Water Safety Ireland

CODE OF ETHICS & GOOD PRACTICE FOR CHILDREN* INVOLVED IN WATER SAFETY ACTIVITIES

Water Safety Ireland (WSI) is the statutory voluntary body established to promote water safety in Ireland. We educate persons in water safety best practices. We develop public awareness campaigns to promote necessary attitudes, rescue skills and behaviours to prevent drowning and water related accidents. We provide instruction in lifesaving, water safety and swimming.

- The guidelines in this document are based on and draw from the national guidelines as outlined in the following documents: Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young Persons in Sport, by Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland, the National policy and legislation in ROI Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017, and the requirements under The Children First Act 2015, and in Northern Ireland – the Children (NI) Order and Cooperating to Safeguarding Children and Young Persons 2017. This guidance is also informed by Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, The Child Care Act 1991, The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998 and the National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Acts 2012-2016 and the Child Trafficking and Pornography Acts 1998 – 2004.

* The Child Care Act, 1991, defines "child " as "a person under the age of 18 years other than a person who is or has been married".

In these guidelines the terms 'child' and 'young person' are used interchangeably and refer to a person of less than 18 years of age.

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FOREWORD AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This publication contains the current procedure and approach of Water Safety Ireland in dealing with a code of ethics and good practice for children involved in water safety activities. It also emphasises in detail the volunteer policies for members of Water Safety Ireland.

Water Safety Ireland's "**National Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children**" is a very important component of the curriculum when teaching children. It is important that such codes of practice are clearly outlined so that procedures are followed and immediately implemented if and when ever required. I wish to emphasise the importance of this element of teaching under the auspices of Water Safety Ireland. There is no room for complacency in this matter, and it is incumbent upon all members dealing with young persons under instruction or otherwise to ensure that the Code is fully adhered to. Therefore, it is of prime importance that members of Water Safety Ireland receive adequate time and training in the detail of the code to protect the young and those who have responsibility for them within instructional classes or within lifesaving sport in Water Safety Ireland

In dealing with Members of Water Safety Ireland it was found that there was not in place a defined code for volunteers. This void left a certain grey area between the commitment of the volunteer towards Water Safety Ireland, and indeed, from the organisation to the volunteer. It was therefore decided by Council that such a code should be put in place, and this is covered within the "**Volunteer Policies for Members**". The policies outline the expected commitment of respect of both parties to one another and while it does not form a contract it is a memorandum of understanding, which should be respected within the structure of Water Safety Ireland.

As a Lifesaving Organisation, Water Safety Ireland has taken a leading role in developing both the Code and Volunteer Policies in line with best practice. The Council has approved these documents, and they must be read, understood, accepted, and adhered to by each and every member of Water Safety Ireland. I am confident that they reflect the positive contribution that Water Safety Ireland makes to best practice in the area of child protection and volunteerism.

I wish to thank the various Commissions and Members of Council for working so diligently to bring these publications to fruition and dealing with and advising on the many aspects concerning correct procedures to be followed. I would also like to thank the Royal National Lifeboat Institution for allowing us to extrapolate and use various sections of their volunteer policy documentation, which has been most helpful to Water Safety Ireland. In conclusion, I thank all the voluntary members and staff of Water Safety Ireland who have contributed and assisted in compiling this publication in an effort to protect children and ensure that Volunteer Policies are in place.

Clare McGrath

Chair, Water Safety Ireland

Preface

This document is intended to guide WSI members and personnel on how to avoid allegations of child abuse arising in the course of our normal activities. It is not the intention of WSI to create or foster a perception that children taking part in our activities are at risk, rather it is our intention to deliver our programme of instruction in swimming and water safety in a manner that ensures that our volunteers and participating children are fully protected so that their experience of dealing with our organisation will be entirely proper, competent, positive and beneficial.

Policy Statement

Water Safety Ireland (WSI) is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of its members. Every individual member in Water Safety Ireland should at all times, show respect and understanding for fellow members' rights, safety and welfare and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the organisation's Code of Ethics and the guidelines contained in Children First and the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children Involved in Water Safety Activities. To this end training in child protection is mandatory for all members of WSI. This Code will, following adoption by the Association's Council, apply to all registered members of WSI.

In Water Safety Ireland our first priority is the welfare of the young persons, and we are committed to providing an environment that will allow participants to perform to the best of their ability, free from bullying, intimidation or abuse.

In drawing up this Code, Water Safety Ireland makes explicit the essential values, beliefs, attitudes and responsibilities which underpin all the activities of WSI members. The Code also illustrates the complexity of the tasks which members undertake in collaboration with colleagues, participants, parents and other agencies.

Mission Statement

Water Safety Ireland is the statutory and voluntary body established (by Statutory Instrument No 389 of 2006 and again in 2019 by S.I. No. 56/2019 - Water Safety Ireland (Establishment) Order 2019) to promote public awareness of water safety in Ireland. Through Water safety education and training, Water Safety Ireland strives to promote a stronger water safety ethos and culture in order that everybody will have the water safety attitude, skills and necessary behaviour to safely use and enjoy our aquatic environment.[1]

[1] For the definitive statement of the Organisation's legal responsibilities, please refer to S.I. No. 56/2019 - Water Safety Ireland (Establishment) Order 2019.

Vision

A Water Loving People where Safety is Second Nature

Core Values for Water Safety Ireland Members

A young persons' experience of water safety should be guided by what is best for that young person. The stages of development and the commensurate ability and potential of the young person should guide the types of activity provided within the organisation. Adults will therefore need to have a basic understanding of the needs of young persons, including physical, emotional and personal needs.

Quality of Instruction

Members promote and maintain the highest quality of educational experiences for participants. Members facilitate participant progression in their learning and development and their effective engagement in all areas of water safety.

Commitment

Members are committed to the highest standards of service to participants and understand that the safety of participants is their primary obligation.

Responding to Change

Members acknowledge the changing nature of society and recognise their role in providing appropriate educational responses to cater for the identified needs of participants and society in general.

Continual Professional Development

Members reflect upon and continue to improve their own practice and are provided by Water Safety Ireland with opportunities to engage in continuous professional development by attendance at seminars and conferences.

Social Justice, Equality and Inclusion

Members in their various roles show commitment to democracy, social justice, equality and inclusion. They encourage active citizenship in all aspects of water safety.

Collegiality

Members work in collegiality with colleagues in the interests of sharing, promoting, developing and supporting best safety practice.

Collaboration

Members work collaboratively with participants, parents, the public and other agencies in developing shared goals towards the promotion of water safety the eradication of water-based accidents.

Respect

Members respect participants, parents, colleagues and all in the community and work to establish and maintain an attitude of mutual respect.

Care

As well as the legal duty of care which members exercise, their role as carer is central to their membership value system. Their practice is motivated by the best interests of the participants entrusted to their care.

Co-Operation

Members engage in a professional manner with participants, the wider community and other agencies.

Code of Conduct for WSI Members

Code of Conduct

WSI Council, Commission Members and Employees are all required to adhere to the WSI Code of Conduct. WSI Council has agreed that this same standard applies to all WSI members, regardless of their role in the organisation.

Introduction

Water Safety Ireland (WSI) is a statutory body established by Statutory Instrument (S.I. 56 of 2019). This clearly outlines how the Body should operate and be managed. In addition, Water Safety Ireland adheres to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies, issued by the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform and is overseen by the Department of Rural and Community Development. The Code of Business Conduct for WSI Members, Council Members, Committee and Commission Members and Staff ensures that the business of WSI aligns with WSI's Statutory Instrument, the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies and the DRCD's priorities.

Intent and Scope

The Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (2016), issued by the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, sets out the principles of corporate governance which State bodies are required to adopt. It puts the onus on WSI to put in place and adhere to a Code of Business Conduct for members of the Council and employees. This policy also applies to all WSI members, committees, commissions and working groups appointed by the Council. This Code of Conduct considers the implications of the Ethics in Public Office Act, 1995, the Standards in Public Office Act, 2001, the Charities Act (2009) and associated guidance.

