



CHILD WELFARE & SAFEGUARDING POLICY

POOR PRACTICE/CONDUCT - CONCERN/ COMPLAINTS

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6. Poor Practice/Conduct Complaints & Concerns

Some concerns may not meet the threshold of 'harm' or constitute 'reasonable grounds for concern' that would require making a report to the Statutory Authorities. However the complaint/concern may require a response. This section is written to provide clear and unambiguous procedures for responding to such cases which could be defined as suspected poor practice and/or conduct. It aims to set out guidelines and procedures on how to take action if there are any concerns for those working in a voluntary or paid capacity with Children within the game.

It is important the complaint/concern is raised directly to the organisation where it is believed that the poor practice has occurred in the first instance. There is further information on the escalation process in section 6.6.

(If any report made directly to the FAI Child Welfare and Safeguarding Manager or Child Welfare and Safeguarding department may be deemed it more appropriate, it shall be remitted to the Designated Children's Officer of the Club, League and Member for consideration.

6.1 What is Poor Practice/conduct?

Incidents of poor practice occur when the needs of Children are not afforded the necessary priority, so their welfare is compromised. Examples of poor practice are likely to be once-off incidents and these might include but are not limited to:

6.1.1 Coach

- a) Giving preferential treatment to individuals and unfairly rejecting others (e.g. singling out and only focusing on the talented Children and failing to involve the full squad).
- b) Giving preference to winning games over Children's development, participation and enjoyment.
- c) Using inappropriate language, gestures or comments to motivate Children or provoke a reaction.
- d) Delivering a coaching session alone, without another responsible adult present.
- e) Not paying due care and attention to the Children taking part in the training session or game.
- f) Failing to recognise and applaud a Child's efforts to make improvements to their game.
- g) Coaching alone when their own child is part of the team.
- h) Entering the field of play as a coach/manager when their own child is involved in an on-field incident.
- i) Inappropriate sideline behaviour toward children on the pitch, the match officials or any coaching staff.
- j) Making eligibility disputes in front of children.
- k) Breach of code of conduct.

6.1.2 Players

- a) A player not setting a positive example to other players
- b) A Player not safeguarding the physical fitness of opponents or team member, not avoiding violence and rough play.
- c) Not showing gamesmanship, and time wasting.
- d) A Player using inappropriate language particularly to referees/officials/coaches and other players during games include own team members.
- e) A Player using inappropriate language to coaches and own team members during training.
- f) A Player not accepting victory and defeat with equanimity.

- g) A Player not treating opponents or team members with respect at all times, irrespective of the outcome of any game.
- h) Breach of code of conduct.

6.1.3 Parent / Guardian

- a) Placing too much pressure on their Child to perform to a high standard and win games.
- b) Criticising their Child's performances instead of highlighting the positives of their game and where improvements were made.
- c) Failing to ensure that their Child is appropriately dressed for the weather conditions
- d) Making derogatory comments about their Child, or another Child during a game or training session.
- e) Inappropriate sideline behaviour toward children on the pitch, the match officials or any coaching staff.
- f) Failing to bring their Child to training on time, or collect them promptly at the end of the session.
- g) Breach of code of conduct.

6.1.4 Supporter

- a) Using inappropriate language towards Children, coaches, referees or other supporters.
- b) Making inappropriate comments about the performance of Children, coaches or referees.
- c) Entering the field of play during a match or training session without being asked to do so.

6.1.5 The Club/League/Member

- a) Failing to provide adequate safeguarding arrangements for the Children in their care.
- b) Failing to implement FAI Regulations on the protection and welfare of Children, the FAI Child Welfare and Child Safeguarding Policy and other supporting documents.
- c) Placing undue pressure on a coach or team of Children to win games or competitions.
- d) Allowing poor practice to go unreported (e.g. a coach who ridicules and criticises Children who make a mistake during a match).
- e) Failing to create an environment that encourages player development and enjoyment over winning games and trophies.
- f) Failing to provide appropriate safeguarding education for their coaches and members.
- g) Not having procedures in place to ensure a parent/guardian does not coach their own child's team alone and that they do not enter the field of play as the coach or manager when their own child is involved in an on-field incident.
- h) Removing a child's place on a team, reducing playing opportunities or preventing a child from training if a complaint has been made against the club/league/member (unless a high risk has been identified).

