

A.I.T. ATHLETICS CLUB

**CHILD PROTECTION
AND WELFARE**

**POLICY AND
PROCEDURE**

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Introduction

AIT Athletic Club wishes to provide the best possible environment for all young people involved in sport. All participants deserve to be given safe sporting opportunities, in a happy environment free of any turmoil of any kind. These participants must be respected, and in turn they must accept responsibility to act in a manner that is appropriate at all times. All of those who belong to the club will be expected to treat all they encounter with fairness and respect.

This document outlines Guidelines and Codes of practices relating to people involved with AIT Athletic Club. It also identifies the roles and responsibilities of all involved including parents. The aim of this document is to ensure that the environment creates and nurtures a child centred approach to athletes. It is envisaged that at all times young athletes will enjoy and participate freely in various events, competitions and training sessions.

AIT Athletic Club is run on a voluntary basis and people freely give their time to coach, coordinate and support young athletes. AIT Athletic Club actively encourage parents and guardians to participate in and support the club and depend on the cooperation of parents/guardians to ensure a ratio of young athletes to coaches/supervisors. Without this cooperation from parents/guardians this ratio would not be met.

AIT Athletic Club expects persons involved in athletics and parents to read and up-hold the contents of this document. AIT Athletic Club does not accept any responsibility for children who do not follow the instructions of their coaches/supervisors at all times. Therefore parents must instruct their children to follow the instructions of coaches.

It is important and vital that parents must collect their children on time at the end of each athletics session. Parents are required to collect their children from within the indoor sports arena. Verbal abuse towards coaches/ volunteers of the Athletic Club will not be tolerated and the offending person may be expelled.

AIT Athletic Club has a Child Welfare Officer and a Designated Officer for issues relating to children.

Guidelines and Codes of Conduct:

Details of the Executive committee of AIT Athletic Club (including Child Welfare Officer and Designated Officer) and other people involved in the club are available on the web www.aitac.ie. The site should also be used to keep up to date with policies, events and training information.

The Athletics Association of Ireland is the Governing Body for AIT Athletic Club.

Abbreviations:

AAI = Athletics Association of Ireland

AIT AC = Athlone Institute of Technology Athletic Club

TULSA = Child and Family Agency

These guidelines and code of conduct applies to:

Juvenile and Junior athletes in AIT AC, i.e. all athletes aged 19 or younger at the end of the current calendar year.

Coaches/helpers of these athletes.

Parents of these athletes.

Members of the Executive Committee of AIT AC and all sub-committees.

Code of Conduct for Young Athletes:

Young athletes are entitled to:

Be listened to;

Be believed;

Be safe and to feel safe;

Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect;

Have a voice in the club / organisation;

Participate on an equal basis;

Be happy, have fun and enjoy sport;

Experience competition at a level at which they feel comfortable;

Make complaints and have them dealt with appropriately;

Get help against bullies;

Say no;

To protect their own bodies;

Confidentiality.

Young athletes should always:

Treat coaches/helpers and supervising parents with respect;

Play fairly at all times, do their best;

Respect all members, even when things go wrong, thus displaying good sportsmanship qualities;

Respect opponents, be gracious in defeat as well as victory;

Abide by the rules set down by team managers when travelling to away events;

Behave in a respectful manner that avoids bringing AIT AC and/or the sport of Athletics into disrepute;

Talk to child welfare officer if they have any problems;

Young athletes should never:

Cheat;

Use violence of any kind or physical contact that is not allowed within the rules;

Shout or argue with officials, team mates or opponents;

Harm anyone, team members, opponents or their property;

Bully or use bullying tactics to isolate another player;

Use unfair or bullying tactics to gain advantage;

Leave the athletics arenas without the permission of/supervision of an adult coach/helper;

Take banned substances;

Keep secrets, especially if any harm or hurt of any kind has occurred;

Tell lies about adults / young people or any other matter;

Spread rumours.

Guidelines for Parents

AIT Athletic Club believes that Parents should:

Be an exemplar and a role model for their child and maintain the highest standards of conduct when interacting with children, other parents, coaches, officials, organisers or any other person that they might come into contact with at any time.

Always behave responsibly and do not seek to unfairly affect any event that is going on in the club.

