



## **Bohermeen Celtic Child Protection & Welfare Policy Statement**

### **Introduction**

Bohermeen Celtic 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. This Policy document clearly demonstrates the importance placed by our club on the protection and safety of children and young people who participate in soccer.

All children and young people<sup>[1]</sup> 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.

Bohermeen Celtic recognises and accepts its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people 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 Bohermeen Celtic knows exactly what is expected of them in relation to protecting children and young people within soccer.

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

In pursuit of this goal Bohermeen Celtic will:

- Advise all members of Bohermeen Celtic (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

### **THE AIMS OF BOHERMEEN CELTIC 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, 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 Bohermeen Celtic are committed to cooperating fully with them in accordance with procedures as outlined in “Children First” National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.
- Bohermeen Celtic 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, regarding 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.

**Bohermeen Celtic** through confirming this policy document has demonstrated its commitment to ensuring that children and young people 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 soccer.

It is the responsibility of all adults involved in soccer 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.

### **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:**

#### **Step One**

1. a specific indication from a child that (s)he was abused;(iii) an illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse;(v) consistent signs of neglect over a period of time. Any allegation of abuse must in the first instance be brought to the attention of the Coaching Co-ordinator, Child Welfare Officer, or Chairperson of the Club. Should they be unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist they can informally consult with the local HSE duty social worker. She/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.
2. Ref. Children First
3. (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;
4. (ii) a statement from a person who witnessed abuse;

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 Bohermeen Celtic 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 Chairperson will privately inform the coach/volunteer of the following:

- the fact that the allegation has been made against him/her;
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- 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.

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