

Balbriggan F.C.

Child Safeguarding Statement



Safeguarding Children at Balbriggan F.C

Balbriggan F.C is committed to safeguarding children and by working under the guidance of our FAI Safeguarding Policies. For the avoidance of doubt, children are defined as any person under the age of eighteen regardless of team or circumstances. Our volunteers, throughout the organisation, seek to create a safe environment for children to grow and develop.

While attention often turns to sexual abuse, child abuse takes many forms including bullying (cyber and in-person), neglect, emotional and physical abuse. Balbriggan F.C has undertaken a risk assessment to identify areas where we can do more to protect children at the club from abuse. The club's written risk assessment document indicates the areas of potential risk of harm, the likelihood of the risk occurring, and gives the required policy, guidance or process documents require to alleviate these risks. The most recent risk assessment was undertaken on 28th February 2018.

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been developed in line with requirements under the Children First Act 2015, (the Children First: National Guidance, and Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice). In addition to our Risk Assessment document described above, there are further procedures that support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our activities. These procedures and guidelines are set out below.

We recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. Our Club is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures that support our intention to keep children safe from harm while availing of our activities.

Yours in Sport,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'John Sheridan'.

John Sheridan

Balbriggan F.C's Children's Officer

Our Principles

The key principles underpinning child protection at Balbriggan F.C are:

- The welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration.
- All children and young people have a right to be protected from abuse of any kind regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual identity.
- All volunteers must apply to hold a position at Balbriggan F.C. Applicants must disclose if they have been convicted of any offences which may prohibit them from being involved in the club as well as providing references.
- All volunteers must be Garda Vetted for their roles at Balbriggan F.C. Those who fail to achieve Garda Vetting must stand down from all club activities.
- All volunteers must attend the FAI Safeguarding course.
- Adequate supervision must be maintained at all times. Best practice advice would advocate adult:child ratios of 2 Leaders to every 16 children (1:8), but no coach or volunteer works alone.
- When travelling with young people, coaches of Balbriggan F.C should avoid being alone with any one player. While carpooling is often necessary to transport players to matches, at least two adults should travel in each car with players being dropped in central locations to be picked up by their parents/guardians.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse/poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately. It is essential that we work in partnership with children and young people and their parents/carers.
- The HSE has a statutory responsibility to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and Balbriggan Football Club is committed to cooperating fully with them in accordance with procedures as outlined in "Children First" National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children. Balbriggan Football Club will cooperate fully with the Football Association of Ireland National Children's Officer, Gardai and Health Boards in any investigation of child abuse in soccer.

The Protection and Welfare of Children

In line with legislation and Government Guidelines (The Child Care Act 1991 and the Protection for Persons Reporting Abuse Act 1998) in relation to child protection and welfare, it is mandatory that all participants, clubs, leagues, divisional associations and other football bodies shall be bound by the FAI recommended codes of conduct and best practice guidelines

Any act, statement, conduct or other matter which harms a child or children, or poses or may pose a risk of harm to a child or children, shall constitute behaviour which is improper and brings the game into disrepute.

Breaches shall become a disciplinary offence. Any member issued with a ban from football activity shall have their name notified to all League Secretaries for onward dissemination to all Club Secretaries. The notification shall state the name of the individual and the fact a ban has been issued.

Any participant who is the subject of a Statutory Inquiry in relation to any child welfare concern must stand down from all club activities pending the outcome of that inquiry and any subsequent internal disciplinary proceedings.

Any member convicted of an offence by the Irish Courts or Courts of any other jurisdiction involving the welfare of children shall be automatically banned from membership of the club. For the avoidance of doubt no disciplinary or other hearing shall be necessary in order to implement this automatic ban.

Child-Adult Physical Contact Guidelines

All volunteers of Balbriggan F.C are advised that:

- Any necessary physical contact should be in response to the needs of the child and not the adult and it should be in an open environment with the permission and full understanding of the player.
- Coaches should not treat injuries out of sight of others. Use a "Two-Deep" (two personnel, or two players) supervision system. Only personnel who are qualified in administering First Aid or treating sports injuries should attempt to treat an injury. The comfort level and dignity of the player should always be the priority. Example: Only uncover the injured area, or cover private areas of the athlete's body.

Comforting/congratulating players is an important part of the relationship between coaches and players. Guidelines for this type of touch are:

- Limit touching to "safe" areas, such as hand-to-shoulder. It should not involve touching genital area, buttocks, breasts, or mouths.
- Make your intention to congratulate or comfort clear to the player.
- Get permission from the player before embracing them - remember that personnel are in the position of power.
- Respect a players discomfort or rejection of physical contact.

Club Children's Officer

The appointment of Club Children's Officers is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere in any club. They act as a resource to members with regard to children's issues and also ensure that children have a voice in the running of the club and can freely talk of their experiences.

