

Ratoath Harps Football Club

Code of Practice

The Code of Practice detailed in this document is based on national guidelines as outlined in the following policy statements:

Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, Irish Sports Council, 2000.

Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Dept. of Health & Children 1999

Our Duty to Care, Dept. of Health & Children 2002

Football Association of Ireland Code of Ethics & Best Practice

Ratoath Harps Football Club Guiding Principles

The work of Ratoath Harps Football Club is based on the following principles that will guide the development of sport for young people in this club. Children and young people's experience of soccer should be guided by what is best for the child or young person. The stages of development and the ability of the child should guide the types of activity provided within the club. Adults will need to have a basic understanding of the needs of young people, including physical, emotional and personal.

Integrity in relationships:

Adults interacting with young people in soccer should do so with integrity and respect for the child. All adult actions in soccer should be guided by what is best for the child and in the context of quality, open working relationships. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind is unacceptable within soccer.

Quality atmosphere and ethos

Soccer for young people should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. 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 result in excessive levels of pressure on them and, as a consequence, high levels of dropout from sport.

Equality

All children should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, sex, 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 Councils 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 young people, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. Coaches/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.

Ratoath Harps Football Club

Child Protection & Welfare Policy Statement

Introduction.

Ratoath Harps Football Club 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 Ratoath Harps Football Club on the protection and safety of children and young people who participate in soccer.

All children and young people 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. The responsibility for protecting children lies with all adults involved in soccer.

Ratoath Harps Football Club recognises and accepts its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people by protecting them from physical, emotional or sexual harm and from neglect or bullying.

Clear policies, practices and procedures in addition to relevant training programmes will ensure that everybody in Ratoath Harps Football Club knows exactly what is expected of them in relation to protecting children and young people within soccer.

It is vital that children and young people who participate in Ratoath Harps Football Club activities are able to do so in a safe, enjoyable and quality environment.

In pursuit of this goal Ratoath Harps Football Club will:

- Advise all members of Ratoath Harps Football Club (coaches, players, parents and spectators) of their responsibilities in relation to the welfare and protection of children and young people who participate in soccer.
- Operate within the recommended Football Association of Ireland codes of conduct and best practice guidelines.
- Appoint a Club Children's Officer in line with Football Association of Ireland requirements.
- Provide a child protection and welfare module in staff induction and development programmes.

The Aims of Ratoath Harps Football Club's Child Protection Policy are:

- To develop a positive and pro-active position in order to best protect all children and young people 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 this Policy are:

- The welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration.
- All children and young people 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 young people and their parents/carers. Health Boards have a statutory responsibility to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and Ratoath Harps Football Club is committed to cooperating fully with them in accordance with procedures as outlined in "Children First", National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.
- Ratoath Harps Football Club will cooperate fully with the Football Association of Ireland National Children's Officer, Gardai and Health Boards in any investigation of child abuse in soccer.

The Football Association of Ireland's regulations in regard to child welfare and protection are defined in the rulebook as:

Rule 68. The Protection and Welfare of Children

In line with recent legislation and Government Guidelines (The Child Care Act 1991 and The Protection for Persons Reporting Abuse Act 1998) in relation to child protection and welfare, it is mandatory that all National Associations, Divisional Associations and Affiliated Leagues should operate to Football Association of Ireland recommended codes of conduct and best practice guidelines (see Football Association of Ireland Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Under Age Soccer for Players, Coaches, Parents and Spectators).

1. 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.
2. Breaches will become a disciplinary offence.

Ratoath Harps Football Club through confirming this policy document has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that children and young people can participate in all soccer activities with their safety and welfare being of paramount importance.

It is essential that this document represents a process of continual improvement in the area of child protection and welfare in soccer. 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 and young people in their care.

Ratoath Harps Football Club
Procedure for dealing with Child Abuse Concerns or Allegations

It is important to note that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the Statutory Authorities (Gardai, Health Board) and should not be undertaken by Children's Officers or any other Club/League. All allegations of child abuse must be referred to the Statutory Authorities.