Never intentionally expose any young participant to embarrassment or disparagement by the use of flippant or sarcastic remarks.

Always recognise the value and importance of the volunteers who provide sporting / recreational opportunities for their child.

Encourage their child at all times to participate within the rules. Teach their child that honest endeavour is as important as winning and do all they can to encourage good sportsmanship.

Set a good example by applauding other participants. Encourage mutual respect for individual competitors, team mates and all participants in sporting events.

Parents at all times should support all efforts to remove abusive behaviour and bullying behaviour in all its forms.

Ensure their child is aware that they must inform a coach/helper if they wish to leave the athletics arena.

Co-operate with Club request to remain at the athletics training session/event in order to safeguard the wellbeing of the child if it is deemed to be in the best interest of the athlete.

Talk to the child protection and welfare officer if you have any concerns with how your child is getting on in the club.

Parents Code of Conduct

I will respect the rules and procedures set down in AIT Athletic Club's Guidelines and Codes of conduct.

I will respect all people that I come in contact with including my child's team-mates, leaders (e.g. Manager, Coaches, Officials, Judges) and parents, as well as all athletes, parents and coaches.

I will encourage my child at all times to treat other participants, coaches, selectors, officials and managers with respect.

I will give encouragement and applaud only positive accomplishments whether from my child, his/her team-mates, their opponents or the officials.

I will respect my child's coaches (s) and support his/her efforts.

I will collect my child/children on time from training sessions.

I will if asked supervise or assist training sessions where my child/children are involved.

I will participate in the Toilet Rota (which is a system whereby parents are requested to be available at training sessions to accompany children to the toilets, wait outside the toilets and accompany the children back to the sports arena afterwards) when requested by the club. This rota will be e-mailed to parents.

I will address any concerns, issues or complaints that I have to the Child Welfare Officer.

Guidelines for Coaches/Helpers.

Administrators/Coaches/Helpers

All in charge children's sport should strive to create a positive environment for all participants in their care. They have an overall responsibility to take any necessary steps to ensure that positive and healthy experiences are provided.

AIT Athletic Club recognises the key role all responsible play in the lives of children in sport.

All coaches, officers, administrators, team managers should have as their first priority the children's safety and enjoyment of the sport and should at all times adhere to the guidelines and regulations set out in AIT AC.

All involved with the club must respect the rights, dignity and worth of every child and must treat everyone equally, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability.

Coaches will be expected to go through appropriate recruitment and selection procedures, that apply to all persons with substantial access to young people, whether paid or unpaid.

All coaches, team managers and administrators MUST undergo current Garda vetting.

All coaches/helpers agree to abide by the Guidelines and Codes of Practice for AIT Athletic Club and to their policies.

A copy of the Guidelines and Codes of Practice for AIT Athletic Club will be made available to coaches/helpers on the AIT AC website and they should aware of the procedures contained within the document.

All coaches to read and sign the AI Code of Conduct which will be supplied by AIT AC.

Once appointed the Coach must act as a role model and promote the positive aspects of sport and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct.

The use of drugs and alcohol is prohibited. Tobacco must be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity, health and wellbeing.

Remember your behaviour to athletes, other officials, and opponents will have an effect on the athletes in your care. Be generous with praise and positive attributes.

Remember never ridicule or shout at athletes for making mistakes or not performing as expected. All young athletes are entitled to respect. Be careful to avoid the "star system". Each child deserves equal time and attention, and at all times during his/her involvement in athletics.

Care must be taken not to expose a child intentionally or unintentionally to embarrassment or disparagement by use of sarcastic or flippant remarks about the child or his/her family or anyone else.

Physical punishment or physical force must never be used. Never punish a mistake by verbal means, physical means, or exclusion.

Insist that athletes in your care respect the rules of athletics. Insist on fair play and ensure young athletes are aware you will not tolerate cheating or bullying behaviour.

Encourage the development of respect for opponents, officials, selectors and other coaches and avoid criticism of fellow coaches.

When overnight travel is involved, and a parent is not travelling, parents and participants will be asked to sign permission forms in these instances.

Coaches are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with athletes. It is advisable for coaches not to involve young athletes in their personal life/ visits to coaches home or overnight stays.

All Coaches should avoid working alone and ensure there is adequate supervision for all activities. It is important to realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted by the participant or by outsiders.

When approached to take on a new athlete, ensure that any previous coach – athlete relationship has been ended by the athlete / others in a professional manner.

When young athletes are invited into adult groups/squads, it is necessary to get agreement from a parent/carer. Boundaries of behaviour in adult groups are normally different from the boundaries that apply to junior groups/squads. However the Guidelines and Codes of Practice for AIT Athletic Club should be observed where young athletes are invited to adult groups/squads.

Leaders who become aware of a conflict between their obligation to their athletes and their obligation to AIT Athletic Club must make explicit the nature of the conflict and the loyalties and responsibilities involved, to all parties concerned.

Coaches should communicate and co-operate with medical and ancillary practitioners in the diagnosis, treatment and management of their athlete's medical or related problems. Avoid giving advice of a personal or medical nature. Any information of a personal or medical nature must be kept strictly confidential unless the welfare of the child requires the passing on of this information.

The nature of the relationship between coach and a participant can often mean that a leader will learn confidential information about an athlete's family. This information must be regarded as confidential and except where abuse is suspected, must not be divulged to a third party without the express permission of the player/family.

Coaches should set realistic goals for the participants and do not push young athletes. Create a safe and enjoyable environment.

Coaches should involve parents where possible and inform parents when problems arise.

Coaches should keep a brief record of injury(s) and action taken.

Coaches should keep a brief record of problem/action/outcomes, if behavioural problems arise.

Coaches should keep a brief record of accidents, incidents or complaints and refer these to the chairperson/child welfare officer.

Remember... Young athletes compete for fun and enjoyment and skill development and personal satisfaction have priority over highly structured competition. Never make winning the only objective.

Where possible Coaches/helpers should avoid:

Spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others.

Taking sessions alone.

Taking children to their home.

Taking children on journeys alone in their car.

Coaches/helpers should not:

Use any form of punishment or physical force on a child.

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 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.

Anti Bullying Policy

Bullying is recognised and defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or sectarian remarks, threats, name-calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of his peer group).

The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm). Bullying is not an accepted behaviour towards anyone at AIT Athletic Club be they child, coach, volunteer or parent. Anyone found to be bullying others will be dealt with seriously both in regards to the behaviour exhibited and the reasons for the behaviour. The possibility of people being bullied will be discussed openly within the Club and all young people and staff/volunteers informed of both the Clubs views on bullying and ways in which bullying can be prevented / stopped. It should be emphasised that anyone can be the victim of bullying and that being or feeling bullied is not a sign of weakness and does not make the victim a less valuable person.

Action to be taken if a child states they are being bullied:

Child to be given time to say how they are being bullied and reassured they are right to tell. Reports of bullying may also come from the parent to athletics coaches/helpers. The coach documents the report and notifies the report to the child welfare officer. The coach speaks generally to the alleged perpetrator of the bullying to ascertain the issues without revealing the name of the child who reported it. If satisfied that bullying is occurring, the coach (in the company of a witness) points out to the perpetrator that it is not acceptable to pick on others like this and that s/he needs to correct their behaviour. A record of this conversation should be kept for future reference. If the behaviour reoccurs with the same or another victim, the coach repeats the unacceptability of this behaviour to the perpetrator. A record of this conversation should be kept for future reference. If the behaviour reoccurs a 3rd time, the coach discusses the matter with the perpetrator's parent/carer and asks that they emphasise the unacceptability of such behaviour. A record of this conversation should be kept for future reference. If the behaviour continues, the perpetrator's parent/carer will be asked to remain at training in order to supervise their own child's behaviour. If the behaviour continues, the Complaints/Appeals Procedure will be followed. Child Welfare Officer to keep the young person informed of their proposed action and to take into account the child's feelings and perspective. The child's parents can be informed of your concerns and response. Chairperson of the club to be informed of any incident of bullying so that the policies and practices can be reviewed on a regular basis.

Disciplinary Procedures

AIT Athletic Club 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 will not be undertaken by the Designated Child Officer or other club officials. The standard reporting procedure outlined in the Tusla guidelines will be followed by AIT Athletic Club and adhered to by its members.

