



# Stepaside F.C.

## Introduction

### Child Welfare & Stepaside Football Club Policies

Our ethos and values are founded on the principles of sportsmanship, respect and inclusivity. Our aim is to encourage the enjoyment of the sport for all members and to coach all members effectively so that they can play football to the best of their ability in a safe, supportive and respectful environment. **We encourage skill development, fitness, fair play and teamwork** as well as teaching our members life skills such as mutual respect for your opponents, managers, coaches, team mates, spectators and hosts.

Stepaside FC is committed to ensuring that all necessary steps will be taken to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people who participate in soccer. This Policy document clearly demonstrates the importance placed by Stepaside FC on the protection and safety of children and young people who participate in soccer.

The operation of our child welfare policy is overseen by the Committee of the club.



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## Code of Conduct About this Code of Conduct ('Code')

All members of Stepaside F.C. (the 'Club') are required to comply with the principles set out in this Code, and any breach of these principles may lead to sanction by the Board, including revocation of membership.



The principles in this Code are based on applicable national laws, guidelines and best practices, including the following:

- Football Association of Ireland Codes of Ethics and Best Practice,
- Children First Act, 2015,
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012 to 2016,
- 2011 National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children issued by the Department of Health & Children,
- Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sports, Irish Sports Council, 2000,
- Our Duty to Care, Dept. of Health & Children 2002,
- Irish Sports Council's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, and
- The Governance Code for good governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable organisations in Ireland.

The directors of Stepaside F.C. (together, the 'Committee) are represented by: Alan Lynch. (Chairperson & DLP) and Graham Maher (Secretary),

The Club is an associated member of the Football Association of Ireland ('FAI').



## **Stepaside F.C. Code of Conduct Mission Statement**

Our mission is to provide our members with a positive experience of soccer guided by what is best for the individual players, and to provide a safe, encouraging and respectful environment where players can learn and develop their skills.

### **Guiding Principles**

#### **Respect**

Everyone involved with the Club (whether players, parents or coaches) should be treated with integrity and respect. All adult actions in soccer should be guided by what is best for the child and in the context of quality, open working relationships founded on mutual respect. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind is unacceptable.

#### **Quality atmosphere and ethos**

The Club's activities should always be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere for players, coaches and parents. A child-centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place. Too often unhealthy competitive demands are placed on children too early and results in excessive levels of pressure on them and as a consequence, high levels of dropout from sport.

#### **Equality**

Everyone involved with the Club should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, gender, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. Children with disability should be involved in sports activities in an integrated way, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children.

#### **Fair Play**

Fair play is the guiding principle of the Irish Sports Council's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport. It states that "all children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play". Ireland has contributed and is committed to the European Code of Sports Ethics, which defines fair play as: "much more than playing within the rules". It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing with the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption.



## Competition

A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of children, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. Coaches and managers should aim to put the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second. A child-centred approach will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.



## **Code of Conduct Child Protection Policy**

Stepaside FC is committed to ensuring that all necessary steps will be taken to protect and safeguard the welfare of children<sup>1</sup> who participate in soccer. This Child Protection Policy ('Child Protection Policy') is intended to clearly demonstrate the importance placed by Stepside FC on the protection and safety of children who participate in soccer.

All players who participate in soccer should be able to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment. While doing so they should be protected from any form of abuse be it physical, emotional, sexual, neglect or bullying. In particular, the responsibility for protecting children lies with all adults involved in Stepside F.C. and in soccer in general.

Stepaside FC recognises and accepts its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all players (and in particular children) by protecting them from physical, emotional or sexual harm and from neglect or bullying.

These clear policies, practices and procedures in addition to relevant training programs will ensure that everybody in Stepside FC knows exactly what is expected of them in relation to protecting children within soccer.

It is vital that children who participate in Stepside FC activities are able to do so in a safe, enjoyable and quality environment.

In pursuit of this goal, Stepside FC will:

- Advise all members of Stepside FC (coaches, players, parents and spectators) of their responsibilities in relation to the welfare and protection of children who participate in soccer.
- Operate within the recommended FAI codes of conduct and best practice guidelines.
- Appoint a Club Children's Officer in line with FAI requirements
- Appoint a "relevant person" in line with the Child First Act, 2015,
- Appoint a "Designated Liaison Person" in line with the recommendations of the "Child Protection and Welfare Practice Handbook" published by the Health Service Executive, and
- Provide relevant child protection courses to all coaches and volunteers.

In accordance with its obligations under the Child First Act, 2015, the Board of Stepside F.C. has performed and approved an assessment of the relevant risks and signed a Child Safeguarding Statement which is publicly displayed and accessible on the Stepside F.C. website.



It is the responsibility of all adults involved in soccer to actively promote safe and best practice standards whilst being ever vigilant and aware of their responsibilities to children in their care.

## **The aims of the Child Protection Policy**

- To develop a positive and pro-active position in order to best protect all children who participate in soccer, in order for them to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment.
- To provide appropriate guidance and advice to all club members (players, coaches, volunteers, spectators and parents) in all matters concerning child welfare and protection.
- To demonstrate best practice in the area of child welfare and protection.
- To promote ethics and best practice standards throughout soccer.