Objectives

The Code is designed to assist WSI in the conduct of its business by:

1. stating an agreed set of ethical principles.

2. promoting and maintaining confidence and trust.

3. preventing the development or acceptance of unethical practices.

4. promoting the highest management and public service standards in all WSI activities.

5. protecting the reputation of WSI.

Integrity and Conflicts of Interest

Members of WSI, Members of the Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups should always seek to act in the best interests of WSI.

Members of WSI, Members of the Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups should always adhere to the WSI Conflicts of Interest Policy. Members of the Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups should disclose details of outside employment/business/personal interests in actual, potential, or perceived conflict with the business of WSI2. In this regard, "conflict of interest" means any situation in which a person's personal interests or loyalties could, or could be seen to, prevent that person from deciding in the best interests of WSI. This interest may be direct or

indirect and can include interests of a person connected to that person. “A conflict of interest exists in any situation where the personal or other interest of a director or a connected party might in any way affect the discharge by a director of his/her duties or his/her deliberations in a situation where a director or a connected party could benefit. It makes no difference that the Company does not suffer by the conflict of interest. A director or his/her relatives, friends or associates must not under any circumstances obtain any such benefit.

WSI will manage conflicts of interest by requiring Council and Committees, Commissions and Working Groups members to:

• avoid conflicts of interest where possible.

• identify and record any conflicts of interest.

• carefully manage any conflicts of interest; and

• follow this Code and respond to any breaches.

Procedure

The following procedures should be followed at any Council or Committees, Commissions and Working Groups meeting at which a conflict of interest arises:

A declaration of any conflict of interest should be made to the Chair of the meeting and Council Committees, Commissions and Working Groups Secretary, in advance of the meeting whenever possible, or, where that is not practicable, at the meeting by the relevant Council or Committees, Commissions and Working Groups member. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest shall be a standing item on the agenda of every Council Committees, Commissions and Working Groups meeting.

Once the conflict of interest has been appropriately disclosed, the Council or Committees, Commissions and Working Groups members (as applicable) should not:

• vote on the matter; or

• participate in any related discussions.

In exceptional circumstances, such as where a conflict is very significant or likely to prevent the relevant member from regularly participating in discussions, the Council should consider whether it is appropriate for the person concerned to resign from the Council or Commissions and Working Groups (as applicable).

The action taken will be recorded in the minutes.

The relevant members must also furnish a written statement of interest to the Council Committees, Commission’s and Working Group’s Secretary outlining the conflict either prior to, at, or as soon as possible after the meeting. This should include details of whether he/she, or a “connected person” has a material interest in the matter at hand. The Council Committees, Commissions and Working Groups Secretary will then record this in the confidential Conflicts Register.

Where a matter relating to the interests of the Chairperson arises, the other members in attendance shall choose one of the members present to chair the meeting. The Chairperson should absent himself/herself when the Council Committees, Commissions and Working Groups are deliberating or deciding on a matter in which the Chairperson or his/her connected person has an interest.

Where possible, documents on any deliberations regarding any matter in which the Council Committees, Commissions and Working Groups member has disclosed a material interest should not be made available to the member concerned. Consideration should be given as to whether a separate record (to which that member would not have access) should be maintained. If the Council Committees, Commissions and Working Groups has reason to believe that a Council Committees, Commissions and Working Groups member has failed to comply with the above requirements, it will investigate the circumstances. If it is found that the relevant person failed to disclose a conflict of interest, the Council Committees, Commissions and Working Groups may take action against the person, including seeking the person's resignation from Council (Committees, Commissions and Working Groups as applicable).

Management and employees are not permitted to be involved in outside employment/business interests in actual, potential, or perceived conflict with the business of WSI, or which would or might impede the satisfactory discharge of their duties as WSI employees. Where an actual, potential, or perceived conflict arises, the relevant person should furnish a written statement of interest to the Council Committees, Commissions and Working Groups Secretary outlining the conflict as soon as possible. This should include details of whether he/she, or a "connected person" has a material interest in the matter at hand. The Council Committees, Commissions and Working Groups Secretary will then record this in the confidential Conflicts Register and, in consultation with the CEO, advise as to whether further action is required.

Council members, commission members, committee members, working groups and members and employees should:

• avoid giving or receiving corporate gifts, hospitality, preferential treatment, or benefits which might affect or appear to affect the ability of the donor or the recipient to make independent judgements on WSI-related business transactions.

• commit to compete vigorously and energetically, but also ethically and honestly.

• ensure that the conduct of purchasing activities of goods/services are conducted in accordance with best business practice.

• ensure a culture of claiming expenses only as appropriate to business needs and in accordance with good practice in the public sector, adhering to the current WSI T&S Policies and Procedures.

• ensure that the financial statements and reports accurately reflect business performance and are not misleading or designed to be misleading.

• never use WSI resources, property or time for personal gain or for the benefit of persons/organisations unconnected with WSI or its activities

• commit not to acquire information or business secrets by improper means.

Information

Council members, commission members, committee members, working groups and members and employees should: Support the provision of access to general information relating to WSI's activities in a way that is open and enhances its accountability to the general public. Respect the confidentiality of sensitive information held by WSI, including but not limited to commercially sensitive information.

Personal data

Special care should be taken to ensure confidentiality in relation to the personal data of children is maintained.

Information received in confidence

Observe appropriate prior consultation procedures with third parties where, exceptionally, it is proposed to release sensitive information in the public interest. Comply with relevant statutory provisions, including but not limited to legislation related to health & safety, freedom of information and data protection.

Obligations

Council members, commission members, committee members, working groups and members and employees should:

• fulfil all regulatory and statutory obligations. If a Council member finds evidence that there is non-compliance with any statutory obligations that apply to WSI, he/she should immediately bring this to the attention of their fellow Council members, with a view to having the matter rectified.

• comply with detailed tendering and purchasing procedures, as well as complying with prescribed levels of authority for sanctioning any relevant expenditure; and

• ensure that there are adequate controls in place to prevent fraud, including controls to ensure compliance with prescribed procedures in relation to claiming of expenses for business travel.

Council members and Council committee members should:

• use their reasonable endeavours to ensure that they can have 100% attendance at Council Committees, Commissions and Working Groups.

• conform with the procedures laid down by the Council herein in relation to conflict-of-interest situations, including regarding acceptance of positions following employment and/or engagement by WSI that may give rise to the potential for conflicts of interest and to confidentiality concerns.

• acknowledge the duty of all to conform to the highest standards of business ethics.

Confidentiality

Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups members should ensure that:

• they maintain confidentiality of all information obtained by virtue of their position on the Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups.

• there is no disclosure of privileged or confidential information when such membership ceases. In addition, Council members should ensure that acceptance of further employment, where the potential for conflict arises, should be avoided during a reasonable time period after the Council membership ceases. Any issues or clarifications, arising from this, should be addressed to the Council Secretary; and

• they do not retain any documentation obtained during their term as a Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups member and should return such documentation to the Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups Secretary, or otherwise indicate to the Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups Secretary, that all such documentation has been disposed of in an appropriate manner.

Loyalty

Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups members, members and employees should be loyal to WSI and fully committed to its objectives.

Fairness

Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups members, members and employees should:

• ensure compliance with employment equality and equal status legislation.

• commit to fairness in all business dealings; and

• ensure compliance with WSI's Customer Charter.

Work/External Environment

Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups members, members and employees should:

• place highest priority on promoting and preserving the health and safety of employees/members.

• Minimise any detrimental impact of operations on the environment.