Complaints/Appeals Recommended Procedure (Major complaints/allegations)

AIT Athletic Club operates on the basis of good practice which includes a complaints/ appeals procedure.

Guidelines and Codes of conduct reflecting a child centred ethos is widely disseminated and applied to all athletes, coaches and parents.

AIT Athletic Club, on receiving a complaint, will 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 Child Welfare Officer and should be responded to within 5 working days. The committee should consist of a representative from the Executive Committee, the Child Welfare Officer/Designated Officer and ordinary registered members of the club. If the complaint involves suspected abuse or a criminal offence the Designated Officer should be consulted and the disciplinary committee disbanded. Tusla will then be informed without undue delay.

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 Executive 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. Where the member is over 18 correspondence should be addressed to both parents/guardians and the member.

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 Executive Committee. The appeals committee should consult with the Child Welfare 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 (Athletics Association of Ireland). However efforts to resolve the issue at local level should be exhausted before the Governing Body is engaged in attempts to resolve the matter.

The Disciplinary Committee will consist of 5 members, one of whom will be appointed chair. Membership will be 3 officers of the Club, and 2 members of the Executive Committee (Non-Officer).

The Appeals Committee will consist of 5 members, one of whom will be appointed chair. Membership will be 3 officers of the Club, and 2 members of the Executive Committee (Non-Officer).

NOTE: An allegation/complaint against an athletics coach may turn out to be false. However this does not stop people speculating and therefore possibly affecting the reputation of the individual coach. This can be alleviated by quickly instigating and completing the complaints/appeals process.

Recruitment and Selection Policy

AIT Athletic Club will take all reasonable steps to ensure that coaches are appropriately qualified and suitable to work with young people. All coaches/helpers and those working with AIT Athletic Club, including members of the Committee will be Garda vetted.

The Child Welfare Officer will maintain a list of such people and will liaise with Coaching Coordinators to make sure that this list is up to date.

All new athletics coaches should be nominated to the AIT Juvenile Committee and (*this needs to be confirmed by the committee...our exact recruitment of coaches procedure???*)

Each coach is asked to read and sign the AI Coaches Code of Conduct which will be held by the Child Welfare Officer.

Every effort should be made to manage and support appointed Athletics coaches, including awareness of the code of conduct.

All coaches are encouraged to complete the AI Code of Ethics training which will be provided by Athletics Ireland to AIT AC periodically.

Adequate supervision should be provided; a coach should not have to work alone.

When storing information in relation to coaches, information should be treated as sensitive and confidential. It should be kept in a secure place that is only accessible to nominated officers.

General Guidelines

Transport

NOTE: There is extra responsibility on coaches/helpers when they transport young people to events. *(check with committee re insurance for carrying athletes in coaches/helpers own cars???)*

Adults should:

Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover on their car and they follow the rules of the road, including legal use of seat belts. Not carry more than the permitted number of passengers. Avoid being alone with one participant. Put a single passenger in the back seat. Have central drop off locations. Seek parental permission to transport an individual participant on a regular basis and clearly state times of pick-up and drop off. Parents should check with young people about the plans and be happy with the transport arrangements.

Occasions may arise where a leader/coach may have no option but to transport participants /athlete alone. The leader/coach should before commencing make phone contact with athlete's parent, guardian, older sibling to advise of the reason for transporting the athlete. If none of the athlete's family are available to contact then the leader/coach must advise a fellow coach/leader in advance.

General Supervision

Make sure there is an adequate adult: child ratio. Leaders should try to have more than one adult present. The number of adults needed will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the participants and any special needs of the group. As a guide a ratio of 1:8 for under 12 years of age and 1:10 for participants over 12 years of age. This is only a guide. If there is insufficient adults a coach/helper may ask a parent to assist with the session.

Where there are mixed groups there should be leaders of both genders.

Avoid being alone with one participant, if you need to talk separately do so in an open environment, in view of others.

In changing rooms, ask parents to take responsibility and supervise in pairs of appropriate gender.

Coaches/helpers should not need to enter the changing rooms unless children are very young or need special assistance, where supervision should be in pairs of appropriate gender.