### ***The key principles underpinning the Child Protection Policy***

- The welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration.
- All children have a right to be protected from abuse of any kind regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual identity.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse/poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. It is essential that we work in partnership with children and their parents/guardians. The Health Service Executive ('HSE') has a statutory responsibility to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and Stepaside FC is committed to cooperating fully with them in accordance with procedures as outlined in "Children First" National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.
- Stepaside FC will cooperate fully with the FAI National Children's Officer, An Garda Síochána and the HSE in any investigation of child abuse in soccer.

### ***FAI regulations***

The FAI's regulations in regard to child welfare and protection are defined in the rulebook at Rule 75, which is included at Appendix 1 to this Code.



## **Code of Conduct Child Abuse Concerns or Allegations**

The investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the Statutory Authorities (i.e. An Garda Síochána and the HSE) and will not be undertaken by the Club. Consequently, when such an allegation is received by the Club it will be assessed promptly and carefully to determine whether a formal report should be made to the HSE and An Garda Síochána ('Statutory Authorities'). In accordance with requirements of the Children First Act, 2015 any allegation which is determined to have reasonable grounds for concern of suspected child abuse will be passed on to the Statutory Authorities.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

1. (i) a specific indication from a child that (s)he was abused;
2. (ii) a statement from a person who witnessed abuse;
3. (iii) an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse;
4. (iv) a symptom which may in itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is supported by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence; and  
(v) consistent signs of neglect over a period of time.

Therefore in practice, concerns will be passed on by the Club's designated person to the statutory authorities if (i) we receive a specific indication from a child that (s)he was abused, or (ii) a statement from a person who witnessed abuse, or have evidence in relation to (a) an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse, (b) a symptom which may not in itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is supported by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence; or (c) consistent signs of neglect over a period of time. The designated liaison person for the Club shall be the Chairman.

### ***Investigation Procedures***

#### **Step One**

Any allegation of abuse must in the first instance be brought to the attention of the Chairperson of the Club. Should the Chairperson be unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist s/he can informally consult with the local HSE duty social worker. S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

Coaches or volunteers may be subjected to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore, any allegation of abuse will be dealt with sensitively and appropriate support will be provided, including counselling where necessary.



## **Step Two**

Should Stepaside FC become aware of an allegation of abuse of a child or children by a coach or volunteer during the execution of their duties, the Chairman will privately inform the relevant coach or volunteer of the following:

- the fact that the allegation has been made against him/her; and
- the nature of the allegation.

In accordance with FAI rules, any coach/volunteer/manager who is the subject of a statutory investigation into alleged child abuse, is required to stand down from all soccer activities until the investigation is completed. This is a precautionary measure in keeping with standard procedures/guidelines and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings.

The coach/volunteer concerned will be treated with respect and fairness, and all information will be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner. The relevant coach/volunteer will be afforded an opportunity to respond, and the Chairman will make a written note of this response.

## **Step Three**

Where the Chairperson determines it advisable to do so, the Chairperson include all relevant information in a formal report to the HSE. The report to the HSE will contain observations, dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.

In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Chairperson is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Gardaí will be contacted. Under no circumstances will a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.

In considering whether such report should be made, the Chairperson may consult with the FAI's National Children's Officer to provide support and advice.

## **Step Four**

The FAI National Children's Officer will be immediately informed of any formal notification to the Statutory Authorities.

## **Step Five**

If reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities, the Chairperson will first inform the family of the child of the intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine any statutory investigation.



It should be noted that a formal notification to the Statutory Authorities does not constitute an accusation of child abuse, rather it is the Club fulfilling its obligation to inform the appropriate statutory authorities in keeping with the principle that “the welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration”.

### **Step Six**

All subsequent actions following an allegation of abuse against a coach/volunteer will be taken in consultation with the HSE and An Garda Síochána, and a meeting will be sought with these two agencies for this purpose as soon as possible.

### **Step Seven**

The Club will carefully consider the outcome of the statutory investigation and will then assess if there are any outstanding disciplinary issues in relation to their internal rules or infringements of the FAI best practice guidelines.



## **Club Disciplinary, Complaints and Appeals Procedure**

While many concerns can be dealt with in an informal manner to the satisfaction of all concerned, written records will be maintained in respect of all complaints. All parties will be advised of the formal complaints and appeals procedure. All reasonable efforts to resolve matters should be exhausted at local level before accessing the appeals procedure.

### **Step One**

Any person who has a complaint or concern should bring it to the attention of the Chairperson. The complaint or concern should be in writing and should outline all relevant details and other parties involved.

### **Step Two**

Where appropriate, the Chairperson may convene a Disciplinary Committee. The Disciplinary Committee will consist of three members, unless the complaint or concern relates to a child abuse matter or criminal offence that meets criteria for formal reporting to the Statutory Authorities.

