

# Athlone Sub Aqua Club



*Tigh-na-Mara*  
*Brick Island*  
*Coosan Road, Athlone*



## **Child Protection Policy and Procedures**

### **1. Definitions**

#### 1.1 In this Policy and Procedures

- 'Adult' means any person aged 18 years of age or over.
- 'Child/young person' means any person under the age of 18.
- 'CFT' means Comhairle Fo Thuinn, the Irish Underwater Council, which is the national governing body for the sport of diving in Ireland.
- Child Protection Officer means the person(s) designated by Athlone Sub Aqua Club as being responsible for child protection issues.

### **2. Aims**

#### 2.1 Athlone Sub Aqua Club has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for children and young people, it provides them with the highest possible standard of care. This policy and procedures have therefore been adopted to achieve the following aims:

- Promote good practice in child protection within the club;
- Provide young persons with appropriate protection;
- Enable the club's officers, instructors and members to make informed and confident responses in relation to specific child protection issues.

### **3. Scope**

#### 3.1 This policy and procedures are concerned with the provision of protection to all children and young persons who are members of Athlone Sub Aqua Club;

#### 3.2 The scope of this policy and procedures covers child protection issues concerning child members occurring both within and outside the club's environment;

#### 3.3 All child protection concerns that come to the attention of the club relating to any of its child members fall under the scope of this policy and procedures regardless of whether or not it is a member of the club that is responsible for the concerns involved.

#### **4. Policy Statement**

- 4.1 Athlone Sub Aqua Club is committed to providing a sporting environment in which:
- The welfare of the child is paramount;
  - All reasonable steps are taken to protect children from harm;
  - All children, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity are able to participate in diving and snorkelling in a fun and safe environment;
  - All suspicions and allegations of Poor Practice, Child Abuse or Bullying, regardless of origin, are taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately;
  - Working in partnership with parents/guardians and children is considered essential for the protection of children.
- 4.2 Adherence to provisions contained in this policy and procedures will assist the club to protect its young members. The club also fully endorses child protection policies/guidelines that may from time issue from CFT and the Irish Sports Council. In the event that there is any conflict between provisions contained in the club's Child Protection Policy and Procedures and those contained in policies/guidelines that issue from CFT and/or the Irish Sports Council the provisions contained in the policies/guidelines that issue from CFT and/or the Irish Sports Council shall prevail.

#### **5. Good Practice**

- 5.1 All adult members are encouraged to adopt good practice when dealing with children. This is considered vital in order to protect the welfare of children and the adult members themselves from any possible suspicions or false allegations.
- 5.2 Good practice, for the club's adult members means adhering to the following principles:
- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication);
  - Making the experience of snorkelling and diving fun and enjoyable;
  - Treating all young people equally and with respect and dignity;
  - Always putting the welfare of the young person first before winning or achieving goals;
  - Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with young people;
  - Avoiding unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person;
  - Obtaining written consent from parents/guardians if adult members are required to transport children and young persons;

- Obtaining written consent from parents/guardians for a child's attendance at any club events involving overnight stays;
- Ensuring that if mixed groups of young persons are taken away that they are accompanied by at least one male and one female adult;
- Ensuring that at events involving overnight stays adults do not enter the rooms of young persons for reasons other than supervisory purposes. Adults should never invite young people to their rooms;
- Involving parents/guardians wherever possible, e.g. encouraging parents/guardians to take responsibility for their own child in changing room situations, on overnight stays etc;
- Being an excellent role model - this includes moderating ones own behaviour in the company of young people;
- Always giving constructive feedback rather than negative criticism;
- Recognising the capacity of young persons. This means avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will;
- Ensuring that parents are aware and accept that members in authority in the club will be acting in loco parentis and if the need arises they shall have the authority to discipline and also administer emergency first aid or other medical treatment;
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given.

## **6. Poor Practice**

6.1 Except where consent is given by a child's parents/guardians the following are regarded as Poor Practice and should be avoided by all of the club's adult members:

- Unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people;
- Transporting young people alone on journeys;
- Taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you;

The Club however accepts that cases arise where it is impractical/impossible to avoid certain actions e.g. transporting a young person in an adult members car in the event of an injury/ emergency or a parent/guardian failing to pick up a child. These actions in such situations should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of a person in authority within the club or the child's parents/guardians.

6.2 The following are regarded as Poor Practice and should never be carried out by any of the club's adult members:

- Sharing a room with a young person;
- Engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay;

- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching;
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun;
- Reducing a young person to tears as a form of control;
- Allowing allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon;
- Doing things of a personal nature that a young person can do for himself or herself.

6.3 If any of the following occurs to an adult member he/she should report it immediately to a person in authority within the club and record the incident. Parents/guardians should also be informed of the incident.

- If you accidentally hurt a young person;
- If the young person seems distressed in any manner;
- If you find yourself the subject of inappropriate affection or attention from a young person;
- If the young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

## 7. Child Abuse

### 7.1 Definition

Child Abuse consists of mistreatment or lack of care for a child that leads to injury or harm. It commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. The abuser may be a family member or someone the young person encounters in the community including sports and leisure activities.

### 7.2 Types of Child Abuse

For the purpose of this policy and procedures there are four types of Child Abuse as follows:

- **Physical Abuse:** Occurs where adults deliberately cause physical hurt or injury to a young person. Giving young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute physical abuse;
- **Neglect** occurs when an adult fails to meet the young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of a child's health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter, warmth, clothing, hygiene, supervision or safety can constitute forms of neglect;
- **Sexual Abuse** occurs when adults (male and female) use children to meet their own sexual needs. This includes acts of a sexual nature, showing young people pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner;

- **Emotional Abuse:** Involves the persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person by an adult. It may involve telling a young person they are useless, worthless or inadequate. It may feature expectations of young people that are not appropriate to their age or development.

### 7.3 Indicators of Child Abuse

Most people are not experts in recognising Child Abuse. Even for those experienced in working with Child Abuse it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may be occurring or has already taken place. Indications that a child is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries;
- An injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent;
- The young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them;
- Another young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person;
- Unexplained changes in a young person's behaviour e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper;
- Inappropriate sexual awareness;
- Engaging in sexually explicit behaviour;
- Distrust of adults particularly of those with whom a close relationship would normally be expected;
- Difficulty in making friends;
- Being prevented from socialising with others;
- Displaying variations in eating patterns including over eating or loss of appetite;
- Losing weight for no apparent reason;
- Becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt.

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive. Also the presence of one or more of these indicators is not proof that Child Abuse is taking place. This is a matter for the appropriate authorities to investigate and decide.

## 8. Bullying

### 8.1 Definition

Bullying is defined as repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical, or otherwise, conducted by one or more individuals against another or others, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity.

## 8.2 Types of Bullying

This policy and procedures are concerned with the following types of Bullying behaviour being committed by either an adult or a child against a child:

- Physical e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping;
- Verbal e.g. name calling, threats, abusive text messages;
- Emotional e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group;
- Sexual e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments.

Any form of bullying behaviour when conducted by an adult against a child will be regarded as Child Abuse.

## 8.3 Indicators of Bullying

Indicators of the occurrence of bullying include:

- Behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go training or enter competitions;
- An unexplained drop off in performance;
- Physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, bingeing e.g. on food, alcohol or cigarettes;
- A shortage of money or frequent loss of possessions.

## 9. Reporting Concerns of Poor Practice, Child Abuse and Bullying

9.1 It is not the responsibility of any club member to decide whether or not Poor Practice, Child Abuse or Bullying is occurring. It is however his/her responsibility to act on any concerns so that appropriate enquiries and action if necessary can be taken to protect a young person. All concerns regarding the occurrence of Poor Practice, Child Abuse or Bullying must be reported immediately to the Club's Child Protection Officer or other parties as provided for in this policy and procedures. This applies to concerns of Poor Practice, Child Abuse or Bullying occurring to a child member within and outside of Athlone Sub Aqua Club regardless of whether or not a member of the club is responsible. If considered necessary concerns may be shared with statutory authorities that are responsible for child protection.

9.2 To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed report should always be made at the time that concerns are disclosed. The report should be confined to facts. Personal opinions should not be included. In presenting facts the report should distinguish between personal knowledge and information obtained from third parties. In particular the report should include:

- The child's name, age and date of birth;
- The child's home address and telephone number;
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing his/her concerns or those of someone else;
- The nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information;

- A description of any visible evidence e.g. bruising or injury describing location, size etc and any indirect signs such as behavioural changes;
  - Details of witnesses to the incidents;
  - The child's account, if it can be given, of what happened;
  - Have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?
  - Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details;
  - Has anything been said to the alleged offender? If so record details.
- 9.3 Athlone Sub Aqua Club appreciate that concerns regarding the occurrence of Poor Practice, Child Abuse and Bullying generate strong emotions. It is also understood that in some circumstances individuals may experience feelings of misplaced loyalty towards a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the correct choice of action to take for the welfare of a child.
- 9.4 If there is any doubt, you must report the incident. It may be just one of a series of other incidences which together cause concern.
- 9.5 Athlone Sub Aqua Club assures all of its members that it shall support anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concerns of Poor Practice, Child Abuse and Bullying.

