‘duty of every other person, who knows or believes,

- a) that the offence or some other arrestable offences has been committed; and
- b) that he has information which is likely to secure, or to be material assistance in securing, the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of any person for that offence.’

## **5.12 Recognising and reporting of suspected Child Abuse**

Each club should have clear procedures for responding to reports or concerns relating to the welfare and safety of children. All Leaders, children and parents/guardians should be aware of how to report and to whom concerns should be reported within the club/organisation. These procedures should be consistent with Statutory Authority guidelines, i.e. Children First 2015 (ROI) and Our Duty to Care (NI) and with the procedures outlined in this Code. Copies of the Statutory Authority guidelines should be available in all sports clubs. Everyone involved in working with young people

should be aware of their responsibility to work in co-operation with the statutory child protection authorities.

The ability to recognise child abuse depends as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on knowledge and information. It is important to note that child abuse is not always readily visible and may not be clearly observable. If a Leader or a parent/guardian is uneasy or suspicious about a child's safety or welfare the following response should be made:

#### 5.12.1 Reporting Child Abuse

Please see flow chart in the Appendices to this doc for an overview of the procedure.

The following steps should be followed in reporting child abuse to the Statutory Authorities using the standard reporting form from Tusla

<http://www.tusla.ie/children-first/report-a-concern/> (for links to forms and other information):

- a) Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred, or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information;
- b) Report the matter as soon as possible to the designated/relevant person. If there are reasonable grounds (See 5.10) for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, s/he will make a report to the Tusla Child & Family Agency or Gateway Service Team who have statutory responsibility to investigate, assess and validate suspected or actual child abuse;
- c) In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Designated Person is unable to contact a duty social worker the police authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities;
- d) If the Relevant Person is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist or not, s/he should informally consult with the local duty social worker or Weightlifting Ireland's National Children's Officer (Mandated Person) S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report;
- e) A Club Designated Person or 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, under advisement of the Tusla Duty Social

worker, **unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine any further investigation;**

- f) A report should be given by the Designated Person to the Statutory Authorities in person or by phone, and in writing; without delay
- g) It is best to report child abuse concerns by making personal contact with the relevant personnel in the Statutory Authorities and follow up in writing
- h) In those cases where the sports club/organisation finds that it does not have reasonable grounds for reporting a concern to the Statutory Authorities, the member who raised the concern should be given a clear written statement by the designated person of the reasons why the club is not taking action. The member should be advised that, if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to consult with, or report to, the Statutory Authorities in their area.

#### 5.12.2 Response to a child reporting any form of abuse

The following points should be taken into consideration:

1. The child should understand in an age appropriate way that it is not possible that any information will be kept a secret;
2. It is important to deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened;
3. It is important to stay calm and not to show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the child is saying seriously;
4. It should be understood that the child has decided to tell about something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation;
5. No judgmental statement should be made against the person against whom the allegation is made;
6. The child should not be questioned unless the nature of what s/he is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions can be used if necessary such as “Can you explain to me what you mean by that?”. Try to let the child tell their story, use their words

7. The child should be given 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 child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.

### **5.13 Informal Consultation**

Persons unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive and therefore reportable, should contact the duty social worker in the local health services executive or social services department where they will receive advice.

### **5.14 Sources of Child Abuse**

It is important to realise that children may be subjected to abuse by parents/guardians or other family members, persons outside their family, other children, or those who have responsibility for their care for one reason or another for short or long periods of time.

### **5.15 Children who may be especially vulnerable to Abuse**

Children in certain situations may be especially vulnerable to abuse. These include children who, for short or long periods, are separated from parents or other family members and depend on other adults for their care and protection. Children with disabilities may also be more at risk as the nature of their disability sometimes limits communication between themselves and others and they may depend more than most children on a variety of adults to meet their needs, for example, for care and transport. Those from a minority racial background may also be especially vulnerable. This could be due to the difficulty in recognising that racism is inherent in our society, which impacts on a child's ability to seek help from those in positions of authority.

### **5.16 Peer Abuse**

In some cases of child abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child and it is important that behaviour of this nature is not ignored. Grounds for concern will exist in cases where there is an age difference and/or difference in power, status or intellect between the children involved. However, it is also important to distinguish between normal sexual behaviour and abusive behaviour.

## 5.17 Allegations of Abuse against Sports Leaders

See flowchart in the appendices.