To preserve independence, where there are potentially contentious issues the Disciplinary Committee will not be composed of officers or directors of Stepaside F.C.

The Chairperson of the Club does not sit on the Disciplinary Committee.

### **Step Three**

The Disciplinary Committee should furnish any participant with details of the complaint being made against them and afford them the opportunity of providing a response either verbally or in writing. In the event of a complaint against a child, the parents/guardians should be informed and advised of the process.

### **Step Four**

The Disciplinary Committee will then hear the case of all parties involved to consider whether a rule or regulation has been infringed.

### **Step Five**

The Disciplinary Committee will then inform in writing those involved of the outcome of their review and any sanctions, if any that, are to be imposed. This notification will be in writing, setting out the reasons for the sanction. In respect to any participant that is under eighteen years of age, such written notification will be forwarded to their parent/guardian.



## **Step Six**

Any party that is unsatisfied with the findings of the Disciplinary Committee may appeal in writing to the Board.

## **Step Seven**

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The Board will then rehear the case and all evidence shall be considered. The Board may uphold or reject the appeal, or may vary, alter or set aside any sanction imposed by the Disciplinary Committee.

Written confidential records in relation to disciplinary proceedings will be safely and confidentially kept on file.



## **Code of Conduct Anonymous Complaints**

All complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour/poor practice should be brought to the attention of the Chairperson.

All complaints will be investigated and handled in a confidential manner. A record will be maintained of all such complaints and actions taken. Specific advice on dealing with anonymous complaints may be taken from the local HSE duty social worker or the FAI National Children's Officer.

### **Rumours**

Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour circulating in the Club should be brought to the attention of the Chairperson and will be investigated promptly. All ensuing information will be handled confidentially and with sensitivity.

### **Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is about managing information in a respectful, professional and purposeful manner. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected. Therefore, appropriate confidentiality will be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in concerns about the welfare of a child or bad practice within the club.

The following points will 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 will be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and only be discussed with those who need to know.
- Information will be conveyed to the parents/guardians of a 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 shall not constitute a breach of confidentiality.



## Code of Conduct Recruitment Policy

Safe practice starts with safe recruitment procedures and involves:

- Always applying thorough selection procedures, no matter who the applicant happens to be
- Judging the suitability of applicants in relation to a broad range of matters
- Taking all reasonable steps to eliminate people who are not suitable for working with children
- Providing training

Most people who apply to work with community and voluntary organisations on either a voluntary or paid basis are interested, well-motivated and suitable for the various tasks involved. However, it is very important that organisations take all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited. Unfortunately, people with a tendency to abuse children can be attracted to the type of work that gives them the opportunity to be with children, and this always has to be borne in mind when recruiting new workers.

### Recruiting Coaches/Volunteers

This section outlines the Club's approach to safe recruitment and selection:

(i) Clear definition of the role of employees or volunteers: This means clarifying and agreeing expectations regarding the role of a new worker, and involves identifying the minimum level of personal qualities and skills required to fill the post.

(ii) Application Form: An application form, with a clear job description and information about the organisation will be supplied and is designed, as far as possible, to collect all relevant information about the applicant, including past experience of working with children.

(iii) Declaration: All applicants are required to sign a declaration stating that there is no reason why they would be unsuitable to work with children, and declaring any past criminal convictions or cases pending against them. The organisation must have a clear policy regarding the type of factors that would exclude applicants.

(iv) Interview: All applicants will be interviewed by the Chairperson(or such person(s) as may be delegated by the Chairperson) to explore the information stated on the application form and assess the applicant's suitability for the post. The information supplied by the applicant and any other information supplied on their behalf shall only be seen by persons directly involved in the recruitment procedure.

(v) References: An applicant should supply the names of two referees (not family members) who will testify as to their character, their suitability to the role of employee/volunteer, or any other issues which may affect their ability to perform the



tasks required of them. At least one referee should have first-hand knowledge of the applicant's previous work or contact with children. An acceptable reference will indicate that the person is known to the referee and is considered suitable by them to work with children. All references should be received in writing and later confirmed by telephone, letter or personal visit. Any additional information should be attached to the application form. If the applicant has had a previous involvement in sport, one of these names should be that of a manager or official of your last club.

(vi) Identification: The Club will make best efforts to ensure that the identity of the applicant is confirmed against official documentation (e.g. driving licence or passport) which gives his or her full name, address together with a signature or photograph.



## Code of Conduct Induction and training

When an applicant has been accepted, the following processes shall apply:

(i) Induction: If, following the application and interview process, the applicant is accepted, they may be required to undertake child safety course as part of a planned program that will also cover expectations, conditions and procedures for dealing with discipline, grievances and allegations, and the Club's child protection policy.

All coaches, managers and volunteers will be required to undertake to abide by Stepaside FC rules and FAI codes of conduct and good practice.

(ii) Trial period: Appointment will be conditional on the successful completion of a trial period, and unless otherwise notified shall be six months. This gives an opportunity to assess the suitability of the volunteer to work with children and his or her commitment to the Club's policies on safe practices.

