



STRABANE TENNIS CLUB
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Ratified by Club Committee

Date:

Chairperson:

Date for Review: On or before June 2026

POLICY STATEMENT

Strabane Tennis Club is committed to good practice which protects children and young people from harm. Coaches and volunteers accept and recognise their responsibility to provide an environment which always promotes the safety and protection of children and young people. To achieve this, we will:

- Develop an awareness of the issues which may lead to children being harmed.
- Ensure that the club has ‘Designated Safeguarding Officers’ to whom the children can turn to if they need to talk.
- Adopt child centred and democratic coaching styles.
- Adopt safeguarding guidelines through codes of conduct for members and all adults working at the club. Adult workers include coaches, parents and volunteers.
- Ensure careful recruitment, selection and management procedures. These procedures will include regular support and supervision is provided to staff/volunteers.
- Ensure complaints, grievance and disciplinary procedures are included in our constitution.
- Share information about concerns with children and parents and others who need to know.
- Provide information as required to the club committee.
- Ensure good and safe working/playing practices.
- Be involved in training made available through the various agencies and strengthen links with these agencies.
- Keep Safeguarding policies under regular review (every three years minimum).
- Have procedures relating specifically to bullying, away trips, transport, use of photography and communication through texting or social media forums.

Safeguarding or Child Protection

The term child protection has been expanded to safeguarding as it reflects the wider responsibility for health and safety and prevention as well as just protection from abuse. The word safeguarding has been used with increasing frequency over the last few years in a wide range of settings and situations, going well beyond the world of children and child protection. It may be defined as “**Doing everything possible to minimise the risk of harm to children and young people.**”

Safeguarding is about being proactive and putting measures in place in advance of any contact with children to ensure that children are going to be kept safe. This could include:

- Ensuring coaches and volunteers are properly checked when they are recruited;
- Guidelines for people who come into contact with children as part of their role to ensure they know what they need to do to keep children safe; and
- Guidelines for planning an event or activity with children and putting measures in place to minimise the risk of safeguarding issues occurring.

The **Children (Northern Ireland) Order (1995)** is based on a clear and consistent set of principles designed with the common aim of promoting the welfare of children.

Children have the right to be safe. All coaches should ensure that this fundamental principle takes precedence over all other considerations.

This policy applies to all those involved in Strabane Tennis Club coaches, members, parents and young people.

EQUALITY STATEMENT

This club is committed to ensuring that equity is incorporated across all aspects of its development. In doing so it acknowledges and adopts the following Sport Northern Ireland definition of sports equity:

“Sports equity is about fairness in sport, equality of access, recognising inequalities and taking steps to address them. It is about changing the culture and structure of sport to ensure it becomes equally accessible to everyone in society.”

- The club respects the rights, dignity and worth of every person and will treat everyone equally, regardless of age, ability, gender, race, ethnicity, religious belief, sexuality or social/economic status.
- The club is committed to everyone having the right to enjoy tennis in an environment free from threat of intimidation, harassment and abuse.
- All club members have a responsibility to oppose discriminatory behaviour and promote equality of opportunity.
- The club will deal with any incidence of discriminatory behaviour seriously, according to club disciplinary procedures outlined in the club constitution.

To address the vulnerability of children with a disability coaches will seek guidance on working with children with a disability from external agencies, parents/guardians and the children themselves.

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

Strabane Tennis Club will never promise to keep secrets. However, information of a confidential nature will only be communicated on a "need to know" basis, with the welfare of the child always remaining paramount. Considerations of confidentiality will not be allowed to override the rights of children or young members to be protected from harm.

A full Safeguarding policy statement will be made available to all members.

AWARENESS OF THE ISSUES

Background knowledge in relation to child abuse, the general principles of safeguarding and the ability to recognise and respond to abuse are important issues. Of primary concern for Strabane Tennis Club is the issue of Safeguarding of our young members within the operation of the club. However, being cognisant of the indicators of abuse in respect of young members

caused by others outside the club, are of an equal importance for the safety and wellbeing of that child.

Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2016

There is no absolute definition of 'significant harm', as this will be assessed on a case by case basis. Article 50(3) of the Children Order states that "where the question of whether harm suffered by a child is significant turns on the child's health or development, his health or development shall be compared with that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child".

Harm can be suffered by a child or young person by acts of abuse perpetrated upon them by others. Abuse can happen in any family, but children may be more at risk if their parents have problems with drugs, alcohol and mental health, or if they live in a home where domestic abuse happens. Abuse can also occur outside of the family environment.

Harm from abuse is not always straightforward to identify and a child or young person may experience more than one type of harm or significant harm. Harm can be caused by:

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Neglect; and
- Exploitation.

Physical Abuse is deliberately physically hurting a child. It might take a variety of different forms, including hitting, biting, pinching, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning or suffocating a child.

