

# NORTHERN IRELAND BOYS' FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

SECTION 1: NIBFA CUP RULES

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***Northern Ireland Boys' Football Association***

NIBFA Cup Sponsored by 

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AFFILIATED TO  
IRISH FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION

**SECTION 1**  
**NIBFA COMPETITION RULES**

1. **REGISTRATION OF LEAGUES & CLUBS**

All Clubs/Teams must submit their competition entries by 31st August annually, accompanied by subscription fees as detailed on the form. Any changes to the original details supplied must be notified to NIBFA in writing or by email within two working days of such change.

2. **COMPETITIONS**

(a) The competitions shall be called The Northern Ireland Boys F.A. Cups and reflect the relevant age groups U11 to U17. A Plate competition will be offered in a pre-determined draw in the 9 a side competition to teams eliminated in the first and some second-round ties in the Cup. A sponsor's name may be added to one or all titles, as and when such sponsorship is attracted. The competitions shall be open to all affiliated teams of the NIBFA who have paid the appropriate entry fee and NIBFA Insurance premium for the season by the 31<sup>st</sup> August

(b) The competitions for the Cups/Plates shall be played annually and shall be conducted within the Laws of the Game as settled by FIFA, and as directed by NIBFA including the 9 a side competition

(c) NIBFA committee will determine the format of competitions on an annual basis.

(d) The league of the HOME team will appoint the match venue, however, NIBFA will appoint the venues for Semi Finals and Finals.

(e) The team listed first will be designated the home team (but may be subject to a venue appointed as per clause (d) above).

3. **AGE QUALIFICATIONS OF PLAYERS**

All competitions will be open to players who meet the qualifying dates as stated on the NIBFA affiliation form. Teams wishing to play female players or players with a disability will be granted a concession of playing subject to League rules section 2 Rule 4. Players who receive this concession must produce an ID card issued by their League as COMET will not permit selection.

4. **REGISTRATION OF PLAYERS**

A. Players should be registered on COMET by their Clubs. A player will be deemed eligible to play subject to not having played for any other club in the competition. Players may only play for one team in their own age group for a club but may play for one other team in each older age group within the approved age bands (please refer to the conditions in Paragraph B)

B. Teams may include players from an age group below. **(However, players playing in the 9-a-Side competitions may not play in the 11-a-Side format and similarly players who have played at 11 a side may not take part in the 9 a side format)** Players are restricted to playing for those age groups either immediately 1 year or 2 years above the age group for which he or she qualifies. For the sake of clarity under 10 players will also be permitted to play at U11 & U12, an U13 player will also be permitted to play at U14 & U15 etc. In all cases it is the responsibility of coaches and parents to assess the player is physically capable of meeting the demands of an older age group.

C. Clubs may play any additional player recruited before 1<sup>st</sup> February of any season's competition if that player has been registered with the club in their league prior to that date but must not have played in the competition with any other club at any age group.

D. NIBFA may permit a registered Goalkeeper to be replaced after the 1<sup>st</sup> February in any season of a competition on production of certified medical evidence that the original registered goalkeeper is incapable of further participation in the competition. Subject to the replacement not having played for any other Club in the competition.

E. Anyone who, in football related activities, forges a document, falsifies an authentic document or uses a forged or falsified document to deceive in legal relations will be sanctioned within the disciplinary rules as are in place at the time of the offence. Disciplinary Rule 13.2, 13.3 & 13.4

## 5. **MATCH SCHEDULING**

(5.1) Notification of cup-ties shall be sent to the leagues and to both clubs. The draws will also be posted on the association's website [www.nibfa.org](http://www.nibfa.org) as soon as practically possible after the draw.

(5.2) All cup-ties must be played on or before the date specified on the match notification. Fixtures can only be postponed from their scheduled date if the league of the "Home" team or NIBFA are unable to provide a venue to host the fixture, teams that use a "Home" venue will be allocated a venue by their league in the event of their "Home" venue being unavailable or unplayable or in exceptional circumstances if a date has been pre-booked with their league for a bye by the team/s involved in any individual fixture. Teams who fail to meet this criterion will forfeit the cup tie in the event of not fielding on a scheduled date. No matches can be postponed that are Covid related and will be forfeited if any team cannot field for that reason. The competition will abide by Government & PHA Guidelines if those change, and restrictions are introduced to stop the playing of sports.

NIBFA will not agree to any team organising two games on the same day to facilitate the playing of an NIBFA Cup tie.

(5.3) Any club refusing to play the club against which it has been drawn shall be reported to NIBFA, which shall take any action deemed appropriate.

(5.4) It is the duty of the home club to inform their opponents of the location and direction to the match venue making direct contact with the opposition manager at least (3) days prior to the date of the tie, in addition, in the event of a cancellation due to unplayable pitch or other emergency postponement, to inform the opposing team as early as practically possible to avoid unnecessary travel. Apart from unforeseen change any potential cancellations should be confirmed by pitch inspection on the day prior to the date of the match.

(5.5) For any late cancellation of matches, the away club may submit a claim for travel expenses against a home club. Only travel expenses incurred and receipted will be considered. Where negligence is proven against the home club the relevant committee may apportion all or part of the travel costs against the home club.

6. **POSTPONEMENTS**

Any tie that is postponed should take place 14 days after the original date unless the competition is being held up, in which case NIBFA will ask the relevant leagues to permit arrangement of the tie to take place earlier. Where a postponement occurs, the team drawn at home initially will have the opportunity to arrange the game on **one** further occasion thereafter the away team will, in conjunction with their league, facilitate the tie. Each switch of responsibility will permit teams two opportunities to host the game.

7. **REFEREES**

(7.1) The league in which the home team plays are responsible for appointing a referee to the tie other than for the semi-finals and finals when NIBFA will appoint all officials.

(7.2) In the event of a referee not turning up the clubs may mutually agree on a referee but failing same the referee will be decided by toss of a coin (or otherwise). The same referee should referee all the game unless he is injured during the game.

(7.3) **The referee's fee shall be paid by the home team** up until the semi-final and final when same will be paid by NIBFA.

(7.4) Protests about the ground, goalposts, crossbar, or other appurtenances of the game must be made in writing to the referee and to the secretary or official in charge of the opposing team prior to kick off whereupon the referee will decide if the game will proceed on the day.

(7.5) When a referee has travelled, and the match does not proceed for any reason he shall be paid half of the referee's fee which will be met by the home team.

8. **MATCH DAYS**

(8.1) 11 a side matches played in NIBFA Cup competitions will be of the following duration;

U13	30 minutes each way
U14 U15 U16 U17	35 minutes each way

If these ties are still undecided after normal time, then a further 10 minutes each way extra time will apply. If the tie is still undecided, the result of the tie shall be decided by the taking of penalty kicks in accordance with the rules of the game as set down by FIFA.

9 a side matches played in NIBFA Cup/Plate competitions will be of the following duration;

U11 U12	25 minutes each way
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In 9 a side all ties up to Semi-Final and Final matches that end in a draw will go straight to penalties in accordance with the rules of the game as set down by FIFA. In Semi- Final and Final ties only for the 9 side competitions extra time of 5 minutes each way will apply. If the tie is still undecided, the result of the tie shall be decided by the taking of penalty kicks in accordance with the rules of the game as set down by FIFA.

(8.2) NIBFA cup/plate-ties, up to the semi-final stage, will kick off at 11.00 am on a Saturday unless by agreement between the teams. Arrangements about alternative kick off times or dates must be agreed by the Leagues concerned and NIBFA notified. Any dispute about kick off times or dates will be resolved by NIBFA. NIBFA will determine the kick off times, dates and venues for semi-finals and finals.

Where local teams are drawn against each other, the league facilitating the fixture may set the day and kick off time subject to pitch availability.

(8.3) Any protests about player eligibility or the match venue should be made in writing to the referee prior to kick off whereupon the referee will decide if the game will proceed on the day.

(8.4) When clubs have the same or similar colours the visiting team will have the choice of colours. In the semi-final and final the decision will be made by the toss of a coin. Clubs must not use kit branded with any form of Alcohol, Tobacco, or gambling promotion logo.

(8.5) (a) In all matches the player line ups and referee reports will be done via COMET however where a match card is used the Team manager must clearly print the full name of the player on the match card against the shirt number to be worn and submit it to the referee prior to the commencement of the match. No team will be permitted to field a player without a numbered shirt or field players with the same numbered shirt or exchange the shirt of any player being substituted.

