

Mullingar Athletic AFC

M.A.F.C.



Estd 1983

Club Code of Practice

The guidelines in this document are based on the national guidelines as outlined in the following documents.

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

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

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

Football Association of Ireland Code of Ethics & Best Practice

Mullingar Athletic AFC Mission Statement

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

Integrity in relationships:

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

Quality atmosphere and ethos

Soccer within the club for young people should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. A child-centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place. Too often, unhealthy competitive demands are placed on children too early and results in excessive levels of pressure on them and as a consequence, high levels of dropout from sport.

Equality

All children should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, sex, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. Children with disability should be involved in sports activities in an integrated way, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children.

Fair Play:

Fair play is the guiding principle of the Irish Sports Councils Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport.

It states that "all children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play". Ireland has contributed and is committed to the European Code of Sports Ethics, which defines fair play as: "much more than playing within the rules".

It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing with the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption. (European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics, Council of Europe, 1993).

Competition

A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of young people, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. Coaches/managers should aim to put the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second. A child-centred approach will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.

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Child Protection & Welfare Policy Statement

Introduction.

Mullingar Athletic AFC is committed to ensuring that all necessary steps will be taken to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people who participate in soccer within the club. This Policy document clearly demonstrates the importance placed by Mullingar Athletic AFC on the protection and safety of children and young people who participate in soccer.

All children and young people¹ who participate in soccer should be able to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment. While doing so, they should be protected from any form of abuse be it physical, emotional, sexual, neglect or bullying. The responsibility for protecting children lies with all adults involved in this club and in soccer in general.

Mullingar Athletic AFC recognises and accepts its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people participating within the club, by protecting them from physical, emotional or sexual harm and from neglect or bullying.

These clear policies, practices and procedures in addition to relevant training programmes will ensure that everybody in Mullingar Athletic AFC knows exactly what is expected of them in relation to protecting children and young people within this soccer club.

It is vital that children and young people who participate in Mullingar Athletic AFC activities are able to do so in a safe, enjoyable and quality environment.

In pursuit of this goal Mullingar Athletic AFC will:

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

¹ Children are defined in Irish Law as being any person under 18 years of age.

The Aims of Mullingar Athletic AFC Child Protection Policy are:

- To develop a positive and pro-active position in order to best protect all children and young people who participate in soccer within the club, in order for them to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment.
- To provide appropriate guidance and advice to all club members (players, coaches, volunteers, spectators and parents) in all matters concerning child welfare and protection.
- To demonstrate best practice in the area of child welfare and protection.
- To promote ethics and best practice standards throughout soccer.

The key principles underpinning this Policy are that:

- The welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration.
- All children and young people have a right to be protected from abuse of any kind regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual identity.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse/poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. It is essential that we work in partnership with children and young people and their parents/carers. The HSE has a statutory responsibility to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and Mullingar Athletic AFC is committed to cooperating fully with them in accordance with procedures as outlined in “Children First” National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.
- Mullingar Athletic AFC will cooperate fully with the Football Association of Ireland National Children’s Officer, Gardai and Health Boards in any investigation of child abuse in soccer.

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

RULE 71. THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN

(a) In line with legislation and Government Guidelines (The Child Care Act 1991 and the Protection for Persons Reporting Abuse Act 1998) in relation to child protection and welfare, it is mandatory that all participants, clubs, leagues, divisional associations and other football bodies shall be bound by the FAI recommended codes of conduct and best practice guidelines

(b) Any act, statement, conduct or other matter which harms a child or children, or poses or may pose a risk of harm to a child or children, shall constitute behaviour which is improper and brings the game into disrepute.

(c) Breaches shall become a disciplinary offence. Any member issued with a ban from football activity shall have their name notified to all League Secretaries for onward dissemination to all Club Secretaries. The notification shall state the name of the individual and the fact a ban has been issued.

(d) Any participant who is the subject of a Statutory Inquiry in relation to any child welfare concern must stand down from all football activities pending the outcome of that inquiry and any subsequent internal disciplinary proceedings.