(iii) Records: details of selection and induction will be recorded, along with notes on any matters arising during any part of the process.

(iv) Additional training: To maintain quality standards and good practice, training will be provided on an ongoing basis.

Once recruited, Stepaside FC will make all efforts to support and manage coaches, managers and volunteers ensuring that no person is expected to work alone.

### Coach, Manager, Volunteer Education & Support Policy

Stepaside FC is indebted to our coaches, managers and volunteers who give freely of their time in providing a stimulating, challenging, supportive and fun soccer experience to children in the Club. The Board will endeavour to support these coaches, managers and volunteers in their work by providing an environment where all activities are carried out in a safe, fun manner at all times conducted in the spirit of "Fair Play".

The Board recognises the value of having appropriately qualified personnel in the club, and therefore will endeavour to support any of our coaches in the coach education process. At no time will any coach, manager, volunteer be expected to work or deal with any problem alone and they will be assured of Board assistance and support at all times. Also, coaches, managers and volunteers are encouraged to share ideas, expertise and support other club personnel in any way they can.



## **Code of Conduct Health and Safety Policy**

All coaches/managers in Stepside FC have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the players with whom they work as far as possible within the limits of their control. Therefore coaches should seek to create a safe and enjoyable environment in which to play and train.

In this respect:

- Adequate supervision must be maintained at all times. Best practice advice would advocate adult-to-child ratios of 2 Leaders to every 16 children (1:8). In no circumstances should any coach, manager or volunteer work with any child alone.
- Regular safety checks will be carried out in relation to premises, training facilities and equipment to ensure, in particular, that the FAI Goalpost safety policy is strictly adhered to at all times.
- Stepside FC safety rules should be adhered to at all times.
- Parents/guardians should be informed of the starting and finishing times of training sessions and matches.
- A first aid kit should be available at all training sessions and matches and injuries should be recorded, with a note of action taken in relation to each one.
- Never play injured players.
- Parents/Guardians should be notified of injuries/illness which their children incur while participating in any Stepside FC soccer activity.
- Records of attendance should be maintained.
- Ensure the use of any recommended safety equipment.

### **Substance Abuse Policy**

In Stepside FC the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco shall be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity. Coaches/managers shall not smoke when taking a session or drink alcohol before taking a session.

In relation to our under-age teams Stepside FC shall endeavour to organise receptions and celebrations in a non-alcoholic environment and in a manner that is suitable for the age group concerned. Where this is not possible, the Club will comply with the FAI directive that under no circumstances whatsoever can any person under the age of 18 years consume alcohol and any and all appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that this policy is strictly adhered to.

Our coaches/managers/Board shall act as role models for appropriate behaviour and refrain from drinking alcohol at such functions.



## Code of Conduct Children's Officer

The appointment of Club Children's Officer is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere in any club. They act as a resource to members with regard to children's issues and also ensure that children have a voice in the running of the club and can freely talk of their experiences.

Government guidelines advise that a children's officer should be appointed by all clubs and this should be done in accordance with recommended selection and recruitment procedures.

The Club Children's Officer should:

- Have good communication skills, be approachable and open minded
- Have good knowledge and be familiar with child welfare and protection law, codes and guidelines.
- Have undertaken a Garda Vetting application.
- Have attended the relevant awareness training on child welfare and protection.

The Club Children's Officer will have the following functions:

- To promote the Code of Ethics & Good Practice.
- To influence policy and practice and to prioritise children's needs.
- To ensure that children know how and whom they can report their concerns to within the Club. Information disclosed by a child should be dealt with in accordance with the Department of Health and Children's Guidelines "Children First".
- To encourage the participation of parents/guardians in Club activities.
- To co-operate with parents to ensure that each child enjoys his/her participation in soccer.
- To act as a resource with regard to best practice in children's soccer.
- To report regularly to the Board.
- To monitor changes in membership and follow up any unusual dropout, absenteeism or club transfers by children or coach/volunteers.

The Children's Officer does not have the responsibility of investigating or validating child protection concerns within the Club and this responsibility lies with the HSE and Gardai.



## Code of Conduct Use of Photographic and Filming Equipment

Many people use cameras and video equipment at soccer activities and the vast majority, do so for perfectly legitimate reasons. However, there is evidence that people have used sporting events to take inappropriate photographs and video footage of children in vulnerable positions.

As set out in the Club's Privacy Notice, Stepaside FC will rely upon legitimate interest as the legal basis for posting any photos relating to sporting events or activities related to the Club, however, this shall always be balanced against the rights of any person in such photo.

Where possible we will try to use models or illustrations when promoting an activity and avoid the use of the first name and surname of individuals in a photograph. This reduces the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and outside the sport.

The following should guide your use of photography:

- If the player is named, avoid using their photograph.
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the player.
- Ask for the player's permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. A player's permission form is one way of achieving this.
- Ask for parental permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. A parental permission form is one way of achieving this.
- Only use images of players in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use.
- The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child
- Any inappropriate use of images should be reported to the Children's Officer.