Responsibility

It is not possible for a set of rules or guidelines to provide for all situations that may arise. Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups members, members, and employees of WSI should take responsibility to ensure that all of their activities, whether covered specifically or otherwise in this Code, are governed by the ethical considerations implicit in these procedures.
The Council Secretary will ensure that copies of this Code are circulated to all Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups members.
The CEO will ensure that copies of this Code are circulated to all employees.
The Water Safety Area Chair will ensure that copies of this Code are circulated to all WSAC members.
All recipients of this Code must complete the Declaration of Understanding as set out in Appendix 1

and return the completed declaration to the Council Secretary, as appropriate. Each Council member is considered to hold a "Designated Council Membership" under the Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 and Standards in Public Office Act 2001 (SIPO). In addition, the CEO is considered to hold a "Designated Position of Employment" under SIPO. Procedures for disclosure of interests by such individuals under SIPO are summarised in Appendix 2. Any Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups member, or employee who is in doubt as to the application to him/her of this Code or requires guidance on any matter relating to this Code should seek clarification, from the Council Secretary or the CEO, as appropriate. This Code should be read in conjunction with the Civil Service Code of Standards and Behaviour and WSI's Employee Guidelines, both of which apply to all employees.

In addition, All WSI members should familiarise themselves with the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children Involved in Water Safety Activities and with the **Water Safety Ireland** Code of Conduct and follow the procedures if they suspect or receive complaints of abuse of any sort.

All WSI members should: -

- Be positive during session, praise and encourage effort as well as results.
- Plan and prepare appropriately.
- Put the welfare of young persons first.
- Encourage fair play, treat participants equally.
- Recognise developmental needs.
- Be qualified and up to date with knowledge and skills of sport for instruction and examination.
- Involve parents where possible and inform parents when problems arise.
- Keep records of class attendance and training.
- Keep a brief record of injury(s) and action taken.
- Keep a brief record of problem/action/outcomes if behavioral problems arise.

Where possible All WSI members should avoid: -

- Spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others.
- Taking sessions alone.

WSI members 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 in 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 adults.
- Take children to their home.
- Take children alone in their car.

Water Safety Ireland Members and Volunteers Charter

At the heart of our policies is the 'Volunteer Charter', which is a statement of responsibilities and expectations for both the organisation and the volunteers. This commitment is meant to ensure a respectful and mutually beneficial relationship between volunteer and organisation. We ask volunteers to sign this when they come on board with Water Safety Ireland.

Volunteer's Rights

A volunteer shall have the right:

To know if how they are being selected as a volunteer.

To be offered a volunteer induction and the opportunity for ongoing training.

To be given meaningful and rewarding tasks that matches their interests and skill set.

To know what is expected of them and have a clear understanding of their role and assigned tasks.

To refuse any task that would go against their beliefs and or convictions.

To be assured that any personal data collected from the volunteer will be handled in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

To be valued, recognised and thanked for their time.

To receive ongoing support and feedback from a designated supervisor/ mentor.

To know the point of contact if there is a concern and to be aware of how it will be handled.

To be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses incurred when volunteering in accordance with WSI's Travel and Subsistence Policy. To make mistakes and to learn from them.

be made aware of any disciplinary and grievance procedures that affect them.

To be treated fairly and respectfully and not be subject to discrimination, bullying or exclusion.

to be provided with a Appropriate equipment and conditions while engaged in WSI activities.

To be informed of relevant or necessary organisational updates or changes.

The opportunity to play an active part in the organisation.

The right to attend Area Committees AGM. AGM voting rights (17 Yrs)

The right to participate and or give time freely when available and withdraw from activities

without guilt.

VOLUNTEERS' RESPONSIBILITES

To follow, comply and engage with all policies and procurers as set by WSI.

To respect the values, aims and integrity of the organisation.

To adhere to the rules of law and non-discrimination.

To comply without exception, with WSI Code of Conduct for members.

To successfully complete and renew Garda Vetting

To complete and renew TUSLA and WSI "children first" safeguarding training and certification.

To adhere to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) when encountering any personal data.

To be committed and carry out duties assigned to them. Within reason.

To be reliable, punctual and give the organisation sufficient notice if they are unable to attend an assigned course or event.

To represent the organisation in an appropriate and professional manner at all times.

To cooperate with other volunteers in a respectful manner.

To refrain from consuming prohibited drugs and alcohol while carrying out assigned tasks for WSI.

To attend essential training, CPDs and support sessions, necessary for any assigned role.

To ask questions when there is uncertainty. To undertake the activities to a high standard.

To keep activities safe and in line with standards set in Water Safety Ireland syllabus.

To be honest and inform appropriate design persons contact of issues, including any serious incidents or potential dangers.

To respect confidentiality.

To step back from activities when requested or no longer enjoying the experience.

Organisation's Responsibilities

Water Safety Ireland commits itself:

To ensure the volunteering experience is a rewarding.

To listen to volunteer needs and try to find the right fit for their interests and skill set

To ensure inclusion, accessibility and equal opportunity.

To identify any barriers to volunteering and develop a strategy to retain diverse groups.

To ensure support and reasonable accommodation is in place for any potential volunteer with additional needs. To define clear, meaningful roles for volunteers.

To provide policies and procedures for volunteers that are relevant, including induction guidance and training. To handle any personal data collected from volunteers in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

To ensure that all volunteers who have direct contact with children or vulnerable adults are Garda Vetted and comply with WSI's Safeguarding requirements and training.

To comply with and be familiar with any legal requirements regarding volunteering.

To provide all necessary information to volunteers.

To be available for volunteers.

To provide training where necessary for assigned roles

To value and thank volunteers.

To inform volunteers of any legal liabilities and obligations that they may have when volunteering for WSI.

To supervise and provide ongoing support for volunteers.

To reimburse out of pocket expenses in accordance with WSI's Travel and Subsistence Policy.

To not utilise volunteers in place of paid staff.

To provide flexibility when possible.

To encourage volunteers to contribute to the development of volunteering policies and procedures.

To understand that volunteering is the individual's choice and not attempt to influence or coerce them to continue or take part if unable too.

Organisation's Rights

Water Safety Ireland has the right:

To look for certain qualities and skills in volunteers.

To select only volunteers who are suitable for the task

To request that tasks are performed in a specific way.

To ask for commitment, reliability and punctuality.

To deal with disciplinary and grievance matters.

To enforce Rules and Regulations and or Code of Conduct when necessary/ needed

To revoke membership where a breach of rules or code of conduct has occurred, or any action that brings the organisation into disrepute.

Guiding Principles for WSI Activities

The work of Water Safety Ireland is based on the following principles that will guide the development of young persons in this organisation.

Integrity in relationships

Adults interacting with young persons in lifesaving should do so with integrity and respect for the child. There is a danger that some contexts can be used to exploit or undermine children. All adult actions in WSI 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 WSI.

Quality atmosphere and ethos

Water Safety activities for young persons 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 competitive demands are placed on children too early, resulting in excessive levels of pressure on them and a consequential high level of dropout.

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 water safety 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 WSI Code of Ethics. All children's activities 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 persons, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. Members should aim to put the welfare of the child first. A child-centred approach will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.

Code of Conduct for Young Persons

Water Safety Ireland wishes to provide the best possible environment for all young persons involved in our activities. Young persons deserve to be given enjoyable, safe opportunities, free of abuse of any kind. These participants have rights, which must be respected, and responsibilities that they must accept. Young persons should be encouraged to realise that they have responsibilities to treat other participants and WSI personnel with fairness and respect.

Young participants are entitled to: -

- Be safe and to feel safe
- Be listened to
- Be believed
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- Have a voice in the club/organisation
- Participate on an equal basis
- Have fun and enjoy sport
- Experience competition at a level at which they feel comfortable
- Make complaints and have them dealt with
- Get help against bullies
- Say No
- Protection for their own bodies
- Confidentiality

Young participants should always: -

- Treat WSI personnel with respect –trainee instructors, instructors, teachers and examiners.
- Play fairly at all times, do their best
- Respect team members, even when things go wrong
- Respect opponents, be gracious in defeat
- Abide by the rules set down by team managers when travelling to away events.
- Behave in a manner that avoids bringing the sport of lifesaving into disrepute
- Talk to children's officer if they have any problems – deck manager, designated liaison person.