(e) Any member convicted of an offence by the Irish Courts or Courts of any other jurisdiction involving the welfare of children shall be automatically banned from membership of the Association. For the avoidance of doubt no disciplinary or other hearing shall be necessary in order to implement this automatic ban.

RULE 95. PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN

1. All participants, clubs, leagues, divisional associations and other football bodies shall be bound by the FAI rules, codes of conduct and guidelines governing the protection and welfare of children, and breaches of such rules, codes and guidelines shall be subject to disciplinary sanction.

2. The disciplinary body may impose any sanction it deems appropriate.

3. Any act, statement, conduct or other matter which harms a child or children, or poses or may pose a risk of harm to a child or children, shall constitute behaviour which is improper and brings the game into disrepute.

4. Any participant who is the subject of a statutory inquiry in relation to any child welfare concern must stand down from all football activities pending the outcome of that inquiry and any subsequent internal disciplinary proceedings.

Mullingar Athletic AFC through confirming this policy document has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that children and young people within this club can participate in all soccer activities with their safety and welfare being of paramount importance.

It is essential that this document represents a process of continual improvement in the area of child protection and welfare in our club.

It is the responsibility of all adults involved in Mullingar Athletic AFC to actively promote safe and best practice standards whilst being ever vigilant and aware of their responsibilities to children and young people in their care.

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Procedure for dealing with Child Abuse Concerns or Allegations

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

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

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

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

Ref. Children First

Step One:

Any allegation of abuse must in the first instance be brought to the attention of the Chairperson of the Club. Should the Chairperson be unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist s/he can informally consult with the local HSE duty social worker. S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

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

Step Two:

Should Mullingar Athletic AFC become aware of an allegation of abuse of a child or children by a coach/volunteer during the execution of that coaches/volunteers duties, the Chairman will privately inform the coach/volunteer of the following:

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

Step Three

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

The report to the HSE should contain observations, dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.

In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Chairperson is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Gardai shall be contacted.

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

Step Four:

Our Chairperson, if 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 any statutory investigation.

Step Five:

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

Step Six:

Under Football Association of Ireland rules, any coach/volunteer/manager who is the subject of a statutory investigation into alleged child abuse is required to stand down from all soccer activities until the investigation is completed. Therefore the FAI National Children's Officer must be informed immediately of any formal notification to the Statutory Authorities.

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

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

Step Seven:

The Club will carefully consider the outcome of the statutory investigation and will then assess if there are any outstanding disciplinary issues in relation to their internal rules or infringements of the Football Association of Ireland best practice guidelines. It must be remembered that the fact that the alleged abuser has not been prosecuted or been found guilty does not mean that they are appropriate to work with young people in the future.

Note: Internal Club disciplinary proceedings can only be initiated after the Statutory Authorities have completed theirs.

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2.4 Club Disciplinary, Complaints and Appeals Procedure (Covers all matters other than suspected child abuse which has to be referred to the Statutory Authorities See 10.6)

While many concerns can be dealt with in an informal manner to the satisfaction of all concerned, detailed records will be maintained in respect of all complaints and all parties will be advised of the formal complaints and appeals procedure. All reasonable efforts to resolve matters will be exhausted at local level before accessing the appeals procedure.

Step One:

Any person who has a complaint or concern should bring it to the attention of the club secretary under the relevant club rules.

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

Step Two:

The complaint or concern should then be brought to the attention of the appropriate person in line with club rules who will convene the disciplinary committee/panel (3 elected members) **unless the complaint or concern relates to a child abuse matter or criminal offence that meets criteria for formal reporting to the statutory authorities.**

(The Chairperson of the Club should not sit on the Disciplinary Committee)

Step Three:

The disciplinary committee/panel should furnish any participant with details of the complaint being made against them and afford them the opportunity of providing a response either verbally or in writing. In the event of a complaint against a child, the parents/guardians should be informed and advised of the process.

Step Four:

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

Step Five:

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

Step Six:

Any party unhappy with the findings of the disciplinary committee/panel can appeal the decision in writing to the club executive as per rules.

