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### Report Forms enclosed:

1. Reporting Allegations or Suspicion of Abuse
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## Foreword

Bellurgan United Football Club is committed to ensuring that children can participate in all football activities in our club in a safe environment.

We acknowledge that football provides an excellent opportunity to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise potential as members of teams and as individuals. Participation in football should be fun, enjoyable and provide a platform to learn and develop life skills, make new friends and enhance personal growth.

The safety and welfare of all children is paramount. Bellurgan Utd FC acknowledge that all our members and volunteers are playing their part in providing an enjoyable and safe environment in which children and young people can play, learn and thrive within football.

We thank all participants, all of whom are volunteers, for their commitment, hard work and dedication which has contributed to making Bellurgan Utd FC the successful, safe and community driven club that it is. The work of the voluntary committee of Bellurgan Utd FC and the coaching staff is of crucial importance to implementing this Policy, and their endeavours need to be acknowledged and supported at all levels within the game. Their efforts are deeply appreciated and the full adoption and application of this Policy by everyone involved will help ensure the promotion of happy, healthy and successful experiences.

## 1. Policy Statement

### Why do we need a Policy?

Bellurgan Utd FC Child Welfare Policy (the “Policy”) aims to set out guidelines and procedures to assist those working with children and young people within the club and where appropriate those working with vulnerable persons. It is the responsibility of all adults involved in football to actively promote best practice standards whilst being ever vigilant and aware of their responsibilities. This policy has been formulated in line the FAI Child Welfare Policy 1<sup>st</sup> Edition as published January 2014.

### Who is the Policy aimed at?

The Policy is aimed at all those engaged in football and club related activities within Bellurgan Utd FC.

Bellurgan Utd FC are committed to following the principles and practice guidelines contained in the Policy by:

- Recognising that the safety, protection and welfare of children and young people is of paramount importance;
- Obliging all relevant persons engaging directly or indirectly with children and young people to be Garda vetted;
- Providing appropriate training and education in the area of child welfare;
- Providing guidance and assistance to all who work directly or indirectly with children and young people;
- Appointing a Designated Child Welfare Officer who will report to the committee of Bellurgan Utd FC who together are responsible for overseeing the club’s policy on child protection and implementation of same;
- Providing a clear pathway for the investigation of complaints and appropriate disciplinary procedures;

### What is contained within the Policy?

In particular the Policy outlines;

- the various types of abuse which can arise;
- the recommended reporting procedures;
- guidance on confidentiality;
- the role of Designated Child Welfare Officer;
- principles of safe record keeping;
- the role of Statutory Authorities;
- safe recruitment and management practices;
- procedures for handling allegations and complaints relating to children and young people;
- the process for involving parents and children;
- guidelines in respect of away trips;
- best practice for use of photography, websites and social media.

## **Who approves the Policy?**

This Policy is approved by the Committee of Bellurgan Utd FC. Proposals for additions and/or amendments are considered by the committee on an ongoing basis.

## **What are the underlying principles of the Policy?**

The Policy follows the principles outlined in relevant guidelines and legislation provided by Statutory Authorities. The Policy is established on a number of core principles: - the needs of the child, integrity and respect, environment, equality, fair play, welfare and safety in children's football. These underlying principles underpin the Policy and outline our principles of good practice and child protection policy and procedures.

**(i)** Safe Environment

The safety and welfare of children is of paramount importance and children must feel safe in their surroundings. Unhealthy competitive demands should not be placed on children too early as this could result in excessive levels of pressure and as a consequence, high levels of dropout from the sport. Those working with children should be suitable for their positions, i.e. all should be Garda vetted and should be aware of the principles of Children First (2011) and the requirements of the Policy. The committee of Bellurgan Utd FC should ensure proper procedures are put in place to ensure our children can participate in a safe manner and that concerns regarding their welfare are correctly and speedily handled.

**(ii)** The Needs of the Child

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

**(iii)** Integrity and Respect

Adults interacting with children and young people in football should do so with integrity and respect. All adult actions in football should be guided by what is in the best interests of the child and in the context of quality and open working relationships. Child abuse of any kind is unacceptable within football.

**(iv)** Equality

All children should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, gender, religious, social, or ethnic background or political persuasion.

**(v)** Fair Play

Fair Play is the guiding principle of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport.

