

Wilkestown Target Shooting Club

Safeguarding Statement

NOTE: This policy has been adopted from the National Governing Body Target Shooting Ireland and follows best practice with regards Safeguarding in Ireland.

1. Introduction

Wilkestown Target Shooting club (WTSC) is committed to ensuring that the welfare of the children and young people.

- All sporting organisations are to ensure that the provision for these individuals is paramount:
- All children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, ethnicity or national origin, religion or belief and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- All employees, officials, volunteers or members (paid or unpaid) involved in target shooting have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate person.
- Officials, coaches or members are not trained to deal with situations of abuse nor decide if abuse has occurred.

2. Policy Statement

- WTSC has a duty of care to safeguard all children involved in target shooting from harm. All children have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. WTSC will ensure the safety and protection of all children involved in target shooting through adherence to Safeguarding Children guidelines adopted by WTSC and Target Shooting Ireland.
- A child is defined as an individual under 18 years of age.

3. Policy Objectives

- The aim of the WTSC Safeguarding of Children Policy is to promote good practice:
- providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of WTSC officials or coaches.
- Allow all officials, coaches or members to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.
- Ensure the club has a children's officer and designated liaison person in place to handle matters appropriately.

4. Promotion of Good Practice with Young People

4.1. Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take. Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer may have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where a young person needs protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document. When a child enters the club having been subjected to child abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem.

4.2.

Good Practice Guidelines: All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate within target shooting:

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging an open environment). Avoid one to one scenarios.
- Treating all young people and vulnerable adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with junior target shooters (e.g. it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Although manual or physical support situations are rare in target shooting any that do occur should be provided openly and according to guidelines as care is needed. Young people should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are becoming increasingly sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered.
- Keeping up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance in the sport.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible (e.g. where possible in residential situations).
- Ensuring that if mixed teams are taken away, they should, if possible, be accompanied by a male and female member of staff (note: same gender abuse can also occur).
- Ensuring that at championships or residential events, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- Being a good role model – this includes moderating one's own behaviour in the company of young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults – avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Ensuring that parents are aware that officials, coaches and clubs will be acting 'in loco parentis', and if the need arises they will have the authority to discipline and also administer emergency first aid and/ or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting parental consent if club officials are required to transport young people in their cars.
- Where both female and male children are involved in the club, a children's officer should be present for both male and females.
- The children's officer(s) and designated liaison persons should not hold a coaching role in the club to avoid any potential conflict of interest.
- The club should display details and photographs of the club children's officer and designated liaison person to ensure all members are aware of who holds these positions and how to reach out.

4.3.

Practice to be avoided: The following should be avoided except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or the child's parents. For example, a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with children away from others.
- Avoid taking children to your home where they will be alone with you.

4.4.

The following should never be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay;

- Share a room with a child;
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching;
- Allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun;
- Reduce a child to tears as a form of control;
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon;
- Do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults, that they can do for themselves**
- Invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.
- Administer any form of physical punishment or discipline except by way of necessary restraint.

4.5.

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to another colleague and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed.

- If you accidentally hurt a junior shooting athlete.
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner.
- If a junior shooting athlete appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a junior shooting athlete misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

** NOTE. It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the players involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

5. Recruitment of Coaches

5.1.

WTSC recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children.

5.2.

WTSC will undertake pre-selection checks on any coaches whether remunerated or not which it may recruit. These checks will include:

- All coaches will be Garda vetted.
- All coaches completing an application form. The application form will elect information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent will be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Garda Criminal Records Bureau.
- Confidential references may be sought, these references to be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo).

5.3.

Post Selection:

All coaches will familiarise themselves with the club safeguarding policy.

Where a coach is involved in the club, they will complete the Level 1 children's safeguarding course.

6. Responding to suspicions or allegations

6.1.

It is not the responsibility of anyone working with WTSC, in a paid or unpaid capacity, to take responsibility or to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place.

6.2.

However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

6.3.

WTSC will assure all officials, coaches and members that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child.

6.4.

Where there is a complaint against an official, coach or member there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation,
- A child protection investigation,
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

6.5.

The results of the Garda and child protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

7. Actions if there are concerns

7.1. Poor Practice:

If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the WTSC Children's Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

If the allegation is about poor practice by a WTSC Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to WTSC Secretary who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

7.2. Suspected Abuse:

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by either an official, coach or member should be reported to WTSC Designated Liaison Person (DLP), who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk.

The WTSC DLP will refer the allegation to the HSE department who may involve An Garda Síochána, or go directly to An Gardaí if out-of-hours.

The parents or carers of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the HSE department.

7.3. Confidentiality:

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws. Information should also be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- Children's Officer.
- DLP
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused.
- The person making the allegation.
- Appropriate authority (e.g. HSE, Gardai, TUSLA, etc).
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child).*

8. Internal Enquiries and Suspension

8.1.

The WTSC Children's Officer in consultation with the Executive Committee will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further Garda and HSE inquiries.

8.2.

Irrespective of the findings of the HSE or Garda inquiries, WTSC will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer or member can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the Gardai. In such cases, WTSC must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of children should always remain paramount.

9. Bullying

9.1. Action if Bullying is Suspected:

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

9.2. What is Bullying?

Bullying is repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical, which is conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour, which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools, sports clubs and other organisations working with children. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting or extortion by one or more children against a victim. It is the responsibility of Sports Leaders to deal with bullying that may take place in the organisation. Incidents of bullying should be dealt with immediately and not tolerated under any circumstances.

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

9.3. Combating Bullying

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