Young participants should never: -

- Cheat
- Use violence or physical contact that is not allowed within the rules
- Shout or argue with officials, teammates or opponents
- Harm team members, opponents or their property
- Bully or use bullying tactics to isolate another player
- Use unfair or bullying tactics to gain advantage
- Take banned substances
- Keep secrets, especially if they have been caused harm
- Tell lies about adults/young persons
- Spread rumours

Guidelines for Parents

Water Safety Ireland expects that parents should: -

- Be a role model for your child and maintain the highest standards of conduct when interacting with children, other parents, with officials and organisers.
- Always behave responsibly and do not seek to unfairly affect the performance of others.
- 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 your child. Do not publicly question the judgement or honesty of referees, coaches or organisers. Respect all WSI personnel.
- Encourage your child to play by the rules. Teach your child that honest endeavour is as important as winning and do all you can to encourage good sportsmanship.
- Set a good example by applauding good play on both sides. Encourage mutual respect for teammates and opponents in lifesaving sport competitions.
- Parents should not engage in exclusion behaviours, such as gossip and spreading of rumours.
- Parents should support all efforts to remove abusive behaviour and bullying behaviour in all its forms and adhere to the anti-bullying policy contained in these guidelines.

Parents' Code of Conduct

1. I will respect the rules and procedures set down in **Water Safety Ireland** Code of Ethics.
2. I will respect my child's teammates, leaders, coaches, officials, as well as competitors, parents and coaches from opposing teams and referees/judges in lifesaving sport competition. I will encourage my child to treat other participants, coaches, selectors, managers, and referees/judges with respect.

3. I will give encouragement and applaud only positive accomplishments whether from my child, his/her teammates, their opponents, or the officials in lifesaving sport.

4. I will respect my child and support their efforts.

5. I will respect the officials and their authority during sessions and events.

6. I will never demonstrate threatening or abusive behaviour, exclusion, or use foul language.

Name: _____

Name of Child(ren) _____

_____

_____

_____

Date _____ _____

For more information on Guidelines for Parents see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children Involved in Water Safety Activities

Guidelines for WSI Members involved in Lifesaving Sport

WSI members should strive to create a positive environment for the children in their care. They have an overall responsibility to take the necessary steps to ensure that positive and healthy experiences are provided.

Water Safety Ireland recognises the key role leaders – coaches, selectors and team managers, etc. – play in the lives of children in sport. These roles include:

1. All WSI members should have as their first priority the children's safety and enjoyment of the sport and

should adhere to the guidelines and regulations set out in the club's Code of Ethics.

2. All WSI members must respect the rights, dignity and worth of every child and must treat everyone equally, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ability.

3. All WSI members working with young persons in water safety should be suitable and appropriately qualified. All WSI personnel will be expected to go through appropriate recruitment and selection procedures that apply to all persons with substantial access to young persons, whether paid or unpaid. References will be needed and will be followed up.

4. There will be a 'sign-up' procedure, whereby the appointed/reappointed leaders agree to abide by the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Sport and to the policies and code of the club/organisation.

5. All WSI members will be given a copy of the club/organisation's code of ethics, and they should be made aware of the procedures contained within the club/organisation's code.

6. Once appointed all WSI personnel must act as a role model and promote the positive aspects of sport and of Water Safety Ireland and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct.

7. The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco must be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity.

8. Remember your behaviour to others will have an effect on the children in your care.

9. Be generous with praise and never ridicule or shout at participants for making mistakes. All participants are entitled to respect.

10. Be careful to avoid the "star system". Each child deserves equal time and attention.

11. 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.

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

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

14. Remember that young participants play for fun and enjoyment and that skill development and personal satisfaction have priority over highly structured competition. Never make winning the only objective.

15. Encourage the development of respect for all involved in water safety activities.

16. When travel/overnight travel is involved, the WSI members travelling with children must sign a separate agreement. Parents and participants will also be asked to sign permission forms in these instances.

17. Members are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with participants. WSI personnel should not involve young participants in their personal life, and visits to homes or overnight stays are not acceptable.

18. Avoid working alone and ensure there is adequate supervision for all activities.

19. It is important to realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted by the participant or by onlookers.

20. When young participants are invited into adult groups, it is recommended to get agreement from a parent/carer. Boundaries of behaviour in adult groups are normally different from the boundaries that apply to junior groups.

21. All WSI members who become aware of a conflict between their obligation to their participants and their obligation to the organisation must make explicit the nature of the conflict and the loyalties and responsibilities involved, to all parties concerned.

22. All WSI members should communicate and co-operate with medical and ancillary practitioners in the diagnosis, treatment and management of their participants' medical or related problems. Avoid giving advice of a personal or medical nature if you are not qualified to do so. 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.

23. The nature of the relationship between members and a participant can often mean that an WSI member will learn confidential information about a participant or participant'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 participant/family.

24. Set realistic goals and do not push young participants. Create a safe and enjoyable environment.

25. Do not criticise other WSI members. You are the role model for the children in your care.

26. All WSI members should avoid the inappropriate use of alcohol, before coaching and during events.

Recruitment and Selection Policy

Water Safety Ireland will take reasonable steps, including the measures set out at 1-7 hereunder, to ensure that persons working with young persons are suitable and appropriately qualified. Recruitment and selection procedures

are therefore necessary, and these procedures apply to all persons with substantial access to young persons, whether paid or unpaid.

1. All adults taking responsibility for children in water safety activities should undergo a recruitment process. The responsibilities of the role and the level of experience/qualifications required should be drawn up and clearly stated beforehand.

2. Volunteers should fill in an application form – see sample – giving the names of at least two referees that can be contacted.

3. There should be an interview, which may be conducted informally.

4. Consent for Garda Vetting will be sought for all members. No person deemed to constitute a risk will be admitted. Some of the exclusions to being admitted but not limited to would include:
    - Any child offence related conviction.
    - Insufficient documentary evidence of identification.
    - Concealing information on one's suitability to working with children.

5. A probationary period should always apply and be agreed upon before commencement.

6. There will be an enrolment procedure, whereby the newly recruited volunteers agree to abide by the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Water Safety Activities and to WSI's Code of Conduct and all other policies.

7. Every effort should be made to manage and support appointed members. Adequate supervision should always be provided; a member should not have to work alone.

8. A decision to accept a member is the responsibility of the organisation and not of any one individual within it. The organisation's committee should ratify all recommendations for appointment.

For more information on Recruitment and Selection Policies see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children Involved in Water Safety Activities

Anti-Bullying Policy

What is Bullying?

Bullying can be repeated in appropriate behaviour, direct or indirect whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly in social environments such as schools, clubs and other organisations working with children and young persons. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion by one or more children against a victim. It is behaviour that could be reasonably regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to someone's dignity, but, as a once off incident, is not considered to be bullying.

How would you know if a child is being bullied?

All bullies operate using furtiveness, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so. The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied: -

- Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities.
- Physical signs – unexplained bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings.
- Stress-caused illness – headaches, and stomach aches which seem unexplained.
- Fearful behaviour – fear of walking to a meeting, going different routes, asking to be driven.
- Frequent loss of, or shortage of, money with vague explanations.
- Having few friends.
- Changes in behaviour –withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed.
- Not eating.
- Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide.
- Self- harming
- Anxiety – shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics.

But remember there may be other possible reasons for many of the above.

Who should deal with bullying?

While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reported to the health board and An Gárda Síochana, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of the senior personnel within this organisation. Within each Health Services Executive area, there is a duty social worker available at all times who also will give appropriate advice if required. This advice is available on a 'hypothetical scenario' basis if necessary.