Step Seven:

The appeal body should then rehear the case and all evidence, should be considered. The appeals body (Club Executive) will have the power to uphold or reject the appeal or to vary, alter or set aside any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee/panel.

Written confidential records in relation to disciplinary proceedings will be safely and confidentially kept on file (procedures should clearly define the possession of such records in the event of election of new officers)

Anonymous Complaints

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

All complaints shall be checked out and handled in a confidential manner. It is important to record all such complaints and actions taken.

Note: If necessary, specific advice on dealing with anonymous complaints can be obtained from local HSE duty social worker or alternatively the Football Association of Ireland National Children's Officer.

Rumours

Rumours should not be allowed hang in the air. Any rumour/s relating to inappropriate behaviour/s circulating in the club should be brought to the attention to the Chairperson and checked out promptly. All ensuing information should be handled confidentially and with sensitivity.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is about managing information in a respectful, professional and purposeful manner. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected. Therefore, appropriate confidentiality will be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in concerns about the welfare of a child or bad practice within the club.

The following points will be borne in mind:

- A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the child will supersede all other considerations
- All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should only be discussed with those who need to know
- Information will be conveyed to the parents/guardians of a child about whom there are concerns in a sensitive way. Giving information to others on a "need to know" basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality

Club Recruitment Policy:

Mullingar Athletic AFC will take all reasonable steps to ensure that coaches, managers and volunteers are suitable to work with children and young people.

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

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

All coaches/volunteers subject to Garda clearance.

All appointments are subject to approval and ratification by the committee of Mullingar Athletic AFC.

All coaches, managers and volunteers will be subject to a sign up procedure in which they undertake to abide by Mullingar Athletic AFC rules and FAI codes of conduct and good practice. (Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained in regard to all application and reference forms)

Once recruited, Mullingar Athletic AFC will make all efforts to support and manage coaches, managers and volunteers ensuring that no person is expected to work alone.



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Volunteer Coach Application & Self Declaration Form (Please use block capitals)

Name: _____ D.O.B _____
 Address: _____
 Tel. (H) _____ (Mobile) _____

Coaching Qualifications

Sport	Award Held	Date of Award

Previous experience/involvement in sport? Please give details.

Have you ever been asked to leave a sporting organisation in the past?
 (If you have answered yes we will contact you in confidence)

Yes	No
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Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offence? If so give details

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

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

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

Name _____ Title _____ Tel. _____

Address _____

Name _____ Title _____ Tel. _____

Address _____

I agree to work within Mullingar Athletic AFC club Rules and FAI approved codes of conduct & best practice guidelines. I also agree that I will refrain from getting involved in any behaviour that could bring Mullingar Athletic AFC or the sport of soccer into disrepute.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

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Reference Form

Private and Confidential

Name: _____

Address: _____

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

How long have you known this person?

In what capacity?

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

Yes	
No	

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

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Mullingar Athletic AFC Coach, Manager, Volunteer Education & Support Policy

The Committee of Mullingar Athletic AFC are indebted to our coaches, managers and volunteers who give freely of their valuable time in providing a stimulating, challenging, supportive and fun soccer experience to children and young people in the Club.

The Committee will endeavour to support these coaches, managers and volunteers in their work by providing an environment where all activities are carried out in a safe, fun manner at all times conducted in the spirit of "Fair Play".

Mullingar Athletic AFC will make all efforts to assist all new volunteers, managers, coaches in whatever way they can.

Mullingar Athletic AFC will provide an induction pack to all new volunteers/coaches which will familiarise them with Club rules, policies and procedures and expected codes of behaviour for children, coaches and parents/spectators.

The Committee of Mullingar Athletic AFC recognise the value of having appropriately qualified personnel in the club, and therefore will endeavour to support any of our coaches in the coach education process.

At no time will any coach, manager, volunteer be expected to work or deal with any problem alone and they will be assured of Committee assistance and support at all times. Also, coaches, managers and volunteers are encouraged to share ideas, expertise and support other club personnel in any way they can.