(b) Match Cards must be signed by an official of each Club. The date of the match, the age group and the match result must be noted on the match card.

(c) All dismissals and cautions must be noted on the match card by the referee. In addition, all dismissals must be reported by an official of the dismissed players/officials Team via the appropriate contact number listed on the match card within 24 hours of the match. Contact by telephone, email or text must include full detail of the offence, name of player/official and if player the shirt number. The information should also include the date, time, age group, venue and opposition. ALL dismissals must be reported even in cases where the referee later indicates he may have made an error.

(d) All match cards will be subject to scrutiny by NIBFA and verified by the relevant league.

(e) A Team official of the WINNING TEAM must forward the match card to the address notified on the card.

(f) A Team official of the WINNING TEAM must report the result immediately after the match to the number noted on the match card.

(8.6) In 11-a-side games 16 players can be named on the Match Card and up to 5 substitutes can be used. In 9-a-side games (14) players can be named and up to (5) substitutes can be used. Rolling substitutions will be permitted in the following manner:

Any player, who has been substituted, himself becomes a substitute and may replace another player at any time subject to the substitution being carried out in accordance with Law 3 of the Laws of Association Football.

### Law 3—The Number of Players

Other than small sided games where each team consists of 9 players one of whom is a goalkeeper, A match is played by two teams, each consisting of not more than eleven players, one of whom is the goalkeeper. A match may not start if either team consists of fewer than seven players. The rules of the competition must state how many substitutes may be nominated; for all 11 a side matches organised under the jurisdiction of the NIBFA (Five) 5 substitutes may be used. For all small sided 9 a side matches 6 substitutes may be used.

All Matches—In all matches, the names of the substitutes must be given to the referee prior to the start of the match. Substitutes not named on the match card may not take part in the match.

Substitution Procedure—To replace a player by substitution, the following conditions must be observed:

- The referee is informed before any proposed substitution is made - A substitute only enters the field of play after the player being replaced has left and after receiving a signal from the referee
- A substitute only enters the field of play at the halfway line and during a stoppage in the match
- A substitution is completed when a substitute enters the field of play. From that moment, the substitute becomes a player and the player he has replaced is now a substitute.
- All substitutes are subject to the authority and jurisdiction of the referee, whether called upon to play or not.

Changing the Goalkeeper— any of the other players may change places with the goalkeeper, provided that:

- The referee is informed before the change is made
- The change is made during a stoppage in the match.

Infringements/Sanctions—If a substitute enters the field of play without the referee's permission:

- Play is stopped
- The substitute is cautioned, shown the yellow card and required to leave the field of play
- Play is restarted with an indirect free kick at the place the ball was located when play was stopped.

If a player changes places with the goalkeeper without the referee's permission before the change is made:

- Play continues
- The players concerned are cautioned and shown the yellow card when the ball is next out of play.

For any other infringements of this Law:

- The players concerned are cautioned and shown the yellow card

Restart of Play:

- If play is stopped by the referee to administer a caution:
- the match is restarted by an indirect free kick, to be taken by a player of the opposing team from the place where the ball was located when play was stopped.

Players and Substitutes Sent Off—A player who has been sent off before the kick-off may be replaced only by one of the named substitutes. A named substitute, who has been sent off, either before the kick-off or after play has started, may not be replaced.

(8.7) Substitutes must be listed on the Match Card before the match commences. Any substitute not used will not be cup tied.

(8.8) Ties at U11, 12 & 13 size 4 footballs will be used. U14 – U18 level a size 5 Football will be used. The HOME Team shall provide (2) match standard footballs. The Away team shall carry (2) match standard footballs to each game as back up.

(8.9) Teams are responsible for the behaviour of their players and officials and for the behaviour of spectators who are deemed to be attached to that club. Any reported misbehaviour on the part of any of the above will be dealt with by NIBFA by whatever penalties it thinks fit up to and including expulsion from the competition.

(8.10) Matches involving male and female players may be played provided all the participating players comply with the Registration Procedures of the NIBFA. The following conditions are recommended:

- a) NIBFA must be informed of a club's wish to involve male and female players in the same team.
- b) Clubs wishing to play male and female players in the same team have both male and female committee members and appropriate parent /guardian present as good practice.
- c) The club secretary of any club wishing to play male and female players in the same team will be responsible for informing their opponents and checking that separate changing facilities are available when arranging any match. On arrival at the match venue it is the club's responsibility to check that the facilities are suitable before players can change.

If no suitable facilities are available, it is the responsibility of the club wishing to play male and female players in the same team to make alternative arrangements.

Officials and players of opposite gender are not permitted to be in the dressing room or immediate surrounds when players or officials of the opposite gender are in the process of changing.

Club members, who receive injuries during any club activity, should only be treated by a qualified First Aider or a medically qualified person. It is the responsibility of any club with members of the opposite gender to aim to have the following in place:

1. A first aider of each gender
2. A medically qualified person who is registered with the UK Central Council of the GMC or similar authorised medical body. This person to identify himself or herself to the match official before the match commences.
3. Any such person must prior to commencement of the match identify to the match referee any personal relationship with any player/s and exceptionally would then be allowed to treat any such injured player.

4. If points 1, 2 and 3 are not met and if the first aider is of the opposite gender to the club member being treated, they must be accompanied when the first aid is administered, by a club official of the same gender as the club member being treated.

The above conditions are recommended to be in place for the duration of all club activities.

9. **MONITORS**

NIBFA reserve the right to appoint monitors to any game who will have the power to check player and official IDs and to report on any misconduct or matters affecting NIBFA games.

10. **UNFINISHED GAMES**

- (a) Results for matches that are abandoned because of inclement weather having played a minimum of 80% of the scheduled time of the match will stand.
- (b) The status of matches that are abandoned because of inclement weather having played less than 80% of the scheduled time will be decided by NIBFA.
- (c) The status of all other matches that are abandoned or unfinished shall be determined by NIBFA with reference to Disciplinary Code Rule 19

11. **MATCH POSTPONEMENTS**

- (a) Where venues have been appointed by a League in conjunction with a local authority it will be the final decision of the local authority as to the fitness of the ground for play.
- (b) In cases where the Home Team has a registered venue not owned or controlled by local authority it will be the decision of the Home Team grounds man or other club appointee responsible for grounds maintenance in the first instance to decide on the fitness of the ground for play or failing such then the decision of the referee will be final.
- (c) The home Club must immediately inform their league, referee, visiting club and NIBFA if a postponement is necessary, in default of which the Home Club may at the discretion of NIBFA be required to pay half of the referee's match fee and the travelling expenses, in whole or part of the Visiting Club.
- (d) The reason for the non-fulfilment of any fixture shall be investigated by NIBFA

12. **MATCH PRIORITY**

Competitions of the NIBFA shall have precedence over member League competitions.

13. **TROPHIES**

Trophies for NIBFA Competitions shall be presented to the respective winners. The maximum number of medals that will be issued to any teams in any 11 a side competition will be limited to 20 unless the actual number of players registered is less than twenty (20). In 9 a side competition the maximum number of medals will be limited to sixteen (16)

14. **MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS**

- (a) Any Club refusing or failing to play the Club against which it is drawn within the time notified to it, and without enough reason for doing so, shall be liable for disqualification.
- (b) Any Club intending to forfeit a game must give notice to the Secretary of the opposing Club and NIBFA prior to the date of the tie. NIBFA will impose whatever penalties it thinks fit up to and including disqualification from the competition for the following year.



- (c) NIBFA shall fix the venue for the semi-final and final tie and have direct control of games, receipts and donations from funds raised in connection therewith.
- (d) No player shall play for more than one Club in a cup or plate competition during any one season and this rule shall also apply irrespective of any transfer made in season.
- (e) All cup-ties will be played to a finish at the first time of asking.
- (f) Players who wear glasses will only be permitted on the field of play if approved prescription safety glasses are in place for the duration of the match.

15. **BREACH OF NIBFA RULES**

Any breach of NIBFA rules may render the player, official or Club liable to censure, fine or suspension or a combination of such penalties as NIBFA deem fit to impose.

**SECTION 2**  
**NIBFA CUP & PLATE - DISCIPLINARY RULES**

**RULE 1: ADOPTION & ENFORCEMENT**

- 1.1. The NORTHERN IRELAND BOYS' FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION (NIBFA) adopted this disciplinary code on (20.08.2019).
- 1.2. This code is effective from (21.08.2019).

**RULE 2: DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1. Player: A person whose name appears on the match card for the relevant match.
- 2.2. Official: Any person aged 16 years or over who, whether registered with a member Club or not, acts on behalf of a member Club or is in the dressing room or enters the field of play on behalf of a member Club or acts as a match official or is in a member Club's technical area or assists in the running of the member Club.
- 2.3. Match Official: The referee, assistant referees, 4th Official or any other person appointed by the NIBFA regarding the administration of a match.

**RULE 3: GENDER & NUMBER**

- 3.1. Terms within the NIBFA Disciplinary Code referring to the players, officials or match officials are applicable to both genders. Any term in the singular applies to the plural and vice-versa.

**RULE 4: CULPABILITY**

- 4.1. Unless otherwise specified, infringements are punishable regardless of whether they have been committed deliberately, recklessly or negligently.

**RULE 5: ACTS AMOUNTING TO ATTEMPT**

- 5.1. Acts amounting to attempt are also punishable.
- 5.2. In the case of acts amounting to attempt, NIBFA may reduce the penalty for the infringement accordingly. It will determine the extent of the mitigation as it sees fit.

**RULE 6: BREACH OF NIBFA RULES**

- 6.1. Any breach of NIBFA rules may render the player, official or Club liable to censure, fine or suspension, or a combination of such penalties as NIBFA deem fit to impose.
- 6.2. NIBFA reserves the right to carry out investigations, make appropriate enquiries and invite comments from players, officials or clubs as it sees fit in relation to any disciplinary matter.
- 6.3. Players, Officials or Clubs will have the right to be heard before any decision is passed on a disciplinary matter other than those relating to cautions and dismissals, except in the case of alleged mistaken identity for a player who is cautioned or dismissed in a match.

## **RULE 7: FAILURE TO REPLY TO CORRESPONDENCE**

- 7.1. Any failure to reply to NIBFA correspondence which requests a response, within the period stated in such correspondence may render the player, official or Club liable to censure, fine or suspension, or a combination of such penalties as NIBFA deem fit to impose.

## **RULE 8: CAUTIONS & DISMISSALS**

- 8.1 All dismissals and cautions must be noted on the match card.

## **RULE 9: CAUTIONS**

- 9.1. A caution is a warning from the referee to a player or an official during a match to sanction minor infringements (See Law 12 of the Laws of the Game).
- 9.2. A player who receives 2 cautions during the same match will be dismissed and, consequently, an automatic suspension from the next match.
- 9.3. Cautions received during one season are cancelled at the end of that season and are not carried over to the next season.

## **RULE 10: DISMISSALS**

- 10.1. A dismissal is the order given by the referee to someone to leave the field of play and its surroundings, including the technical area and the substitute's bench.
- 10.2. A player who is dismissed from the field of play for 2 yellow cards in an NIBFA Competition will be automatically suspended with immediate effect for 1 match in that competition even if he was dismissed in a match that is later abandoned. Any player who accumulates 3 yellow cards will be automatically suspended from the next match in the competition should the team progress.
- 10.3. A player who is dismissed from the field of play for a straight Red Card offence in an NIBFA Competition will be automatically suspended with immediate effect for 1 match in that competition even if he was dismissed in a match that is later abandoned. Additional suspensions may be imposed by NIBFA on receipt of the match officials report
- 10.4. A player who is cautioned or dismissed after the final whistle or outside the field of play will be dealt with as a field offence.
- 10.5. Any unserved suspension after a team is eliminated from an NIBFA Competition will be served in the league in which that player is registered.

## **RULE 11: SUSPENSION**

- 11.1. A player suspended because of an NIBFA Competition may not play for any team in an NIBFA competition until the suspension is served. Matches arranged by the team's own league are exempt from the suspension until the team to which the player is registered has been eliminated from the NIBFA competition. (See Rule 10.5 above)

Suspensions issued by a member league will be given effect in NIBFA Competitions until the suspension has been served.

An official, suspended because of an NIBFA Competition may not participate with any team in an NIBFA competition until the suspension is served. Matches arranged by the team's own league are exempt from the suspension until the team to which the official is registered has been eliminated from the NIBFA competition. (See Rule 10.5 above)

- 11.2. NIBFA reserves the right to designate a venue for any match under the jurisdiction of NIBFA and or impose a venue ban in the event of incidents of a sufficiently serious nature.
- 11.3. In the event of a suspension being imposed the player's or official's Club will be advised of the details of the suspension. It is each Club's responsibility to ensure the eligibility of their players for any match.

#### **RULE 12: DISCIPLINARY MATTERS ARISING BY WAY OF REFEREE'S REPORT OR OTHERWISE**

- 12.1. Disciplinary matters affecting NIBFA will be dealt with in the first instance by a person or persons nominated by NIBFA. Any appeal relating to that decision/s will be heard by a Disciplinary Appeals Panel which will consist of at least three persons nominated by NIBFA.

The person or persons involved in making the original decision which is the subject of the appeal, will not be eligible to hear the appeal.

- 12.2. NIBFA may consider or investigate any incident of misconduct, misbehaviour or any act likely to bring the game or NIBFA into disrepute by any player, official or Club it becomes aware of through any source.
- 12.3. Upon consideration or investigation of any such incident or act NIBFA may impose whatever penalty it deems fit using this disciplinary code as a guide.
- 12.4. A player, official or Club which is penalised for misconduct, misbehaviour or actions likely to bring NIBFA into disrepute may appeal against such penalty to the disciplinary appeals panel.

#### **RULE 13: MISCONDUCT BY PLAYERS & OFFICIALS**

- 13.1. Misconduct by players or officials will be dealt with by NIBFA as they deem fit. Using standard NIBFA league rules as a guide
- 13.2. Forgery and falsification, if the perpetrator is a player, that player in addition to any other sanction imposed by the committee, will be suspended for a minimum of 6 matches.
- 13.3. If the perpetrator is an official, a player's agent or an intermediary, that official, player's agent or intermediary will in addition to any other sanction imposed by the committee be subject to a ban on taking part in any football related activity under NIBFA jurisdiction for a period of at least 12 months.
- 13.4. If the perpetrator is an association or a club, that association or club will in addition to any other sanction imposed by the committee, be subject to an expulsion from a competition and or a fine.

#### **RULE 14: MEDIA & SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS**

- 14.1. If a player or official makes comments by email, fax, text or telephone or in the media or social media regarding NIBFA or games or matters involving NIBFA which imply bias, question integrity, bring the game into disrepute or are abusive, offensive and/or insulting will be dealt with by NIBFA using standard NIBFA league rules as a guide.

#### **RULE 15: UNIDENTIFIED AGRESSORS**

- 15.1. If, in the case of violence by players, officials or supporters it is not possible to identify the perpetrator(s), NIBFA may penalise the Club to which the aggressors are deemed to belong using standard NIBFA league rules as a guide.

#### **RULE 16: INCITING HATRED & VIOLENCE**

- 16.1. A player or official who carries out an act of incitement to hatred or violence or who incites others to hatred or violence will be penalised with a suspension for not less than twelve months a minimum fine of £100 and up to a maximum fine of £200 will be imposed on their Club.
- 16.2. In serious cases, when the infringement is committed using the mass media (such as the press, radio or television) or if it takes place on a match day in or around a venue, a minimum fine of £250 and up to a maximum fine of £500 will be imposed on their Club.

#### **RULE 17: PROVOKING THE GENERAL PUBLIC**

- 17.1. A player or official who provokes the public during a match will be penalised with a suspension for two matches.

