**Code of Ethics**

*This edition dated: 12/03/2016*

**1. Introduction**

1.1. This Code of Ethics outlines the minimum levels of behaviour that we require of

our members. The Code applies equally to players, coaches, volunteers, to parents and guardians and to our Club officials. While the promotion of the Code at Club

level may be seen as the responsibility of the Club’s Protection Officer, ultimately it is

everybody’s responsibility to ensure that the Code is fully implemented.

Breaches of our Code will unfortunately occur from time to time. This may happen

as a result of carelessness, poor practice, lack of understanding or there may in

some instances be deliberate or indeed calculated breaches of the Code.

1.2 This policy is set out with reference to the Special Olympics’ Code of Ethics and Good Practice and the Irish Sports Council’s Code of Ethics for Good Practice for Children's Sport and the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005.

1.3 The implementation of this policy throughout the Club will be overseen by the Club Committee. The Committee shall appoint at least one member to act as the Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer – referred to here as the Protection Officer. Ideally, and where possible, the Club shall appoint one male and one female protection Officer.

1.4 The Club Chairperson will act as the Designated Person – DP - to liaise with the Statutory Authorities in relation to the reporting of allegations or suspicions of child or vulnerable adult abuse.

1.5 For the purpose of this Code a child is any person under the age of 18 years, while a vulnerable adult is any person, aged 18 years or over, who is unable to take care of themselves or take steps to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. This vulnerability exists by virtue of the person’s intellectual, mental or physical condition.

**2. Roles and Responsibilities**

2.1 Designated Person

 2.1.1. Have knowledge of the Code of Ethics and statutory guidelines

 Have a knowledge of categories and indicators of abuse

Undertake training in relation to child protection and safeguarding of vulnerable adults

Be familiar with and able to carry out reporting procedures as outlined in this Code.

Communicate with parents and/or agencies as appropriate

Assist with the ongoing development and implementation of protection and safeguarding training needs

Be aware of local contacts and services in relation to child and adult protection, i.e. principal and duty social workers and their contacts

To inform local duty social worker in the Health Services Executive Cork / Cork Social Services and/or An Garda Síochána, using the Standard Reporting Form. Keep a copy of this form and ensure acknowledgement of receipt of this form.

 2.1.2 The Designated Person does not have the responsibility of investigating or validating protection or safeguarding concerns within the club/organisation and has no counselling or therapeutic role. These roles are filled by the Statutory Authorities.

2.1.3 All cases of disclosures, complaints and/or incidents that come under the scope of this policy will recorded by the Designated Person

 2.2 Protection Officer/Assistant Protection Officer

2.2.1 Have knowledge of the Code of Ethics and statutory guidelines

 Have a knowledge of categories and indicators of abuse

Undertake training in relation to child protection and safeguarding of vulnerable adults

 Oversee and coordinate the implementation of the Code of Ethics by the Club’s members.

Act as a point of contact for information and reporting of alleged incidents/complaints related to athlete protection with particular emphasis on members under 18 years and SO players.

Promote the health & safety of all members – ensure adequate first aid cover is provided for all training sessions.

The Assistant Protection Officer will ensure that Athlete Participation Forms for Special Olympics members are up to date and available on site for all training sessions and Special Olympics competitions.

The Assistant Protection Officer will ensure that applicants, for volunteer and coach roles with Special Olympics members, will submit volunteer and Garda vetting forms to Special Olympics Ireland.

 2.2.2 The Protection Officer does not have the responsibility of investigating or validating protection or safeguarding concerns within the club/organisation and has no counselling or therapeutic role. These roles are filled by the Statutory Authorities.

2.3 Volunteers and Coaches

Should be positive during sessions and competitions, praise and encourage effort as well as results

Should put welfare of the player first, strike a balance between this and winning / results

Should encourage fair play and treat participants equally Should recognise developmental needs, ensuring activities are appropriate for the individual

 Should plan and prepare appropriately

Should have experience relevant to working with young or vulnerable people or hold up-to-date qualifications and be committed to the guidelines in this Code

 Should involve parents where possible and inform parents when problems arise

 Should keep a record of attendance at training and competitions

 Should keep a brief record of injury(s) and action taken

 Should keep a brief record of problem/action/outcomes, if behavioural problems arise

Should report any concerns in accordance with this Code’s reporting procedures

 Avoid spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others

 Avoid taking sessions alone

 Avoid taking children on journeys alone in the car

Not use any form of punishment or physical force on a child

 Not take children to their home

Not exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward

Not 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 or vulnerable adult. This includes innuendo, flirting or inappropriate gestures and terms.

Specifically for Under-age/ Vulnerable adult players

Under- age players will be asked to tell the coach when they are going to use the toilet. The coach should supervise toilet breaks with regard to child safety.

All underage players are to be signed in by an adult who is responsible for them at all times during the training session. Any adult dropping off a few children must sign in each child and is responsible for them during training. If they wish to leave they need to inform the coach.

No underage/vulnerable adult player is to be left alone with a coach or committee member when being dropped off or before being picked up at the club.

2.4 All Members

 Neither the Club nor any of its members shall discriminate in any way against another member of this club, any other club and its members, or any member of TTI and SO or member of the general public with regard to a gender, race, creed, skin colour, or ability. The Club expects members to show respect for fellow members. Rude or offensive behaviour, including the use of bad language, by one member towards another member will lead to expulsion from the Club. Failure to follow an instruction of a member of the Committee may lead to disciplinary action including expulsion from the Club.