When an allegation is received it should be assessed promptly and carefully. It will be necessary to decide whether a formal report should be made to the health board and this decision should be based on reasonable grounds for concern.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- (i) a specific indication from a child that (s)he was abused;
- (ii) a statement from a person who witnessed abuse;
- (iii) an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse;
- (iv) a symptom which may not in itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is supported by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence;
- (v) consistent signs of neglect over a period of time.

Ref. Children First

Step One

Should the Chairperson be unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist s/he can informally consult with the local health board duty social worker. S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

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

Step Two

Should Ratoath Harps Football Club become aware of an allegation of abuse of a child or children by a coach/volunteer during the execution of that coach's/volunteer's duties, the Chairman will privately inform the coach/volunteer of the following:

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

Step Three

The coach/volunteer should be afforded an opportunity to respond. The Chairman will note the response and pass on this information when making the formal report to the health board.

The report to the Health Board should 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 Gardai shall be contacted.

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

Step Four

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

Step Five

All subsequent actions following an allegation of abuse against a coach/volunteer will be taken in consultation with the Health Board and An Garda Síochána. An immediate meeting will be sought with these two agencies for this purpose. The Football Association of Ireland National Children's Officer is also available to provide support and advice. He can be contacted at any time Tel. 0879691422

Step Six

Under Football Association of Ireland 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. Therefore the FAI National Children's Officer Tel. 087 9691422 must be informed immediately of any formal notification to the Statutory Authorities.

When a person is asked to stand down it should be made clear that it is a precautionary measure in keeping with standard procedures/guidelines and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings.

The coach/volunteer concerned should be advised that the procedures being undertaken are in accordance with statutory requirements. He or she should be treated with respect and fairness, and also be assured that all information will be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

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 Football Association of Ireland best practice guidelines. It must be remembered that 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.

Internal Club disciplinary proceedings can only be initiated after the Statutory Authorities have completed their investigation.

Ratoath Harps Football Club

Disciplinary, Complaints and Appeals Procedure

While many concerns can be dealt with in an informal manner to the satisfaction of all concerned, it is advisable that detailed records are maintained in respect of all complaints and that all parties are advised of the clubs formal complaints procedure.

Step One

Any person who has a complaint or concern should bring it to the attention of Ratoath Harps Football Club's Secretary.

The complaint or concern should be in writing and should outline all relevant details and other parties involved.

Step Two

The complaint or concern will then be brought to the attention of the Chairperson who will convene the disciplinary committee and appoint a Chairperson of that Committee **unless the complaint or concern relates to a child abuse matter or criminal offence that meets criteria for formal reporting to the statutory authorities.**

(The Chairperson of the Club does not sit on either the Disciplinary or Appeal Committee)

Step Three

The disciplinary committee will furnish any individual/s 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 shall be informed and advised of the process.

Step Four

The disciplinary committee will then hear the case of all parties involved and decide if a club rule or regulation has been infringed.

Step Five

The disciplinary committee will then inform those involved of their decision and sanctions, if any, that are to be imposed. This notification should be in writing, setting out the reasons for the sanction. (Written notification will be forwarded to parents should the proceedings involve a club member under eighteen years of age)

Step Six

Any party unhappy with the findings of the disciplinary committee can appeal the decision in writing within a ten-day period.

Step Seven

The appeals committee will then be convened. The appointed chairperson of the appeals committee should be taken from the executive committee and those who have not been on the original disciplinary committee.

Step Eight

The appeal committee will then rehear the case and all evidence, new and old, will be considered. The appeals committee will have the power to uphold or reject the appeal or to vary, alter or set aside any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee.

Step Nine

The Management Committee will, at its next meeting, give effect to the decisions of the disciplinary committee or, if convened, the appeals committee.

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

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints relating to Child Welfare can be difficult to deal with, however they cannot be ignored. All complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour/poor practice should be brought to the attention of the Chairperson of the Club. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child/children is paramount.

All complaints will be investigated and handled in a confidential manner. A record will be kept of all such complaints and actions taken. Specific advice on dealing with anonymous complaints can be obtained from the local Health Board duty social worker or alternatively the Football Association of Ireland National Children's Officer (Tel. 0879691422).

Rumours

Rumours should not be allowed hang in the air. Any rumour/s relating to inappropriate behaviour/s circulating in the club should be brought to the attention to 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 complainant 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 children will supersede all other considerations.
- All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should 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 is not a breach of confidentiality.

Discipline in Soccer

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, overly 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.

Guidance on the use of Sanctions

The use of sanctions is an important element in the maintenance of discipline. However Coaches/Managers/Volunteers and Administrators should have a clear understanding of where and when particular sanctions are appropriate.

It should be remembered that effectively controlled organisations and successful coaches/managers/volunteers are characterised by the sparing use of sanctions. The age and developmental stage of children, in particular, should be taken into account when using sanctions.

Sanctions should always be fair, consistent and applied evenly, and in the case of a persistent offence, should be progressively applied.

The following steps are suggested:

- Rules should be clearly stated and agreed
- 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 a 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
- A child should be helped to understand if necessary why sanctions 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

Adapted from the Irish Sports Councils Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport (2001)

Ratoath Harps Football Club Children's Officer/s

The appointment of Club Children's Officers 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 Children's Officer should 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 to whom they can report their concerns 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 Club Management Committee
- To monitor changes in membership and follow up any unusual dropout, absenteeism or club transfers by children or coaches/volunteers

Children's Officers do not have the responsibility of investigating or validating child protection concerns within the club and have no counselling or therapeutic role. This responsibility lies with the Health Boards and Gardai.

Ratoath Harps Football Club has appointed Mr. Dave Cullen as Children's Officer and he can be contacted at 086 376 6113 (after 6 PM).

Ratoath Harps Football Club Recruitment Policy

Ratoath Harps Football Club will take all reasonable steps to ensure that coaches, managers and volunteers are suitable to work with children and young people.

All coaches, managers and volunteers are required to complete an application/self declaration form, giving the names of two referees who will then be contacted. Written references will then be verified and kept on file.

All coaches/volunteers are subject to Garda clearance (when available).

All appointments are subject to approval and ratification by the committee of Ratoath Harps Football Club.

All coaches, managers and volunteers will be subject to a sign up procedure in which they undertake to abide by Ratoath Harps Football Club and FAI codes of conduct and good practice.

Once recruited, Ratoath Harps Football Club will make all efforts to support and manage coaches, managers and volunteers ensuring that no person is expected to work alone.

Safety

All coaches/managers in Ratoath Harps Football Club 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
- Regular safety checks should be carried out in relation to premises, training facilities and equipment.
- Ratoath Harps Football Club 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 Ratoath Harps Football Club soccer activity.
- Records of attendance should be maintained.

**Ratoath Harps Football Club
Reference Form**

Private and Confidential

Name: _____

Address: _____

The above has applied for a post within the Ratoath Harps Football Club and has supplied your name as a referee. As an organisation committed to the safety, protection and happiness of children, we are anxious to know if you are satisfied that this person is suitable to work with children in a sporting capacity.

How long have you known this person?

In what capacity?

Are you satisfied that the above named person is suitable to work with children in a sporting capacity?

Yes	
No	

(If you have answered no, we will contact you in confidence)

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Ratoath Harps F.C.
Manager/Assistant/Volunteer/Coach Application
& Self Declaration Form
(Please use block capitals)

Name: _____ D.O.B _____

Address: _____

Tel. (Home) _____ (Mobile) _____

Coaching Qualifications

Sport	Award Held	Date of Award

Previous experience/involvement in sport? Please give details.

Have you ever been asked to leave a sporting organisation in the past? YES: NO:

(Please tick as appropriate. If you have answered yes we will contact you in confidence)

Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence? If so give details

(Having a criminal record does not necessarily preclude anyone from working with children. If you have answered "yes" you will be contacted in confidence)

Referee: Please supply the names, addresses and telephone numbers of two people whom we can contact and who from personal knowledge are willing to support your application.

(If you have had a previous involvement in sport, one of these names should be that of an administrator/leader of your last club/place of involvement)

Name _____ Title _____ Tel. _____

Address _____

Name _____ Title _____ Tel. _____

Address _____

I agree to work within Ratoath Harps Football Club and FAI approved codes of conduct & best practice guidelines.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Ratoath Harps Football Club Bullying Policy

What is Bullying?

Bullying can be defined as repeated verbal, psychological or physical aggression conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with children.

It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting or extortion by one or more individuals against a victim. While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reportable to Health Board or Gardai where children are concerned, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of the club where it is taking place.