Government guidelines advise that a children's officer should be appointed by all clubs and this should be done in accordance with recommended selection and recruitment procedures. The appointment of this person should be carried out in consultation with juvenile members and their parent/guardians.

The Club Children's Officer should have the following functions:

- To promote the Code of Ethics & Good Practice
- To influence policy and practice and to prioritise children's needs
- To ensure that children know how and whom they can report their concerns to within the club. Information disclosed by a child should be dealt with in accordance with the Department of Health and Children's Guidelines "Children First"
- To encourage the participation of parents/guardians in club activities
- To cooperate with parents to ensure that each child enjoys his/her participation in soccer
- To act as a resource with regard to best practice in children's soccer
- To report regularly to the Executive Committee
- To monitor changes in membership and follow up any unusual dropout, absenteeism or club transfers by children or coach/volunteers

Club/League Children's Officers do not have the responsibility of investigating or validating child protection concerns within the club and have no counselling or therapeutic role. This responsibility lies with the HSE and Gardai.

Balbriggan F.C have appointed John Sheridan as our Children's Officer.

Procedure for dealing with Child Abuse Concerns or Allegations

It is important to note that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the Statutory Authorities (Gardai, HSE) and will not be undertaken by Balbriggan F.C or any of its members. All allegations of child abuse will be referred to the Statutory Authorities.

When an allegation is received it should be assessed promptly and carefully. It will be necessary to decide whether a formal report should be made to the HSE and this decision should be based on reasonable grounds for concern.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

1. A specific indication from a child that (s)he was abused
2. A statement from a person who witnessed abuse
3. An illness, injury or behaviour consistent with abuse.
4. A symptom which may not in itself be totally consistent with abuse, but which is supported by corroborative evidence of deliberate harm or negligence
5. A consistent signs of neglect over a period of time.

The following procedure sets out how allegations of child abuse will be dealt with at Balbriggan F.C:

1. Any allegation of abuse must in the first instance be brought to the attention of the Chairperson and or Child Liaison Officer. Should they be unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist, we will informally consult with the local HSE duty social worker who will advise whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

Coaches/volunteers may be subjected to erroneous or malicious allegations. Therefore, any allegation of abuse should be dealt with sensitively and appropriate support should be provided for staff/volunteers including counselling where necessary.

2. Should Balbriggan F.C become aware of an allegation of abuse of a child or children by a coach/volunteer during the execution of that coaches/volunteers duties, the Chairman will privately inform the coach/volunteer of the following:
 - a. The fact that the allegation has been made against him/her.
 - b. The nature of the allegation.

unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine any statutory investigation.

The coach/volunteer should be afforded an opportunity to respond. The Chairman will note the response and pass on this information when making the formal report to the HSE. The report to the HSE will contain observations, dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.

In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Chairperson is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Gardai shall be contacted. Under no circumstances will a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities

3. Our Chairperson, if reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities will first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine any statutory investigation.

4. Under Football Association of Ireland rules, any coach/volunteer/manager who is the subject of a statutory investigation into alleged child abuse, is required to stand down from all soccer activities until the investigation is completed. Therefore the FAI National Children's Officer must be informed immediately of any formal notification to the Statutory Authorities.

When a person is asked to stand down it should be made clear that it is only a precautionary measure in keeping with standard procedures/guidelines and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings.

The coach/volunteer concerned should be advised that the procedures being undertaken are in accordance with statutory requirements. He or she should be treated with respect and fairness, and also be assured that all information will be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

5. All subsequent actions following an allegation of abuse against a coach/volunteer will be taken in consultation with the HSE and An Garda Síochána. An immediate meeting will be sought with these two agencies for this purpose. The Football Association of Ireland National Children's Officer is also available to provide support and advice.
6. The Club will carefully consider the outcome of the statutory investigation and will then assess if there are any outstanding disciplinary issues in relation to their internal rules or infringements of the Football Association of Ireland best practice guidelines. It must be remembered that the fact that the alleged abuser has not been prosecuted or been found guilty does not mean that they are appropriate to work with young people in the future.

Rumours

Rumours should not be allowed hang in the air. Any rumour/s relating to inappropriate behaviour/s circulating in the club should be brought to the attention to the Chairperson/Children's Officer and checked out promptly. All ensuing information should be handled confidentially and with sensitivity.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is about managing information in a respectful, professional and purposeful manner. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected. Therefore, appropriate confidentiality will be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in concerns about the welfare of a child or bad practice within the club.

The following points will be borne in mind:

- A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the child will supersede all other considerations
- All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should only be discussed with those who need to know
- Information will be conveyed to the parents/guardians of a child about whom there are concerns in a sensitive way. Giving information to others on a "need to know" basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality