

Northern Ireland Provincial Bowling Association



Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

This policy includes procedures and guidance for dealing with concerns or allegations of abuse. The Northern Ireland Provincial Bowling Association (NIPBA) recognises and acknowledges its responsibility as a Governing Body, to establish a policy which promotes and encourages its affiliated member clubs to adopt the highest possible standards of care towards children, and other vulnerable people participating in the game of bowls.

Policy statement

The NIPBA believes that everyone, whether administrator, official, coach or bowler, has a duty of care to safeguard all children from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. The NIPBA will ensure the safety and protection of all children whilst in the care of the NIPBA through adherence to the Child Protection guidelines adopted by the NIPBA.

A child is defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007 (SVG Order) as a person who has not attained the age of 18.

The above also applies to safeguarding vulnerable adults (“the vulnerable”).

A vulnerable adult is described in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 and the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 as a person who has attained the age of 18 and

- Is living in residential accommodation, such as a residential care home, a nursing home or a residential special school;
- is living in sheltered housing;
- is receiving domiciliary care in his or her own home;
- is receiving any form of healthcare;
- is detained in a prison, remand centre, young offender institution, secure training centre or attendance centre, or under the powers of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- is in contact with probation services;
- is receiving support, assistance or advice to help them live independently, for example through the Supporting People programme receiving a service or participating in an activity that is specifically targeted at people with age-related needs or disabilities;
- is an expectant or nursing mother in residential accommodation;
- is receiving direct payments from Health and Social Care Trusts in lieu of social care services; or
- requires assistance in the conduct of his or her own affairs.

Principles

The following principles form the basis of the policy:

- The welfare of the child/vulnerable adult is paramount.

- All, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Everyone in the NIPBA has a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer. They are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred, but it is their responsibility to ensure they report any concerns or allegations of abuse to statutory authorities.

Policy aims

The aim of the NIPBA **Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy** is to promote good practice:

- Providing children, young people and the vulnerable with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of NIPBA.
- Allowing all those in the NIPBA to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

Promoting good practice

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can evoke strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur in many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people and the vulnerable in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer will have regular contact with young people and will be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases or cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child or vulnerable person enters the club activity having been subjected to abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving self-esteem. In such instances the club activity organiser must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure that they receive the required support.

Good practice guidelines

Officials and members should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote individual welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults means:

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Treating all young people/ the vulnerable equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with players (e.g. it is not appropriate for adult members to have an intimate relationship with a child/the vulnerable or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and according to guidelines provided by the Coach Education Programme. Care is needed, for example, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when a child is

constantly moving. Young people and their parents should always be consulted and their agreement gained.

- Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their children in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure parents, club members, coaches or officials work in pairs.
- Ensuring that at bowling events or overnight and away trips, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people, and the vulnerable.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and the vulnerable.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act *in loco parentis*, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent if officials or club members are required to transport young people in coaches, minibuses or cars.

Practices to be avoided for children and the vulnerable

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or the child's parents. For example, if they sustain an injury and need to go to hospital, or a parent/carer etc., fails to arrive to pick them up at the end of a session:

- Avoid spending time alone with them away from others.
- Avoid being isolated with them by taking or dropping them off to an event or activity.

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a room with a child.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control.
- Fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child.
- Do things of a personal nature for children or the vulnerable, that they can do for themselves.
- Invite or allow children or the vulnerable to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

N.B. It may sometimes be necessary for officials, coaches or bowlers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the players involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with them about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the appropriate officer and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents/guardians of children or vulnerable people are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a player.
- If they seem distressed in any manner.
- If a player appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a player misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Use of photographic/filming equipment at sporting events

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of children and the vulnerable. Officials and all club members should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the Safeguarding Officer.

Appointment of Safeguarding Officers

The NIPBA recognises its duty to appoint/elect a Safeguarding Officer with responsibility for child protection and the protection of the vulnerable at their Annual General Meeting. It also recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. The appointee could be a teacher, youth organisation leader or a person who will be well versed in child protection and have been “vetted” by Access NI and registered by the Independent Safeguarding Authority for working with children and who would be willing to act as the Safeguarding Officer. It is recommended that the Safeguarding Officer is a member of the General Purposes 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 NIBPA.

The NIPBA requires the designated Safeguarding Officer to:

- Attend a recognised 3-hour good practice and child protection awareness training workshop, to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of a positive culture towards good practice and child protection.
- Receive advisory information outlining good practice and informing them about what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person or the vulnerable.
- Gain national first aid training (where necessary).
- Attend update training when necessary. Information about meeting training needs can be obtained from Coaching NI, the NSPCC, and Sport NI.
- Have knowledge of the Code of Ethics and Statutory guidelines.
- Have knowledge of categories and indicators of abuse.
- Assist with the ongoing development and implementation of the NIPBA’s child protection training needs.
- Provide information and advice on child protection within the organisation.
- 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.
- Encourage member clubs to develop policies, procedures and guidelines to inform and promote good practice with regard to child protection and the protection of the vulnerable.
- Recommend member clubs adopt and implement the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport.

