



## **Child Protection Policy**

This document has been drawn up by the Leinster Schools Chess Association. It is intended as a code of good practice. It cannot foresee every possible issue, and is a working document. If you have recommendations for improvement please email [info@leinsterschoolschess.com](mailto:info@leinsterschoolschess.com)

The LSCA strongly recommends every school to have their own child protection policy / code of good practice.

## **PRINCIPLES**

Children have a lot to gain from chess. Their natural sense of fun and spontaneity can blossom in a positive environment. Chess provides an excellent opportunity for children to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own unique potential. These benefits will increase through a positive and progressive approach that places the needs of the child first and winning and competition second.

### **NEEDS OF THE CHILD**

All children's chess experiences should be guided by what is best for children. This means that adults should have a basic understanding of the emotional, physical, and personal needs of young people.

### **INTEGRITY IN RELATIONSHIPS**

Adults interacting with children in chess (referred to as chess leaders in this code) are in a position of trust and influence. All adult actions in chess should be guided by what is best for the child and carried out in the context of respectful and transparent relationships. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind or threat of such abuse is totally unacceptable within chess, as in society in general.

### **FAIR PLAY**

All children's chess should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. Ireland 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 within the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just a way of behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of cheating, gamesmanship, doping, violence (both physical and verbal), exploitation, unequal opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption.

(European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics. Council of Europe, 1993)

### **COMPETITION**

A child centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place. A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to children's development while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. Through such competition, children learn respect for opponents, officials and rules of the sport.

Too often competitive demands are placed on children too early, which results in excessive levels of pressure on them. It should always be kept in mind that the welfare of children comes first and competitive standards come second.

## **EQUALITY**

All children should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner, regardless of ability, age, sex, religion, or social and ethnic background. Children, irrespective of ability or disability should be involved in chess activities in an integrated and inclusive way.

## **PEOPLE**

Everyone involved in chess i.e. children, parents / guardians, and chess leaders should accept the role and responsibilities that they undertake in their commitment to maintaining an enjoyable and safe environment.

## **ADULTS INVOLVED IN CHESS**

The roles of every adult involved in children's chess should be clearly defined. It is very important that each chess leader has a clear idea of his / her role and responsibilities.

## **ADULT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS IN CHESS**

The trust implicit in adult-child relationships in chess places a duty of care on all adults, voluntary or professional to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the child while engaged in chess. Adults have a crucial leadership role to play in chess. Whether they are parents / guardians or chess Leaders or teachers, they can contribute to the creation of a positive sporting environment for young people.

Most adults who become involved in youth chess do so in their own free time. There may, therefore, be a reluctance to make impositions upon them with regard to either conditions of training, or reproaches for any misdemeanours. However, given the important and responsible roles which adults play at many different levels in chess, it is essential that their competence and ability to deal with children in a fair, empathic and ethical way is supported, guided and maintained.

### **Adult-child relationships in chess should be:**

- Carried out in a context where children are protected.
- Encouraging, positive, and transparent.
- Entered into by choice.
- Free from verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse or any threat of such harm.
- Respectful of the needs and developmental stage of the child.
- Respectful, but not unquestioning of authority.
- Mindful of the fact that children with disabilities may be more vulnerable.

## **CHILD TO CHILD RELATIONSHIPS**

Interaction between children should be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect and fair play.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS / GUARDIANS**

Parents / guardians play a key role in the promotion of an ethical approach to chess and their children's enjoyment of chess. Parents / guardians therefore need to be aware, informed and involved in promoting the safest possible environment for children to enjoy their participation in chess. Chess Leaders need the support of parents/guardians in conveying the fair play message.

## ***POLICY AND PROCEDURES***

Everyone taking part in chess, irrespective of his or her role, should be able to do so in a safe environment. The purpose of creating and adhering to policies and procedures is to facilitate and encourage best practice.

## **L.S.C.A. CONSTITUTION**

The Leinster Schools Chess Association operates on the basis of a Constitution, which promotes good practice.

## **DISCIPLINARY, COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURES**

Each school / organisation should ensure that it has adequate disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures in place.

***The investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the Statutory Authorities and should not be undertaken by chess leaders.***

The standard reporting procedure outlined in the Statutory Authorities guidelines should be followed by each school / organisation and adhered to by its members.