## **10. Procedure for Dealing with a Report of Poor Practice**

- 10.1 If, following consideration of a report, the allegation is clearly about Poor Practice being conducted by a member, either within or outside the club's immediate environment, the club's Child Protection Officer may decide to initiate disciplinary proceedings under the Club's Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. If the allegation is about poor practice being conducted by the Club Child Protection Officer, or if a Poor Practice issue has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the CFT National Children's Office, who shall decide how to deal with the allegation and decide whether or not disciplinary proceedings should be initiated.
- 10.2 If, following consideration of a report, the allegation is clearly about Poor Practice being conducted by a person who is not a member of the club, either within or outside the club's immediate environment, the following shall apply
- The club's Child Protection Officer shall immediately notify the child's parents/guardians.
  - The club's Child Protection Officer shall co-operate with any further enquiries the child's parents/guardians may wish to make in relation to the report.

## **11. Procedure for Dealing with a Report of Child Abuse**

- 11.1 Where a report of Child Abuse is received there may be three types of response as follows.
- **Child Protection Investigation** in which case the Health Services Executive (HSE) and possibly the Gardaí will be involved;
  - **Criminal Investigation** in which case the Gardaí are immediately involved;
  - **Disciplinary Proceedings** under Athlone Sub Aqua Club's Disciplinary and Grievance Policy and Procedure against a member of the club.

11.2 The following actions should be taken to deal with reports of Child Abuse being committed by any person against a child member either inside or outside the immediate club environment:

- The club Child Protection Officer shall immediately refer the allegation to the HSE who may involve the Gardaí, or go directly to the Gardaí if out-of-hours.
- If the club Child Protection Officer is not available, the person reporting the Child Abuse shall contact the HSE or the Gardaí immediately
- The parents, guardians or carers of the child shall be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the HSE.
- The club Child Protection Officer shall notify the club Chairman
- The club Child Protection Officer shall also notify the CFT Executive.
- If the club Child Protection Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the CFT executive who shall refer the allegation to the HSE.

11.3 The following actions should also be taken to deal with reports of Child Abuse being committed by a member against a child member either within or outside the club's immediate environment.

- The club Child Protection Officer shall initiate disciplinary proceedings in accordance with the club's Disciplinary and Grievance Policy and Procedure;
- A member accused of Child Abuse shall be temporarily suspended pending the outcome of the club's disciplinary proceedings;
- The results of any criminal and child protection investigation need not necessarily influence the outcome of the club's disciplinary proceedings. Irrespective of any findings of the HSE or Gardaí investigations if the Directors of Athlone Sub Aqua Club conclude, at a Disciplinary Hearing, that, on a balance of probabilities, it is more likely than not that the allegation of Child Abuse is true, the member concerned shall be expelled from club membership. In all such cases the welfare of children should always remain paramount.

11.4 Consideration should be given as to what support may be appropriate to the Child Abuse victim, his/her parents/guardians and any other member considered necessary.

## **12. Procedure for Dealing with a Report of Bullying**

12.1 If, following consideration of a report, the allegation is clearly about Bullying of a child member being conducted by a member either within or outside the club's immediate environment the following shall apply:

- (a) If the alleged Bullying is being committed by an adult member the Child Protection Officer shall activate the procedure outlined in this document for dealing with a report of Child Abuse.
- (b) If the alleged Bullying is being committed by a child member the Child Protection Officer shall initiate disciplinary proceedings in accordance with the club's Disciplinary and Grievance Policy and Procedure.

12.2 If, following consideration of a report, the allegation is clearly about Bullying of a child member being conducted by a person who is not a member of the club, either within or outside the club's immediate environment, the following shall apply:

- (a) If the alleged Bullying is being committed by an adult the club's Child Protection Officer shall activate the procedure outlined in this document for dealing with a report of Child Abuse.
- (b) If the alleged Bullying is being committed by a child the club's Child Protection Officer shall:
  - Immediately notify the child's parents/guardians, and
  - Co-operate with any further enquiries the child's parents/guardians may wish to make in relation to the report.

### **13. Confidentiality**

13.1 Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all connected with any reports received in relation to Poor Practice, Child Abuse and Bullying. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only to the following and any other persons or parties that the Directors consider necessary.

- The club's Child Protection Officer;
- The parents of the child;
- Any alleged offender (and parents if, in the case of bullying, the alleged offender is a child). HSE advice should be sought on who should approach the alleged offender if the allegation concerns Child Abuse;
- The person making the allegation;
- HSE/Gardai (where relevant);
- The CFT Executive (where relevant).

13.2 All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

### **14. Frivolous, Vexatious or Malicious Report**

14.1 The making of a frivolous, vexatious or malicious report by a club member of Poor Practice, Child Abuse or Bullying shall be regarded as a serious disciplinary offence.

### **15. Appointment of Adult Members to Work with Children/Young Persons**

15.1 All adult members who wish to work with children/young persons will be required to sign a Declaration Form (see *Appendix A*) stating that they agree to:

- (a) Abide by the provisions of this Child Protection Policy and Procedures and any other related policies/procedures/guidelines that the club consider necessary or appropriate;
- (b) Athlone Sub Aqua Club having the discretion to seek references from appropriately qualified referees as nominated by the adult member;
- (c) Athlone Sub Aqua Club having the discretion to carrying out appropriate checks with An Garda Siochana in order to determine the suitability of the adult member to work with children/young persons.