How can it be prevented?

- Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.
- 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 persons, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a 'shared concern' of the group, (see below).
- Reinforce that there is 'a permission to tell' culture rather than a 'might is right'.
- Encourage young persons to negotiate, co-operate and help others, particularly new or children who may be perceived by their peers as 'different'.
- 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.

The 'No Blame' Approach

Step 1 – Interview with the alleged victim, to be conducted by the Designated Liaison Person

If you find that there has been an incident of bullying, first talk to the victim. At this stage find out who was involved and what the victim is now feeling. Try asking the following questions:

- Was it verbal or physical intimidation?
- How hurt is the victim?
- Was it within his/her own peer group?
- Assure the victim that his/her name will not come out in the investigation.
- Actively listen.

Step 2 – Meet with all involved

Arrange to meet with all those involved; this should include some bystanders, those who may have colluded, those who joined in and those who initiated the bullying.

- Have a maximum of six to eight in the group – keep the number controllable
- Make a point of calling a 'special' meeting
- Ensure the severity of the topic is understood by all
- Speak only of the hurt caused in general terms with no reference to the victim
- Play on the conscience of all – ask questions like: How would you feel? Would you like it done to you?

Step 3 – Explain the problem

The distress being suffered as a result of the bullying incident is explained. At this stage the details of the incident or the allocation of the blame is not discussed. Explain the feelings of loneliness, feeling left out, rejected, laughed at. Try asking questions:

- Would they like it if it happened to them?
- "Someone here in this group was bullied by someone within the group, what could we do to see it does not happen again?"
- Listen, watch out for reactions, and pick up on any without isolating anyone.

Step 4 – Share the responsibility

Explain what steps / controls may have to be introduced to prevent further incidents and how everyone will lose out as a result.

Step 5 – Ask the group for their ideas

At this stage the group is encouraged to suggest ways that would make the victim feel happier. All positive responses are noted. Use phrases “if it were you” to encourage a response. Listen to all suggestions and note them.

Step 6 – Leave it to them

Now the problem has been identified, solutions suggested, the problem is now handed over to the group to solve. Arrange to meet again in a week’s time. Pass responsibility over to the group and give a time frame within which something must be done.

Step 7 – Meet them again

Each member of the group, including the bully, discuss how things are going, who is doing what and have there been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and also keeps all involved in the process.

Again enforce the idea of the ‘team’ looking after each other at regular intervals to ensure it is known that bullying or intimidating behaviour will not be tolerated.

For more information on Bullying see Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children Involved in Water Safety Activities, page 37 section 5.4

Disciplinary Complaints and Appeals Procedures
Any complaint that falls under the guidelines relating to Child Protection will be dealt with in accordance with the Problem Solving Policy that is detailed in the WSI Members Policies. (See pages 24-27). Any complaint or concern raised that is a violation or suspected violation of any law or regulation shall be immediately reported to the relevant authority. Current legislation shall supersede any and all WSI policies and procedures.

Guidelines on Supervision

Travelling with children for WSI purposes

There is extra responsibility taken on by WSI personnel when they travel with children to events. When travelling with young persons you should:

- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover while transporting others in your vehicle. (check with your own insurance company if you have questions)
- Not carry more than the permitted number of passengers.
- Ensure use of safety belts.
- Avoid being alone with one participant, put passenger in the back seat, drop off at central locations or seek parental permission to transport an individual participant on a regular basis and clearly state times of pick-up and drop off.
- Maintain a current list of parents' or guardians' contact information and give them your contact details.

Supervision

Make sure there is an adequate adult: child ratio. This 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 and will change depending on the circumstances, e.g. participants with special needs or away trips.

- Where there are mixed groups there should be supervisors 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.
- All due and possible regard should be had to the policies of the owners and operators of the pool or other facility.
- As far as possible, parents to take responsibility and supervise in pairs of appropriate gender.
- Members should not have to enter the changing rooms unless children are very young or need special assistance, and then supervision should be in pairs of appropriate gender.
- Clearly state time for start and end of classes or competitions.
- Members should remain in pairs until all participants have been collected.

- Keep attendance records and records of any incidents / injuries that arise.

- Welcome and encourage parents to stay and watch sessions, (for safety and supervision, not necessarily for their 'technical' expertise).

Away trips/Overnight stays

Separate permission forms should be signed by parents and participants, containing an emergency contact number to which there will be a person responding – this includes maintaining mobile telephones in credit, maintaining mobile telephones 'on' and fully charged, avoiding long blocking conversations on the emergency telephone and not utilising any call diversion system.

- Young participants should sign a detailed behaviour agreement, as set by WSI.

- Appoint a member as manager who will make a report on returning home.

- A meeting with parents and participants is useful to communicate travel times, competition details, other activities, gear requirements, medical requirements, special dietary needs and any other necessary details.

- Rooming arrangements – adults should not share rooms with children, children share rooms with those of same age and gender and adults should knock before entering rooms, and refrain from entering for a reasonable period if it appears to be inappropriate to do so.

- Any group socialisation should take place in communal areas (i.e. no boys in girls' rooms and vice-versa) as may be defined by the team officials.

- Alcoholic drink, smoking, unlawful or illegal substances are forbidden to children.

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

- Lights out times should be enforced.

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

Safety

Water Safety Ireland has a safety statement as required by law, which includes specific and potential risks attached to swimming and lifesaving. WSI has procedures in place for safeguarding against such risks. In addition, all WSAC's should:

- Ensure activities are suitable for age and stage of development of participants.

- Keep a record of any specific medical conditions of the participants.

- Keep a record of emergency contact numbers for parents/guardians.
- Ensure any necessary protective equipment is used.
- Ensure First Aid kit is close at hand with access to qualified first aiders and check/maintain/restock the kit regularly.
- Know the contact numbers of emergency services.
- Ensure easy access to medical personnel if needed and have an emergency plan.
- If an incident occurs, make a brief record of injury and action taken. Make a brief record of the problem/action/outcome. Contact the participants parents and keep them informed of all details.
- Participants should know and keep the rules, keeping in mind that many rules are there for safety.
- Members should hold appropriate qualifications required by the relevant governing body.
- Ensure there is adequate insurance cover for all activities.
- Ensure parents/guardians are present at finishing time of sessions or events.

Touching

Some aspects of lifesaving classes require a 'hands on approach', especially in a teaching situation/scenario, e.g., it may be necessary to gives demonstrations as a child learns a new skill, but the following should be taken into consideration:

- Avoid unnecessary physical contact.
- Any necessary contact should be in response to the needs of the child and not the adult.
- Demonstrations should be done on another instructor or consenting adult rather than on a participant.
- It should be in an open environment with the permission and understanding of the participant.
- It should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the participant; for example, do not do something that a child can do for themselves.
- Never engage in inappropriate touching.

Use of Photographic and Filming Equipment Policy

Water Safety Ireland has adopted a policy in relation to the use of images of participants on their websites and in other publications, as there have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young persons through the use of photographs on sports websites and 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.

Rules to guide the use of photography:

- If the participant or group is named, you must NOT identify them when/if using their photograph.
- Ask for the participant's permission to use their image. This ensures that they're aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. A participant's permission form is one way of achieving this. (See Appendix for Permission form template).
- Ask for parental permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used. A parental permission form is one way of achieving this. A template of this form can be found in the appendix of this document.
- Only use images of participants in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child. When taking a posed photograph, children must not appear unless wearing a minimum of a team T shirt. (They must be covered).
- Create recognised procedures for reporting the use of inappropriate images to reduce the risks to participants. Follow the child protection procedures, ensuring either the designated person or, if necessary, the social services and/or gardaí are informed.

Amateur photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session must comply with the venue's photography policy. For outdoor events, photographers must follow all rules of law as well as these WSI rules.