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Safety Policy

All coaches/managers in Mullingar Athletic FC have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the players with whom they work as far as possible within the limits of their control. Therefore coaches should seek to create a safe and enjoyable environment in which to play and train.

In this respect:

- Adequate supervision shall be maintained at all times.
- Regular safety checks shall be carried out in relation to premises, training facilities and equipment. Ensure that the FAI Goalpost safety policy is strictly adhered to at all times
- Mullingar Athletic AFC safety rules should be adhered to at all times
- Parents/guardians should be informed of the starting and finishing times of training sessions and matches.
- A first aid kit should be available at all training sessions and matches and injuries should be recorded, with a note of action taken in relation to each one. Never play injured players.
- Parents/Guardians should be notified of injuries/illness which their children incur while participating in any Mullingar Athletic AFC soccer activity.
- Records of attendance should be maintained by each coach / manager

Note: Ensure the use of any recommended safety equipmenta

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Substance Abuse Policy

In Mullingar Athletic AFC the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco shall be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity.

Coaches/managers shall not smoke when taking a session or drink alcohol before taking a session.

In relation to our under-age teams Mullingar Athletic AFC shall endeavour to organise receptions and celebrations in a nonalcoholic environment and in a manner that is suitable for the age group concerned.

Where this is not possible, the Club will comply with the **Football Association of Ireland directive that under no circumstances whatsoever can any person under the age of 18 years consume alcohol and any and all appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that this policy is strictly adhered to.**

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

Mullingar Athletic AFC Club Children's Officer/s

Mullingar Athletic AFC has appointed a Club Children's Officer in accordance with government guidelines. The appointment of Club Children's Officers is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere in any club. They act as a resource to members with regard to children's issues and also ensure that children have a voice in the running of the club and can freely talk of their experiences.

Government guidelines advise that a children's officer should be appointed by all clubs and this should be done in accordance with recommended selection and recruitment procedures. The appointment of this person should be carried out in consultation with juvenile members and their parent/guardians.

The Club Children's Officer shall have the following functions:

- To promote the Code of Ethics & Good Practice
- To influence policy and practice and to prioritise children's needs
- To ensure that children know how and whom they can report their concerns to within the club. Information disclosed by a child should be dealt with in accordance with the Department of Health and Children's Guidelines "*Children First*"
- To encourage the participation of parents/guardians in club activities
- To co-operate with parents to ensure that each child enjoys his/her participation in soccer
- To act as a resource with regard to best practice in children's soccer
- To report regularly to the Club Management Committee
- To monitor changes in membership and follow up any unusual dropout, absenteeism or club transfers by children or coach/volunteers

The Club Children's Officer does not have the responsibility of investigating or validating child protection concerns within the club and has no counselling or therapeutic role. This responsibility lies with the HSE and Gardai.

Note: Mullingar Athletic AFC has appointed Frank Harkin as our Children's Officer and he can be contacted at
0872863021

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Guidance on the Use of Photographic and Filming Equipment

Many people use cameras and video equipment at soccer activities and the vast majority, do so for perfectly legitimate reasons. However there is evidence that people have used sporting events to take inappropriate photographs and video footage of children and young people in vulnerable positions.

Mullingar Athletic AFC has adopted a policy in relation to the use of images of players on their websites and in other publications.

Where possible we will try to use models or illustrations when promoting an activity and avoid the use of the first name and surname of individuals in a photograph. This reduces the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and outside the sport.

Club Rules to guide use of photography:

The club understand that parents will from time to time like to see their child's photo appear in the sports pages of one of the local papers or indeed in the club newsletter or on the club web site. These images will only be used to promote the activity and or the team achievement and will not focus on a particular child.

When using photos in these circumstances the club will endeavour to adopt the following rules:

- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the player.
- Use team or group photos rather than individual players.
- Ask for the player's permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. Ask for parental permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. Use only images of players 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

The club will:

Report any use of inappropriate images in order to reduce the risks to players. Follow the child protection procedures, ensuring either the designated person or, if necessary, the health boards and/or Gardai are informed.