It is important to recognise the impact that bullying and discrimination can have in the lives of young people. Some people may not regard bullying and discrimination as child abuse because of the settings in which this often takes place and also because it is often other young people who are responsible for the behaviour.

Ratoath Harps Football Club recognises that bullying is an increasing problem. It is imperative that the club should have in place a policy to deal with bullying, and that volunteers/coaches are aware of this policy and of procedural guidelines to deal with bullying.

In situations where the incident is serious, concerns children, and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, Ratoath Harps Football Club will consult the relevant Health Board with a view to drawing up an appropriate response such as a management plan. (Children First 1999)

All coaches/managers/volunteers/players/parents have a part to play in ensuring that nobody in Ratoath Harps Football Club is the victim of any type of bullying behaviour. Everyone in the club should be aware that bullying of any kind will not be tolerated and they have a duty to report any such behaviour to our managers/coaches/volunteers who will in turn report to the Committee.

Peer Abuse

In some cases of child abuse, the alleged perpetrator will be a child. In these situations, the child protection procedures should be adhered to for both the victim and alleged abuser, that is, it should be considered a child protection issue for both children.

Work must be done to ensure that perpetrators of abuse, even when they are children themselves, take responsibility for their behaviour and acknowledge that the behaviour is unacceptable.

It is important that clarity exists in respect of which behaviours constitute peer abuse, particularly child sexual abuse. Consultation with the health board should help to clarify the nature of any sexual behaviour by children which gives rise to concern.

Bullying is often defined in terms of three components.

- It must occur over time, rather than being a single aggressive act.
- It involves an imbalance of power, the powerful attack the powerless.
- It can be psychological, verbal, or physical in nature.

Types of Bullying

Child to child (or Adult to adult) – includes physical aggression, verbal bullying, intimidation, damage to property, stealing property and isolation.

Adult to child- this includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any comment intended to degrade a child.

Child to adult- this includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature by an individual or group of children.

A UK study found that the most common experiences of bullying and discrimination reported by young people is at the hands of other young people.

These included:

- Being called names, insulted or verbally abused;
- Being deliberately embarrassed and humiliated by other children;
- Being made to feel different or like an outsider;
- Being lied about;
- Being physically assaulted or threatened with violence;
- Being ignored.

In the study, boys were most likely to experience physical bullying or threats, have property stolen or damaged. Girls on the other hand, were more likely to be ignored or not spoken to.

Bullying by adults was a less common experience however one in ten reported this. Of this type of bullying the most common reported experiences were:

- Being deliberately embarrassed or humiliated;
- Being unfairly treated or verbally abused;
- Being ignored or not spoken to.

What makes a child more likely to be bullied?

- Being different in any obvious way, e.g. Having a physical disability, an unusual tone of voice, being timid or belonging to an ethnic or racial group.
- Lacking confidence and not being able to mix. This can result in name-calling, “slagging” or physical abuse.
- Being very clever or good at a particular activity. Others may be jealous and inflict cruel nicknames.
- Being very weak intellectually. Children can be very hurt and distressed by associated name calling.
- Children from homes where there are problems are also vulnerable. Children can have an alcoholic or drug user in the family, a family member in jail or a relative with mental problems who sometimes acts in a bizarre manner in public.
- An overprotective parent can also attract unwarranted attention.
- Children whose hobbies are different and are not in line with mainstream culture, anything that can be misinterpreted by others as making them “different”.
- Children’s physical appearance, prominent physical features, wearing different or old-fashioned clothes, being awkward or clumsy, too big or small.
- Sexual undertones. Children can be jeered about their perceived sexuality or their lack of experience of sexual matters.
- Children who react easily, e.g. the child who gets upset easily and is quick to react to jeering.
- Wearing glasses, teeth braces.

Response to Bullying

Vigilance is the most potent deterrent against bullying so that children and young people who bully will know that it will be dealt with, and the victims of bullying will have confidence in this.

There needs to be open discussion about bullying and a clear statement of its unacceptability. Managers/coaches/children/parents should be advised at the start of every season that “bullying” in any shape or form is not acceptable or permitted in Ratoath Harps Football Club.