#### **Rule 18: INELIGIBILITY THROUGH SUSPENSION**

- 18.1. Any player or official who participates in a match whilst being suspended or breaches the terms of his suspension will be dealt with by NIBFA as they deem fit using standard NIBFA league rules as a guide

#### **RULE 19: ABANDONMENT**

- 19.1. If a team is found to have caused the abandonment of a match it will be fined £250 and whatever other penalties NIBFA deem fit using standard NIBFA league rules as a guide. NIBFA will then decide on the outcome of the match. The matter will be reported to the league of the offending team/s
- 19.2. Where a person or persons (officials and/or players) from a Club breach Article 19.1 or there are other aggravating circumstances, the fines and penalties may be increased, and the team concerned may be disqualified from the competition.
- 19.3. Where supporters of a team breach Rule 19.1 at a match, a minimum fine of £200 shall be imposed on the Club concerned and whatever other penalties NIBFA deem fit using standard NIBFA league rules as a guide

#### **RULE 20: DISCRIMINATION**

- 20.1. A player or official who offends the dignity of a person or group of persons through contemptuous, discriminatory or denigratory words or actions concerning Race, Religious Belief and/or Political Opinion, Age, Sex, Disability and Sexual Orientation and a fine of £100 will be imposed on their Club. If the perpetrator is an official, the fine shall be £200 and will also be imposed on their Club.
- 20.2. NIBFA may in more serious offences of discrimination impose additional penalties, including an order to play a match at a neutral/controlled venue, the forfeit of a match or disqualification from the competition.

### **RULE 21: THREATS**

- 21.1. A player or official who intimidates a match or NIBFA official with serious threats will be penalised and a fine £50 minimum up to £100 maximum will be imposed on their Club and whatever other penalties NIBFA deem fit using standard NIBFA league rules as a guide.

### **RULE 22: COERCION**

- 22.1. A player or official who uses violence or threats to pressurise a match or NIBFA official into taking certain action or to hinder him in any other way from acting freely will be penalised and a fine £50 minimum up to £100 maximum will be imposed on their Club and whatever other penalties NIBFA deem fit using standard NIBFA league rules as a guide.

### **RULE 23: LIABILITY FOR SPECTATOR CONDUCT**

- 23.1. Clubs are liable for any improper conduct among spectators and may be penalised by NIBFA for same fine £50 minimum up to £100 maximum will be imposed on their Club and whatever other penalties NIBFA deem fit using standard NIBFA league rules as a guide.

### **RULE 24: REPEATED INFRINGEMENTS**

- 24.1. In any case NIBFA may increase the penalty to be pronounced as deemed appropriate if an infringement has been repeated within the current or previous (2) seasons.

### **RULE 25: REFEREE**

- 25.1. During matches, disciplinary decisions are taken by the referee.
- 25.2. These decisions are final.
- 25.3. Facts contained in match officials' reports are presumed to be accurate.
- 25.4. Reports may be made individually by match officials or collectively agreed by match officials and supplied through the referee. A collectively agreed report must be signed by the relevant match officials.
- 25.5. Evidence of the inaccuracy of the contents of these reports may be provided.
- 25.6. If there is any discrepancy in the reports from the various match officials and there are no means of resolving the different versions of the facts, the referee's report is considered authoritative regarding incidents that occurred on the field of play.
- 25.7. Where appointed, an NIBFA monitor's report is considered authoritative regarding incidents that occurred outside the field of play.

### **RULE 26: DISCIPLINARY APPEALS**

- 26.1. Disciplinary appeals shall be heard by a disciplinary appeals panel. Each disciplinary appeal panel will be appointed by NIBFA.
- 26.2. Clubs in default of their financial obligations to NIBFA more than 30 days from when they fall due shall forfeit the right to submit a disciplinary appeal.

- 26.3. A player, official or Club shall have no right of appeal against cautions or dismissals except in the case of alleged mistaken identity for a player who is cautioned or dismissed in a match.
- 26.4. Subject to Rule 26.2 & Rule 26.3, a Club may submit a Disciplinary Appeal to the Disciplinary Appeals Panel in the case of any penalty issued by NIBFA against any player or official of that club.
- 26.5. Any Disciplinary Appeal by a Club as per Rule 26.4 must be lodged by that Club's Registered Secretary and will only be accepted for consideration by the Disciplinary Appeals panel if lodged by that official or Club's Registered Secretary on official Club headed paper.

#### **RULE 27: DISCIPLINARY APPEALS PROCEDURE**

- 27.1. A Disciplinary Appeal must be made in writing on official Club headed paper and sent by Special Delivery Post within five days of the date on which notification of the decision or penalty being appealed against was sent by NIBFA.
- 27.2. Disciplinary Appeals must be addressed to the Disciplinary Appeals Panel and sent **c/o NIBFA**, National Football Stadium, Windsor Park, Belfast, BT12 6LU or other address as determined by NIBFA.
- 27.3. The Disciplinary Appeal being lodged must include the following payment and documentation:
- (a) A payment in the sum of £50 for a player or £100 in the case of an official or Club, which is refundable in the case of a successful appeal.
  - (b) A copy of the decision or penalty being appealed against.
  - (c) Confirmation of the date upon which notification of such decision or penalty was received by the appellant.
  - (d) All additional documentation, submissions and details of evidence upon which the appellant intends to rely at the Disciplinary Appeal Hearing.
- 27.4. It will be at the discretion of the Disciplinary Appeals Panel as to whether any further documentation or evidence, not so lodged as per clause 27.3, shall be considered at the Disciplinary Appeal Hearing.
- 27.5. All Disciplinary Appeal Hearings shall commence within a reasonable period from receipt of the Disciplinary Appeal. NIBFA shall inform all parties to the Disciplinary Appeal of the venue, date and time of the Disciplinary Appeal Hearing.
- 27.6. NIBFA can issue directions to the parties in respect of the hearing prior to proceedings commencing.
- 27.7. All parties involved in the Disciplinary Appeal must, at least three days before the hearing, confirm in writing, by post, fax or email to NIBFA the name and relationship to the party, of all persons who will be attending the Disciplinary Appeal Hearing on their behalf, or at their request. The Disciplinary Appeals Panel shall have discretion to permit the attendance of any persons not confirmed within the stated deadlines.
- 27.8. Any party involved in the Disciplinary Appeal, which fails to attend a Disciplinary Appeal Hearing if requested to do so by NIBFA may be subject to disciplinary action. The case may be heard in their absence.
- 27.9. In cases of urgency, NIBFA may amend the time limits indicated above to facilitate an expedited Disciplinary Appeals process.

- 27.10. Upon receipt of a Disciplinary Appeal, the decision or penalty being appealed shall be set aside pending the outcome of the Disciplinary Appeal Hearing.
- 27.11. Should the Disciplinary Appeals Panel consider a Disciplinary Appeal to be of a frivolous nature or merely to release a player or official from suspension to enable them to participate in a match, they shall have the power to penalise the player, official and or Club as it deems appropriate.

#### **RULE 28: EVIDENCE**

- 28.1. The Disciplinary Appeals Panel will have absolute discretion regarding evidence.
- 28.2. The following are admissible:
- 28.2.1 Reports from Match Officials,
  - 28.2.2 Reports from Match Monitors and referee observers,
  - 28.2.3 Declarations from the parties and witnesses, material evidence, expert opinions and unedited audio or video recordings.
- 28.3. The Disciplinary Appeals Panel shall hear evidence from all witnesses it considers relevant to the case. It is a matter for the Disciplinary Appeals Panel to deem if a witness is relevant to the case in hand. The disciplinary Appeals Panel may refuse to hear a witness or to take evidence that is not considered relevant or which would otherwise unnecessarily delay the proceedings.
- 28.4. The Disciplinary Appeals Panel shall make decisions based on the rules and the evidence before them.
- 28.5. The Disciplinary Appeals Panel may request a party or any other body to submit information or documentation.
- 28.6. Facts contained in Match Officials' or Match Monitors reports are presumed to be accurate.
- 28.7. Evidence of the inaccuracy of the contents of Match Officials' or Match Monitors reports may be submitted for consideration by the Disciplinary Appeals Panel.

#### **RULE 29: PROCEDURES FOR THE CONDUCT OF DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS**

- 29.1. A member of the Disciplinary Appeals Panel is obliged to retire from the consideration of any case if it involves their Club.
- 29.2. The Appellant player, official or Club may be represented by a club official who shall be admitted to the hearing.
- 29.3. At the commencement of the Disciplinary Appeal Hearing, the Chairman of the Appeals Panel shall confirm the identities of the persons admitted to the hearing and introduce the Disciplinary Appeals Panel members. The Appellant player, official or Club will be required to give good reason for any objection to the composition of the Disciplinary Appeals Panel.
- 29.4. The Appellant player, official or Club and/or their representative shall be given the opportunity to comment upon and supplement his written submission to the Appeals Panel.
- 29.5. At any time, the Chairman, and through him, members of the Disciplinary Appeals Panel may ask questions of any of the parties. The Disciplinary Appeals Panel may draw such inferences as it considers appropriate from the failure of the person charged to give evidence or answer a question put to him.