## **Recommended procedures**

In the event of a complaint a school or organisation is advised to do the following:

- Appoint a disciplinary committee with clearly defined procedures to resolve problems relating to the conduct of its members. This should include bullying. The committee should consist of a representative from the management committee. Regular turnover of this committee will be encouraged.
- The disciplinary committee should initiate an investigation following a complaint into any incident of suspected misconduct that does not relate to child abuse. It should, as soon as possible, inform the relevant management committee of the progress of the disciplinary process.
- Written confidential records of all complaints should be safely and confidentially kept and procedures will be defined for the possession of such records in the event of election of new officers.
- The disciplinary committee should furnish the individual with details of the complaint being made against him/her and afford him/her the opportunity of providing a response either verbally or in writing.

- Where it is established that an incident of misconduct has taken place, the disciplinary committee should notify the member of any sanction being imposed. The notification should be made in writing, setting out the reasons for the sanction. If the member is under 18 years of age, correspondence should be addressed to the parents / guardians.
- If the member against whom the complaint was made is unhappy with the decision of the disciplinary committee s/he should have the right to appeal the decision to an appeals committee (independent of a disciplinary committee). Any appeal should be made in writing within an agreed period after issue of the decision of the disciplinary committee.
- The appeals committee should have the power to confirm, set aside or change any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee.

It is recommended that all adults taking responsibility for children in chess should undergo a recruitment process. The following procedures for recruitment of chess leaders will assist in placing them in the position to which they are suited and help in the protection of children and leaders alike.

- List tasks that leaders need to perform and the skills needed for those tasks.
- Make all vacancies openly available to interested and qualified applicants.
- An application form should be completed by each applicant.
- Once recruited, all chess leaders should be adequately supported.
- Any statutory guidelines should be adhered to.

#### **CONTEXT FOR THE PLAYING OF CHESS**

- The activity undertaken should be suitable for the ability, age and experience of the participants.
- Adult / Child ratios should reflect the duration, nature and location of the activities, the ages and characteristics of the young people and any other safety issues related to the activity. It is recommended that more than one adult at a time should be present at chess activities. This will help to ensure the safety of the children and protect adults against false allegations.

#### **GUIDELINES FOR CHESS LEADERS**

Leaders have an important role to play in promoting good practice in children's chess. They should have as their first priority the children's safety and enjoyment of chess. The chess leaders' success should not be evaluated by performance or results of competition. They should enjoy a sense of achievement and pleasure through their work with young people. After undertaking appropriate education and training within the club or organisation, chess leaders will be well prepared to operate in a safe environment with a knowledge and understanding of their role and responsibilities. They should be supported in their work by the school / organisation and parents / guardians.

Chess leaders are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with young participants. Chess leaders should operate to the LSCA's agreed code of conduct, which emphasises enjoyment, equality, fair play and the general wellbeing of young people. This model of good practice should help children to demonstrate an awareness of equality, fair play and respect for chess leaders, other members of their group and the rules of the sport. The school / organisation and parents / guardians should afford Chess Leaders the respect they deserve and make them aware of any special needs of the child.

Procedures should support the chess leaders' model of good practice, thus ensuring protection for both the leader and participant. In so doing, chess leaders should feel able to make a complaint in an appropriate manner and have it dealt with through an effective complaints and appeals procedure.

**Where possible, Chess Leaders should avoid:**

- Spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others.
- Taking sessions alone.
- Taking children to the chess leader's home.
- Taking children on journeys alone in their car.

**Chess Leaders should not:**

- Use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a child.
- Exert undue influence over a participant to obtain a 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 adult.
- Undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.) in the training of children.

**GUIDELINES FOR PARENTS / GUARDIANS**

Parents / guardians have the primary responsibility for the care and welfare of their children within chess. Parents / guardians should encourage their children to participate in chess for fun and enjoyment and should ensure that their child's experience is a positive one. They should always remember that children play sport for their own enjoyment not that of the parents / guardians.

Parents / guardians and chess leaders will ideally work in partnership to promote good practice in children's chess and to support all efforts to protect against verbal, physical or sexual abuse. To do so, parents / guardians should ensure that chess clubs treat their children with fairness, respect and understanding, and that the club is fulfilling its

responsibility to safeguard children. They should encourage their children to tell them about anyone causing them harm.