Clearly state time for start and end of training sessions or competitions, leaders should not be left alone with young people at the end of sessions. If there are late collections, coaches/helpers should (where possible) remain in pairs until participants have all departed. Parents are requested to pick their child/children up on time to avoid placing leaders in this situation.

Keep attendance records and records of any incidents, injuries or complaints that may arise.

An attendance register should be maintained for each training session/event and this should be kept as a permanent record of attendance, which could be referred to in the future.

Overnight & Away Trips:

NOTE: Where possible the parent/guardian of the child/children should travel on overnight/away trips.

Separate permission forms should be signed by parents/guardians and participants, containing emergency contact number(s) unless accompanied by a parent/guardian.

Young participants should sign a behaviour agreement.

AIT AC will:

Appoint a team manager who will make a report on returning home.

A meeting with parents/guardians and participants is useful to communicate travel times, competition details, other activities, gear requirements, special dietary needs and any other necessary details. This is where possible and practicable.

Rooming arrangements: adults should not share rooms with children. Children should share rooms with those of similar age and same gender.

Adults should knock before entering rooms. If possible place male and female rooms in separate sections/quarters.

Medical requirements/information will be kept confidential.

All group socialisation should take place in communal areas (i.e. no boys in girls rooms and vice versa).

Alcoholic drink, smoking or other illegal substances are forbidden to young athletes. Leaders should act as role models in this respect.

Team leaders must be very vigilant in this regard at all times on overnight and away trips. To achieve this, a team leader roster involving at least two leaders/managers on duty at the same time should be drawn up.

There must be at least one adult of each gender with a mixed party, there should be a good Adult: child ratio, 1:5/6, and proper access to medical personnel.

Lights out times should be enforced.

Young athletes should be under reasonable supervision at all times and should never leave the venue or go unsupervised without prior permission.

It is important that arrangements are outlined as above, and are agreed with the management team leaders in advance of actual event, and at a formal meeting at the commencement of the travel to include everyone.

Physical Contact:

Physical contact during sport should always be intended to meet the child's needs, NOT the adults. The adult may 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 for a child that they 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.

Use of Photographic and Mobile Equipment

AIT Athletic Club adopts a policy in relation to the use of images of athletes on its website and other publications. Adults and coaches/helpers need to work together to prevent those wishing to cause 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. Anyone concerned about photography taking place at events or training sessions can contact the Child Welfare Officer/Designated Officer and ask them to deal with the matter.

AIT Athletic clubs policy on the use of photographs is:- a) when joining the club, parents have consented to photographs/videos of the athlete being used by the club for the promotion of the sport, unless they have ticked the box on the membership form stating they do not wish photographs of their child to be used. This is stated on the club's membership form. b) For athletes in the U15 or older age groups, it is acceptable for them to be named in photographs on the club website. c) For athletes in the U14 or younger age groups, its only acceptable to use their photograph on the club's website if

the athlete's name cannot be easily identified or provided if parental permission is explicitly given on each occasion for its use on the club's website. d) The use of camera phones in dressing rooms or changing areas is prohibited.

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:

- 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 Child Welfare Officer/Designated Officer if you are worried about use of images. Amateur photographers and film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session are required to register their details with the club. The person's name, address, club (if appropriate) and contact number/s should be recorded and stored for future reference. Parents taking pictures/images of their children only do not require permission.
- To ensure spectators and participants are informed of the policy, the club/event/organisation should display these requirements prior to the start of an event and where possible make an announcement over a tannoy.

Child Welfare and Protection Procedures

AIT AC strives to promote a child centred, safe and protective environment for all its members. Below are the procedures for dealing with any welfare or protection issue that may arise. Child welfare and the protection of young people is the concern of all adults at all times, irrespective of their role within the club.

If there are grounds for concern about the safety or welfare of a young person, you should react to the concern. When unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are considered abusive and warrant reporting, you should contact the Designated Officer who is familiar with the reporting procedure. They may contact the duty social worker in the local Tusla Child and Family Agency office where they will receive advice. Grounds for concern include a specific indication from a child, a statement from a person who witnessed abuse or an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse.