29.6. Evidence from any witness called by the Appellant player, official, Club or the Disciplinary Appeals Committee may be heard at the discretion of the panel.

**RULE 30: NOTIFICATION OF DECISION RELATING TO DISCIPLINARY APPEAL HEARING**

30.1. The Disciplinary Appeals Panel may issue an oral decision after the hearing and shall provide written notification of its decision to the Appellant player, official or Club within a reasonable period from the date of the Disciplinary Appeal Hearing.

30.2. Decisions and other documents intended for players or officials will be addressed to the listed Secretary of the Club concerned.

30.3. Decisions shall be formally communicated by way of ordinary letter post, fax and/or electronic mail.

**RULE 31: FORM & CONTENT OF THE DECISION RELATING TO DISCIPLINARY APPEAL HEARING**

31.1. The decision shall be in writing and contain:

- (a) The composition of the Disciplinary Appeals Panel;
- (b) The names of the parties;
- (c) The terms of the decision, including the date of coming into force;
- (d) Notice of the channels for appeal;

**RULE 32: APPEAL TO IFA**

32.1. Disciplinary Appeals Panel decisions may be appealed to the Irish Football Association Appeals Committee in accordance with the IFA Disciplinary Code.

**RULE 33: INTERPRETATION**

33.1 NIBFA shall be the final authority of the interpretation of the Rules, decisions upon questions of interpretation and on matters affecting NIBFA not provided for by the Rules shall be final and binding on all members.

## Appendix 1

### IRISH FA SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE IN FOOTBALL

Adopted by NIBFA on 20.08.2019 as the policy & procedures document for all affiliated leagues and clubs.

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# Section 1 Introduction

## Safeguarding Policy Statement

The welfare of children and young people is paramount to our club. We endeavour to provide an environment which values and protects all children and young people. It is our policy promote good practice and ensure each young person is protected from inappropriate behaviour and all types of abuse while having a positive experience at our club.

**Our club endeavours to safeguard children and young people by adopting the standards set out by the Irish Football Association. To achieve this, we will:**

- 1) Appoint a Child Welfare Officer and communicate their contact details to all club members.
- 2) Adopt the Irish FA Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football Policy and Procedures in their entirety.
- 3) Ensure our coaches/volunteers engaged in Regulated Activity have completed appropriate vetting checks through the Irish FA as part of the club's safe recruitment process before commencing their role. Vetting checks will be updated every 3 years.
- 4) Ensure all coaches/volunteers working with or responsible for under 18's have attended the Irish FA Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football Workshop within 6 months of taking up their role. This should be updated every 3 years.
- 5) Have procedures for dealing with complaints or concerns regarding poor practice, abuse or neglect consistent with the Irish FA safeguarding policy.
- 6) Adhere to Irish FA Codes of Conduct and ensure these are communicated to all club coaches, players and parents.

## Scope

This policy document covers all functions of our club and applies to all staff and/or volunteers, particularly those who engage in regulated activity with children and young people, club members and representatives.

## Equality statement

Our club is committed to ensuring a fun and safe environment for all, regardless of religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status, sexual orientation, men and women generally, persons with a disability or persons without, and persons with dependents and persons without.

## Section 2 Children's Rights

### The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (International Treaty)

#### What is the UN convention?

The convention is a set of minimum standards – the bottom line – in protecting children's rights. It is a binding international treaty which the British government signed at the United Nations, committing itself to give children the rights and protections written in the convention.

#### Who is a child?

In the convention 'a child' means anyone who is under 18 years of age.

#### What rights do children have?

There are many rights written into the convention which include, for example, rights relating to:

- children having a say in their education;
- protection of the environment in which children live;
- reasonable standards of living;
- protection from violence, abuse and exploitation;
- protection for children cared for away from home and for children with a disability;
- children being able to use their own language, enjoy their own culture and practice their own religion;
- reasonable standards of health and development;
- children suspected of committing a crime and children convicted of crimes.

Each point in the convention is called an article. There are five articles that are especially important for Irish FA staff and volunteers to be aware of:

**Article 1:** No Discrimination

**Article 3:** Acting in The Child's Best Interests

**Article 6:** Making It Happen (the government has promised to make laws and change policies and procedures to give children these rights)

**Article 12:** The Child's Right to Express an Opinion

**Article 19:** Protection from Abuse and Neglect

#### Are these all 'legal' rights?

Since the UK government has signed the convention, no law or administrative action should contradict it. There is a committee at the United Nations which checks on whether governments are keeping their promises. Current legislation does not make all these rights available to children.

More information about children's rights in local law can be obtained from the Children's Law Centre, who can advise you or put you in touch with specialist groups with information relating to any issues.

#### The Children (NI) Order 1995

The Children (NI) Order 1995 is based on a clear and consistent set of five principles designed with the common aim of promoting the welfare of children and young people, they are;

- **Paramountcy** the welfare of the child and young person is paramount to this club
- **Parental / Guardian Responsibility** parents / guardians have responsibility for ensuring their child is safe and the young person's rights are protected rather than rights over them
- **Prevention** the club will put all good practice measures in place to reduce any potential risks of harm
- **Partnership** parents / guardians and statutory agencies will work together to prevent abuse and harm
- **Protection** the statutory agencies have a legal duty to investigate when a child or young person is at risk from harm or abuse. This club is committed to working in partnership with any statutory intervention to protect a child.

Children and young people have the right to be safe. Our staff and/or volunteers have a duty to ensure that this fundamental principle takes precedence over all other considerations.

## Section 3 Responsibility for Safeguarding

Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football is a shared responsibility. Our club fully endorse the Irish FA's Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football Policy and Procedures found under the Foundation section at [www.irishfa.com](http://www.irishfa.com). We have appointed a Club Child Welfare Officer(s) who has been ratified by our club committee.

The club child welfare officer plays a fundamental role in the creation of a child-centred ethos that promotes the positive aspects of football. This can be achieved by communicating to every adult in the club that they have a duty of care to safeguard the welfare of children and young people and protect them from inappropriate behaviour and promote a culture of fun.

**The role and responsibilities of the child welfare officer includes the following:**

- Work with others in the club to create a positive child centred environment.
- Adopt the safe recruitment procedures outlined by the Irish FA to ensure all volunteers in Regulated Activity have completed appropriate vetting checks, administered by the Irish FA prior to taking up their role.
- Ensure all club volunteers have attended Irish FA Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football training in line with NIBFA, NIWFA, GDC, SSG affiliation requirements within 6 months of taking up their role.
- Be the first point of contact for any complaints relating to poor practice and/or safeguarding issues and maintain appropriate records of any complaints, actions or decisions taken.
- Disseminate relevant information throughout the club as and when necessary.
- Liaise with the Irish FA, clubs, leagues and any other relevant affiliated bodies to ensure any concerns are dealt with at the earliest opportunity.

As a club, we will ensure that the club welfare officer has:

- Completed the Irish FA Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football Course
- Completed the Irish FA Child Welfare Officer Course (within 6 months of being appointed)
- Completed a satisfactory Enhanced Disclosure Check through the Irish FA
- Agreed to take responsibility for their own development to maintain their knowledge and skills to fulfil the role

For additional information on the roles and responsibilities of the club child welfare officer see the Irish FA Safeguarding Policy and Procedures or the Irish FA Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football App currently available at Google Play and iTunes.

## Section 4 Safe Recruitment Procedures

Our club recognises its responsibility to ensure that all staff/volunteers providing football opportunities for children and young people are appropriately selected, supported and have the necessary safeguarding knowledge to help them in their roles. Our selection process includes but is not limited to:

- An application process
- Confirmation of any experience working with children
- Previous coaching experience
- A commitment to engage in additional training as required by the club
- Reference checking

### Vetting Checks

Our club is required to ensure that any volunteer who is engaged in regulated activity (welfare role, first aider, coach, transporting children, overnight stays) completes an AccessNI Enhanced Disclosure Check.