Amateur photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek permission/accreditation with the Children's Officer, team manager/coach and/or event organiser of session. Where possible, the Club will display the following information prior to the start of an event to inform spectators of the policy:

"In line with the recommendation in Stepaside FC'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 Club. Children should only be photographed or filmed with their permission and/or the permission of their parents/guardian".



When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to an activity or event we will aim to ensure they are clear about our expectations of them in relation to child protection.

Professional photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the Children's Officer/event organiser/team manager by producing their professional identification for the details to be recorded. The Club may then provide a brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour, and issue the photographer with identification which must be worn at all times.

The Club will keep a record of accreditations, and inform players and parents that a photographer will be in attendance at an event.

Unsupervised access to athletes or one to one photo sessions at events are strictly prohibited. The Club does not approve photo sessions outside the events or at an athlete's home.

#### Videoring as a coaching aid

Video equipment can be used as a legitimate coaching aid, however, permission should first be obtained from the player and the player's parent/guardian.

All members, volunteers and parents should also be aware of the dangers of permitting camera phones in dressing rooms and should apply appropriate safety rules.

Anyone concerned about any photography taking place at events/matches or training sessions should bring their concerns to the attention of the team manager, Children's Officer or a member of the Board.



## Code of Conduct Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are often given to children for security, enabling parents to keep in contact and make sure they are safe. Children 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 children, in some cases used to cross personal boundaries and cause harm to children. Therefore, we need to encourage responsible and secure use of mobile phones by adults and children.

The following applies to the use of mobile phones in the course of activities related to the Club:

- If you or your child receives an offensive photo, email or message, do not reply, save it, make a note of times and dates and notify the Club's Children's Officer. Children should be advised by their parent to notify them if they receive any such messages.
- Be careful about who you give your phone number to and don't respond to unfamiliar numbers.
- You have the option to change your phone number in cases of bullying or harassment by numbers that are not familiar to you.
- Do not use the phone in certain locations as inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person (e.g. changing rooms).
- Treat your phone as you would any other valuable item so that you guard against theft.

As a coach/manager remember:

- Use only group texts for communication among players and teams and inform parents of this at the start of the season.
- It is not appropriate to have communication with players who are children, and, other than in the case of an emergency, all such communication should be routed through the player's parent/guardian.

Don't use the phone in certain locations: inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person, e.g., in changing rooms.



## Code of Conduct Travelling Guidelines

When travelling with children, coaches and volunteers of Stepaside FC should:

- Contact the Secretary to ensure that there is adequate insurance cover,
- Never carry more than the permitted number of passengers in a vehicle,
- Ensure the use of safety belts and keep to the rules of the road,
- Ensure there is an appropriate parent-to-child ratio to ensure adequate supervision at all times. Any child travelling without their parent or guardian must be assigned into the supervision of a responsible adult for the duration of the trip.
- Avoid being alone with one player; if with one player you could: put the passenger in the back seat, drop off at central locations, get parental permission for transporting children on a regular basis, and clearly state times of pick off and drop off.

### Guidelines on Physical Contact

All managers/volunteers of Stepaside FC are advised that:

- Any necessary physical contact should be in response to the needs of the child and not the adult. It should be in an open environment with the permission and full understanding of the player.
- It should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the player. You should not do anything that a child can do for him/herself.
- Coaches should not treat injuries out of sight of others. Use a "Two-Deep" (two personnel, or two players) supervision system. Only personnel who are qualified in administering First Aid or treating sports injuries should attempt to treat an injury.
- The comfort level and dignity of the player should always be the priority. Example: Only uncover the injured area, or cover private areas of the athlete's body.
- Any doubts of a medical nature should be passed on to a suitably qualified medical person. Coaches should not play injured players.

Comforting/congratulating players is an important part of the relationship between coaches and players.

Guidelines for this type of touch are:

- Limit touching to "safe" areas, such as hand-to-shoulder. It should not involve touching genital area, buttocks, breasts, or mouths.
- Make your intention to congratulate or comfort clear to the player.
- Get permission from the player before embracing them - remember that personnel are in the position of power.
- Respect a player's discomfort or rejection of physical contact.



- Be sure that touching occurs only when others are present.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact and never engage in inappropriate touching.

## **Code of Conduct Guidance on Player Discipline**

Discipline in soccer should always be positive in focus, providing the structures and rules that allow players to set their own goals and strive for them. It should encourage players to become more responsible for themselves and their actions and therefore more independent.

Discipline should be a positive reinforcement for effort. It should encourage the development of emotional and social skills as well as skills in soccer. Players have to be helped to become responsible for the decisions and choices they make within soccer, particularly when it is likely to make a difference between playing fairly or unfairly.

There is no place in soccer for fighting, bullying, over aggressive or dangerous behaviour.

At all times, players should treat others in a respectful manner. They should never bully, interfere with or take unfair advantage of others.