[https://www.sportireland.ie/participation/code\\_of\\_ethics/code\\_of\\_ethics\\_manual/](https://www.sportireland.ie/participation/code_of_ethics/code_of_ethics_manual/)

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".

## 2. Child abuse

Child Abuse can be categorised into four main types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. Other forms of abuse include bullying. A child may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.

### Definition of 'neglect'

- Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the 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, and/or medical care.
- Harm can be defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by the child's health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of similar age.
- Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For example; a child who suffers a series of minor injuries may not have his or her needs met in terms of necessary supervision and safety.
- a child whose height or weight is significantly below average may be deprived of adequate nutrition.
- a child who consistently misses school may be deprived of intellectual stimulation.
- The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

### Definition of 'emotional abuse'

• Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a parent/carer 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. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.

Examples may include:

- the imposition of negative attributes on a child, expressed by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming;
- conditional parenting in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviours or actions;
- emotional unavailability of the child's parent/carer;
- unresponsiveness of the parent/carer and/or inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of the child;
- premature imposition of responsibility on the child;
- unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of the child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself or herself in a certain way;
- under or over protection of the child;

- failure to show interest in, or provide age-appropriate opportunities for, the child's cognitive and emotional development;
- use of unreasonable or over-harsh disciplinary measures;
- exposure to domestic violence;
- exposure to inappropriate or abusive material through new technology.

Emotional abuse can be manifested in terms of the child's behavioural, cognitive, affective or physical functioning.

Examples of these include insecure attachment, unhappiness, low self-esteem, educational and developmental underachievement, and oppositional behaviour. The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/carer.

### Definition of 'physical abuse'

- Physical abuse of a child is that which results in actual or potential harm from an interaction, or lack of interaction, which is reasonably within the control of a parent or person in a position of responsibility, power or trust. There may be single or repeated incidents. Physical abuse can involve:
  - severe physical punishment;
  - beating, slapping, hitting or kicking;
  - pushing, shaking or throwing;
  - pinching, biting, choking or hair-pulling;
  - terrorising with threats;
  - observing violence;
  - use of excessive force in handling;
  - deliberate poisoning;
  - suffocation;
  - fabricated/induced illness;
  - allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

### Definition of '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. Examples of child sexual abuse include:
  - exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of the child;
  - intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification;
  - masturbation in the presence of the child or the involvement of the child in an act of masturbation;
  - sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal;
  - sexual exploitation of a child, which includes inciting, encouraging, propositioning, requiring or permitting a child to solicit for, or to engage in, prostitution or other sexual acts. Sexual exploitation

also occurs when a child is involved in the exhibition, modelling or posing for the purpose of sexual arousal, gratification or sexual act, including its recording (on film, video tape or other media) or the manipulation, for those purposes, of the image by computer or other means. It may also include showing sexually explicit material to children, which is often a feature of the 'grooming' process by perpetrators of abuse;

- consensual sexual activity involving an adult and an underage person. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years for both boys and girls. An Garda Síochána will deal with the criminal aspects of the case under the relevant legislation.
- It should be noted that the definition of child sexual abuse presented in this section is not a legal definition and is not intended to be a description of the criminal offence of sexual assault.

## Other forms of 'Abuse'

### Bullying

- Anyone can be the target of bullying but no one deserves to be the victim of bullying. Everyone has the right to be treated with respect.

Bellurgan Utd FC will not accept or condone bullying in football and has defined bullying as a category of abuse. It is the responsibility of everyone in football, whatever their role, to ensure that bullying is dealt with appropriately. Bullying can take place anywhere, but is more likely to take place where there is inadequate supervision.

Examples of Bullying include:

- physical: hitting, kicking and theft;
- verbal: name calling, constant teasing, sarcasm, racist or homophobic taunts, threats and gestures;
- emotional: tormenting, cyber, ridiculing, humiliating and ignoring;
- sexual: unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.

### Cyber, text and social media bullying

Cyber bullying can involve unwanted text messages, phone video recordings or web posts being used to threaten abuse or harm someone. It is similar to physical or verbal bullying, but it uses technology instead. Cyber bullying, like all bullying, is difficult for the victim. It can be hard to prove and difficult to get the courage to report it. Text bullying or harassment can be texts that frighten, insult, threaten or make the recipient feel uncomfortable. Email, social networks like Facebook/Twitter and phone calls can be used to harass in the same way.

## Recognising Child Abuse

Child abuse can often be difficult to identify and may be present in many forms, therefore it is necessary to follow some general guidelines.