In confronting the bully or bullies in relation to specific incidents it is important to:

- Be absolutely certain about the known facts
- Confront the “bully/bullies” with the allegations
- Make it clear that the behaviour is unacceptable
- See each “bully” separately if appropriate
- Be specific about sanctions if the bullying does not stop
- Follow up to check that the behaviour has ceased
- Record all instances of bullying and action taken.

Who should deal with bullying?

While the more extreme forms of child bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reported to the Health Board or An Garda Síochana, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of all coaches/managers/volunteers in this club.

How can it be prevented?

- Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.
- Ensure adequate supervision at all times
- Deal with any incidents as they arise.
- Use a whole group policy or ‘no-blame approach’, i.e., not ‘bullying the bully’ but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a ‘shared concern’ of the group.
- Reinforce that there is ‘a permission to tell’ culture rather than a ‘might is right’.
- Encourage young people to negotiate, co-operate and help others, particularly new or different children
- Offer the victim immediate support and put the ‘no blame approach’ into operation
- Never tell a young person to ignore bullying, they can’t ignore it, it hurts too much
- Never encourage a young person to take the law into their own hands and beat the bully at their own game.
- Tell the victim there is nothing wrong with them and it is not their fault.
- All incidents of “bullying” should be reported to the Committee of Ratoath Harps Football Club.

Club personnel are advised that they are not expected to deal with all situations on their own as sometimes bullying can be very difficult to deal with. They can be assured that the Committee of Ratoath Harps Football Club are available to provide support and advice and if necessary professional expertise.

Ratoath Harps Football Club Away Trips Policy

Attention to the following will help to promote safety:

- All away trips must be approved and sanctioned by the Committee of Ratoath Harps Football Club.
- Written permission of parents/guardians shall be obtained for all overnight trips. Parents/Guardians should complete a medical form disclosing any medical conditions or special needs of their child/children.
- All adults who travel on away trips with children will be carefully chosen.
- Adults/Coaches accompanying or participating in an away trip shall complete a medical form disclosing any medical conditions or special needs to the Club in advance.
- The roles and responsibilities of adults participating in away trips shall be clearly defined.
- Ratoath Harps Football Club will appoint a Team Manager/Head of Delegation for all away trips. He/She will have overall responsibility for the children's well being, behaviour and sleeping arrangements. He/She will be appointed as an official of Ratoath Harps Football Club for the duration of the trip. Children will be informed at the outset to whom they can report any concerns they might have. They shall be clearly encouraged to tell anybody if they should have a concern. On no account should they keep secrets.
- On away trips, all coaches/volunteers are accountable to the Team Manager/Head of Delegation in all non-performance related matters.
- Where there are mixed teams there shall be at least one female in the management/coaching structure
- The Team Manager/Head of Delegation shall submit a report to the Committee of Ratoath Harps Football Club as soon as possible after the trip.
- As a norm adults should not share a room with a child. Where the presence of an adult is required there should be more than one child in the room with the adult. If children are sharing, it should be with those of the same age and sex.
- Coaches/volunteers are advised to avoid being alone with one child - if talking separately do so in an open environment, in view of others.

- Adequate child ratios should always be maintained (This can depend on the ages of the children, the nature of the activity involved or any special needs of the group) Guide 1:8 for children under 12 and 1:10 for twelve and over.
- Adequate supervision shall be maintained at all times.
- Ratoath Harps Football Club shall ensure that there is adequate insurance cover for the trip.
- When driving, coaches/volunteers are required to ensure adequate insurance and to not carry more than the permitted number of passengers. Ensure the use of seat belts if provided.
- Coaches/Volunteers are discouraged from travelling alone in their cars with children. Should this be impossible, child passengers should travel in the back seat, be dropped off at central locations, and parental permission should be sought for transporting an individual on a regular basis. At all times there should be a clearly stated pick-up and drop off time.
- Special care should be taken by both host and visiting clubs in the selection of homes for overnight stays and where practicable more than one child should be placed with each host family.
- Parents/Guardians shall be informed as soon as possible if their child suffers any significant injury or accident.

Adapted from Code of Ethics & Good Practice p.30-31

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 and young people in vulnerable positions.

Ratoath Harps Football Club has adopted a policy in relation to the use of images of players on its website and in other publications.

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.

Rules to guide use of photography:

- If the player is named, avoid using a photograph.
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the player.
- Only images of players in suitable dress will be used to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity, not on a particular child.
- Where team/group photographs are used with accompanying names, a random order of naming will be used which will not correspond with the order of appearance in the photograph.

We will follow the child protection procedures for reporting the use of inappropriate images, ensuring either the designated person or, if necessary, the health boards and/or gardai are informed.

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. This 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 Ratoath Harps Football Club's Code of Conduct, the promoters of this event request that any persons wishing to engage in any video, zoom or close range photography should register their details with the organisers. Children and young people 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.

We will then:

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour.
- Issue the photographer with identification which must be worn at all times.
- Keep a record of accreditations.
- Inform players and parents that a photographer will be in attendance at an event.
- Not allow unsupervised access to athletes or one to one photo sessions at events.
- Not approve/allow photo sessions outside the events or at an athlete's home.

Videoing as a coaching aid: Video equipment can be used as a legitimate coaching aid. However, permission should first be obtained from the player and, where the player is a child, the player's parent/carer.

Photographic equipment of any sort, and in particular camera phones, may not be used in dressing rooms/changing areas.

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

Travelling Guidelines

When travelling with young people coaches/volunteers of Ratoath Harps Football Club should:

- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover
- Not carry more than the permitted number of passengers
- Ensure the use of safety belts
- Keep to the rules of the road
- Avoid being alone with one player. If with one player: 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 up and drop off.

Touching

All managers/volunteers of Ratoath Harps Football Club 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

Ratoath Harps Football Club Substance Abuse Policy

In Ratoath Harps Football Club 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 Ratoath Harps Football Club shall endeavour to organise receptions and celebrations in a nonalcoholic environment and in a manner that is suitable for the age group concerned.

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

The Football Association of Ireland has directed 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 shall promote fair competition through the development of sound training practice and should actively discourage the use of any substance that is perceived to offer short cuts to improved performances or to by-pass the commitment and hard work required to achieve success.

Coaches/managers will also try to ensure that those in their charge are aware of the harmful side effects or the illegality of proscribed drugs or other banned performance-enhancing substances.

Ratoath Harps Football Club

Code of Conduct for Parents, Guardians & 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, managers/volunteers, match officials or opposing supporters cannot be accepted in any shape or form. Players, managers, coaches, volunteers or match officials should never be regarded as fair targets for ignorant or abusive behaviour.
- Where a fence or other barrier exists around a pitch, it indicates the boundaries of the "technical area". All areas inside this boundary are reserved for Ratoath Harps managers, coaches, officials, players and substitutes. Spectators should please remain outside this area.

Ratoath Harps Football Club
Players Charter & Code of Conduct

Children in Ratoath Harps Football Club 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.
- 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 be believed.
- Have a voice in the running of the club.
- Ratoath Harps have decided that all players in a seven-a-side squad of ten are entitled to a minimum playing time of 20 minutes per match.
- If a seven-a-side squad is made up of eleven or more players, a fair and equal rotation system will be implemented. All players in the squad of ten selected for a particular match are entitled to a minimum playing time of 20 minutes per match.
- We have further decided that eleven-a-side player playing times, for squads of up to 16 players at age groups up to and including Under 13, will be decided on the basis of a fair rotation system.
- If an eleven-a-side squad is made up of more than sixteen players, then a fair squad rotation system will be implemented from week to week.

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 Ratoath Harps Football Club 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 shown to 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 Ratoath Harps Football Club 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 Ratoath Harps Football Club into disrepute.

In Ratoath Harps Football Club 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.

Ratoath Harps Football Club is 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 are; that sport is no longer fun, lack of opportunity 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. This, however, does not mean abandoning competition altogether. Balanced competition is a healthy part of our sport and our Club.

Making sport fun.

In promoting “Sport for Fun” we in Ratoath Harps Football Club will insist on:

- Encouraging participation and fun.
- Promoting the development of skills as opposed to winning at all costs.
- Ensuring each player is treated fairly in the selection process for matches.
- Emphasising and praising effort.
- Acting as a good role models.
- Insisting on **Fair Play** (see guiding principles above).
- 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.