Once we are satisfied that the volunteer is suitable to represent our club we will ensure that an appropriate AccessNI application is completed prior to them taking up their role and at 3 yearly intervals thereafter. The process is as follows:

- We will issue a hard copy of the AccessNI application form (available at [www.irishfa.com](http://www.irishfa.com)) to each applicant.
- Each applicant must complete the application in full, including the online registration for an Enhanced Disclosure Check (against the Barred list if the work is unsupervised).
- Each applicant must return the application form to our club welfare officer or chairperson along with 3 pieces of identification for identity checking.
- Each applicant should consider submitting a self-declaration form outlining any relevant cautions and/or convictions to Kevin Doyle, Irish FA Safeguarding Manager, NFS Windsor Park, Belfast, BT12 6LU.
- The club welfare officer/chairperson should record the name, dob and AccessNI reference number and forward the application form and copies of identification to Kevin Doyle, Irish FA Safeguarding Manager, NFS Windsor Park, Belfast, BT12 6LU.

On receipt of the completed application the Irish FA will:

- Process the application to AccessNI
- Receive notification from AccessNI outlining:
  - (i) Nothing to disclose
  - (ii) Certificate Issued (previous cautions and/or convictions)
  - (iii) Further information required from the applicant

The Irish FA will conduct a thorough risk assessment on any disclosures. Our club volunteers will provide the Irish FA with the original disclosure certificate and a detailed explanation of any disclosures identified by the AccessNI check. The Irish FA may be required to obtain third party information and/or share information with our club. This will only be done with the consent of the volunteer.

Our club will engage fully in this process and comply with any decision taken by the Irish FA Case Management Panel.

## Safeguarding Training

All our staff and volunteers will attend the Irish FA Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football training course within 6 months of taking up their role. This will cover:

- Basic awareness and understanding of safeguarding issues
- Recognising a child protection concern including guidance on how to respond to, record and report concerns in line with Irish FA guidelines
- Volunteers responsibility to safeguard children and young people who participate in Irish FA programmes
- Awareness of the Irish FA Safeguarding Children and Young People Policy and Procedures – including codes of conduct

Volunteers will be required to attend refresher training in safeguarding on a 3-yearly basis either via face to face training or online learning. Face to face training must be completed after 9 years.

## Section 5 Responding to concerns, complaints or allegations

**We will take any complaint or concern about the safety and welfare of a child seriously. This includes but is not limited to the following:**

- The conduct of a club volunteer towards any other club member – child, parent/guardian, spectator, Irish FA and/or other match officials.
- The conduct of any club representative towards any member of another football club, league, Irish FA and/or match official.
- Any concern, raised by a child or adult, that indicates they (or another person) have been harmed or are at risk of being harmed by another individual.
- The conduct of any club member that may cause reputational damage to the club.
- Any concerning behaviour that is observed by a club representative.

Any concerns you may have should initially be directed to our club Child Welfare Officer. If the complaint is about that individual, you should raise the issue with the club Chairperson or another senior official as necessary.

We will consider if your concern relates to poor practice and is a breach of our Code of Conduct. This matter may be addressed internally. Serious cases of poor practice may be referred to the Irish FA/NIBFA. All concerns will be fully investigated.

**The outcome of any investigation may be:**

- No case to answer
- Advice and warning as to future conduct
- Supervision/monitoring
- Support/additional training
- Suspension from the club
- Club membership rescinded

We will also consider if your concern is potentially child abuse or criminal behaviour. We will record the nature of the concern and immediately share this information with statutory authorities and the Irish FA/NIBFA. Our club will be guided by the advice from relevant authorities.

We may have to make a referral to the DBS. If this is the case, we will liaise with the Irish FA and any other appropriate body.

## Section 6 What is Child Abuse?

“Child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care. Children may be abused in many settings: in a family, in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them, or more rarely, by a stranger. There are different types of abuse and a child may suffer more than one of them.”

*(Ref: Department Of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) NI Area Child Protection Committee’s Regional Child Protection Policy and Procedures, 2005)*

Child abuse occurs when a person in a position of greater authority or power causes significant harm to a child or young person. Research indicates that this harm can take place in many settings, including sport, and that the perpetrator is more often an adult whom children and young people know and place their trust in, rather than a stranger.

Child abuse is a very difficult and emotive subject which requires education and open discussion so that everyone feels confident in recognising the potential signs and symptoms of abuse and knows how to respond to concerns in line with Association and statutory guidelines.

By creating a better understanding of the issue, and by facilitating open discussion about abuse, the Irish FA also endeavours to deter those who may wish to use football as a means of gaining access to children and young people for inappropriate reasons.

Child abuse inquiries indicate that abuse which takes place in a public setting is rarely a one-off occurrence. Therefore, it is imperative that all allegations and suspicions of abuse are taken seriously and acted upon immediately to prevent further harm to children and young people

**The Department of Health Co-operating to Safeguard Children (2017) Report formally recognises five types of abuse:**

<b>Physical abuse</b>	occurs when a person deliberately hurts a child or young person or gives a child or young person access to alcohol, drugs or other dangerous substances
<b>Emotional abuse</b>	occurs when a person persistently shouts, taunts or threatens a child or young person. They may also convey to them that they are worthless or inadequate
<b>Neglect</b>	occurs when a person persistently fails to provide a child or young person with basic needs such as food, water and clothing. The child or young person may also be left unsupervised and not cared for
<b>Sexual abuse</b>	occurs when a person takes advantage of a child or young person to gratify their own sexual needs
<b>Exploitation</b>	occurs when a person manipulates or abuses their power and control over a child or young person for their own personal gain.

Although bullying is not formally recognised as a type of abuse under the Children (NI) Order, the Irish FA considers it to be a form of harm which must be taken seriously and responded to.

For more detailed information regarding the categories of abuse, refer to [www.irishfa.com/foundation/youth-and-grassroots-football/safeguarding](http://www.irishfa.com/foundation/youth-and-grassroots-football/safeguarding).

## Section 7 Code of Conduct

Football should be a positive experience for all participants. Our club expects high standards of behaviour from all our representatives – players, coaches, volunteers and supporters. Football is passionate and naturally competitive and can evoke different emotions and reactions. These, at times can be both positive and negative and can spill onto the pitch. We have a shared responsibility to ensure poor conduct does not compromise the safety and welfare of children and young people. Any behaviour which compromises this ethos may result in disciplinary action.

**Players - Children and young people at our club are expected to:**

- Show respect to players, coaches/volunteers and spectators
- Play fairly, respect officials and accept their decisions
- Respect opponents and not cheat
- Not use violence
- Remain within the defined boundary of the playing area/coaching area
- Behave and listen to all instructions from the coach/supervising adult
- Take care of all equipment owned by the club/league/SSG centre
- Refrain from bad language or racial /sectarian references
- Refrain from bullying or persistent use of rough and dangerous play
- Report abuse and/or inappropriate behaviour
- Be gracious in defeat
- Refrain from any inappropriate use of social media that may be critical of any club member or bring our club into disrepute

**Children and Young People have the right to:**

- Be safe and be listened to
- Be respected
- Privacy
- Enjoy football in a protective environment
- Be referred for professional help if needed
- Be protected from abuse/inappropriate behaviour from any other person
- Participate on an equal basis, based on their ability
- A positive experience of competition
- Have their concerns taken seriously

Any behaviour deemed to be in breach of the code of conduct will initially be addressed by the appropriate coach and the Club Welfare Officer informed. Should the inappropriate behaviour persist or become more serious the matter will be escalated within the club and the following actions may be considered (this list is not exhaustive):

- Behavioural contract
- Suspension from training/matches
- Expulsion from the club

Your parents/guardians will be informed of any action taken by the club or concerns about your behaviour.