Amateur photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek permission/accreditation with the children's officer, team manager/coach and/or event organiser of session. This club / organisation will display the following information prior to the start of an event to inform spectators of the policy:

"In line with the recommendation in Mullingar Athletic AFC's Code of Conduct, the promoters of this event request that any person wishing to engage in any video, zoom or close range photography should register their details with the organisers. Children and young people should only be photographed or filmed with their permission and/or the permission of their parents/guardian".

When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to an activity or event we will aim to ensure they are clear about our expectations of them in relation to child protection.

Professional photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation with the children's officer/event organiser/team manager by producing

their professional identification for the details to be recorded.

We will then:

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour
- Issue the photographer with identification which must be worn at all times
- Keep a record of accreditations
- Where possible, inform players 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 children or one to one photo sessions at events
- not approve/allow photo sessions outside the events or at an child's home

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

The Club will take reasonable care to increase awareness of the danger of permitting camera phones in dressing rooms.

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

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are often given to children for security, enabling parents to keep in touch and make sure they are safe. Young people value their phones highly as it offers them a sense of independence. In addition mobile phones allow quick and easy contact, which can make a safe and efficient way to carry out club business. However such technology has also allowed an increase in direct personal contact with young people, in some cases used to cross personal boundaries and cause harm to young people. Therefore, we need to encourage responsible and secure use of mobile phones by adults and young people.

Therefore club personnel should advise children:

- If you receive an offensive photo, email or message, do not reply, save it, make a note of times and dates and tell a parent or children's officer/designated person within the club.
- Be careful about who you give your phone number to and don't respond to unfamiliar numbers
- Change your phone number in cases of bullying or harassment
- Don't use the phone in certain locations; inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person, e.g. changing rooms
- Treat your phone as you would any other valuable item so that you guard against theft.
- Taking photographs, with any photographic equipment including cell phones, of undressed or partially undressed children and/or adults is prohibited.

As a coach/manager remember:

- Use only group texts for communication among players and teams and inform parents of this at the start of the season
- It is not appropriate to have constant communication for individual players

Don't use the phone in certain locations; inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person, e.g. changing rooms

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Travelling Guidelines for Match Day and Other Events

When travelling with young people coaches/volunteers of Mullingar Athletic AFC should:

- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover
- Not carry more than the permitted number of passengers
- Ensure the use of safety belts
- Keep to the rules of the road
- Avoid being alone with one player; if with one player you could: put the passenger in the back seat, drop off at central locations, get parental permission for transporting children on a regular basis, and clearly state times of pick off and drop off.

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Touching Guidelines

All managers/volunteers of Mullingar Athletic AFC are advised that:

Any necessary physical contact should be in response to the needs of the child and not the adult

It should be in an open environment with the permission and full understanding of the player

It should be determined by the age and developmental stage of the player. You should not anything that a child can do for him/herself

Coaches should not treat injuries out of sight of others. Use a "Two-Deep" (two personnel, or two players) supervision system. Only personnel who are qualified in administering First Aid or treating sports injuries should attempt to treat an injury.

The comfort level and dignity of the player should always be the priority. Example: Only uncover the injured area, or cover private areas of the athlete's body.

Any doubts of a medical nature should be passed on to a suitably qualified medical person.

Coaches should not play injured players.

Comforting/congratulating players is an important part of the relationship between coaches and players.

Guidelines for this type of touch are:

Limit touching to "safe" areas, such as hand-to-shoulder. It should not involve touching genital area, buttocks, breasts, or mouths.

Make your intention to congratulate or comfort clear to the player.

Get permission from the player before embracing them - remember that personnel are in the position of power.

Respect a players discomfort or rejection of physical contact.

Be sure that touching occurs only when others are present.

Avoid unnecessary physical contact and never engage in inappropriate touching

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Guidance on the use of Sanctions

Discipline in Club

Discipline in Club should always be positive in focus, providing the structures and rules that allow players to set their own goals and strive for them. It should encourage players to become more responsible for themselves and their actions and therefore more independent.

Discipline should be a positive reinforcement for effort. It should encourage the development of emotional and social skills as well as skills in soccer. Players have to be helped to become responsible for the decisions and choices they make within soccer, particularly when it is likely to make a difference between playing fairly or unfairly.

There is no place in Mullingar Athletic AFC for fighting, bullying, over aggressive or dangerous behaviour.

At all times, players should treat others in a respectful manner. They should never bully, interfere with or take unfair advantage of others.

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

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

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

- Club Rules shall be clearly stated and agreed.
- A warning should be given if a rule is broken
- A sanction (use of time out for example) should be applied if a rule is broken for a second time
- If a rule is broken three or more times, the child should be spoken to and parents/guardians involved if necessary
- Sanctions should only be used in a corrective way that is intended to help children improve both now and in the future. They should never be used in retaliation or to make coach/manager/volunteer feel better or more powerful
- When violations of the team rules or other misbehaviours occur, sanctions should always be applied in an impartial and fair manner
- Sanctions should never be used as threats. If a rule is broken, the appropriate sanction/s should implemented consistently, fairly and firmly
- Sanctions should not be applied if the coach/manager/volunteer is not comfortable

with them. If an appropriate action cannot be devised immediately, the child should be told that the matter will be dealt with later, at a specified time and as soon as is possible

- Once a sanction/s has been imposed, it is important to make the child feel s/he is a valued member of the team again
- A child should be helped, to understand if necessary why sanction/s are imposed
- A child should not be sanctioned for making errors whilst playing soccer for the club
- Physical activity (e.g. running laps or doing push ups) should not be used as a sanction as to do so may cause a child to resent physical activity which is something that s/he should learn to enjoy throughout his/her life. Remember Soccer has to be Fun if participants are to continue playing
- Sanctions should be used sparingly. Constant criticism and sanctioning can cause participants to turn away from Soccer

Adapted from the Irish Sports Councils Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport (2005)

Mullingar Athletic AFC

Code of Conduct for Spectators

- Remember that although children play organised soccer in the club, they are not miniature professionals. Don't place excessive pressure on children to perform to unrealistically high expectations. Children play soccer to develop their skills, to have fun and enjoy to the game.
- Be on your best behaviour and lead by example. The behaviour of a team's supporters will often be remembered long after the result of the game. Be remembered for the right reasons.
- Applaud good play, sportsmanship and best effort by the visiting team as well as your own.
- Welcome and respect all your teams' opponents. Without them there would be no match.
- Condemn the use of violence in all forms at every opportunity.
- Verbal abuse of players, match officials or opposing supporters cannot be accepted in any shape or form. Players or match officials should never be regarded as fair targets for ignorant or abusive behaviour.

Mullingar Athletic AFC

Players Code of Conduct

Children in Mullingar Athletic AFC are entitled to:

- Be safe
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- Participate in soccer on an equal basis, appropriate to their ability and stage of development.
- Mullingar Athletic AFC has decided that all players involved in club teams are entitled to a minimum playing time. Be happy, have fun and enjoy soccer
- Make a complaint in an appropriate way and have it dealt with through a proper and effective complaints procedure
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality
- Be listened to and to be believed
- Have a voice in the running of the club

Children should also be encouraged to realise that they also have responsibilities to treat other children, fellow players, coaches and volunteers with the same degree of fairness and respect.