The use of sanctions is an important element in the maintenance of discipline and the following is intended to give members a clear understanding of where and when particular sanctions are appropriate so that sanctions should be fair, consistent and applied evenly. In particular, the age and developmental stage of the child will be taken into account when using sanctions.

In the case of a persistent offence, sanctions will be progressively applied.

The following steps:<sup>2</sup>

- A warning should be given if a rule is broken
- A sanction (use of time out for example) should be applied if a rule is broken for a second time
- If a rule is broken three or more times, the child should be spoken to and parents/guardians involved if necessary
- Sanctions should only be used in a corrective way that is intended to help children improve both now and in the future. They should never be used in retaliation or to make coach/manager/volunteer feel better or more powerful
- When violations of the team rules or other misbehaviours occur, sanctions should always be applied in an impartial and fair manner



- Sanctions should never be used as threats. If a rule is broken, the appropriate sanction/s should be implemented consistently, fairly and firmly
- Sanctions should not be applied if the coach/manager/volunteer is not comfortable with them. If an appropriate action cannot be devised immediately, the child should be told that the matter will be dealt with later, at a specified time and as soon as is possible
- Once a sanction/s has been imposed, it is important to make the child feel s/he is a valued member of the team again

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from the Irish Sports Councils Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport (2005) 22

A child should be helped, to understand if necessary why sanction/s are imposed

- A child should not be sanctioned for making errors whilst playing soccer
- Physical activity (e.g. running laps or doing push ups) should not be used as a sanction as to do so may cause a child to resent physical activity which is something that s/he should learn to enjoy throughout his/her life.
- Remember Soccer has to be Fun if participants are to continue playing
- Sanctions should be used sparingly. Constant criticism and sanctioning can cause participants to turn away from Soccer

## Code of Conduct for Spectators

- Remember that although children play organised soccer they are not miniature professionals. Don't place excessive pressure on children to perform to unrealistically high expectations. Children play soccer to develop their skills, to have fun and enjoy the game.
- Be on your best behaviour and lead by example. The behaviour of a team's supporters will often be remembered long after the result of the game. Be remembered for the right reasons.
- Applaud good play, sportsmanship and best effort by the visiting team as well as your own.
- Welcome and respect all your team's opponents. Without them there would be no match.
- Condemn the use of violence in all forms at every opportunity.
- Verbal abuse of players, match officials or opposing supporters cannot be accepted in any shape or form. Players or match officials should never be regarded as fair targets for ignorant or abusive behaviour.

Players Code of Conduct Children in Stepaside FC are entitled to:

- Be safe.
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect.
- Participate in soccer on an equal basis, appropriate to their ability and stage of development.



- Stepside FC have decided that all players are entitled to a minimum playing time as per the FAI Player Development Plan per match. (Consult League rules in this regard) Criteria for team selection should be clearly defined.
- Be happy, have fun and enjoy soccer.
- Make a complaint in an appropriate way and have it dealt with through a proper and effective complaints procedure.
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality.
- Be listened to and to be believed.
- Have a voice in the running of the club.

Children should also be encouraged to realise that they also have responsibilities to treat other children, fellow players, coaches and volunteers with the same degree of fairness and respect.

In this regard children in Stepside FC should undertake to:

- play fairly, do their best and have fun.
- be on their best behaviour at all times.
- abide by all club rules.
- make high standards of Fair Play the standard others want to follow.
- respect opponents, they are not the enemy, they are partners in a sporting event.
- shake hands before and after the match, whoever wins.
- give opponents a hand if they are injured, put the ball out of play so they can get attention.
- accept apologies from opponents when they are offered.
- respect fellow team members and support them both when they do well and when things go wrong.
- treat players from minority groups with the same respect you show other people.
- be modest in victory and be gracious in defeat- "Be A Sport".
- approach the club Children's Officer with any questions or concerns they might have. Coaches and parents should encourage children to speak out and support them in doing so.

Children in Stepside FC should not:

- cheat.
- use abusive language, or argue with, the referee, officials, team mates or opponents.
- use violence, use physical contact only when it is allowed within the rules
- bully.
- tell lies about adults or other children.
- spread rumours.
- take banned substances to improve performance.
- keep secrets about any person who may have caused them harm.



- behave in any manner that may bring the name of Stepaside F.C. into disrepute.

In Stepaside FC we want children to have fun and develop skills in a safe and Fair Play environment where standards of behaviour are just as important as winning.

We recognise that competition and winning is an important goal, but winning at all costs does not meet the needs of young players.

Stepaside FC are aware that recent research would suggest that increasing numbers of children leave sport between the ages of eight and thirteen. A number of the most common reasons given were; that sport was no longer fun, they did not get to play and overemphasis on winning.

Therefore we have to make every effort to ensure that we keep a balanced approach to competition, make sure all players get a chance to play and strive to keep the fun in soccer.

Making sport fun.