Parents / guardians should become aware of procedures and policies, in particular where changes are made that affect them or their children, and be informed of all matters relating to ethics and good practice. Parents / guardians should remember that children learn best by example.

**To assist in the promotion of good practice with the school or organisation parents / guardians should:**

- Be aware of the relevant chess leaders and their role within the club.
- Show appreciation of and respect for chess leaders and their decisions.
- Encourage their child to play by the rules.
- Behave responsibly at tournaments.
- Focus on their child's efforts rather than performance.
- Focus on the fun and participation of the child in the activity.
- Liaise with the chess leaders in relation to the times / locations of training sessions, medical conditions of their children and any requirement for their child's safety.

**To promote the procedures of good practice parents / guardians should be:**

- Encouraged to assist the school / organisation in the running of chess activities in which their children take part.
- Informed of the training and/or competitive programmes and be satisfied with the general environment that is created for their children.
- Informed if their child sustained an injury during chess activities.
- Informed of problems or concerns relating to their children.
- Informed in advance and have their consent sought in relation to matters regarding away trips, camps or specially organised activities.

Comments and suggestions by parents/guardians should always be considered and their complaints acknowledged and dealt with as they arise through an effective and confidential complaints procedure.

**Parents / Guardians should not:**

- Ignore or dismiss complaints or concerns expressed by a child which relate to his/her involvement in chess.
- Ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake or losing a game.
- Put undue pressure on their child to please or perform well.
- Take safety for granted.
- Treat a chess club as a child-minding service.

## **GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN**

Children must be encouraged to realise that they also have responsibilities to treat other children and Chess Leaders with fairness and respect.

### **Children in chess are entitled to:**

- Be safe.
- Participate in chess activities on an equal basis.
- Be treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity.
- Be happy, have fun and enjoy chess.
- Experience competition and the desire to win as a positive and healthy outcome of striving for best performance.
- Comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner.
- Make a complaint in an appropriate way and have it dealt with through an effective complaints procedure.
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality.
- Be listened to.
- Be believed.

### **Children should undertake to:**

- Play fairly, do their best, and have fun.
- Shake hands before and after the event, whoever wins and mean it.
- Respect officials and accept their decisions with grace not a grudge.
- Respect fellow team members, give them full support both when they do well and when things go wrong.
- Respect opponents, they are not enemies, they are partners in a sporting event.
- Accept apologies from opponents when they are offered.
- Be modest in victory and be gracious in defeat.
- Make high standards of fair play the example others want to follow.
- Approach the relevant leaders with any questions or concerns they may have.

### **Children should not:**

- Cheat.
- Use violence.
- Shout at, or argue with, the referee, officials, team mates or opponents.
- Take banned substances to improve performance.
- Bully.
- Tell lies about adults or other children.
- Spread rumours.
- Keep secrets about any person who may have caused them harm.



## **SUPERVISION OF AWAY TRIPS**

Attention to the following factors will help to promote safety:

- Written permission of parents / guardians should be obtained for all overnight away trips.
- Parents / guardians should inform the school / organisation Team Manager at the outset of any medical condition or special needs of their child.
- All adults who travel on away trips with children should be carefully chosen.
- Adults / chess leaders accompanying or participating in an away trip should make known any medical condition / special needs to the relevant school / organisation in advance.
- The roles and responsibilities of adults participating in away trips should be clearly defined.
- The school / organisation should appoint a team manager / head of delegation for away trips. S/he should have overall responsibility for the children's wellbeing, behaviour, and sleeping arrangements.
- On away trips, coaches should be accountable to the team manager in all non-performance related matters.
- Where there are mixed teams there should be at least one female in the management / coaching structure.
- The team manager should submit a report to the relevant body as soon as possible after the end of the trip.
- As a norm, adults should not share a room with a child. Where the presence of an adult is needed there should be more than one child in the room with the adult. If children are sharing a room, it should be with those of the same age and sex.
- Adequate adult : child ratios should be observed.
- Chess leaders are discouraged from travelling alone in their cars with children.
- Special care should be taken by both host and visiting clubs in the selection of homes for overnight stays and where practicable more than one child should be placed with each host family.
- If a child suffers a significant injury or an accident the parents / guardians should be informed as soon as possible.

## **INSURANCE COVER**

All schools and organisations should ensure that appropriate insurance cover is in place to cover the chess activities of the club, Chess Leaders and participants. Away trips should be included in such cover.