There are commonly three stages in the identification of child abuse:

1. Considering the possibility;
2. Looking out for signs of abuse;
3. Recording of information.

### Stage 1: Considering the possibility

The possibility of child abuse should be considered if a child appears to have suffered a suspicious injury for which no reasonable explanation can be offered. It should also be considered if the child seems distressed without obvious reason or displays persistent or new behavioural problems. The possibility of child abuse should also be considered if the child displays unusual or fearful responses to parents/carers.

### Stage 2: Looking out for signs of abuse

Signs of abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental. They can exist in the relationships between children and parents/carers or between children and other family members/other persons. A cluster or pattern of signs is likely to be more indicative of abuse. Children who are being abused may hint that they are being harmed and sometimes make direct disclosures. Disclosures should be believed. Some signs are more indicative of abuse than others.

These include:

- Disclosure of abuse and neglect by a child or young person;
- Age-inappropriate or abnormal sexual play, language or knowledge;
- Specific injuries or patterns of injuries;
- Absconding from home or a care situation;
- Self harm
- Attempted suicide;
- Underage pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease;

Signs in one or more categories at the same time may together indicate a pattern of abuse. Most signs of abuse are non-specific and must be considered in the child's social and family context with the aid of professionals. Football clubs are often the places where appropriate trusting relationships with adults outside the family or formal education sector are developed. However it can also provide opportunities for adults to target and groom a child or young person through their role as a volunteer or paid employee. Grooming can be seen as the process by which an individual manipulates those around them – particularly, but not exclusively, the child – to provide opportunities to abuse and reduce the likelihood of being reported or discovered.



### Stage 3: Recording and reporting of information

If abuse is suspected, it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much detailed information as possible. Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information that may be relevant. Please refer to the reporting procedures section of the Policy for more information.

Points to remember;

- The severity of a sign does not necessarily equate with the severity of the abuse. Severe and potentially fatal injuries are not always visible. Emotional and/or psychological abuse tends to be cumulative and effects may only be observable in the longer term.
- Neglect is as potentially fatal as physical abuse. It can cause delayed physical, psychological and emotional development, chronic ill-health and significant long-term damage. It may also precede, or co-exist with other forms of abuse and must be acted upon.
- Child abuse is not restricted to any socio-economic group, gender or culture. All signs must be considered in the wider social and family context.
- Challenging behaviour by a child or young person should not render them liable to abuse. Children in certain circumstances may present management problems. This should not leave them vulnerable to harsh disciplinary measures or neglect of care.
- It is sometimes difficult to distinguish between indicators of child abuse and other adversities suffered by children and families. The advice of professionals should always be sought.

### Vulnerable Children

Certain children are more vulnerable to abuse than others. Such children include those with disabilities, homeless children and those who, for one reason or another, are separated from their parents or other family members and who depend on others for their care and protection. The same categories of abuse - neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse - are applicable, but may take a slightly different form. For example, abuse may take the form of deprivation of basic rights, harsh disciplinary regimes or the inappropriate use of medications or physical restraints.

### Distinguishing between 'Child abuse' and 'Poor Practice'

Concerns identified as child abuse will fall within the following categories:

1. Physical Abuse
2. Neglect
3. Sexual Abuse
4. Emotional Abuse
5. Bullying

Incidents of poor practice occur when the needs of children and young people are not afforded the necessary priority, so that their welfare is compromised.

Some examples are likely to be:

- When insufficient care is taken to avoid injuries (e.g. by excessive training or inappropriate training for the age, maturity, experience and ability of players).
- Giving continued and unnecessary preferential treatment to individuals and regularly or unfairly rejecting others (e.g. singling out and only focusing on the talented players and failing to involve the full squad).
- Placing children or young people in potentially compromising and uncomfortable situations with adults (e.g. changing in a 1:1 situation with a coach).
- Allowing abusive or concerning practices to go unreported (e.g. a coach who ridicules and criticizes players who make a mistake during a match).
- Ignoring health and safety guidelines (e.g. allowing young players to set up goal posts unsupervised by adults).
- Failing to adhere to the club's codes of practice (e.g. openly verbally abusing the referee).