**Code of Conduct for Parents/Guardians****Parents/Guardians involve with our club are expected to:**

- Show respect, appreciation and support for the club coaches and volunteers
- Complete and return club registration forms along with consent forms pertaining to your child's participation with the club
- Inform the club of any health concerns pertaining to your child – particularly breathing, chest conditions or allergies. This may include any other condition including ADHD and/or Autism prior to football related activity.
- Be punctual when delivering and collecting your child to and from football training or matches. Inform the coach of any change of circumstance or collection arrangements
- Ensure your child is prepared for football – appropriate attire depending on weather conditions, appropriate footwear, shin guards and if required, prescription safety glasses, fluids and snacks if needed
- Behave in a manner that reflects the good name of the club, make yourself aware of and adhere to rules of games centres  
Encourage your child to play by the rules and to do their best
- Be realistic and promote your child's participation in football for fun and enjoyment
- Accept officials and referee's decisions
- Behave responsibly on the side-lines and engage positively with other parents and coaches
- Refrain from any inappropriate use of social media that may be critical of any club member or bring our club into disrepute
- Never enter the field of play unless invited by an official

**Parents/Guardians have a right to:**

- Know their child is safe and supervised during training and matches (unless prior arrangements re supervision agreed)
- Be informed about any problems or concerns relating to their child(ren)
- Be informed if their child is injured
- Make a positive contribution to decisions made by the club
- Raise any complaints or concerns they may have relating their children's involvement with the club

Any behaviour deemed to be in breach of the code of conduct will initially be addressed by the appropriate coach and the Club Welfare Officer informed. Should the inappropriate behaviour persist or become more serious the matter will be escalated within the club and the following actions may be considered (this list is not exhaustive):

- Behavioural contract
- Parent/Guardian may be asked not to attend training sessions and/or matches for an agreed period
- **If parental poor behaviour continues then ultimately your child may be asked to leave the club because of your actions**



## Code of Conduct for Coaches and Volunteers

### All coaches and volunteers at our club will:

- show respect to everyone involved in the game (i.e. coaches, players, match officials, parents and spectators)
- be an excellent role model and always display exemplary behaviour. This includes not smoking, drinking alcohol, taking drugs or using foul, racial, sectarian or discriminatory language in the presence of children and young people.
- only develop open, honest, professional and respectful relationships with children and young people
- promote the positive aspects of football and never condone rule-violations or the use of prohibited substances
- not equate success purely with results / winning, or equate losing with failure
- respect decisions made by match officials and never publicly criticise their decisions
- never enter the field of play without permission from the referee
- never use offensive, insulting, abusive or inappropriate language
- agree to complete appropriate vetting checks and engage in any subsequent risk assessment with the Irish FA
- attend appropriate training as and when required in line with Irish FA affiliation requirements – safeguarding, first aid etc

### When coaching/volunteering children and young people I will:

- always put the welfare of children and young people before winning or achieving goals
- work in an open environment and avoid spending time alone with children and young people away from others
- only partake in one-to-one coaching with a child or young person if it is necessary, part of the overall team training session and is done with the knowledge of the club and agreement with the child/young person and parent
- make them feel safe and ensure that coaching and volunteer ratios are appropriate to the needs of the group
- make football a fun experience
- communicate in a constructive, effective and age-appropriate manner
- be positive by giving constructive feedback, praising efforts and encouraging achievements
- ensure that if any form of manual / physical support is required, it is provided openly and according to agreed club guidelines. If physical support is needed, I will talk openly to the child or young person, explaining what I am doing and why, but I understand that for coaching purposes within football there are limited reasons for physical support. I agree that children and young people should always be consulted before they are touched, and their agreement gained. Parental / guardian views about manual support will always be carefully considered
- recognise the developmental needs and capacity of children and young people, including those with a disability, avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing any child against their will
- carry out a risk assessment and ensure that the equipment and environment used for every club activity is safe
- keep a written record, and inform senior coach and parent of the young person, of any injury that occurs, including details of any treatment given
- never engage in bullying behaviour
- challenge any form of bullying behaviour and report it to club Welfare Officer and parent of the young person
- avoid spending any time alone with children or young people away from others.

### The following actions will never be sanctioned. I will never:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- share a changing room, bath or shower with a child or young person
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- allow children or young people to use foul, abusive, racial, or discriminatory language unchallenged
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child or young person – even in fun
- engage in sexual relationships with any player under 18 years of age while that unequal power relationship exists, and will notify the Club Welfare Officer of any relationships where there is a potential or actual abuse of trust
- engage in inappropriate use of social media – this includes never posting comments on social media sites that compromise the welfare of a child or young person, cause them harm, or bring the club or sport into disrepute
- reduce a child or young person to tears as a form of control
- encourage or bully a child or young person into playing while injured
- show favouritism
- allow allegations made by a child or young person to go unrecorded or not acted upon.
- undertake personal care for children or young people
- enter or remain in the changing room while players are showering or changing if they are of a different gender to myself.
- invite or allow children or young people to stay with me at my home.

Any behaviour deemed to be in breach of the code of conduct will initially be addressed by the head coach or Club Welfare Officer. Should the inappropriate behaviour persist or become more serious the matter will be escalated within the club and the following actions may be considered (this list is not exhaustive):

- Additional training
- Mediation
- Period of supervision
- Suspension
- Expulsion from the club

## **Section 8 Anti-Bullying Policy**

Bullying is hurtful behaviour which no child or young person should have to experience. The impact that bullying can have on a child's or young person's life should never be underestimated. In extreme cases, bullying can lead to a child or young person self-harming or taking their own life. Our club is committed to providing an environment which promotes fun, respect, inclusivity and equality for everyone involved.

Bullying is unacceptable behaviour that compromises our club's ethos and will therefore be challenged and responded to. Volunteers who witness bullying behaviour, whether it's child-to-child or adult to child, must respond immediately and report it to our Club Welfare Officer. Cases of serious bullying may be reported to the Irish FA Safeguarding team.

- All volunteers must respect every child and young person's need for, and right to, an environment where safety, security, praise, recognition, opportunity and equality are available.
- Bullying behaviour will not be accepted or condoned at our club.
- Any form of bullying will be taken seriously, be investigated and be promptly and appropriately responded to.
- Everyone involved in our club must understand what bullying is and how it affects those involved.
- Everybody has a responsibility to work together to stop bullying.
- Our anti-bullying policy and reporting procedures should be made known to everyone involved in the club, so they know how to respond to bullying, should it occur
- Our club will support children and young people, and their parents / guardians, should they be subjected to bullying.

### **RESPONDING TO BULLYING: VOLUNTEERS**

- All cases of bullying must be reported to the club welfare officer.
- Parents and guardians should be made aware that their child is being bullied, or is bullying others, and should be invited to meet with relevant club volunteers to discuss the problem.
- Where appropriate, the PSNI may be contacted
- Mediation should be used to help achieve a resolution but only if there is informal consent and agreement from all parties.
- The bullying behaviour should be promptly addressed and stopped.

## Section 9 Useful Contacts

### **Irish FA Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football App Health and Social Care Trusts In Northern Ireland**

Each trust has a Gateway team to deal with initial reports of abuse, and more local contacts for ongoing professional liaison and advice on concerns.

**Northern HSC Trust** Tel 0300 1234 333 (0900-1700) **Out of hours** 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

**South Eastern HSC Trust** Tel 0300 1000 300 (0900-1700) **Out of hours** 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

**Southern HSC Trust** Tel 0800 7837 745 (0900-1700) **Out of hours** 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

**Belfast HSC Trust** Tel 028 9050 7000 (0900-1700) **Out of hours** 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

**Western HSC Trust** Tel 028 7131 4090 (0900-1700) **Out of hours** 028 9504 9999 (1700-0900)

### **Police Service Of Northern Ireland Public Protection Units**

The following are PSNI Public Protection Units throughout Northern Ireland. Contact them via the police exchange 028 9065 0222 or 101 and the relevant extension below:

**North/West Belfast** Tennent St PSNI x 28969

**South/East Belfast** Willowfield PSNI x 23570

**Newtownards/Bangor** Newtownards PSNI x 31065

**Carrickfergus/Newtownabbey/Antrim** Antrim PSNI x 36070

**Armagh/Newry** Lurgan PSNI x 39084

**Cookstown/Omagh/Enniskillen** Omagh PSNI x 41630

**Limavady/Londonderry/Magherafelt** Maydown PSNI x 57016

**Coleraine/Larne/Ballymena** Ballymoney PSNI x 63605 A

### **NSPCC**

**Helpline** 0808 800 5000 [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)

**Child Protection In Sport Unit** 028 9035 1135/011 6234 7278 | [www.thecpsu.org.uk](http://www.thecpsu.org.uk)

**ChildLine** Freephone 0800 1111 [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**Access NI** 0300 200 7888 [www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/accessni)

### **Disclosure and Barring Service**

Information or queries relating to referrals or barring of adults from working with children and young people  
01325 953795 [www.homeoffice.gov.uk/dbs](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/dbs)

**Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP)** 028 7238 2391 [www.ceop.gov.uk](http://www.ceop.gov.uk)

**Kidscape (Anti-Bullying Charity)** 0207 730 3300 [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

**PIPS (Suicide Prevention Charity)** 028 90287836 [www.pipsprogrammes.com](http://www.pipsprogrammes.com)

**Lifeline 24-hour general helpline** 0808 808 8000

**Nexus Counselling service for survivors of abuse** [www.nexusinstitute.org](http://www.nexusinstitute.org)

**Belfast** 028 9032 6803

**Derry/Londonderry** 028 7126 0566

**Portadown** 028 3835 0588

**Enniskillen** 028 6632 0046

**Sport NI** 028 9038 1212 [www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

**Volunteer Now** 028 9023 6100 [www.volunteernow.co.uk](http://www.volunteernow.co.uk)

### **OTHER USEFUL WEBSITES**

[www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk) (anti-bullying charity)

[www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) (CEOP's internet safety education programme)

# Summary

We are committed to the good practice guidelines and procedures outlined throughout this policy. As a club, we accept our responsibility to provide an environment which promotes the safety and welfare of children and young people at all times.