For away trips parents / guardians should be made aware of the need for comprehensive insurance to cover their child, e.g. health/medical insurance etc. Adults transporting children in their cars should be aware of the extent and limits of their motor insurance cover, particularly in relation to acceptable numbers and liability.

## **REGISTRATION & DROPOUTS**

Any unusual or unexpected dropout or club transfer of children or chess leaders should be checked out by the relevant officer. If any concerns regarding a child or children's welfare are raised the matter should be handled in accordance with procedures outlined in this document.

## **DISCIPLINE IN YOUTH CHESS**

Discipline in chess should always be positive in focus, providing the structure and rules that allow participants to learn to set their own goals and strive for them.

- The main form of discipline should be positive reinforcement for effort. It should encourage the development of emotional and social skills as well as skills in chess.
- Children should be helped to become responsible about the decisions and choices they make within chess, particularly when they are likely to make a difference between playing fairly and unfairly.

### **4.10 THE USE OF SANCTIONS**

The use of sanctions is an important element in the maintenance of discipline. However, chess leaders should have a clear understanding of where and when particular sanctions are appropriate. The age and developmental stage of the child should be taken into consideration when using sanctions.

#### **Recommended use of Sanctions**

Sanctions should be fair and consistent and in the case of persistent offence, should be progressively applied. The following steps are suggested:

- Rules should be stated clearly and agreed.
- A warning should be given if a rule is broken.
- A sanction (e.g. a time out) should be applied if a rule is broken for a second time.
- If a rule is broken three or more times, the child should be spoken to, and if necessary, the parents / guardians may be involved.
- Sanctions should be used in a corrective way that is intended to help children improve now and in the future. They should never be used to retaliate or to make a chess leader feel better.
- When violations of team rules or other misbehaviours occur, sanctions should be applied in an impartial way.
- Sanctions should not be used as threats. If rules are broken sanctions should be implemented consistently, fairly, and firmly.
- Sanctions should not be applied if a Chess Leader is not comfortable with them. If an appropriate action cannot be devised right away, the child should be told that the matter will be dealt with later, at a specified time and as soon as possible.
- Once sanctions have been imposed, it is important to make the child feel s/he is a valued member of the group again.

- A child should be helped, if necessary, to understand why sanctions are imposed.
- A child should not be sanctioned for making errors when s/he is playing.
- Sanctions should be used sparingly. Constant sanctioning and criticism can cause a child to turn away from sport.

### **AREAS OF RISK FOR CHILDREN IN SPORT**

Awareness of risk to children's happiness and welfare in chess should be seen as central to protection against harm. Such risk could include the following:

- Children being deprived of proper supervision and safety.
- Chess Leaders, parents / guardians subjecting children to constant criticism, sarcasm, rejection, threatening behaviour, or unrealistic performance expectations.
- The infliction of any form of non-accidental injury or other forms of child abuse.

### **SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN SPORT**

- The use of alcohol, drugs, and tobacco should be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity.
- A chess Leader should not smoke when taking a session or drink alcohol before taking a session.
- Schools and organisations should be encouraged to organise receptions and celebrations in a non-alcoholic environment and in a manner that is suitable for the age group concerned.
- Chess Leaders should actively discourage the use of any substance that is perceived to offer short cuts to improved performances or to by-pass the commitment and hard work required to achieve success.
- Leaders in youth chess should refrain from seeking sponsorship from the alcohol and tobacco industries.

### **PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS, BURNOUT AND DROPOUT OF CHILDREN IN SPORT**

Burnout may be defined as a process resulting from an activity that was once a source of fun and satisfaction but later becomes associated with progressive physical and psychological distress. There are a range of factors, which may cause this change, some of which are not associated with the child's sporting activities.

Burnout itself may result from a combination of the number of hours involved in training with high expectations and pressure from leaders and parents / guardians. It represents a loss of energy and enthusiasm for chess and is characterised by anxiety and stress. The child no longer has fun and becomes overwhelmed by the demands of competition and training. S/he may wish to drop out of sport.

### **Practices harmful to children's health and welfare within a sporting context**

- Pressuring a child to perform at a level which is beyond his/her capacity base.
- Over-training or the making of demands on a child that lead to burnout.

- Failure to take adequate precautions to protect a child from environmental hazards.
- Failure to take account of known ailments or relevant weaknesses of a child.

