



FAIreland

Code of Conduct and Good Practice for **Parents / Guardians**





Football and Young People

Football, like all sports, provides an excellent pathway for children and young people to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own potential. Through their participation, they can learn and develop life skills, have fun and enjoyment, make friends and experience life in a way that can enhance their personal growth throughout their lives.

People become involved in football for young people for a variety of different reasons. They come from a variety of sporting backgrounds and take on various roles within clubs and other football organisations. Yet irrespective of their role or responsibility, they all share the common goal of providing football opportunities for young people.

Parents, coaches and administrators all have an important role to play in promoting good practice in children's sport. They should have, as their first priority, the children's safety and enjoyment of the sport.

The FAI want football to be safe, it wants football to be fun and wants to ensure that no matter what level of the game young people are involved in, that it takes place in the spirit of 'FAIR PLAY'.

Fair play is the guiding principle of the Irish Sport's Council's Code of Ethics as well as the FAI's Code of Ethics and Good Practice programme which is designed to provide guidance for those working with young people in football. It outlines the type of issues that need to be discussed and addressed to provide the safest and most enjoyable environment not only for young people but also the coaches and volunteers involved.

Focusing on individual participants' needs encourages young people to achieve and demonstrate enjoyment, equality and fair play. Through this they will come to realise that standards of behaviour are equally as important as sports performance.

In taking this approach children are encouraged to:

- Do their best – put in their best effort.
- Improve and develop their skills.
- Make friends.
- Play by the rules.
- Appreciate/accept everyone in the group, regardless of ability, race, religion, gender etc.



Guide for Parents / Guardians

Parents / guardians play an important role in promoting children's happiness and success in football and sport in general.

Parental expectations and behaviour have a significant bearing on children's attitude and behaviour while participating in football.

Parents / guardians need to be aware of why children want to play football. Children want to learn new skills, make new friends, be part of a group, to win and be successful, experience challenges, excitement and action.

While winning is important, it must be remembered that winning at all costs does not meet the needs of players. Results are not necessarily a good indicator of coaching effectiveness or ability, the improvement level of players and their level of enjoyment is.

Support and encouragement from parents / guardians will contribute to children having:

- A sense of personal achievement.
- An enjoyment of soccer.
- Improved physical fitness.
- Higher self-esteem.
- A greater level of skill.
- Improved social skills.



It is important for parents / guardians to find out what their children want from football, and help them to set realistic targets to achieve this. **This may involve controlling their own aspirations and avoiding the desire to force their own dreams or unfulfilled ambitions on them.**

It is important to:

- Encourage but not force children to be active.
- Know when he / she is ready to play.
- Encourage healthy lifestyle habits.
- Attend training and games where possible.
- Promote and teach **FAIR PLAY**.
- Teach your child to treat referees, other players, coaches, officials and spectators with respect regardless of race, creed, colour, sex or ability.
- Help children to set realistic targets.
- Help children with decision making.

Parents/Guardians should not:

- Ignore or dismiss complaints or concerns expressed by a child which relate to his/her involvement in soccer.
- Ridicule or shout at a child for losing a game or making a mistake.
- Treat any club as a child minding service.
- Take safety for granted.
- Put undue pressure on any child to please or perform well.

Most importantly parents / guardians should: “LEAD BY EXAMPLE”

Parent / Coach Co-Operation

It is important that parents / guardians establish contact with the individual responsible for coaching their child.

In addition, parents / guardians should:

- Give the coach help when asked and show appreciation for a job well done.
- Support the coach's and referee decisions. These individuals are only doing the best they can and they need support not anger.
- Refrain from contacting the coach unless it is necessary, respect they have a private life.

- Inform the coach about any illness, injury, holidays, etc.
- Make an effort to attend training and games.
- Communicate any concerns you may have to the coach.
- Make sure the child has appropriate equipment/clothing/refreshments.
- Encourage **FAIR PLAY** at home and do not instil a “win at all costs” attitude in children.
- Be positive or be quiet, negative comments are counter productive.
- Conduct themselves in such a way which promotes the definition of **FAIR PLAY**.
- Be prepared to be asked to leave by officials or club personnel if behaviour is contrary to the definition of **FAIR PLAY**.

Parents / Guardians should never:

- Insult players or club personnel.
- Argue with, or shout abuse at officials and they should actively discourage children or young players from doing likewise.
- Suggest or encourage cheating, aggressive or “dirty” play.
- Placing undue or inappropriate criticism on a player, causing the player unnecessary or unhealthy levels of stress.
- Behave with physical or verbal aggression towards another person (actually use force or threaten the use of force).
- Engage in any “harassment” type of behaviour.

“Sport for young people is about Fun and Participation, Best Effort and Fair Play in a Safe Environment”

In promoting “Football for Fun” everyone involved in the organisation of football should:

- Encourage participation and fun.
- Promote the development of skills as opposed to winning at all costs.
- Emphasise and praise effort.
- Act as a good role model.
- Insist on **Fair Play**.
- Be realistic with expectations.
- Be aware of children's feelings.
- Teach players to respect different cultures.



Children in soccer are entitled to:

- Be safe.
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect.
- Participate in football on an equal basis, appropriate to their ability and stage of development.
- Be happy, have fun and enjoy football.
- 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, referees, fellow players, coaches and volunteers with the same degree of fairness and respect.

In this regard children should undertake to:

- Play fairly, do their best and have fun.
- 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 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.



Responsibility to Report

Any person, who has concerns about a child's welfare or who suspects that a child is being abused, or is at risk of abuse, has a responsibility to report their concerns to the Health Board or Gardai.

Persons unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive and therefore reportable, are advised that they can seek advice from the duty social worker in their local health board area where they will receive appropriate advice.

In cases of emergency where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the duty social worker is not contactable, call the Gardai.

Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.

All clubs should have clear procedures for responding to reports or concerns relating to the safety and welfare of children. Coaches/volunteers, children and parents/guardians should be aware of how and to whom they report concerns within the club or organisation.

For further information or advice see:

FAIreland Code of Ethics & Best Practice which is available on our website www.fai.ie

Or contact:

FAI Code of Ethics Programme Co-ordinator / National Children's Officer,
80 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.

Tel. 087 9691422

Email: codeofethics@fai.ie



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Acknowledgement

Much of this document has been adapted from the Irish Sports Council's Code of Ethics & Good Practice. This document and related material is available on their website www.irishsportsCouncil.ie The Football Association of Ireland would also like to acknowledge the assistance of The Football Association's of England and Wales and the NCTC for their assistance in producing this guide.



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