Press

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 make themselves known to event organisers so that the organisers may then:

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour.

- Inform participants and parents that a photographer will be in attendance at an event and ensure they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs.

- Not allow unsupervised access to participants or one- to- one photo sessions at events.

- Not approve/allow photo sessions in private.

- Not allow camera phones in dressing rooms.

Using Video as coaching aid

Video footage can be used as a legitimate coaching aid. However, permission should first be obtained from the participant's parent/guardian.

Anyone concerned about any photography taking place at events or training sessions can contact the DLP and ask them to deal with the matter.

Child Welfare and Protection Procedures

Water Safety Ireland (WSI) is committed to a child-centred approach in its work with children and young persons. WSI recognises its duty of care to children availing of its services. WSI undertakes to provide a safe environment and experience where the welfare of the child/young person is paramount.

WSI has adopted these Guiding Principles, the Child Protection Procedure, and a Child Safeguarding Statement (Collectively referred to as "the Child Protection Policy") to underpin its commitment to the safety and welfare of children and young persons who engage with WSI and its services. This Child Protection Policy provides staff with the necessary information and guidance to be compliant with The Children's First Act 2015 ("The Act") and to protect children. This document has been aligned with the Children's First Act 2015 & Children First: National Guidance for The Protection and Welfare of Children (DYCA 2017). This policy also refers to the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996. Our guiding principles are also underpinned by the Child Care Act 1991, and Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998.

Water Safety Ireland accepts that organisations, which include young persons among its members, are vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. Below are the procedures for dealing with any welfare or protection issue that may arise. Child welfare and the protection of young persons is the concern of all adults at all times, irrespective of their role within the organisation.

If there are grounds for concern, please see WSI Code of Ethics and Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children Involved in Water Safety Activities about the safety or welfare of a young person, and how you should react to the concern. Persons unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive and therefore reportable should contact TUSLA 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 at the class but should be passed on to the Designated Liaison Person who may in turn have to pass the concern to the local Statutory Authorities. It is not the responsibility of anyone working within Water Safety Ireland, in a paid or voluntary capacity, or those working in affiliated organisations, to take responsibility or decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. That is the job of the local statutory authorities. However, there is a responsibility to protect children by assisting the appropriate agencies so that they can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the young person.

Everyone should follow both procedures outlined in the *WSI Ethics and Code of Practice for Children.*

Allegations Against Water Safety Ireland Members:

Water Safety Ireland has agreed procedures to be followed in cases of alleged child abuse against its members. If such an allegation is made against a member working within the organisation the reporting procedure in respect of suspected child abuse should be followed.

The issue of confidentiality is important. Information is on a need to know basis and the member should be treated with respect and fairness.

The Reporting Procedure

If the designated person has reasonable grounds for concern the matter should be reported to the local statutory authorities/social services, following the standard reporting procedure as outlined in this document.

Key Roles in safeguarding

The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility. There are a number of key roles within the WSI who support safeguarding of children.

Development of Guiding Principles and Child Safeguarding Procedures

The Chief Executive Officer of WSI is responsible for leading the development of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and for ensuring that policies and procedures are consistent with best practice.

Designated Liaison Persons

The Designated Liaison Persons will liaise with statutory agencies responsible for child protection and welfare and will be the resource person to any person engaged by/with WSI and any member of staff who has child protection concerns. Each Water Safety Area Committee will have a Designated Liaison Person, and they are all supported by the National Designated Liaison Person.

In the event that a Designated Liaison Person cannot be contacted or is unavailable, the Deputy Designated Liaison Person should be contacted.

Location	Name	Contact Number	Designated Responsibility	E Mail
Nation wide	Ashling Nesbitt	086 2601264	Designated Liaison Person	NationalDLP@WaterSafety.ie
			Deputy Designated Liaison	

Guidelines for Water Safety Ireland Members Regarding Child Abuse

Purpose of Guidelines

These guidelines are for use by all members of the Water Safety Ireland in their dealings with the public. The purpose of the guidelines is to:

- Provide members with basic information on the nature of child abuse
- Inform members on the procedures they should follow if they are informed a case of child abuse is occurring or they themselves are suspicious that it is occurring
- Raise members' awareness of the necessity for good practice so as to help to ensure the protection of young persons from abuse and the protection of members against false accusations of abuse.

Identifying reasonable grounds for concern

There are many reasons a member of staff/volunteer/member may be concerned about the welfare or protection of a child or young person. *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* states that "Tusla should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected".

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children lists the following as reasonable grounds for concern:

- A child or young person saying or indicating by other means that they have been abused.
- An account by a person who saw the child/young person being abused.
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour, which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in any other way.
- A concern about possible sexual abuse

- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed.

Wherever appropriate, any issues should be checked with the parent/guardians/primary carers when considering whether a concern exists, unless doing so may further endanger the child or person considering making the report (consult with DLP or Deputy DLP).

Abuse is not always committed through personal contact with a child or young person, sometimes it is perpetrated through social media or the use of information and communication technology.

The Nature of Child Abuse

- Child abuse occurs when a child is ill-treated in some manner and requires protection/intervention.
- Child abuse is the abuse of power over a young person by an adult or another in a way which disadvantages the young person and to which they cannot give informed consent.
- Child abuse can be categorised into four different types**:**
    - Neglect
    - Emotional Abuse
    - Physical Abuse
    - Sexual Abuse
- A child may be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any given time.

Definitions

The National Guidelines have adopted the following definitions of child abuse.

Neglect

Children First states that child neglect, is the most common category of abuse and, can be the most harmful. A distinction can be made between 'wilful' neglect and 'circumstantial' neglect. Not only does neglect generally last throughout a childhood, it also has long-term consequences into adult life.

Harm is defined as the ill treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is *significant* is determined by their health and development as to that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.

Emotional neglect and Abuse

Emotional neglect and abuse is found typically in a home lacking in emotional warmth. It is not

necessarily associated with physical deprivation. The emotional needs of the child are not met; the parent's relationship to the child may be without empathy and devoid of emotional responsiveness. Emotional neglect and abuse occurs when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional neglect and abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily observable e.g. lack of comfort, love, attachment, proper recreational stimulation or rejection, **typical** of the relationship.

Physical Abuse

Unsatisfactory explanations, varying explanations, frequency and clustering for the following events are high indices for concern regarding physical abuse: bruises, fractures, swollen joints, burns, scalds, lacerations, poisonings, coma or death.

Sexual Abuse

Child sexual abuse often covers a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and usually occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family e.g. non-contact sexual abuse, sexual contact, oral-genital sexual abuse, inter-femoral sexual abuse, penetrative or sexual exploitation.

Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse

Child neglect or abuse can often be difficult to identify and may present in many forms. No one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse. It may indicate conditions other than child abuse. All signs and symptoms must be examined in the context of the child's situation and family circumstances. The ability to recognise child abuse can depend as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on their knowledge and information.

Further information regarding the definitions of child abuse is located at Appendix 4.

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

Report the matter as soon as possible to the Designated Liaison Person with responsibility for reporting abuse. If the Designated Person has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse they will make a report to the health board/social services who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse

(b) In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Designated Person is unable to contact a duty social worker, the police authorities

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

(c) If the Designated Person is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist, they can informally consult with the local health board/social services. They will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

A Designated Person 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.

Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998

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 Board or the Gardaí (See 5.13.1 – ISC Code). 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 Boards or any member of An Garda Síochána;

2. The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including, dismissal. A person shall not be liable in damages in respect of the communication, whether in writing or otherwise, by him or her to an appropriate person of his or her opinion that

   (a) a child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or
   (b) a child's health, development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or neglected, unless it is proved that they have not acted reasonably and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person

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.

The Procedures

If there is indisputable evidence that an individual has abused a child the matter must be reported directly, and immediately, to the Gardaí.