In addition to this policy document we are guided by additional policies outlined in the Irish FA Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football Policy and Procedures document found [www.irishfa.com/foundation/youth-and-grassroots-football/safeguarding](http://www.irishfa.com/foundation/youth-and-grassroots-football/safeguarding). This includes:

- Whistle Blowing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Equality Policy
- General Data Protection Regulations
- Communications and Social Media Policy
- Managing Challenging Behaviour
- Transporting Children and Young People
- Travelling to Away Fixtures/Tournaments/Residentials
- Guidelines on Confidentiality
- Organising Events/Festivals/Tournaments

**The Irish FA Safeguarding Children and Young People in Football App is available to download.**

## Appendix 2

### VETTING CHECKS

In order to register an official, all clubs, leagues, affiliated bodies and Associations must follow appropriate selection procedures ensuring they are satisfied with the applicant/volunteer. This process should include but is not limited to:

- An application process
- Confirmation of any experience working with children
- Previous coaching experience
- A commitment to engage in additional training as required by the club
- Reference checking

If satisfied with the applicant/volunteer, the club, league or association/affiliated body must ensure that all volunteers engaging in Regulated Activity complete an Enhanced Disclosure Vetting Check prior to confirmation of their membership.

To allow the Irish FA/NIBFA to assess the suitability of a club official to take up membership of the NIBFA, the club, league/association or affiliated body must ensure that the club official engaging in Regulated Activity completes a satisfactory vetting check.

The application process is as follows:

- When satisfied with the applicant, the club will issue a hard copy of the AccessNI application form to each applicant. This application can be found at <https://www.irishfa.com/irish-fa-foundation/grassroots-and-youth-football/safeguarding>
- Each applicant must complete the application full, including the online registration for an Enhanced Disclosure Check (against the Barred list if the work is unsupervised).
- Each applicant must return the application form to the club welfare officer or chairperson along with 3 pieces of identification for identity checking.
- Each applicant should, if necessary submit the self-declaration form outlining any relevant cautions and/or convictions to Kevin Doyle, Irish FA Safeguarding Manager, NFS Windsor Park, Belfast, BT12 5LU.
- The club welfare officer/chairperson should record the name, dob and AccessNI reference number and forward the application form and copies of identification to Kevin Doyle, Irish FA Safeguarding Manager, NFS Windsor Park, Belfast, BT12 5LU. All information should be included on the relevant online club registration system.

On receipt of the completed application the Irish FA will:

- Process the application to AccessNI
- Receive notification from AccessNI outlining:
  - (i) **Nothing to disclose** – The Irish FA/NIBFA will inform the club welfare officer/chairperson that the individual could be considered for appointment
  - (ii) **Certificate Issued** – The Irish FA will request from the applicant, the original disclosure certificate and a full explanation of any disclosures outlined within. The applicant may provide or be required to provide relevant additional information allowing the Irish FA to assess the individual's suitability to fulfil their proposed role. This may include but is not limited to written references and/or additional reports relating to the convictions. The applicant may be required to attend an interview as part of the assessment process. The Irish FA will inform the club, league or affiliated body if the applicant has been successful and any measures that should be put in place to manage any identified risk. The club/league/affiliated body may be required to engage in this assessment process.
  - (iii) **Further information required** – the Irish FA may be required to request additional information from the applicant for the purposes of progressing the application.

This decision will be taken by the Irish FA Case Management Panel.

The Irish FA is committed to equal opportunities for all and does not preclude applicants with criminal convictions. Convictions will only be considered when relevant to the position that the applicant has applied for. Applicants whose disclosure certificate returns information in relation to their criminal record will be judged on a case-by-case basis. Disclosures do not necessarily preclude a person from taking a role within affiliated youth football.

The assessment of suitability will depend on several factors:

- the nature of the position
- the self-disclosure of any prosecutions or convictions
- the seriousness, timing and any possible pattern that emerges of any information disclosed
- the potential of reoffending to cause harm to young people/vulnerable adults

The following information is considered:

- Age of applicant now and at the time of the offence
- Type and nature of the offence
- Number of offences on record
- Pattern of offending or date since last offence
- Contact with young people and/vulnerable adults
- Any mitigating factors
- Any aggravating factors
- Disclosure by applicant
- Cooperation with case management process

Disclosure of certain types of convictions/prosecutions may automatically preclude the applicant from a position working with children. Examples of offences that may prohibit an applicant are:

- Any offence of a sexual nature
- Any offence against a child
- An offence that causes gross bodily harm
- An offence of kidnapping
- A series of continuous offending that might cause concern for the well-being of children

Any applicant who submits inaccurate information (at any stage of the process), omits relevant information or does not engage meaningfully in the assessment process may not be permitted to take up membership of the NIBFA either temporarily or permanently.

All documentation will be returned to the applicant on completion of the process. The Irish FA will retain confirmation of the decision to grant membership or not.

All clubs, leagues, affiliated and associated bodies must ensure they maintain accurate and up to date record of all club officials including confirmation of vetting checks and safeguarding training, both of which should be updated every 3 years.

### **Appeals**

An appeals process can be made available to any individual who is subject to a decision made by the CMP.

- All requests must be submitted in writing, by special-delivery post, within 14 days after the date the decision was intimated in writing to the individual concerned.
- A fee of £75 must be enclosed with the appeal. The fee shall be returned only where the appeal is upheld or not heard.
- The request must clearly identify the decision the individual wishes to appeal, on what grounds they wish to make the appeal, and reasons as to why it would be unfair not to change the decision. Evidence must also be submitted to support the claim.
- The Appeals Panel will exclude any person who sat on the original CMP.
- Where an appeal has been rejected or not heard, the initial decision made by the CMP will stand.
- The Appeals Panel will notify the individual, in writing, of the outcome of the appeal process.

Should an individual wish to withdraw their appeal prior to the hearing taking place, they must notify the Irish FA's Safeguarding Team in writing. In such cases, the original decision made by the CMP will be upheld. The individual may also be subject to a cancellation fee.

**Appendix 3**

**PLAYER TRAINING/TRIALS AGREEMENT FORM**

Agreement for club registered players to attend trial, training or as a guest player for another club during the period of the registration. Please PRINT ALL sections except for signature.

Name of Player \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Club \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_ head of youth/secretary\* of the above-named club hereby approve the Request from Name of Club \_\_\_\_\_ to invite the above named player to a trial, to train and or to guest for the said team in a tournament between the following dates \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_ inclusive.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Role \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Declaration

I \_\_\_\_\_ head of youth/secretary\* of Name of Club \_\_\_\_\_

Acknowledge the cooperation of; Name of Club \_\_\_\_\_

In releasing the above-named player and will comply with the agreed dates noted above. I also understand any failure to comply with these dates will leave our club subject to sanction as per the current league disciplinary code.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Role \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\*delete as appropriate but the approval must be authorised by an official at this level of the club.

This signed document and a copy must now be submitted to the league or leagues of the two clubs named above.

**League use only**

Name of League \_\_\_\_\_

Received by; \_\_\_\_\_ Print Name

Date; \_\_\_\_\_