6.1.6 General

- a) Shouting at or ridiculing Children when they make a mistake. Children should be given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and develop.
- b) Allowing Children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- c) Placing Children in potentially compromising and uncomfortable situations with adults.
- d) Ignoring health and safety guidelines (e.g. allowing Children to set up goal posts unsupervised by adults).
- e) Failing to adhere to the club's codes of practice.

6.1.7 Points to remember

a) If at any time the person handling the concern/complaint receives information which would change the threshold of the concern/complaint and it now would be considered reasonable grounds for concerns, the matter should be reported to the statutory authorities in line with section 6 of the policy and the person handling the matter should stop any internal proceedings.

6.2 How to Deal with Alleged Poor Practice

6.2.1 Where alleged poor practice has been identified or reported, it must be dealt with in a fair and impartial manner. All information should be treated in the strictest of confidence, in accordance with procedures concerning confidentiality outlined within this policy.

6.2.2 When an example of alleged poor practice is reported, it should be dealt with on a case by case basis. The following steps provide guidance as to how a complaint of poor practice could be handled:

- a) Alleged poor practice is observed and/or reported. This information is then passed on to the Children's Officer.
- b) Initial assessment is carried out by the Children's Officer who should collate all information / reports and record what action has been initially taken, if any.
- c) Inform the person(s) against whom the report of alleged poor practice has been made and offer them the opportunity to respond.
- d) The Children's Officer should then record what the next step will be and if any other parties need to be approached to collect information or reports from.
- e) If information needs to be collected from Children this should be done in the presence of their parents or guardians. Collecting information from Children should only occur where necessary.
- f) All information should be treated in the strictest of confidence, in accordance with procedures concerning confidentiality outlined within this policy.
- g) If the accused agrees that poor practice has taken place, they may be subject to an appropriate sanction. The matter should be referred by the Designated Liaison Person and / or Children's Officer to their Executive Committee for review. On assessment, the Executive Committee may refer the matter to an appropriate disciplinary body. This should be the body to which the matter was reported and if investigated in full no referral to a higher body is warranted.
- h) If the alleged poor practice is disputed, the Designated Liaison Person and / or Children's Officer must refer the matter to their Executive Committee for review. On assessment, the Executive Committee may refer the matter to an appropriate disciplinary body. This should be the body to whom the matter was reported and if investigated in full no referral to a higher body is warranted.
- i) Should a disciplinary hearing be required, the panel should be impartial consisting of at least 3 members. All parties should be provided with the opportunity to make further oral and / or written submissions.
- j) Should the alleged poor practice relate to an individual who is under 18 years of age, no meetings should be held with that person without the presence or permission of a parent / guardian. If a parent or guardian cannot attend then a coach chosen by the parents can attend in their place.
- k) All parties should be informed of the decision of any such investigation or disciplinary hearing in writing as soon as possible on completion of same.
- l) Note: If a party feels that the alleged Poor Practice has not been investigated in full, they should refer the matter to the appropriate Club, League and Member, for example, Club to League, League to National Body/Provincial Association, National Body/Provincial Association to FAI. This is outlined further in this section.
- m) When a conflict of interest occurs for the children's officer this should be declared and it may be necessary for the club/ league/member to appoint a different person from the committee to review the

complaint or request the children's officers from a different club/league/member to assist with the review the organisations behalf.

6.3 Sanctions Involving Poor Practice

6.3.1 If there is cause to believe that poor practice has occurred, a sanction proportionate to the offence should be applied.

6.3.2 The sanction process should be in line with disciplinary procedures.

6.3.3 Any suspension / removal of a parent / guardian should not impact the involvement of the Child. Drop off and collection of their Child should be facilitated to allow the Child attend training and matches.

6.4 Other resolution options

Sometimes after a complaint and a review, the conflict between parties can persist. This can be detrimental to the club/league/member, the player and others involved. Organisation may want to consider the below resolution options. However, in cases where a report has been submitted to Tusla as it has reached the Reasonable Grounds for Concern or where a Mandated Report has been submitted, restorative justice may not be appropriate.