Each club/sports organisation should have agreed procedures to be followed in cases of alleged child abuse against Sports Leaders. If such an allegation is made, two steps should be taken:

1. The reporting procedure (See 5.12)
2. The procedure for dealing with the Sports Leader

### 5.17.1 Special Considerations

The following points should be considered

- The safety of the child making the allegation and any others who are/may be at risk should be ensured and this should take precedence over any other consideration. In this regard, the sports club/organisation should take any necessary steps which may be immediately necessary to protect children
- If a Sports Leader is the subject of the concern s/he should be treated with respect and fairness

### 5.17.2 Steps to be taken within the Sports Organisation

Where reasonable grounds for concern exist (See 5.10) the following steps should be taken by the club/organisation:

- Advice should be sought from the local duty social worker with regard to any action by the club deemed necessary to protect the child/children who may be at risk
- The matter should be reported to the local statutory authorities following the standard reporting procedure outlined above
- In the event that the concern is connected to the actions of a Leader in the club, the Leader involved in the concern should be asked to stand aside pending the outcome of any investigation by the Statutory Authorities. It is advisable that this task be undertaken by a senior office holder other than the designated person/children's officer who takes the responsibility for reporting
- When the Sports Leader is being privately informed by the senior officer of
  - a) the fact that an allegation has been made against him/her and

b) the nature of the allegation, s/he should be afforded an opportunity to respond. His/her response should be noted and passed on to the statutory authorities.

- All persons involved in a child protection process (the child, his/her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family, Sports Leaders) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure.
- Once the criminal process is completed, the club and weightlifting Ireland should consider the need to examine whether there are grounds for disciplinary proceedings for misconduct. The fact that the alleged abuser has not been prosecuted or has been found not guilty does not mean that such proceedings are not necessary or feasible.

### **5.18 Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is about managing information in a respectful, professional and purposeful manner. Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in concerns about the welfare of a child or bad practice within a club. 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 borne in mind:

- A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the child will supersede all other considerations
- All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know
- Information should be conveyed to the parents/guardians of the child about whom there are concerns in a sensitive way
- Giving information to others on a “need to know” basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality
- All persons involved in a child protection process (the child, his / her parents / guardians, the alleged offender, his / her family, coach/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 laws should be adhered to.
- Breach of confidentiality is a serious matter.

### **5.19 Dealing with Anonymous Complaints**

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but should not be ignored. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child/children is paramount. Any such complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Designated Person. This information should be checked out and handled in a confidential manner.

Any such complaints relating to child protection concerns should be handled in accordance with procedures outlined in this Code.

### **5.20 Rumours**

Rumours should **not** be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour circulating in sports organisations should be brought to the attention of the Designated Person and checked out without delay. Any ensuing information should be handled confidentially and with sensitivity. If the designated person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child has been abused s/he should refer the matter to the Statutory Authorities, using the standard reporting procedure. If there is any doubt about the requirement to report the substance of a rumour, advice should be sought from the duty social worker in the local health board or social services department.

Children should be encouraged to report problems or concerns directly to their Children's Officer and/or to their parents/guardians, or any trusted adult, regardless of how minor or serious the problem might be. Parents/guardians should also encourage children to inform them of any such problems or concerns.

Open trusting relationships between adults and children will help to ensure that all-important issues are dealt with in a constructive manner.

## 5.21 Disclosing information to Others

### Northern Ireland

If as a club you have information about an individual, who you are concerned poses a risk to children, joining another club/organisation you should seek advice from the PSNI (Public Protection Unit) before disclosing that information. Department of Justice guidance places the responsibility on the police to co-ordinate and leads the risk assessment and management process. The police have a standardised assessment method to consider the risk an individual may pose. Depending on this risk assessment the police will take the decision about sharing information. Sport's people should not feel that they have the burden of this knowledge alone.

### Duty to Refer to Disqualification Disclosure and Barring Service

Under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Order, all organisations operating in NI have a duty to refer information to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in certain circumstances. In all cases there are two conditions, both of which must be met, to trigger a referral to the DBS by a regulated activity provider.

A referral **MUST** be made to the DBS if the club or Weightlifting Ireland:

1. Withdraws permission for an individual to engage in regulated activity, or would have done so had that individual not resigned, retired, been made redundant or been transferred to a position which is not regulated activity; because
2. They think that the individual has:
  - a. Engaged in relevant conduct;
  - b. Satisfied the criteria set out in the Harm Test; or
  - c. Received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence.

The referral must be made to the DBS when the club/WI (in accordance with good practice) has gathered sufficient evidence as part of its investigations to support its reasons for withdrawing permission for the person in question to engage in regulated activity and consulted with the relevant social services or police if appropriate.

Weightlifting Ireland must also be informed if any club removes an individual from engaging in regulated activity for reasons outlined above to enable WI to consider the information and decide about the persons coaching award.



Additional information on the DBS and the referral process can be found on the DBS website: [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/dbs](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/dbs)

### Republic of Ireland

In the absence of the above guidance, if a club/organisation has information about an individual, who you are concerned poses a risk to children, joining another club/organisation you should seek advice from An Garda before disclosing that information. If there is no conviction information but concerns about the individuals practice, then advice about managing the information should be sought from Weightlifting Irelands National Children's Officer and Tusla.

Sport Ireland recommend that best practice is to disclose information requested by a third party which is given in order to provide protection to a young person now or in the future.