In promoting “Sport for Fun” we in Stepaside FC will insist on:

- Encouraging participation and fun.
- Promoting the development of skills as opposed to winning at all costs.
- Ensure a minimum playing time of 15 minutes per match per player (time may vary according to League Rules).
- Emphasising and praising effort.
- Acting as a good role models.
- Insisting on Fair Play (we will take off offending players)
- Being realistic with our expectations.
- Being aware of children’s feelings.
- Teaching players to respect different cultures.
- Teaching players that standards of behaviour are just as important as winning.



## Codes of behaviour between Coaches/Volunteers and children

All coaches and volunteers should be mindful always of the following:

- Coaches/Volunteers should be sensitive to the risks involved in participating in contact sports or other activities.
- While physical contact is a valid way of comforting, reassuring and showing concern for children, it should only take place when it is acceptable to all persons concerned.
- Coaches/Volunteers should never physically punish or be in any way verbally abusive to a child, nor should they even tell jokes of a sexual nature in the presence of children.
- Coaches/Volunteers should be sensitive to the possibility of developing favouritism, or becoming over involved or spending a great deal of time with any one child.
- Children should be encouraged to report cases of bullying to either a designated person, or a Coach/Volunteer of their choice. Complaints must be brought to the attention of management Committee.
- Everyone involved in the Club should respect the personal space, safety and privacy of individuals.
- It is not recommended that workers give lifts in their cars to individual children, especially for long journeys.
- All workers should agree this Code and it should form part of any future induction training introduced in your Club.

### Diversity and Inclusion

The Club supports diversity and inclusion in its membership at all levels, whether acting as player, volunteer or coach. 'Diversity' is a term broadly used to describe the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and age. 'Inclusion' means involvement and empowerment, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognised.

The Club will not accept or tolerate any behaviour that seeks to negatively discriminate, differentiate or demean any person on the basis of who they are. The Club reserves the right to implement disciplinary procedures against any member who is found to have done so.

In keeping children at the forefront of planning and practice, our coaches can be confident that participants will enjoy their football experiences and that their actions are regarded as safe and in keeping with the principle that the safety and welfare of children is of paramount consideration.



Our Coaches are given a position of trust by parents/guardians and players, and are expected to operate to the highest standards of behaviour whilst carrying out any activity on behalf of the Club, and in particular when they are in the company of players. Our coaches are also expected to treat others (whether players, parents or other coaches) with respect and not to engage in any behaviour that could reasonably be viewed as disrespectful, or bringing the Club or soccer in general into disrepute.

It is important for our coaches to note that in adhering to these guidelines ensures not only a safe environment for children but also a safe environment in which coaches and volunteers can operate.

Most coaches work in an environment where it is recognised that, in a sporting context, certain types of coaching require a 'hands on approach', i.e., it may be necessary to support a participant in order to physically demonstrate a particular technique. This should only occur when necessary and in an open and appropriate way with the knowledge, permission and full understanding of the participant concerned and his/her parents/guardians.

Coaches must realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted, not only by the player, but by outsiders motivated by jealousy, dislike or mistrust and could lead to allegations of sexual misconduct or impropriety. Therefore, coaches should be aware of, and avoid all situations conducive to risk.

Where possible, our coaches/volunteers should avoid:

Spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others.

- Taking sessions alone (always employ "Two Deep" supervision).
- Taking children to their homes.
- Taking children on journeys alone in their care.

Our Coaches/volunteers should never:

- Exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward.
- Share a room with a young person alone on away trips.
- 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.
- Use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a young person.
- Take measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adult and permission from the Committee
- Undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.) in the training of children.



## **Code of Conduct Safety**

Coaches have a responsibility to ensure the safety of all players possible within the limits of their control. Therefore, coaches should seek to create a safe and enjoyable environment in which to play and train.

In this respect:

- Regular safety checks should be carried out in relation to premises, training facilities and equipment. Any problems should be brought to the attention of the Committee
- Appropriate safety rules should be adopted and implemented and protective equipment should be used in any contact training session.
- Parents/guardians should be informed of the starting and finishing times of training sessions and matches.
- A first aid kit should be available at all training sessions /matches and injuries should be recorded, with a note of action taken in relation to each one.
- Parents/Guardians should be notified of injuries/illness which their children incur while participating in any football activity
- Never play injured players.
- Ensure that the FAI Goalpost safety policy is strictly adhered to at all times



## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1: FAI REGULATIONS

#### RULE 75. THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN (PERSONS UNDER THE AGE OF 18)

##### General

1. a) The protection and welfare of children is of paramount importance to the FAI. Any act, statement, conduct or other matter which harms a child or children, or poses or may pose a risk of harm to a child or children, shall constitute behaviour which is improper and brings the game into disrepute. The FAI Child Welfare Policy sets out how all matters pertaining to the protection and welfare of children are governed.
2. b) It is mandatory that all Members and Participants shall comply with all FAI rules, regulations, codes, policies and guidelines in respect of child protection and welfare.
3. c) It is mandatory that all Members and Participants shall comply with all legislation and guidelines issued by any Statutory Authority in respect of child protection and welfare.
4. d) All Members and Participants are responsible for ensuring that their members are made aware of and understand their legal and football obligations in respect of child protection and welfare.