In this regard children in Mullingar Athletic AFC should undertake to:

- play fairly, do their best and have fun
- be on their best behaviour at all times
- abide by all club rules
- make high standards of Fair Play the standard others want to follow
- respect opponents, they are not the enemy, they are partners in a sporting event
- shake hands before and after the match, whoever wins
- give opponents a hand if they are injured, put the ball out of play so they can get attention
- accept apologies from opponents when they are offered
- respect fellow team members and support them both when they do well and when things go wrong

- treat players from minority groups with the same respect you show other people
- be modest in victory and be gracious in defeat- ***“Be A Sport”***
- approach the club Children’s Officer with any questions or concerns they might have. Coaches and parents should encourage children to speak out and support them in doing so

Children in Mullingar Athletic AFC should not:

- cheat
- use abusive language, or argue with, the referee, officials, team mates or opponents
- use violence, use physical contact only when it is allowed within the rules
- bully
- tell lies about adults or other children
- spread rumours
- take banned substances to improve performance
- keep secrets about any person who may have caused them harm
- behave in any manner that may bring the name of (insert club name here) into disrepute

In Mullingar Athletic AFC we want children to have fun and develop skills in a safe and ***Fair Play*** environment where standards of behaviour are just as important as winning.

We recognise that competition and winning is an important goal, but winning at all costs does not meet the needs of young players.

Mullingar Athletic AFC is aware that recent research would suggest that increasing numbers of children leave sport between the ages of eight and thirteen. A number of the most common reasons given were; that sport was no longer fun, they did not get to play and overemphasis on winning.

Therefore we have to make every effort to ensure that we keep a balanced approach to competition, make sure all players get a chance to play and strive to keep the fun in soccer.

Making Sport Fun.

In promoting “Sport for Fun” we in Mullingar Athletic AFC will insist on:

- Encouraging participation and fun
- Promoting the development of skills as opposed to winning at all costs
- Ensure all players in squad get playing time in games.

- Emphasising and praising effort
- Acting as a good role models
- Insisting on **Fair Play** (we will take off offending players)
- Being realistic with our expectations
- Being aware of children's feelings
- Teaching players to respect different cultures
- Teaching players that standards of behaviour are just as important as winning

Best Practice-Coaches:

In keeping children and young people at the forefront of planning and practice, our coaches can be confident that participants will enjoy their football experiences and that their actions are regarded as safe and in keeping with the principle that the safety and welfare of children is of paramount consideration.

Our Coaches are given a position of trust by parents/guardians and players, and are expected to operate to the highest standards of behaviour whilst in the company of under age players (under 18years). Our coaches are also expected not to engage in any activity that could reasonably be viewed as bringing the club or soccer in general into disrepute.

It is important to for our coaches to note that in adhering to these guidelines ensures not only a safe environment for children but also a safe environment in which coaches and volunteers can operate.

Most coaches work in an environment where it is recognised that, in a sporting context, certain types of coaching require a 'hands on approach', i.e., it may be necessary to support a participant in order to physically demonstrate a particular technique. This should only occur when necessary and in an open and appropriate way with the knowledge, permission and full understanding of the participant concerned and his/her parents/guardians.

Coaches must realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted, not only by the player, but by outsiders motivated by jealousy, dislike or mistrust and could lead to allegations of sexual misconduct or impropriety. Therefore coaches should be aware of, and avoid all situations conducive to risk.

Where possible, our club coaches/volunteers should avoid:

- Spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others.
- Taking sessions alone (always employ "Two Deep" supervision).
- Taking children to their homes.
- Taking children on journeys alone in their care.

Our Coaches/volunteers should never:

- Exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward.
- Share a room with a young person alone on away trips.
- 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.
- Use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a young person.
- Take measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adult and permission from the Committee
- Undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.) in the training of young people.

Safety:

Coaches have a responsibility to ensure the safety of all players possible within the limits of their control. Therefore, coaches should seek to create a safe and enjoyable environment in which to play and train.

In this respect:

- Regular safety checks should be carried out in relation to premises, training facilities and equipment. Any problems should be brought to the attention of the Committee
- Appropriate safety rules should be adopted and implemented and protective equipment should be used in any contact training session.
- Parents/guardians should be informed of the starting and finishing times of training sessions and matches.
- A first aid kit should be available at all training sessions /matches and injuries should be recorded, with a note of action taken in relation to each one.
- Parents/Guardians should be notified of injuries/illness which their children incur while participating in any football activity
- **Ensure that the FAI Goalpost safety policy is strictly adhered to at all times**