Sexual Abuse occurs when others use and exploit children sexually for their own gratification or gain or the gratification of others. Sexual abuse may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape, or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside clothing. It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in the production of sexual images, forcing children to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via e-technology). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Emotional Abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child. It is also sometimes called psychological abuse and it can have severe and persistent adverse effects on a child's emotional development. Emotional abuse may involve deliberately telling a child that they are worthless, or unloved and inadequate. It may include not giving a child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them, or 'making fun' of what they say or how they

communicate. Emotional abuse may involve bullying – including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobile phones – by a child’s peers.

Neglect is the failure to provide for a child’s basic needs, whether it be adequate food, clothing, hygiene, supervision or shelter that is likely to result in the serious impairment of a child’s health or development. Children who are neglected often also suffer from other types of abuse.

Exploitation¹ is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a child or young person; to take selfish or unfair advantage of a child or young person or situation, for personal gain. It may manifest itself in many forms such as child labour, slavery, servitude, engagement in criminal activity, begging, benefit or other financial fraud or child trafficking. It extends to the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of children for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

Anti-Bullying Policy Statement

Bullying is not an accepted behaviour towards anyone at *Strabane Tennis Club* be they child, coach, volunteer, adult or parent. Bullying will be dealt with seriously both with regard to the behaviour exhibited and the reasons for the behaviour.

NI Anti- Bullying Federation defines bullying as the REPEATED use of POWER by one or more persons, INTENTIONALLY to harm, hurt or adversely affect the RIGHTS and needs of another or others.

Bullying can take many forms but usually includes the following:

Physical – hitting, kicking, pinching, punching, scratching, spitting or any other form of physical attack. Damage to or taking someone else’s belongings may also constitute physical bullying.

Verbal – offensive name calling, insults, racist remarks, sexist jokes or comments, homophobic/transphobic or gender related jokes and comments, teasing, threats, using sexually suggestive or abusive language.

Sexual – abusive sexualised name calling, inappropriate and uninvited touching, inappropriate sexual innuendo and/or proposition.

Indirect – spreading nasty stories/rumours about someone, intimidation, exclusion from social groups.

Homophobic or transphobic bullying can be hard to identify because it may be going on in secret. It may include a person being made to feel unwelcome, belittled, or harassed (through gossip, name-calling, jokes and other hate acts – both in the virtual e.g. online and ‘real’ world.)

Sometimes athletes witness homophobic or transphobic bullying, and even if they are not lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) and the subject of the abuse, they may be reluctant to report it in case participants, coaches or other adults assume they are also homosexual, bisexual or transgender.

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying which uses technology to deliberately harm or upset others. This type of bullying can happen in many ways, using mobile phones or the internet and could include:

- Sending hurtful messages or using videos and images to humiliate
- Leaving malicious voicemails
- A series of silent calls
- Creating a website about other people to humiliate them
- Writing hurtful comments on social networking sites e.g. Facebook, Twitter
- Excluding them from chat/messaging rooms
- Sending video/images of people being bullied, so others can see.

Children and young people with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to being bullied for a variety of reason. These include:

- the increased likelihood of social isolation
- having fewer outside contacts than non-disabled children, and perhaps having limited access to someone to disclose bullying to
- an impaired capacity to resist, avoid or understand bullying
- being viewed as a 'safe target' for bullies.

INDICATORS OF ABUSE

The following is a list of some indicators of abuse, but it is not exhaustive:

PHYSICAL INDICATORS	BEHAVIOURAL INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas • Repeated injuries • Black eyes • Injuries to the mouth • Torn or bloodstained clothing • Burns or scalds • Bites • Fractures • Marks from implements • Inconsistent stories/excuses relating to injuries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unexplained changes in behaviour - becoming withdrawn or aggressive • Difficulty in making friends • Distrustful of adults or excessive attachment to adults • Sudden drop in performance • Changes in attendance pattern • Inappropriate sexual awareness, behaviour or language • Reluctance to remove clothing

Reasonable Grounds for concern

Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) Gateway teams should always be informed when there are reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- A specific indication from the child that he or she was abused
- An account by a person who saw the child being abused
- Evidence, such as an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in another way
- An injury or behaviour that is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation, but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse e.g. a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, and other indications of abuse and/or dysfunctional behaviour
- Consistent indication, over a period of time that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

The responsibility of deciding if a child has been abused lies with the HSCT Gateway Team, not with the people working within the sports club. However, all adults have a responsibility to protect children by reporting grounds for concern.

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE OF ABUSE

Always

1. Record what has been said as soon as possible
2. Remain sensitive and calm
3. Reassure child that they are safe and were right to tell and are not to blame
4. Reassure that they are being taken seriously
5. Let child talk - do not interview
6. Listen and hear, give the person time to say what they want
7. Ensure the experience is as positive as it can be
8. Explain that you must tell others to ensure action is taken to increase their safety, but will maintain confidentiality
9. Tell child what will happen next
10. Involve appropriate individuals immediately

Never

- Question unless for clarification
- Make promises you cannot keep
- Rush into actions that may be inappropriate
- Make/pass a judgment on alleged abuser
- Take sole responsibility, consult the designated safeguarding children officer so you can begin to protect the child and gain support for yourself

DESIGNATED SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN OFFICER (DSCO)

The DSCO within *Strabane Tennis Club* can be found on the committee section of our website.