Points to remember;

- Judgement about whether an incident is one of child abuse or poor practice may not be possible at the point of referral, but only after the collation of relevant information.
- The majority of poor practice concerns will be dealt with directly by the club in the first instance. Further support and guidance will then be sought from the league, the National Body/Provincial Association and then the FAI where appropriate.
- In some cases poor practice may amount to child abuse, e.g. where the actions of a coach/manager put a child at unacceptable risk of injury and accordingly must be reported to the Statutory Authorities.
- All child abuse investigations will be dealt with by the Statutory Authorities with the full support of Bellurgan Utd FC.

### 3.The role of Bellurgan Utd FC Committee pertaining to BUFC Child Welfare Policy

The Policy shall be monitored by Bellurgan Utd FC Committee who in turn have the following general remit:

- a) To monitor and oversee compliance with the Policy, and all regulations, codes, policies and guidelines in respect of child protection and welfare.
- b) To consider matters referred to it by the Child Welfare Officer in accordance with the Policy.
- c) To take appropriate action in relation to breaches of the Policy, and all regulations, codes, policies and guidelines in respect of child protection and welfare.
- d) Advise the Statutory Authorities of any concerns pertaining to child protection and welfare
- e) To report concerns pertaining to child protection and welfare regarding any BUFC member, volunteer or independent.
- f) To work closely with the Designated Child Welfare Officer.

#### Designated Children's Officer/Liaison Officers

All member clubs of the FAI, leagues, divisional associations or other football bodies engaged with children shall appoint a Designated Children's Officer within their relevant football body.

The Designated Children's Officer and/or Liaison Officer shall:

- Be responsible for all matters pertaining to the protection and welfare of children at their level within the game.
- Be informed and knowledgeable about child protection and welfare including the provisions of the Policy and shall undertake any training considered necessary to keep themselves updated on new developments.

The role includes:

- Promoting best practice and procedures within the game.
- Receiving reports and being familiar with and able to carry out reporting procedures.
- Communicating with parents and/or authorities as appropriate.
- Assisting with the ongoing development and implementation of the organisation's child protection training needs.
- Being aware of local contacts and services in relation to child protection.
- Informing Statutory Authorities of relevant concerns about individual children.
- Reporting poor practice to their relevant governing body having ensured that any concerns regarding child protection issues have been reported to the relevant statutory authority.

## Criminal Record Checks / Garda Vetting

The FAI is a registered organisation with the Gardaí for the purposes of Garda vetting. Garda vetting is a process which involves an individual giving consent for An Garda Síochána to furnish the FAI with a statement that there are no convictions recorded in the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere or a statement of all convictions and / or prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed in the State or elsewhere as the case may be.

Garda vetting should be completed prior to the commencement of any position for those who will be working with children and/or vulnerable persons in any capacity. Garda vetting is not a substitute for safe recruitment but provides another element in determining a person's suitability to work with children. The FAI recommends that Affiliated Members do not solely rely upon vetting checks but should also seek to determine an individual's suitability for a position through normal recruitment processes including interviews and reference checks.

## FAI Vetting Obligations

- a) All those engaging with persons under the age of 18 and vulnerable persons shall be Garda Vetted.
- b) All Designated Children's Officers, Designated Liaison Officers, Chairpersons and Secretaries of each Affiliated Member involved with teams that are competing in any age group up to and including Under 18's shall be Garda Vetted.
- c) All coaches or those involved with the management of any team that are competing in any age group up to and including Under 18 shall be Garda Vetted.
- d) Any other person working or volunteering with children in any capacity on behalf of the FAI or an Affiliated Member shall be Garda Vetted. It is the responsibility of the football body concerned to determine the relevant persons within their organisation who this applies to subject to the relevant legislation and guidelines.
- e) Failure to ensure that the relevant persons are vetted in accordance with the Policy, FAI Rules and/or legislation may result in disciplinary action against the individual and/or Affiliated Member and may also constitute a legal offence under relevant legislation.
- f) Affiliated Members shall not accept confirmation of the Garda vetting status of any individual prior to confirmation being received from the FAI that the Garda vetting of the individual is in order. It is the responsibility of each club, league and divisional association who engage individuals to ensure that they have received a copy of vetting approval.
- a) The FAI shall provide a Garda vetting service to all Members. Applications for vetting may be made by contacting the Designated Child Welfare Officers and/or Designated Child Welfare Liaison Officer of the relevant football body or directly through the FAI.
- b) The FAI shall be solely responsible for the approval of all vetting applications and final determination on disclosures provided by the Gardaí in accordance with the Policy.
- c) All persons shall complete their vetting application in good faith and shall ensure all information provided is accurate, complete and up to date.

d) All matters disclosed as part of the Garda vetting application shall remain confidential to FAI authorised personnel, the applicant and Statutory Authorities. However, approvals and rejections shall be notified to all relevant football personnel in accordance with the Policy.

## Vetting Application Process

When available applications may be made online at [www.fai.ie](http://www.fai.ie) by registering as an FAI Member and following the steps to complete a vetting application. Applications may also be made by manually completing the FAI approved Vetting Application form by hand. Incomplete forms will be returned and may delay applications.

### Step 1

Once a Vetting form has been fully completed either manually or on-line all forms should be sent by the club, league, provincial association or national body by post to the Child Welfare Officer, Football Association of Ireland, National Sports Campus, Abbotstown, Dublin 15. All forms must be sent to the FAI for processing and not to An Garda Síochána.

### Step 2

When the Garda vetting forms are returned to the FAI, the Garda vetting form will contain a statement which will include either that;

- (a) there are no convictions recorded against the individual in the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere, or
- (b) a statement of all convictions and/or prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed, in the State or elsewhere as the case may be.

### Step 3 – No disclosures

Should the Garda vetting form disclose no convictions recorded against an individual, correspondence shall be sent to the applicant advising them of this. This correspondence should be provided to the relevant football body as proof of vetting by the individual. Verbal assurances should never be accepted.

### Step 4 - Disclosures

In some instances disclosure of convictions and/or other information will be provided to the Designated Child Welfare Officer of the FAI by the Gardaí. In many cases these disclosures may not prevent an individual from working with children.

Applicants will be given an opportunity to comment on any disclosures before any decision is made by the Child Welfare Committee to ensure fairness and transparency at all times. In some cases it may be necessary to meet and interview the applicant before a decision is made. Applicants will then be advised of the decision which has been made in respect of any vetting disclosures. If the decision is negative, a letter informing them of this decision will be sent to them. If an applicant is currently engaged within football, and if a vetting application is not accepted, they may also be issued with an immediate Stand Down Order in accordance with the Policy. The FAI shall advise all relevant football bodies who are known to be associated with the applicant of the outcome of any negative vetting application. Unsuccessful applicants will be afforded an opportunity for a negative decision made against them to be reviewed by the FAI.

## Step 5 – Review

Unsuccessful applicants will be afforded an opportunity for a negative decision made against them to be reviewed by the Legal and Corporate Affairs Committee. The applicant will be invited to make any written submissions to support their position. In some situations it may be necessary to meet and interview the applicant if the Legal and Corporate Affairs Committee deems this appropriate in any given case. This is a review process conducted at the sole discretion of the Legal and Corporate Affairs Committee and they shall determine what further information they may require for any particular review. Decisions made by the Legal and Corporate Affairs Committee regarding vetting applications are final and not subject to appeal.

If the recommendation of rejection is confirmed, the relevant persons and football bodies involved will be duly informed.

In the case of rejection of an applicant the Legal and Corporate Affairs Committee may also issue an automatic ban from membership of the FAI where vetting disclosures deem it necessary for the protection of children.

## Vetting Enquiries

The FAI shall keep a secure central database of all vetting applications in accordance with data protection legislation. Vetting information shall be passed to Affiliated Members seeking information on applicants where the applicant has indicated their consent to such information being disclosed. Affiliated Members shall not engage any person to work with children without such information being provided either by way of production of a letter confirming the vetting status of an individual or an enquiry being made to the FAI with the consent of the individual concerned. Length of Vetting Status

An individual's criminal record may change at any time hence the importance of general practices being put into place around safe recruitment, references and safe practices in working with children. The current recommended vetting period is every 3-5 years. Notwithstanding this if any person has a concern that an individual should be re-vetted at an earlier interval this should be requested.

Convictions

Any member charged with or convicted of an offence in any jurisdiction for an offence which may raise concerns regarding their appropriateness to work with children may be issued with a Stand Down Order and/or Automatic Ban as referred to in the Policy.

## 4. Reporting Procedures

Bellurgan Utd FC shall treat all concerns reported under the Policy in a serious manner and in line with the following principles.

(i) Coaches or others engaged by Bellurgan Utd FC who are advised, suspect or are concerned that a child may be at risk of abuse are obliged to immediately inform the Designated Children's Officer. The priority in all cases is the safety and wellbeing of the child. The Statutory Authorities should also be advised and all necessary steps taken to protect the child.

(ii) In the event of an emergency where a child is believed to be in immediate danger the Statutory Authorities should be alerted as a matter of urgency. This may be done through any Garda station.

(iii) In cases where there is deemed to be a serious risk to children the Celite Committee including Designated Children's Officer of Bellurgan Utd FC may issue a temporary Stand Down Order in line with the Policy.

(iv) Reports can be made to the Statutory Authorities in person, by telephone or in writing and should include all relevant information. A standard form for reporting child protection and/or welfare is included in this document.

(v) If abuse is suspected, it is important to establish the grounds for concern by obtaining as much detailed information as possible. Observations should be accurately recorded and should include dates, times, names, locations, context and any other information that may be relevant. It is not the role of Designated Children's Officer to investigate the circumstances of an allegation of abuse prior to informing the Statutory Authorities. It should be ensured that all relevant information is recorded and provided to the Statutory Authorities.

(vi) Parents/carers of a child who is a suspected victim of abuse should be advised that a report is being made unless doing so is likely to endanger the child.

(vii) Reports received anonymously should be taken seriously and relevant enquiries made to establish if there is any substance to the complaint. The welfare of the child is a priority in all cases.

(viii) Children who are being abused may hint that they are being harmed and sometimes make disclosures. Disclosures should always be believed and reported to the relevant Designated Children's Officer without delay.

(ix) Any request to keep information anonymous cannot be guaranteed.

(x) Where the Designated Children's Officer decides not to refer a report to the Statutory Authorities the complainant shall be informed in writing and advised that they are entitled to contact the Statutory Authorities directly if they so wish.

## Protection from civil liability for persons reporting concerns of child abuse in good faith (The Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act 1998)

Legislation makes provision for the protection from civil liability of persons who have communicated child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to designated officers of the Child and Family Agency or to any member of An Garda Síochána. This protection applies to organisations as well as to individuals. This means that even if a communicated suspicion of child abuse proves unfounded, a plaintiff who took an action would have to prove that the person who communicated the concern had not acted reasonably and in good faith in making the report.

## How Reports shall be managed

Once a report is received it shall be reviewed by the Designated Children's Officer. The Designated Children's Officer shall determine if an investigation is required and the nature and extent of enquiries and/or reports to be made. It is a matter for the Designated Children's Officer to determine if a report falls under the remit of the Policy and such determination is not subject to appeal.

## False/Malicious Allegations

False or malicious allegations are deemed to be a serious breach of the Policy and the principles of Bellurán Utd FC. Allegations of this type may result in disciplinary action being taken and may constitute an offence under relevant legislation.



## Stand Down Orders

A Stand Down Order may be issued to an individual directly by the elite committee of Bellurgan Utd FC or by the FAI itself. A Stand Down Order is an order made for the immediate protection and safeguarding of children and is not a determination of wrongdoing by any individual. Stand Down Orders may be issued in a number of circumstances including but not limited to the following:

- Any person who is the subject of a complaint or inquiry by a Statutory Authority in relation to any child welfare concern shall be issued with a Stand Down Order from all football activities. This order shall be issued by the Chairperson of Bellurgan Utd FC or Designated Children's Officer, pending the outcome of any inquiry and any subsequent internal disciplinary proceedings. Terms of a Stand Down Order must be complied with.
- Bellurgan Utd FC shall immediately notify the FAI of any Stand Down Order issued.
- Any person engaged within football who is the subject of a vetting disclosure, which in the opinion of a Designated Children's Officer deems them unsuitable to work with children, shall be issued with an immediate Stand Down Order.
- Where it is determined that urgent action is required for any reason an immediate Stand Down Order shall be issued.

In the case of a Stand Down Order issued, the Designated Children's Officer shall inform the individual of the issuance of a Stand Down Order and shall also inform all relevant persons who are engaging the individual within the game. Failure of any person or body to comply with the terms of such an order once notified shall be a disciplinary matter and subject to further sanction.

Bellurgan Utd FC committee shall monitor all Stand Down Orders issued and may be requested to review a Stand Down Order on request from the individual concerned. This is a review process, not an Appeal, and the committee shall make all such final determinations as it deems necessary for the protection and welfare of children.