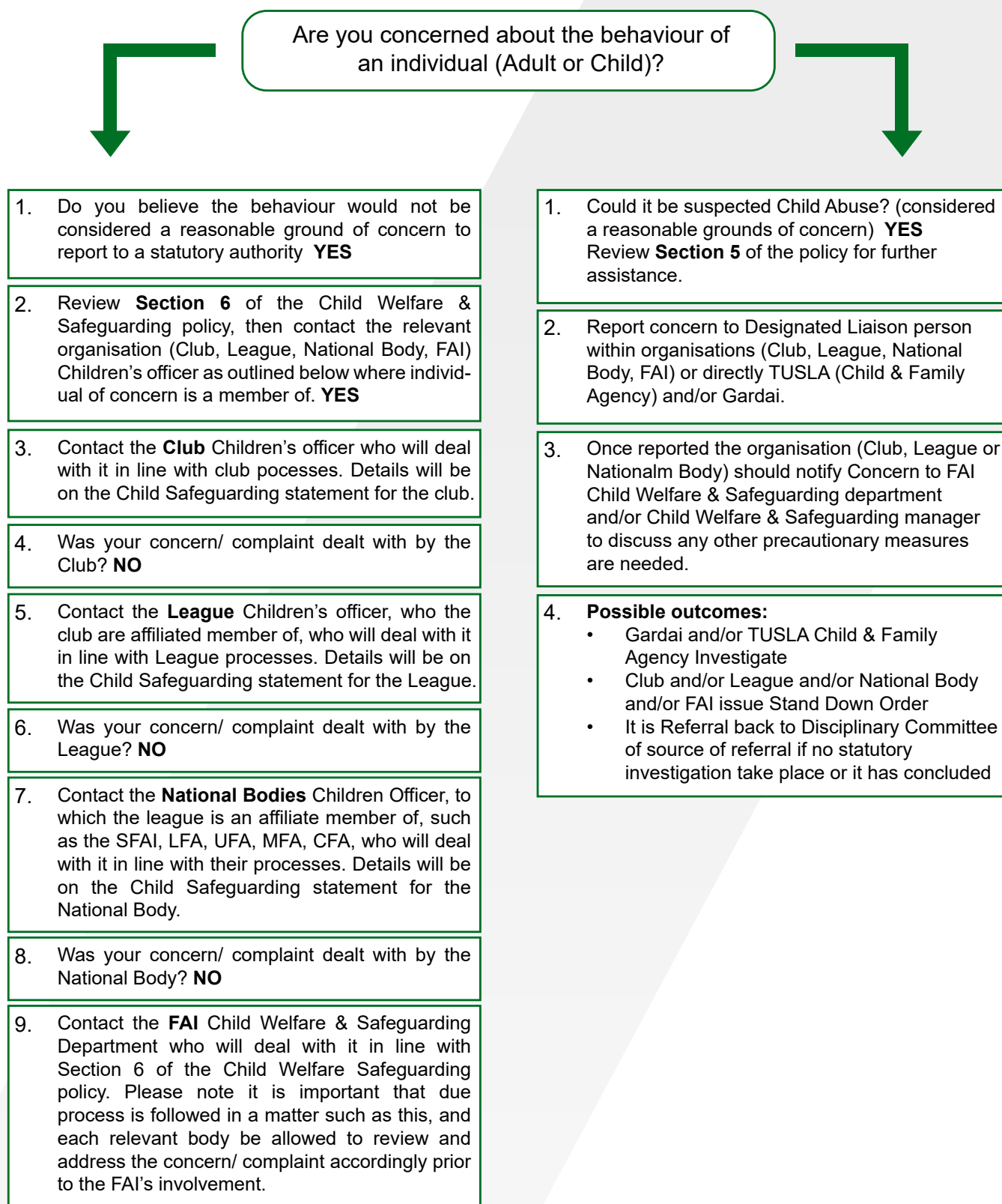
6.4.1 Restorative Practices is an umbrella term used for strategies that help us to proactively build community and relationships and manage conflict and tensions in ways that treat humans with dignity and respect. Circle Practices, a form of restorative practices, are a range of proactive approaches that aim to develop a safe community and build relationships, while Restorative Justice, perhaps the most well-known form of restorative practices, is more reactive in nature and aims to manage conflict and tensions by repairing harm and restoring relationships. These approaches could be helpful in these situations. Links to useful information on this can be found in the appendices.

6.4.2 Mediation is a process for resolving disputes where those in dispute meet with a third party who helps them to negotiate an agreed resolution. Links to useful information on this can be found in the appendices.

6.5 Anonymous Complaints

a) Whilst difficult to pursue, anonymous complaints should not be ignored. Anonymous complaints should be brought to the attention of the Children's Officer and should be looked in fully based on the information that has been provided. The review should be completed without prejudice to any person and it should be explained to all parties that there is an obligation to review all matters reported.

6.6 Concern and Complaint escalation procedure





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