A report may be made by any member in the club but should be passed on to the Designated Officer who may in turn pass the concern to the local Statutory Authorities. (Tusla Child and Family Agency within Monday to Friday 9-5). Taking responsibility for deciding whether or not child abuse is taking/has taken place is not the place of anyone working or volunteering in the club. That is the job of the local statutory authorities. However, the club has responsibility to protect children by assisting the appropriate agencies so that they can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect young people.

Everyone working in or volunteering in the club should follow both procedures outlined below, firstly the procedure for responding to a child in distress and secondly the procedure for reporting the concern.

Response to a Child Disclosing Abuse

NOTE: Abuse may be Verbal, Physical, Sexual, Emotional or Neglect.

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 an facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened;
3. Listen compassionately and take what the child is saying seriously remembering to stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying;
4. Understand that the child has taken a risk in deciding to tell something very important. This experience should be a positive one so that the child will be comfortable talking to those involved in the investigation;
5. Do not make judgemental statements against the person against whom the allegation is being made;
6. The child should not be questioned unless to make clear the nature of what the child is saying, e.g. "Can you explain to me what you mean by that", allow the child to tell their story in their words.
7. The child should be given an indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents or the social work department. It should be noted that the child may have been threatened and may be particularly vulnerable at this point.
8. Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in disclosing to you.
9. Record the details carefully.
10. Pass on these details to the Designated Officer.

Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse:

The following steps should be taken in reporting child abuse to the statutory authorities:

(a) Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information and report the matter as soon as possible to the Designated Officer;

(b) If the Designated Officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, she/he will make a report to the Tusla Child and Family Agency who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse;

(c) In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Child Officer is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Gardaí should be contacted. Under no

circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities ;

(d) If the Designated Officer is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist she/he can informally consult with Tusla, he/she will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report;

(e) A Designated Officer reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities will first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation;

(f) A report should be given by the Designated Officer to the Statutory Authorities in person or by phone, and in writing; without delay

(g) In those cases where the club 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.

The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998, provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the Health Service Executive (now known as Tusla Child and Family Agency) or the Gardaí. The act also covers the offence of 'false reporting'. 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 Service Executive (now known as Tusla Child and Family Agency) or any member of An Garda Síochána.
2. The provision of significant protection for employees who report child abuse. This protection covers 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.

Westmeath Duty Social Work Teams Contact Details:

Tusla Child and Family Agency, Social Work Department, Athlone Health Centre, Coosan Rd, Athlone, Co. Westmeath. Tel: 090 6483106. Office Hours: 9:00am - 5:30pm Monday to Thursday, 9:00am - 5:00pm Friday

Tusla Child and Family Agency, Social Work Department, Child and Family Centre, St.Lomans Hospital, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath.. Tel: 044 9384450. Office Hours: 9:00am - 5:30pm Monday to Thursday. 9:00am - 5:00pm Friday

Outside Working Hours all matters should be referred to An Garda Síochana. Under the protocols developed by An Garda Síochana and Tusla, all cases of suspected child abuse would then be referred to Tusla in the normal way.

How do you report a concern? You can report a concern in writing, in person or by phone. It is possible to report a concern anonymously. Reporting a concern about a child is not easy. If you are not sure about your concerns, you could discuss them with a social worker or public health nurse. This can help you decide whether you want to make a formal report. Anyone can report a concern about a child. Under The Protection of Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998, (Available on line @<http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0049/index.html>) so long as you report what you believe is true and it is done in good faith you cannot be sued. Further Guidance is contained in Children First: National Guidance for the protection and Welfare of Children (2011) Available on Line @ http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/child_welfare_protection/ChildrenFirst.

Allegations Against Sports Coaches/Helpers:

AIT AC has agreed the following procedures be followed in cases of alleged child abuse against Sports Coaches/Helpers. If such an allegation is made against a Sports Coach/Helper working within the club, two procedures should be followed:

(A) The reporting procedure in respect of suspected child abuse (reported by the Designated Officer see previous page).

(B) The procedure for dealing with the Sports Coach/Helper will be carried out by a nominee of the Executive Committee of the AIT AC.

The safety of the child making the allegation and the safety of any other children who may be at risk should be considered. The club should take any steps that may be necessary to protect children in its care.