- Encourage member clubs to appoint a Safeguarding Officer. These individuals will be checked using the Northern Ireland Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) as part of the process of ensuring they are suitable to take on this role.

Responding to allegations or suspicions

It is not the responsibility of anyone within the NIPBA to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate officer or the appropriate authorities.

The NIPBA will assure all officials or members that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child or the vulnerable.

Where there is a complaint against an official/member of the NIPBA there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation.
- A child protection investigation.
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of the Police and child protection investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

Action if there are concerns

1. Concerns about poor practice:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the designated Safeguarding Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the NIPBA Safeguarding Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the Irish Bowling Association who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

2. Concerns about suspected abuse:

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either an official or a member of the NIPBA should be reported to the NIPBA Safeguarding Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.

If suspicion of child abuse is reported:

- The NIPBA Safeguarding Officer will refer the allegation to Social Services who may involve the Police.
- The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from Social Services.
- The NIPBA Safeguarding Officer should also notify the Irish Bowling Association who in turn will inform the Irish Bowling Association Child Protection Officer who will deal with any media enquiries.
- If the NIPBA Safeguarding Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the NIPBA President or in his absence the Irish Bowling Association Safeguarding Officer who will refer the allegation to Social Services.

A similar process should be applied when safeguarding vulnerable adults.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The NIPBA Safeguarding Officer.
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused.
- The person making the allegation.
- Social Services/Police.
- The NIPBA President and Irish Bowling Association Safeguarding Officer.
- Seek Social Services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

- The NIPBA Safeguarding Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further Police and Social Services inquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of the Social Services or Police inquiries the NIPBA General Purposes Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether an official or a member can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the Police. In such cases, the NIPBA General Purposes Committee must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability; it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse:

- Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents, officials and members may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, E-mail: bac@bacp.co.uk, Internet: <http://www.bacp.co.uk/>.
- Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, the club should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the Social Services or the Police. This is because other children, either within or outside sport, may be at risk from this person. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children. This is reinforced by the details of the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003.

Action if bullying is suspected

If bullying is suspected, the same procedure should be followed as set out in 'Responding to suspicions or allegations' above.

Action to help the victim and prevent bullying in sport:

- Take all signs of bullying very seriously.
- Encourage all children to speak and share their concerns (It is believed that up to 12 children per year commit suicide as a result of bullying, so if anyone talks about or threatens suicide, seek professional help immediately). Help the victim to speak out and tell the person in charge or someone in authority. Create an open environment.
- Investigate all allegations and take action to ensure the victim is safe. Speak with the victim and the bully(ies) separately.
- Reassure the victim that you can be trusted and will help them, although you cannot promise to tell no one else.
- Keep records of what is said (what happened, by whom, when).
- Report any concerns to the NIPBA Safeguarding Officer or the school (wherever the bullying is occurring).

Action towards the bully(ies):

- Talk with the bully(ies), explain the situation, and try to get the bully (ies) to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Seek an apology to the victim(s).
- Inform the bully's parents.
- Insist on the return of 'borrowed' items and that the bully(ies) compensate the victim.
- Impose sanctions as necessary.
- Encourage and support the bully(ies) to change behaviour.
- Hold meetings with the families to report on progress.
- Inform all organisation members of action taken.
- Keep a written record of action taken.
- Most 'low level' incidents will be dealt with at the time by coaches and volunteers. However, if the bullying is severe (e.g. a serious assault), or if it persists despite efforts to deal with it, incidents should be referred to the designated NIPBA Safeguarding Officer as in "responding to suspicions or allegations" above.

3. Concerns outside the immediate sporting environment (e.g. a parent or carer):

- Report your concerns to the NIPBA Safeguarding Officer, who should contact Social Services or the Police as soon as possible.
- If the NIPBA Safeguarding Officer is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact Social Services or the Police immediately.
- Social Services and the NIPBA Safeguarding Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.
- The NIPBA Safeguarding Officer should also report the incident to the Irish Bowling Association. The Irish Bowling Association should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident plays a role in NIPBA and act accordingly.
- Maintain confidentiality on a **need to know** basis only.
- See 4 below regarding information needed for Social Services.

4. Information for Social Services or the Police about suspected child abuse

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The child's name, age and date of birth of the child.
- The child's home address and telephone number.

- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.
- The child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents been contacted?
- If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
- If the child was not the person who reported the incident, has the child been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to Social Services or the Police should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact Social Services or the Police directly, or the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000, or Childline on 0800 1111.

Vulnerable Adults

A similar procedure for abuse of vulnerable adults should be adopted, as set out in paragraph 4 above.

This policy is based on the:

- NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) "**Developing a Child Protection Policy**".
- **Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport** (Sport NI and the Irish Sports Council).
- Irish Bowling Association "**Protecting Children and the Vulnerable**".
- Volunteer Development Agency "**Vetting & Barring Scheme, established under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups legislation**".