### **Causes of psychological stress within the sporting context**

- Over-emphasis on winning.
- Age-inappropriate expectations.
- Excessive criticism.
- Inappropriate use of sanctions / discipline.
- Rejection.
- Disapproval of skill / performance ability.
- Failure to provide support and encouragement for effort and achievement.
- Failure to involve a child /children as fully as possible in the activity.
- The use of inappropriate language.

### **Signs of psychological stress and burnout**

- Sleep disturbance.
- Irritability.
- Tension.
- Lack of energy.
- Sadness / depression.
- Frequent illness.
- Loss of interest and enthusiasm.
- Absenteeism, arriving late, and /or leaving early.
- No pleasurable anticipation of participation in sporting events.

### **Combating psychological stress and burnout**

Children who show an early aptitude for chess are very often asked to participate across a range of age groups. This can put them at risk of stress and burnout. Stress and burnout can be prevented and dropout rates reduced by measures such as:

- Listening to and respecting children's views about participation.
- De-emphasising the importance of winning and encouraging the development of individual skills and effort instead.
- Attaining an appropriate match between the individual child's ability and the activity in which s/he is participating.
- Ensuring that the physical or sporting abilities of the child are not viewed by the child as indications of his / her self-worth.
- Ensuring that children have fun and enjoy activities in which they are involved.
- Maximising the involvement of children by using substitutions.
- Ensuring that children are not participating in adverse climatic conditions.

## **BULLYING**

The risk of bullying and harassment by adults and by children should be anticipated by taking active steps to prevent it occurring. A prompt and decisive response should be made to any indications that it is taking place.

### **What is Bullying?**

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

It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting or extortion by one or more children against a victim. It is the responsibility of leaders to deal with bullying that may take place in the organisation. Each school / organisation should have a clear policy on bullying which is known to members and implemented by chess leaders. Incidents of bullying should be dealt with immediately and not tolerated under any circumstances.

Many children are reluctant to tell adults that they are being bullied. Older children are even more reluctant. This underlines the need for constant vigilance and encouragement to report bullying.

### **Types of Bullying**

Bullying can occur:

- Child to child - includes physical aggression, verbal bullying, intimidation, damage to property and isolation.
- Adult to child - includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any comment intended to degrade the child.
- Child to adult - includes the use of repeated gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature by an individual child or a group of children.

### **Combating Bullying**

All clubs / organisations should have an anti-bullying policy, which includes the following measures:

- Raising awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour.
- Creating a club ethos which encourages children, chess leaders and parents / guardians to report bullying and to use the procedures of the complaints mechanism of the organisation to address this problem.
- Providing comprehensive supervision of children at all sporting activities.
- Providing a supportive environment for victims of bullying.

## **CHILD ABUSE**

A school chess club / organisation, like any other organisation that includes children among its members, are vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. This possibility should be openly acknowledged and addressed in its formal policies and procedures.

An environment in which awareness of what constitutes abusive behaviour and a willingness to tackle the issue head on is the most likely to achieve effective implementation of child protection measures. It is only by discussing and agreeing procedures and best practice that all chess leaders can be assured that they are providing the safest and most enjoyable experiences in chess for the children and for themselves.

## **CHILD PROTECTION IN CHESS**

The prevention and detection of child abuse depends on the collaborative effort of everyone concerned. The following factors are central to effective child protection:

- Acceptance by all involved with children that abuse, whether physical, psychological or sexual is wrong, severely damages children and must be confronted.
- Awareness of the behavioural and physical indicators of various forms of abuse.
- Knowledge of the appropriate response and action to be taken where abuse is revealed or suspected.
- Vigilance, and avoidance of all situations conducive to risk.
- Open, trusting and co-operative relationships within the school / organisation, and with parents / guardians and others concerned with children's progress or welfare.
- Willingness to co-operate with the Statutory Authorities (police authorities, health boards or social services) in relation to sharing information about child protection concerns at any time.

## **PROTECTIONS FOR PERSONS REPORTING CHILD ABUSE ACT, 1998 (IRL)**

The Protections 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 Gardai. This means that, even if a reported suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the reporter had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report. This Act came into operation on 23rd January, 1999. 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.
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.