### **16. Travelling to Outings/Overnight Stays**

16.1 All young persons travelling to a club outing must travel with their parents/guardians or an adult (other than a club member) approved by their parents/guardians or with an adult member(s) of the club;

16.2 All young persons travelling to a club outing with an adult member(s) of the club shall, at least 3 days in advance of a club outing, provide written consent from a parent/guardian that he/she is allowed to travel with the adult member(s) concerned using the form outlined in *Appendix B* to this document.

16.3 If a club outing involves an overnight stay, the person(s) accompanying young persons shall be responsible for their supervision and accommodation.

#### **17. Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment at Club Events**

17.1 There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people. All officers, instructors and members should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the club's Child Protection Officer.

17.2 Children must not be photographed or filmed by any club member or other person whether professional or otherwise for any purpose without their permission and the permission of their parents/guardians.

#### **18. Training**

18.1 Athlone Sub Aqua Club will endeavour to provide child protection awareness training to all adult members who train, instruct or are otherwise involved with children.

#### **19. Implementation, Monitoring and Review**

19.1 Overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and procedures rests with the Board of Directors of Athlone Sub Aqua Club.

19.2 The Directors of Athlone Sub Aqua Club shall make all of its members, parents of child members and other relevant parties aware of the provisions of this policy and procedures.

19.3 The Directors of Athlone Sub Aqua Club shall subject this policy and procedures to on-going monitoring and review to ensure that they contribute as far as possible to the protection of children.

#### **20. Queries**

20.1 Any queries concerning the operation of this policy and procedures should be directed to the club's Child Protection Officer or any of its Directors.

20.2 If you feel you do not wish to share your query with a member of Athlone Sub Aqua Club or you require further advice you should contact either:

- CFT at: 01 2844601
- ISPCC at 01 6794944, or
- Childline at 1800 666666

*This policy and procedures were approved at a Board of Directors Meeting held in the Tigh na Mara on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2010 and will take immediate effect from this date.*

#### **Signed:**

*Brian Duffly* (Chairman) **Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> July 2010

*Deborah Riley* (Secretary) **Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> July 2010

*Appendix A:*

**Declaration Form for Adult Members Working with Young Persons**

*To be completed by all adult members working with children/young persons and returned to the Secretary, Athlone Sub Aqua Club. The Secretary shall, if required, lodge this form with CFT.*

**Compliance with Provisions of Child Protection Policy and Procedures**

I wish to confirm that I have received a copy of Athlone Sub Aqua Club's Child Protection Policy and Procedures and the following related policies/procedures/guidelines:

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I fully understand and agree to abide by the provisions contained in these documents.

**References**

I hereby authorise Athlone Sub Aqua Club, if it considers it necessary, to contact the following referees (*not relatives*), in writing and/or by telephone, for the purpose of obtaining a reference in order to assess my suitability for working with children/young persons:

<b>Name:</b> _____	<b>Name:</b> _____
<b>Address:</b> _____	<b>Address:</b> _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
<b>Tel No's:</b> _____	<b>Tel No's:</b> _____
<b>E-mail:</b> _____	<b>E-mail:</b> _____

*If possible the name and contact details of a senior member within the most recent and a previous sporting club should be supplied.*

**Garda Vetting**

I also consent to Athlone Sub Aqua Club conducting any checks that it considers necessary with An Garda Siochana in order to determine my suitability for working with children/young persons.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Block Letters)

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Tel. No:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mob. No:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CFT No:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Grade:** \_\_\_\_\_

*This form is confidential and will be treated as such by Athlone Sub Aqua Club and CFT*

**Appendix B:**

**Authorisation by Parent/Guardian to Travel to Club Outing**

*This form must be completed by the parents/guardians of a young member when he/she is travelling to a club outing accompanied by an adult member of the club.*

<b>Members Name</b>	
<b>Home Address</b>	
<b>Home/Mobile Contact Numbers</b> (of parents/guardians)	
<b>Mobile Contact Number</b> (for member, if any)	
<b>Date(s) of Dive Outing</b>	
<b>Location of Dive Outing</b>	
<b>Date and Time of Departure</b>	
<b>Date and Time of Return</b>	
<b>How is the young person Travelling?</b>	
<b>With Whom is the young person Travelling?</b> <i>(this person will also be responsible for the supervision and accommodation of the young person)</i>	
<b>I agree to take responsibility for the transport, supervision and accommodation of the above named young person</b> (signature of club member)	
<b>I wish to confirm that my child has my permission to travel to the above club outing in accordance with circumstances outlined in this authorisation form</b> (Signature of parent/guardian)	