NAMED PERSON shall be made known to young members, coaches and parents alike as the DSCO to whom concerns will be addressed. If the concern is about the DSCO please report to Club Chairperson.

Guidelines for recording/dealing with incidents/accidents will be outlined later in this policy document (**See Clubmark NI Template 18, 19, 20 and 21**).

SAFE RECRUITMENT PROCEDURES FOR VOLUNTEERS/COACHES

- Volunteers and coaches are carefully selected, trained and supervised. The office bearers of the club committee must vouch for new volunteers/coaches potential involvement and their participation must be ratified by the club committee.
- Individuals working or volunteering in regulated activity must complete an Access NI Disclosure Certificate Application Form (proof of identity **MUST** be provided). **Details available from Club Secretary or Ulster Tennis**
- Declaration of past convictions or cases pending and agreement to have an Access NI check completed, is of course a pre-requisite to approval to coach/volunteer to work with young people.
- All volunteers/coaches must agree to abide by the club's Safeguarding Policy.
- Any concerns or objections with regard to suitability of a coach should be submitted to the Governing Body DSCO. These matters will be raised with the Governing Body case management committee with appropriate action taken including a formal response in writing to the concerned party if required. Clubs should not deal with concerns about a coach in isolation.

TRAINING FOR VOLUNTEERS/COACHES

This club will:

- When appointing volunteers/coaches consider their current or previous experience either playing or coaching tennis.
- Education and training in the basics of Safeguarding will apply to all coaches/volunteers/management committee members working with the children or young members. Strabane Tennis Club is committed to continuous updating and review of our current safeguarding policy.
- Safeguarding training should include:
 - Basic awareness of Safeguarding issues
 - Our club/organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures including our code of conduct
 - Safeguarding refresher training <http://www.sportni.net/resources/>

- Training will be carefully selected to ensure it is sufficient. For instance a one hour training session is unlikely to be very useful. A minimum of three hours is required for basic awareness raising, and Strabane Tennis Club will seek that training from a specific training provider with experience and knowledge of good practice in sport.
- Ensure that all new coaches have attended safeguarding awareness workshop within six months of taking up their post. This opportunity should also be made available to parents and other volunteers to enable a culture of a child-focused club to prevail.
- We will ensure that training is updated and reviewed regularly for new staff/volunteers and in line with changing legislation.

CODES OF CONDUCT

A code of conduct informs all our club members what behaviour is expected and what is unacceptable. It will also let all involved know what sanctions will be applied for non-compliance with the code. A written code of conduct will be communicated to everyone associated with your club. It will be applied consistently.

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING ACCIDENTS

In the event of an accident, the following procedure will be carried out:

- Complete the Accident Form for all accidents.
- Make contact with parents/guardians.
- Forward a copy to DSCO for record keeping/action required.
- Contact emergency services/GP if required.
- Record in detail all facts surrounding the accident, witnesses, etc.

GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING ALLEGATIONS/INCIDENTS

- Record all incidents reported or observed on an Incident Form
- Inform DSCO ASAP.
- One copy to designated person within 24 hours.
- Ensure confidentiality - only "need to know basis" (reference confidentiality statement).
- Inform parents, unless to do so may put the child at further risk.
- The DSCO will be responsible for storing any report in a safe and secure environment and forwarding a copy on to statutory agencies if required.

HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES

This club are committed to ensure the safety of all members by completing a risk assessment for activities and endeavouring to provide first aid treatment for injury, accidents and cases of ill health during coaching sessions or at competitions.

USEFUL NUMBERS	
NSPCC Helpline	0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk
PSNI Public Protection Unit	028 9065 0222 Ask for your local Public Protection Unit
Childline	Freephone 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk
Sport Northern Ireland	028 9038 1222 www.sportni.net
Child Protection in Sport Unit	02890351135 www.thecpsu.org.uk
Lifeline	0808 808 8000

Health and Social Care Trusts in NI - Each trust will have a Gateway team to deal with reports of abuse and also more local contacts for ongoing professional liaison for advice on concerns.

Western HSC Trust	Tel: 028 7131 4090
Regional Emergency Social Work service. Available 5.00 PM – 9.00 AM Monday to Thursday and 5.00 PM on Friday to 9.00 AM on Monday. There is a 24 hour cover over public holidays.	
028 9504 9999	

IMPLEMENTATION AND AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

It is important that there is a free flow of information between coaches/volunteers, children and parents, in terms of promotion of good practice and holding up to date information. This club will insist that a parent/guardian consent form is completed for each under 18 year old member and information a parents role in supporting their child is distributed to all parents.

Parents should know what we do and how we do it, and the coaches/DSCO will always be on hand during, or after coaching sessions, for consultation or advice.

When appropriate, letters (or telephone contact) will be issued in relation to further information or specifics in respect of an event etc.

A regular review of club policies will take place through meetings with coaches/volunteers and feedback from children and parents.