## **SOURCES OF CHILD ABUSE**

It is important to realise that children may be subjected to abuse by parents / guardians or other family members, persons outside their family, other children, or those who have responsibility for their care for one reason or another for short or long periods of time.

## **CATEGORIES OF ABUSE**

All Chess Leaders should be familiar with signs and behaviours that may be indicative of child abuse. Though a child may be subjected to more than one type of harm, abuse is normally categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. For detailed definitions of abuse, refer to Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Department of Health & Children). The categories of abuse may be briefly summarised as follows:

### **1. Child Neglect**

Neglect is normally defined in terms of an omission, where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care. It may also include neglect of a child's basic emotional needs.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For instance, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having his or her needs for supervision and safety met. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her wellbeing and/or development is severely affected.

### **2. Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between an adult and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms. For children with disabilities it may include over-protection or conversely failure to acknowledge or understand a child's disability.

Examples of emotional abuse include:

- a. Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming.
- b. Where the level of care is conditional on his or her behaviour.
- c. Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or unrealistic expectations of a child.

- d. Premature imposition of responsibility on the child.
- e. Over or under protection of the child.
- f. Failure to provide opportunities for the child's education and development.
- g. Use of unrealistic or over-harsh disciplinary measures.
- h. Exposure to domestic violence.

Children show signs of emotional abuse by their behaviour for example, excessive clinginess to or avoidance of the parent/guardian, their emotional state (low self-esteem, unhappiness), or their development (non-organic failure to thrive). The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/guardian.

### 3. **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child, including:

- a. Shaking.
- b. Use of excessive force in handling.
- c. Deliberate poisoning.
- d. Suffocation.
- e. Munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where parents/guardians fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness).
- f. Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.
- g. For children with disabilities it may include confinement to a room or cot, or incorrectly given drugs to control behaviour.

### 4. **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others, For example:

- a. Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child.
- b. Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification.
- c. Masturbation in the presence of a child or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation.
- d. Sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal.
- e. Sexual exploitation of a child.
- f. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.



## **SIGNS OF CHILD ABUSE**

Signs of abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental. A cluster or pattern of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. The following indicators should be noted. It is important, however, to realise that all of these indicators can occur in other situations where abuse has not been a factor and that the list is not exhaustive.

### **Physical Indicators**

- Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas
- Repeated injury
- Black eye(s)
- Injuries to mouth
- Torn or bloodstained clothing
- Burns and scalds
- Bites
- Fractures
- Marks from implements
- Inconsistent stories, excuses relating to injuries

### **Behavioural Indicators**

- Unexplained changes in behaviour - becoming withdrawn or aggressive
- Regressive behaviour
- Difficulty in making friends
- Distrustful of adults or excessive attachment to adults
- Sudden drop in performance
- Change in attendance pattern
- Inappropriate sexual awareness, behaviour or language
- Unusual reluctance to remove clothing
- Reluctance to go home

## **CHILDREN WHO MAY BE ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE TO ABUSE**

Children in certain situations may be especially vulnerable to abuse. These include children who, for short or long periods, are separated from parents or other family members and depend on other adults for their care and protection. Children with disabilities may also be more at risk as the nature of their disability sometimes limits communication between themselves and others and they may depend more than most children on a variety of adults to meet their needs, for example, for care and transport.

## **NEED FOR INTERNAL PROCEDURES**

Each school / organisation should have clear procedures for responding to reports or concerns relating to the welfare and safety of children. All staff, children and parents / guardians should be aware of how to report and to whom concerns should be reported within the school / organisation. These procedures should be consistent with Statutory Authority guidelines, i.e. Children First and Our Duty to Care and with the procedures outlined in this Code. Copies of the Statutory Authority guidelines should be available in all school / organisations. Everyone involved in child protection matters should be aware of their responsibility to work in co-operation with the statutory child protection authorities.

## **RECOGNISING AND REPORTING OF SUSPECTED OR ACTUAL CHILD ABUSE**

The ability to recognise child abuse depends as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on knowledge and information. It is important to note that child abuse is not always readily visible, and may not be as clearly observable as the text book scenarios might suggest. If a chess leader or a parent / guardian is uneasy or suspicious about a child's safety or welfare the following response should be made:

### **Grounds for Concern**

Consider the possibility of child abuse if there are reasonable grounds for concern. Examples of reasonable grounds are:

- a specific indication from a child that s/he has been abused;
- a statement from a person who witnessed abuse;
- an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse;
- a symptom which may not itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is supported by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence; and
- consistent signs of neglect over a period of time.