##### Designated Persons (Child Welfare Officers)

1. a) All Affiliated Members shall appoint a person to be responsible for all child protection and welfare matters within their organisation. In accordance with legislation this person shall be known as the "Designated Officer" and under the auspices of the FAI shall be known as the "Designated Child Welfare Officer". The Designated Child Welfare Officer shall be the person holding the highest office within the football body however day to day duties may be delegated to a suitable person who shall be known as a "Designated Liaison Officer" and under the auspices of the FAI shall be known as the "Designated Child Welfare Liaison Officer".
2. b) The Designated Child Welfare Officer and/or Designated Child Welfare Liaison Officer shall ensure that they discharge their duties in accordance with any legislation and all FAI rules, regulations, codes, policies and guidelines in respect of child protection and welfare.



2. b) All Designated Child Welfare Officers, Designated Child Welfare Liaison Officers, Chairpersons and Secretaries of each Affiliated Member involved with teams that are competing in any age group up to and including Under 18's and/or vulnerable persons shall be Garda Vetted.
3. c) All coaches or those involved with the management of any team that are competing in any age group up to and including Under 18's and/or vulnerable persons shall be Garda Vetted.
4. d) Any other person working or volunteering with children and/or vulnerable persons in any capacity on behalf of an Affiliated Member shall be Garda Vetted. It is the responsibility of the football body concerned to determine the relevant persons within their organisation who this applies to subject to the relevant legislation and guidelines.
5. e) Failure to ensure that the relevant persons are vetted in accordance with Rules and/or legislation may result in disciplinary action against the individual and/or Affiliated Member and may also constitute a legal offence under relevant legislation.
6. f) Affiliated Members shall not accept confirmation of the Garda Vetting status of any individual prior to confirmation being received from the FAI that the Garda Vetting of the individual is in order.
7. g) In addition to carrying out Garda Vetting, all Affiliated Members shall follow safe recruitment practices, as outlined in the FAI Child Welfare Policy, when engaging persons to work or volunteer with children and/or vulnerable persons within their organisation.

### Vetting Applications

1. a) The FAI shall provide a Garda Vetting service to all members. Applications for vetting may be made through the Designated Child Welfare Officer and/or Designated Child Welfare Liaison Officer of the relevant football body or directly through the FAI.
2. b) The FAI shall be solely responsible for the approval of all vetting applications and final determination on disclosures provided by the Gardai in accordance with the FAI Child Welfare Policy.
3. c) All persons shall complete their vetting application in good faith and shall ensure all information provided is accurate, complete and up to date.
4. d) All matters disclosed as part of the Garda Vetting application shall remain confidential to FAI authorised personnel, the applicant and Statutory Authorities. However, approvals and rejections shall be notified to all relevant football personnel in accordance with the FAI Child Welfare Policy.



## Education and Training

1. a) All coaches or those involved with the management of any team that are competing in any age group up to and including Under 18 shall complete an FAI approved “Basic Awareness” training course.
2. b) Any person working or volunteering with children in any capacity on behalf of an Affiliated Member shall complete an FAI approved “Basic Awareness” training course. It is the responsibility of the football body concerned to determine the relevant persons within their organisation who this applies to, subject to the relevant legislation and guidelines.
3. c) Failure to ensure that the relevant persons have completed the FAI approved training course may result in disciplinary action against the individual and/or Affiliated Member and may also constitute a legal offence under relevant legislation.
4. d) Affiliated Members shall not accept confirmation of completion of an approved FAI training course from any individual prior to confirmation being received from the FAI.

## Stand Down Orders

1. a) Any person who is the subject of a complaint or inquiry by a Statutory Authority in relation to any child welfare concern shall be issued with a stand down order from all football activities. This order shall be issued by the Designated Child Welfare Officer or Designated Child Welfare Liaison Officer of the FAI or any Affiliated Member, pending the outcome of any inquiry and any subsequent internal disciplinary proceedings. Terms of a stand down order must be complied with.
2. b) Affiliated Members shall immediately notify the FAI of any stand down order issued.
3. c) The FAI may also issue a stand down order in circumstances where concerns are raised with the FAI outside of a Statutory Authority investigation.
4. d) Stand down orders shall be issued, managed and lifted in accordance with FAI Child Welfare Policy.

## Disciplinary

Anyone who breaches these Rules or commits any other offence relating to child protection and welfare may be subject to sanction, up to and including a ban from membership, by the FAI Child Welfare Committee and/or FAI Disciplinary Bodies.

## RULE 99. PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN

1. All Affiliated Members and Participants shall be bound by the FAI Rules, regulations, codes, policies and guidelines governing the protection and welfare of children, and breaches of such rules, regulations, codes, policies and guidelines shall be subject to disciplinary sanction.



2. Any person reported to the FAI by a Statutory Authority in respect of a child welfare matter may be subject to disciplinary sanction.
3. The disciplinary body may impose any sanction it deems appropriate. The FAI Child Welfare Committee may be party to the proceedings and shall be copied on all decisions.