**3. Recruitment of Volunteers and Coaches**

3.1 This Code reflects a commitment to providing quality leadership for children and vulnerable adults in the Club by having a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting, selecting and managing volunteers and coaches.

3.2 The following recruitment steps will apply:

Volunteer and coach role specification is in place with an emphasis on identifying the skills and attitude required for the roles.

Each applicant will complete an application form. This will include a self-declaration section clearly stating that there is nothing that should prevent the applicant from being suitable for the role.

All volunteers and coaches will be vetted, where possible, through the Garda Vetting Office. Vetting will be completed in the case of volunteers and coaches working with our Special Olympics members though the Special Olympics Ireland process. Volunteers and coaches may also be cleared to participate through the Cope Foundation volunteer process. Garda vetting will be applied to applicants in the case of mainstream and paralympic members **when** this becomes available to sports organisations.

References and identity will be verified by the Club Committee and kept on file as a matter of record. Verify qualifications, experience and gaps in employment history.

A probationary period is applicable after an informal interview by the Club Committee, which will be used to assess the applicant’s commitment to promoting good practice in relation to young and vulnerable people.

All recommendations for appointment will be ratified by the Club Committee

Records in relation to an applicant’s information will be treated as highly sensitive and confidential. It will be kept in a locked cupboard that is accessible only to the Secretary or Chairperson.

**4. Handling Complaints or Issues of Concern**

4.1 The following procedures will apply for dealing with a concern or complaint against a Committee member, coach, volunteer or other member(s) of the Club.

4.2 Any incidents associated with a concern or complaint will be recorded using the Club’s Accident Report, copies of which are available in the Club’s premises.

4.3 Any concern in relation to possible misconduct should be brought to the attention of the Protection or Assistant Protection Officer. If a breach of the Code is acknowledged and is not deemed to be of an extreme nature (e.g. poor practice as opposed to a deliberate breach), the Protection/Assistant Protection Officer will inform the person, against whom the breach has been alleged, how they may have breached the Code and that they must in future adhere to all aspects of the Code.

4.4 If the breach is deemed to be of a more serious, or of a re-occurring nature, OR if the alleged misconduct is denied by the person against whom the concern has been brought. It will be reported by the Protection/Assistant Protection Officer to the Club Committee as a concern to be dealt with on a formal basis.

4.5 A complaint may be made directly by any member to the Club committee without raising it with the Protection/Assistant Officer.

4.6 On receipt of a complaint or concern, the Committee will appoint a disciplinary committee to deal with the complaint/concern – this will include bullying. The complaint should be in writing to the Secretary or Protection/Assistant Protection Officer and should be responded to in writing within 5 working days. The disciplinary committee will consist of a representative from the Club Committee, the Protection or Assistant Protection Officer and an ordinary registered member of the Club.

4.7 If the complaint/concern involves suspected abuse or a criminal offence the disciplinary committee will inform the Designated Person and the disciplinary committee will step down. The statutory authorities will then be informed by the Designated Person i.e. the local duty social worker in the Health Services Executive Cork / Cork Social Services and/or An Garda Síochána, using the Standard Reporting Form.

4.8 If the complaint/concern does NOT involve suspected abuse or a criminal offence the disciplinary committee will review any relevant paper work and hold any necessary meetings with all parties to proceed with complaints into any incident of suspected misconduct.

4.9 The disciplinary committee will furnish the individual, who is the object of the complaint/concern, with the nature of the complaint/concern being made against him/her and afford him/her the opportunity of providing a response either verbally or in writing, but usually at a meeting with the disciplinary committee.

4.10 Written confidential records of all complaints will be safely and confidentially kept by the disciplinary committee and, upon completion of the process, will hand over all documentation to the Club secretary for safe keeping.

4.11 Where it is established that an incident of misconduct has taken place, the disciplinary committee will notify the member, in writing, of any sanction being imposed and the reasons for so doing. If no misconduct has been found the member concerned will be informed in writing of same.

4.12 If the member is under 18 years of age, or intellectually impaired, all correspondence will be addressed to the parents or guardians and the member must be accompanied or represented by an adult member of his/her family, or a family appointed advocate, at any meetings with the disciplinary committee. No legal representation is envisaged at this point as the process is an internal Club process.

4.13 If the member against whom the complaint/concern was made is unhappy with the decision of the disciplinary committee s/he should have the right to appeal the decision to an appeals committee (independent of a disciplinary committee). Any appeal will be made in writing within 10 days of the decision of the disciplinary committee. The chairperson of the appeals committee will be a member of the Club Committee and at least two ordinary registered members... The appeals committee may consult with the Protection/Assistant Protection Officer in relation to issues of child and vulnerable adult welfare and codes of conduct

4.14 The appeals committee has the power to confirm, set aside or change any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee.

4.15 If any party is not satisfied with the outcome the matter can be referred to the relevant National Governing Body i.e. Special Olympics Ireland or Table Tennis Ireland.

**5. Possible Sanctions**

5.1 Any sanction taken will be proportionate to the level of breach that occurred.

5.2 The range of sanctions to be considered against a member include the following;

verbal warning

a removal from their role, in the case of a Committee member, coach or volunteer, for a specific period of time

a permanent removal from their role

a directive that they undertake a specified training programme

expulsion from the Club.

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Philip Shaw) (Margie Hadden) Chairperson Secretary

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_