In some cases of child abuse the alleged perpetrator will also be a child and it is important that behaviour of this nature is not ignored. Grounds for concern will exist in cases where there is an age difference and / or difference in power, status or intellect between the children involved. However, it is also important to distinguish between normal sexual behaviour and abusive behaviour. Persons unsure about whether or not certain behaviours are abusive and therefore reportable, should contact the duty social worker in the local health board or social services department where they will receive advice.

### **Reporting Child Abuse**

The following items should be followed 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.
- b. Report the matter as soon as possible to the person designated for reporting abuse (the senior office holder, normally the Chairperson). If the Chairperson has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, s/he will make a report to the health board / social services who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse.
- c. In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Chairperson 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.**

- d. If the Chairperson is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist or not, s/he should informally consult with the local health board/social services. S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.
- e. A Chairperson reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities should first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, **unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation.**
- f. A report should be given by the Chairperson to the Statutory Authorities in person or by phone, and in writing.
- g. It is best to report child abuse concerns by making personal contact with the relevant personnel in the Statutory Authorities.

### **RESPONSE TO A CHILD REPORTING ANY FORM OF ABUSE**

The following points should be taken into consideration:

- a. It is important to 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.
- b. It is important to stay calm and not to show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the child is saying seriously.
- c. It should be understood that the child has decided to tell about 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.
- d. The child should understand that it is not possible that any information will be kept a secret.
- e. No judgmental statement should be made against the person against whom the allegation is made.
- f. The child should not be questioned unless the nature of what s/he is 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. The child should be given 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.

### **ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AGAINST SPORTS LEADERS**

Each school / organisation should have agreed procedures to be followed in cases of alleged child abuse against Chess Leaders. If such an allegation is made, two procedures should be followed:

1. The reporting procedure in respect of the child.
2. The procedure for dealing with the chess leader.

## **Special Considerations**

The following points should be considered:

- The safety of the child making the allegation and any others who are/may be at risk should be ensured and this should take precedence over any other consideration. In this regard, the chess club/organisation should take any necessary steps which may be immediately necessary to protect children.
- If a chess Leader is the subject of the concern s/he should be treated with respect and fairness.

## **Steps to be taken within the chess Organisation**

Where reasonable grounds for concern exist the following steps should be taken by the club/organisation:

- Advice should be sought from the local health board/social services with regard to any action by the school / organisation deemed necessary to protect the child / children who may be at risk.
- The matter should be reported to the local health board / social services following the standard reporting procedure outlined above.
- In the event that the concern is connected to the actions of a chess leader the chess leader involved in the concern should be asked to stand aside pending the outcome of any investigation by the statutory authorities. It is advisable that this task be undertaken by an appointed committee member other than the Chairperson who takes the responsibility for reporting. When the Chess Leader is being privately informed by the Chairperson of a) the fact that an allegation has been made against him/her and b) the nature of the allegation, s/he should be afforded an opportunity to respond. His/her response should be noted and passed on to the health board/social services personnel.

All persons involved in a child protection process (the child, his/her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family, chess Leaders) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Confidentiality is about managing information in a respectful, professional and purposeful manner. Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in concerns about the welfare of a child or bad practice within a club. 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 borne 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 about whom there are concerns in a sensitive way.
- Giving information to others on a need to know basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.

### **DEALING WITH 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 relevant body. This information should be checked out and handled in a confidential manner. Any such complaints relating to child protection concerns should be handled in accordance with procedures outlined in this Code.

### **RUMOURS**

Rumours should not be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour should be checked out without delay. Any ensuing information should be handled confidentially and with sensitivity. If there are reasonable grounds for concern that a child has been abused s/he should refer the matter to the Statutory Authorities, using the standard reporting procedure. If there is any doubt about the requirement to report the substance of a rumour, advice should be sought from the duty social worker in the local health board or social services department.

### ***Sample Policy Statement for School Chess Clubs / Organisations***

*This school chess club / organisation is fully committed to safeguarding the wellbeing of its members. Every individual in the club / organisation should, at all times, show respect and understanding for their rights, safety and welfare, and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the club/organisation and the guidelines contained in the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in Ireland.*

*A more detailed policy statement may be drawn up for a particular school / organisation.*