The issue of confidentiality is important. Information is on a 'need to know' basis and the Sports Leader/Coach should be treated with respect and fairness.

Reporting Procedure (Allegations of Abuse Against Sports Coaches/Helpers):

If the Designated Officer has reasonable grounds for concern, the matter should be reported to the Tusla Child and Family Agency, following the standard reporting procedure.

While the Designated Officer makes the report to Tusla, at club level a nominee from the committee should deal with the Sports Coach/Helper in question.

The nominee should privately inform the coach/helper that (a) an allegation has been made against him / her and (b) the nature of the allegation. He / she should be afforded an opportunity to respond. His / her response should be noted and passed on to Tusla.

The Coach/Helper should be asked to step aside pending the outcome of the investigation. When a person is asked to step aside it should be made clear that it is only a precautionary measure and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings. The governing body (AAI) should be informed by the Designated Officer that the coach/helper has been asked to stand aside.

Governing bodies can consider disciplinary action on the coach/helper but should ensure that this does not interfere with the investigation of the Statutory Authorities. It is important that governing bodies consider the outcome of the investigation and any implications it might have.

NOTE: The fact that the alleged abuser has not been prosecuted or been found guilty does not mean that they are appropriate to work with young people in the future.

NOTE: An allegation/complaint against an athletics coach/helper may turn out to be false. However this does not stop people speculating and therefore possibly affecting the reputation of the individual athletics coach/helper. This can be alleviated by quickly instigating and completing the complaints/appeals process.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in cases of abuse, welfare or bad practice. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected.

The following points should be kept in mind:

- A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the child will supersede all other considerations.
- Information will only be discussed only with those who need to know.
- Information should be conveyed to the parents / guardians of the child 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, sports) 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.

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 Child Welfare Officer or the Chief Executive Officer of Athletics Ireland. The information should be checked out and handled in a confidential manner.

Rumours

Rumours should not be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Child Welfare Office /Designated Officer and checked out without delay.

Minor Complaints (not of a serious nature).

The early acknowledgement and resolution of a complaint is key to ensure the confidence of people (with genuine issues and/or concerns) that they are being listened to and their concerns are being addressed. They should also be kept up to date about the AIT AC complaints procedure and receive early feedback on the results of the complaints outcome. This may prevent minor complaints from escalating.

Minor complaints should be made formally in writing to the Chairperson(?) Minor Verbal complaints will however be taken seriously and addressed where necessary. Where possible a minor complaint should be resolved by the group coach/zone coach at the point of contact. They should use their judgement as to whether a record of the complaint and action taken is required. This is forwarded to the child welfare officer/designated officer.

If a complaint cannot be satisfactorily resolved by the age group coach/zone coach, it should be forwarded in writing to the designated officer/child welfare officer. This officer will inform the chairperson and secretary of AIT Athletic Club(Juvenile Section).

The complaint will be investigated within 5 working days by a sub group called by the Chairperson which may consist of members of the executive committee, the child welfare officer, designated officer, group coaches and zone coaches (as appropriate) of the relevant age group where the complaint was initiated from.

The sub group will examine all records of the complaint and hear evidence/statements from group coaches/zone coaches or others as necessary. Where a complaint is made against a

coach/helper due process will be afforded to resolve the complaint as soon as possible. During this time the support of the clubs officers will be offered to the coach concerned.

A decision (where possible) will be made within 5 working days. Any delays to this process will be notified to all parties to ensure they are informed of the progress of the process.

The outcome of the complaints procedure will be notified to the person/s making the complaint, the group coaches/zone coaches (as appropriate) by the designated officer. A written record of the complaint and its outcome will be kept by the designated officer.

NOTE: Complaints should be treated as a learning event for the Club and changes (where necessary) put in place to prevent a reoccurrence.

This document has been guided and informed by:

Athletics Association of Irelands Code of Ethics and Good Practice For Children in Athletics.
Available on line @ www.athleticsireland.ie/docs/CodeofConduct.pdf

Guideline and Codes of Practice For Craughwell Athletic Club 2010.

This document will be reviewed periodically. For the latest version please consult the AIT Athletic Club website www.aitac.ie