## 5. General guidelines for interaction between Adults and Children

### Conduct and Behaviour towards Children

All adults involved in football have an important role to play in promoting good practice. Their first priority has to be the children's welfare, safety and enjoyment of the game. Adults should be aware of the emotional, physical and personal needs of children and should ensure that children are treated with integrity and respect. The trust implicit in adult child relationships in sport places a duty of care on all adults, voluntary or professional to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the child while engaged in football. Adults have a crucial leadership role to play and contribute to the creation of a positive sporting environment for children. This allows the child to develop and express themselves in an open and secure way.

The principles referred to in this Policy should always be emphasised in football and children should be given clear guidelines regarding acceptable standards of behaviour. The importance of participation for each child, best effort and enjoyment rather than winning should be stressed. All children should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner and every child, irrespective of ability, should be involved in football in an integrated and inclusive way where possible.

In particular all adult-child relationships in football should be:

- open, positive and encouraging;
- defined by a mutually agreed set of goals and commitments;
- respectful of the creativity and autonomy of children;
- carried out in a context where children are protected and where their rights are promoted;
- free from any abuse or any threat of such abuse;
- respectful of the needs and developmental stage of the child;
- aimed at the promotion of enjoyment and individual progress;
- in accordance with FAI policies and codes;
- respectful but not unquestioning of authority;
- aware that children with disabilities may be more vulnerable.

## General Supervision of Children

It is important to create a safe and enjoyable environment in which to play and train and to ensure any risks in relation to premises, training facilities and equipment are minimised with the implementation of appropriate safety rules. Children need to be supervised at all times as the likelihood of accidents happening increases when adequate supervision is not in place.

In particular the following should be adhered to;

- Ensure adequate Adult: Child ratios.
- There should be at least one adult of each gender with mixed parties.
- Children should be supervised at all times.
- Adults should avoid being left alone with children. Clearly state times for start and finish of training and/or competitions. If late collections occur, participants should remain in pairs until all players have left.
- If a coach/manager needs to talk separately to a player this should be done in an open environment, in view of others.
- Respect the privacy of children while changing, coaches/managers may only need to enter changing rooms where the participants are very young or require special assistance. When necessary, participants should supervise in pairs or seek assistance, it is the safety and welfare of the participants that is of paramount importance.
- If a child suffers an injury or accident the parents/guardians should be informed and necessary reports completed.
- Activities being undertaken should be suitable for the ability, age, and experience of the participants.
- Equipment and facilities should meet the highest possible standards and be appropriate to the maturity of the participants.
- All FAI Goalpost Safety Guidelines must strictly be adhered to and enforced.
- Where protective equipment is deemed necessary it should be used.
- First Aid should be available for all training sessions and matches.

## Missing Children

If a child is believed to be missing, efforts should be made to first establish the child's whereabouts by contacting the parents/carers. If the child's location cannot be established and/or the parents/carers are not available and reasonable efforts have been made to contact them the matter should be reported to the Gardaí urgently.

## Transport of Children

Children being transported should have the express permission of parents/guardians to do so. Appropriate insurance should be in place by the transporter and duties conducted in accordance with relevant legislation including the use of seat belts. Only the permitted number of passengers should be allowed in specific transport. Clear itineraries for transport arrangements including collection and drop off details and contact details for the appropriate adults in charge should be provided. Personnel shall not allow themselves be alone with any one child when assisting with transport arrangements. The use of private cars may be necessary from time to time but where possible this should be avoided.

Parents/guardians have a responsibility to ensure that they are fully aware of any transport arrangements and that they are happy with them. Children should be collected promptly and it is a matter for parents/ guardians to make any necessary arrangements. In the event that a parent/guardian is late for collection or drop off immediate contact should be made with the contact person involved. In the event a child is late being collected efforts should be made to contact the parent/guardian to make whatever other appropriate arrangements can be made. It is a matter for parents/guardians to arrange transport to events for children unless specific arrangements are made. If a private arrangement is made between parents/guardians they should be aware that there are extra responsibilities placed on persons who transport players to events.