1. If a member of Water Safety Ireland, receives an allegation, or has a suspicion, that a child is being abused by member of the class, Water Safety Ireland personnel or family member, the instructor or trainee instructor should, in the first instance, report the matter to another senior colleague. In this instance the report will be verbal.

2. If the instructor and senior colleague are satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for the suspicion they should advise Designated Liaison Person. In future a D.L.P. should be an officer of the WSAC.

3. It is important that the suspicions or allegations be recorded carefully by the D.L.P.

4. This type of discussion would most likely happen in cases where no specific allegation of child abuse has been made but the concern is based on emotional, behavioural and/or physical indications of a particular child.

5. In cases where an allegation has been made the matter has to be reported immediately to the relevant authorities i.e. the designated officer of the Health Board or An Garda Síochána.

6. It is essential that at all times, the matter be treated in the strictest confidence and not discussed except among the parties mentioned above.

7. It is not the responsibility of anyone mentioned in No. 2 above to make enquiries of parents and in some cases it could be counter-productive to do so. The role of personnel mentioned in No.2 above is limited and does not include taking over the role of the Health Board.

8. The Chief Executive of Water Safety Ireland should be informed and briefed by the members of the WSAC and consulted at all times.

9. Suspension should not be the responsibility of a single person; rather an emergency meeting of the officers of the WSAC should be convened to suspend the individual.
10. In the case of a suspension, the officers of the WSAC should formally notify the person being suspended, in writing.

11. The person against whom allegations have been made should, in the same letter, be invited to meet the officers of the WSAC as soon as possible. The timing of this

discussion may be a matter to be decided upon in consultation with the Statutory Authorities.

12. The person against whom the allegation has been made should be informed that this is not an accusation, and the procedures being undertaken are in accordance with statutory guidelines. The person should be assured that within the organisation all information will be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

13. The person should be made aware generally of the nature of any allegation made against them and of any allegation being made known to the Statutory Authorities.

14. The person should be afforded the opportunity to present a formal response to the allegations to senior personnel in the organisation and the response should be reported to the Health Board if the person so desires.

15. In the case of an allegation of child sexual abuse, in the interest of confidentiality and child protection, it will be necessary to withhold the name of the child and precise details of the allegation.

From this point on, only the Statutory Authorities should deal with the matter

Immediate Response to a Child Disclosing Abuse

When a young person discloses information of suspected abuse you should:

(a) be honest with the child and tell them that it is not possible to keep information a secret

(b) deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened

(c) stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the child is saying seriously

(d) understand that the child has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation

(e) make no judgmental statements against the person whom the allegation is made

(f) not question the child unless the nature of what they are saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should

be used such as “Can you explain to me what you mean by that”

(g) check out the concerns with the parents/guardians before making a report unless during so would endanger the child

(h) give the child some indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents/guardians, health board or social services. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.

(i) carefully record the details

(j) pass on this information to the Designated Liaison Person

(k) reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you

Common Difficulties in dealing with child abuse

Dealing with child abuse is rarely straightforward. Many complications can arise including the following:

- Disclosure is made then withdrawn
- A disclosure is made, and secrecy is expected
- A young person may threaten suicide if the report is to be passed on
- The young person will often seek to protect their abuser

Despite these and other complications that may arise, the member should always follow the procedures and the following code of good practice.

Code of Good Practice for Water Safety Ireland Members

- Maintain the highest standard of personal behaviour.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being.
- Be responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with participants.
- Realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted by the participant or others.

- Another instructor or adult should be involved in any demonstrations that require physical contact.
- Members should never allow themselves to be in a one to one situation with a participant nor should a member run a class on their own.
- Ideally male and female members should be present at classes.
- Members should be discouraged from being alone in their cars with participants.

In the case of overnight stays:

- Written permission should always be received from parents/guardians.
- Adults should not share rooms with children.
- Prescribed adult: child ratios should be observed
- Members are in loco parentis and supervision of the participants is vitally important.
- Procedures outlined earlier in this document should be strictly adhered to.

Designated Liaison Person

1: Functions:

- To promote awareness of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice within the organisation and particularly among the young persons involved. This would be best done by the production of information leaflets etc. and by the facilitation of regular information meetings.
- To influence the policy and practice within the organisation to ensure that all policies and decisions take account of the young person's needs.
- To facilitate communication within the organisation.
- To provide an accessible resource for young persons to express their concerns, views or worries regarding their involvement in the organisation.
- To act as an advisory resource to the adults involved in the organisation on child protection issues ensuring that statutory guidelines and procedures are followed.
- To communicate to members the Procedures for Reports or Accusations of Child Abuse drawn up by the organisation.
- To accurately, and immediately, complete the appropriate DLP form recording the report or suspicion following the reporting of same to him/her and as soon as is practicable notify the officers of the WSAC and the CEO.
- To attend the meeting of the officers and make their report.
- To be confidential regarding any reports received and to discuss the matter with no one apart from those laid down in the procedures.
- To be a member of the committee.
- To return the Designated Liaison Person's Book to headquarters if there is a change of personnel in the D.L.P. position. This occurs when there are entries in the book.

2. Training

The Designated Liaison Person should receive training in the following areas:

- The Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children Involved in Water Safety Activities
- Child protection procedures.
- Basic understanding of children's development.
- Communicating effectively with children and young persons.
- Being accessible to, and approachable by, children.

This training should be available to the person through relevant agencies ensuring quality input and a measure of effectiveness. This training should involve an assessment and evaluative component ensuring that only those suitable to be Children's Liaison Officers would be asked to undertake this function.

WSI has in place a National Designated Liaison Person who is available to all other DLP's for consultation, direction, and training.

Confidentiality Policy

Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all issues and persons 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.
- All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know.
- Information should be conveyed to the parents / guardians of the child ina 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, their parents/guardians, the alleged offender, their family, Water Safety Ireland members) 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 persons.
- The requirements of the Data Protection laws should be adhered to.
- Breach of confidentiality is a serious manner.

Anonymous Complaints

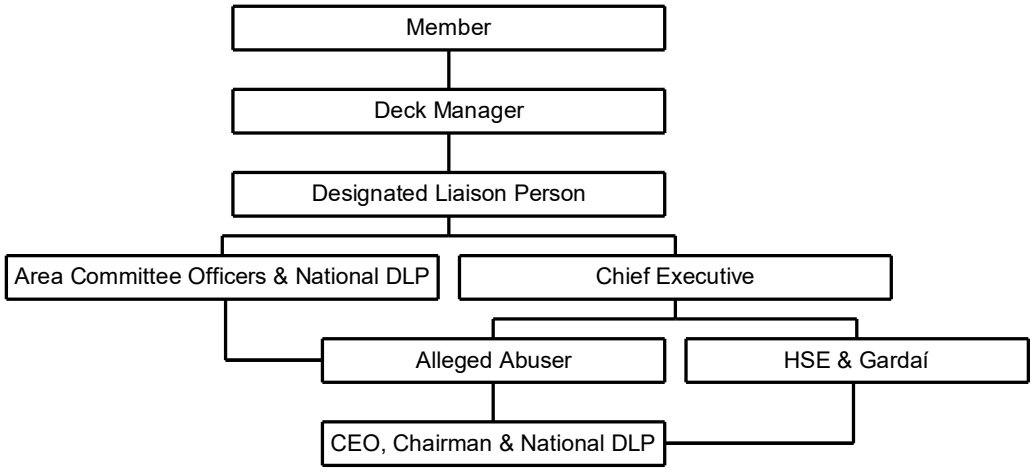
Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but should not be ignored. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child/children is paramount. Any such complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Designated Person. The information should be checked 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 Designated Person and checked out without delay.

Appendix 1: Reporting Chain

The Designated Liaison Person has no role in the investigation or validation of child protection concerns within the organisation and would have no counselling or therapeutic role.