The following general guidelines should be followed for away trips:

- All adults who travel on away trips with children should be carefully chosen and appropriately vetted.
- A meeting with parents and participants is useful to communicate travel times, competition details, other activities, gear requirements, medical requirements, special dietary needs and any other necessary details. Ground rules and behavioural expectations can also be discussed.
- Any group socialisation should take place in communal areas (i.e. no boys in girls' rooms and vice versa).
- Alcoholic drink, smoking and other illegal substances/activities shall be forbidden and adults are expected to act as appropriate role models in this respect.
- The roles and responsibilities of adults participating in away trips should be clearly defined.
- The organising body should appoint a team manager/head of delegation for all away trips having overall responsibility for the children's well being, & behaviour. Children should be informed at the outset to whom they can report any concerns they might have and shall be clearly encouraged to tell anybody if they should have a concern.
- On away trips, coaches should be accountable to the appointed team manager/head of delegation 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/head of delegation should submit a report as soon as possible after the trip recording any incidents/accidents or simply recording that no incidents arose.
- Avoid being alone with one child. If talking separately, do so in an open environment, in view of others.

- Best practice is to ensure two coaches are on site for each team. Adequate child ratios should always be maintained (this can depend on the ages of the children, the nature of the activity involved or any special needs of the group) Ensure adequate supervision at all times.
- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover for the trip and that any incidents are correctly reported.
- Parents/Guardians should be informed as soon as possible if their child suffers any significant injury, accident or becomes unwell.

## Changing facilities

Where possible children should have sole use of changing facilities and all efforts should be made to try and secure separate facilities for children. As many children are self-conscious about changing in front of others it may become more suitable to ask children to change at home before and after activities. A common-sense approach should be adopted as to what the parents/guardians may prefer.

Where facilities are being used by children proper supervision is required and careful consideration should be given to who should be supervising. Those persons should be suitable for such supervision, being vetted and recruited in line with the safe procedures outlined in this Policy. Adults in such supervisory roles should balance the need of supervision with respect of the privacy of children at all times. It is recommended that more than one adult supervise at any time and supervisors are of the same gender as the children involved. Contact between other adults and children should be avoided by careful timing of the changing facilities and adequate notices being put in place. Where mixed changing facilities with adults and children are unavoidable proper adult supervision is even more important. Parents may be of valuable assistance but should also be suitable for undertaking this responsibility. Where mixed gender teams are involved arrangements should be made to allow for separate changing facilities. This can be accomplished through timing arrangements, changing at home only, allocating rooms or areas which are screened off.

## Accidents/Incidents

Any accidents or incidents involving children should be reported in full to the Chairperson by completion of the appropriate report form, included in this document.

If a child is referred for medical treatment contact should immediately be made with the child's parent/ guardian and the relevant consent form located for medical treatment. The child should be accompanied by the person in charge of the child, if for any reason enquiries should be made regarding any diagnosis or treatment. An incident report form should be completed in all cases whether medical treatment is required or not. In all cases insurers should be notified of the incident and the report form submitted for their records.

## Insurance

Appropriate Insurance should be in place to cover organised activities and programmes undertaken with children. Away trips should be included in such cover. Adults transporting children in cars should be aware of the extent and limits of their motor insurance cover, particularly in relation to acceptable numbers and liability.

## Confidentiality

All matters relating to the welfare and protection of children shall be managed in accordance with the Policy and the following principles shall be adhered to;

- a) All complaints, concerns and allegations shall be handled in the best interests of the child concerned and in a careful and sensitive manner. It is a matter for the Designated Children's Officers to determine the relevant persons to be advised in such circumstances. No undertakings regarding secrecy shall be given to any party.
- b) All information regarding concerns relating to child protection and welfare shall be shared on 'a need to know' basis in the interests of the child. This shall not be deemed a breach of confidentiality.
- c) The exchange of information with the Statutory Authorities for ensuring the protection of children is not a breach of confidentiality.
- d) Any information gathered for one purpose will not be used for any another purpose without consultation with the persons who provided that information.
- e) All breaches of confidentiality shall be considered extremely serious and dealt with accordingly.

## Record Keeping

All information gathered by Bellurgan Utd FC shall be stored in a secure location with access only by committee members.

All records shall be maintained in an accurate manner so as to ensure the protection of children and all information shall be recorded.

Records shall be presented so that clear information may be accessed by the Statutory Authorities if necessary.

## Data Protection

Bellurgan Utd FC hold all information in accordance with data protection legislation. Information shall not be passed to third parties unless by consent or deemed necessary for the protection and welfare of children.

## **Report Forms:**

1. Reporting Allegations or Suspicion of Abuse
2. Parent/Guardian Medical Consent Form
3. Accident Report For
4. Incident Report Form