Appendix 2: Permission Form Travelling with Underage Participants

To be retained by Area Committee

EVENT: _____

VENUE: _____

DATES: _____

Travelling Volunteer

I hereby agree to abide by the guidelines and regulations contained in the **Water Safety Ireland's** Code of Conduct

Name:_____ Role: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian of Participant

I have read and accept the conditions and rules set down by **Water Safety Ireland** for children travelling to competitions and events. I have been advised that the guidelines are available to me on www.WSI.ie .

Parent/Guardian:_____ Date: _____

Emergency Contact Number(s): _____

Young Participant

I have read and accept the conditions and rules set down by Water Safety Ireland for children travelling to competitions and events. I agree to abide by the Ethics and Code of Practice for Children as set out by Water Safety Ireland.

Name:_____ Date: _____

Appendix 3: Definitions of child abuse

(Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 pp7-11)

Child abuse can be categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time. Abuse and neglect can occur within the family, in the community or in an institutional setting. The abuser may be someone known to the child or a stranger and can be an adult or another child. In a situation where abuse is alleged to have been carried out by another child, you should consider it a child welfare and protection issue for both children and you should follow child protection procedures for both the victim and the alleged abuser.

The important factor in deciding whether the behaviour is abuse or neglect is the impact of that behaviour on the child rather than the intention of the parent/carer.

The definitions of neglect and abuse presented in this section are not legal definitions. They are intended to describe ways in which a child might experience abuse and how this abuse may be recognised.

Neglect

Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse, both in Ireland and internationally. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences.

Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety. Emotional neglect may also lead to the child having attachment difficulties. The extent of the damage to the child's health, development or welfare is influenced by a range of factors. These factors include the extent, if any, of positive influence in the child's life as well as the age of the child and the frequency and consistency of neglect.

Neglect is associated with poverty but not necessarily caused by it. It is strongly linked to parental substance misuse, domestic violence, and parental mental illness and disability.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when neglect becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer. This may become apparent where you see the child over a period of time, or the effects of neglect may be obvious based on having seen the child once.

The following are features of child neglect:

- Children being left alone without adequate care and supervision.
- Malnourishment, lacking food, unsuitable food or erratic feeding.
- Non-organic failure to thrive, i.e. a child not gaining weight due not only to malnutrition but also emotional deprivation.

- Failure to provide adequate care for the child's medical and developmental needs, including intellectual stimulation.
- Inadequate living conditions – unhygienic conditions, environmental issues, including lack of adequate heating and furniture.
- Lack of adequate clothing.
- Inattention to basic hygiene.
- Lack of protection and exposure to danger, including moral danger.
- or lack of supervision appropriate to the child's age.
- Persistent failure to attend school.
- Abandonment or desertion.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child.

Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse can also occur when adults responsible for taking care of children are unaware of and unable (for a range of reasons) to meet their children's emotional and developmental needs. Emotional abuse is not easy to recognise because the effects are not easily seen.

A reasonable concern for the child's welfare would exist when the behaviour becomes typical of the relationship between the child and the parent or carer.

Emotional abuse may be seen in some of the following ways:

- Rejection.
- Lack of comfort and love.
- Lack of attachment.
- Lack of proper stimulation (e.g. fun and play).
- Lack of continuity of care (e.g. frequent moves, particularly unplanned).
- Continuous lack of praise and encouragement.
- Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming of the child.
- Bullying.
- Conditional parenting in which care or affection of a child depends on
- his or her behaviours or actions.
- Extreme overprotectiveness.
- Inappropriate non-physical punishment (e.g. locking child in bedroom).
- Ongoing family conflicts and family violence.
- Seriously inappropriate expectations of a child relative to their age and stage of development.

There may be no physical signs of emotional abuse unless it occurs with another type of abuse. A child may show signs of emotional abuse through their actions or emotions in several ways. These include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, risk taking and aggressive behaviour.

It should be noted that no one indicator is conclusive evidence of emotional abuse. Emotional abuse is more likely to impact negatively on a child where it is persistent over time and where there is a lack of other protective factors.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/ or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Physical abuse can include the following:

- Physical punishment.
- Beating, slapping, hitting or kicking.
- Pushing, shaking or throwing.
- Pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling.
- Use of excessive force in handling.
- Deliberate poisoning.
- Suffocation.
- Fabricated/induced illness.
- Female genital mutilation.

The Children First Act 2015 includes a provision that abolishes the common law defence of reasonable chastisement in court proceedings. This defence could previously be invoked by a parent or other person in authority who physically disciplined a child. The change in the legislation now means that in prosecutions relating to assault or physical cruelty, a person who administers such punishment to a child cannot rely on the defence of reasonable chastisement in the legal proceedings. The result of this is that the protections in law relating to assault now apply to a child in the same way as they do to an adult.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts (masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex) or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography.

Child sexual abuse may cover a wide spectrum of abusive activities. It rarely involves just a single incident and in some instances occurs over a number of years. Child sexual abuse most commonly happens within the family, including older siblings and extended family members.

Cases of sexual abuse mainly come to light through disclosure by the child or his or her siblings/friends, from the suspicions of an adult, and/or by physical symptoms.

Examples of child sexual abuse include the following:

- Any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child.
- An invitation to sexual touching or intentional touching or molesting of a child's body whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification.
- Masturbation in the presence of a child or the involvement of a child in an act of masturbation.
- Sexual intercourse with a child, whether oral, vaginal or anal.
- Sexual exploitation of a child, which includes:
    - Inviting, inducing or coercing a child to engage in prostitution or the production of child pornography [for example, exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, videotape or

other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of an image by computer or other means].
    - Inviting, coercing or inducing a child to participate in, or to observe, any sexual, indecent or obscene act.
    - Showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse.
- Exposing a child to inappropriate or abusive material through information and communication technology.
- Consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person.

It should be remembered that sexual activity involving a young person may be sexual abuse even if the young person concerned does not themselves recognise it as abusive.

An Garda Síochána will deal with any criminal aspects of a sexual abuse case under the relevant criminal justice legislation. The prosecution of a sexual offence against a child will be considered within the wider objective of child welfare and protection. The safety of the child is paramount and at no stage should a child's safety be compromised because of concern for the integrity of a criminal investigation.

In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that in criminal law the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. Any sexual relationship where one or both parties are under the age of 17 is illegal. However, it may not necessarily be regarded as child sexual abuse. Details on exemptions for mandated reporting of certain cases of underage consensual sexual activity can be found in Chapter 3 of the Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

Appendix 4: Consent Form for Photography

Consent and Model Release Form

Event Name: _____

Required:

☐ I have read and understand Water Safety Ireland's Privacy Policy (found here: https://watersafety.ie/privacy-policy/) and how my image/my child's image and my data will be handled by WSI under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Please check one of the following below as appropriate:

☐I hereby give my consent for WSI to use my name, likeness, image, or videos of me, solely for the purposes of promoting water safety awareness. This may include usage in print and digital media, such as websites, social media, press releases, and promotional materials. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time by contacting the WSI Data Protection Officer.

Name : _____

Date: _____

Phone Number: _____

☐ I hereby give my consent for WSI to use my Child's name, likeness, image, or videos of me, solely for the purposes of promoting water safety awareness. This may include usage in print and digital media, such as websites, social media, press releases, and promotional materials. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time by contacting the WSI Data Protection Officer.

Child's Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Name : _____

Date: _____

Phone Number: _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____

Thank you!

Appendix 5: Code of Conduct Declaration

Declaration of Understanding

I have read and understood the Code of Business Conduct and agree to be bound by the principles set out in any dealing for or on behalf of Water Safety Ireland.

Name in block capitals: _____
Signature: _____
Date: _____

Members of the Council, Committees, Commissions and Working Groups should return the completed declaration to the Council Secretary.

Staff members should return the completed declaration to the CEO.

Volunteer members should return the completed declaration to the WSAC Chair