



**RATHNEW AFC
CHILD SAFEGUARDING
POLICY AND REPORTING PROCEDURES**

Review date: 31st December 2022

This policy is printed and handed to all registered adult members in Rathnew AFC

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Child Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding Policy:

Rathnew AFC is committed to ensuring that all necessary steps will be taken to protect and safeguard the welfare of children and young people who participate in activities in our Club.

All children and young people who participate in Club activities should be able to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment. While doing so they should be protected from any form of abuse, be it physical, emotional, sexual, neglect or bullying.

The responsibility for protecting children lies with all adults involved in this Club.

These policies and procedures, in addition to relevant training programmes, will ensure that everybody in Rathnew AFC is aware of what is expected of them in relation to protecting children and young people within the Club.

In pursuit of this goal Rathnew AFC will:

- Advise all members of Rathnew AFC (coaches, players, parents/guardians and spectators) of their responsibilities in relation to the welfare and protection of children and young people who participate in soccer.
- Operate within the recommended FAI Codes of Conduct and best practice guidelines as set out in the Children First Act 2015 and the FAI's Child Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.
- Appoint a Club Children's Officer.
- Appoint a Designated Liaison Person.
- Endeavour to provide Safeguarding 1 training to all officials/managers/coaches at Rathnew AFC.
- Endeavour to provide emergency first aid courses for all coaches and staff.
- Ensure that all coaches and officials of Rathnew AFC are Garda Vetted.

The aims of this Rathnew AFC Child Protection Policy are:

- To be pro-active in order to best protect all children and young people who participate in activities at Rathnew AFC.
- To provide appropriate guidance and advice to all club members (players, coaches, volunteers, spectators and parents) in all matters concerning child welfare and protection.
- To promote best practice in child welfare and protection.
- To promote ethics and best practice standards throughout the club.

The key principles underpinning this Policy are that:

- The welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration.

- The safety and welfare of children is everyone's responsibility.
- 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 suspicions and allegations of abuse/poor practice must be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- The club will co-operate fully with the statutory authorities in accordance with procedures as outlined in the Children First Act 2015.

Rathnew AFC Child Welfare Key Personnel & Roles:

The Club Children's Officer for the purpose of Children First 2015 is:

Michelle Coffey Tel: 086 3328500 Email: children@rathnewafc.ie

The Designated Liaison Person is:

John Snell Tel: 087 2210222 Email: secretary@rathnewafc.ie

Michelle Coffey Tel: 086 3328500 Email: children@rathnewafc.ie

Roles:

Club Children's Officer: Responsible for leading the development of guiding principles and child safeguarding procedures and for ensuring that policies and procedures are consistent with best practice. The relevant person is the first point of contact in relation to the Clubs' Child Safeguarding Statement and Safeguarding Policy.

Designated Liaison Person: Responsible for making sure that the reporting procedure within Rathnew AFC is followed so that suspected cases of child abuse or neglect are referred promptly to Tusla or, in an emergency and the unavailability of Tusla, to An Garda Síochána.

FAI Mandated Person:

The Mandated Person for the FAI is **Kirsten Pakes**

Tel: 01-8999319 Email: kirsten.pakes@fai.ie

Recruitment Policy:

Rathnew AFC will take all reasonable steps to ensure that all coaches, managers and volunteers are suitable to work with children and young people.

- All new volunteers must first submit a volunteer application.
- All appointments are subject to approval and ratification by the committee.
- All managers/coaches and volunteers associated with the club must be Garda Vetted through the FAI.
- All new coaches and volunteers must first be Garda Vetted before they commence working with children and young persons.
- All coaches, managers and volunteers are expected at all times to abide by all club rules, codes of conduct and policies and procedures.

In the event of failure by any volunteer to abide by club rules and by the highest standards of ethics and good practice the club may issue an immediate stand down order. Once recruited the club will make all efforts to support coaches, managers and volunteers.

Safeguarding training:

The Club will endeavour to provide approved Safeguarding training for all officials/managers/coaches. Records of Safeguarding training will be kept.

Categories and indicators of abuse:

The club encourages all managers/coaches/volunteers to be aware of the signs and types of abuse that may be experienced by young players involved in the club.

Further information on categories of abuse and statutory guidelines can be found at www.tusla.ie/children-first.

Safe management of activities:

Policies and procedures that support the safe management of activities in Rathnew AFC include:

- Coach Education policy;
- Code of Conduct for Players;
- Code of Conduct for Managers/Coaches;
- Code of Conduct for Parents/Guardians & Spectators;
- Incident/Accident Reporting Procedure;
- Anti-Bullying Policy;
- Complaints & Disciplinary Procedure.

FAI Guidelines:

The Football Association of Ireland's regulations in regard to child welfare and protection are defined in the rulebook as:

RULE 71. THE PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN

(a) 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

(b) 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.

(c) 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.

(d) Any participant who is the subject of a Statutory Inquiry in relation to any child welfare concern must stand down from all football activities pending the outcome of that inquiry and any

subsequent internal disciplinary proceedings.

(e) 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 Association. For the avoidance of doubt no disciplinary or other hearing shall be necessary in order to implement this automatic ban.

RULE 95. PROTECTION AND WELFARE OF CHILDREN

All participants, clubs, leagues, divisional associations and other football bodies shall be bound by the FAI rules, codes of conduct and guidelines governing the protection and welfare of children, and breaches of such rules, codes and guidelines shall be subject to disciplinary sanction.

The disciplinary body may impose any sanction it deems appropriate.

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.

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

Michelle Coffey
Club Children's Officer

Date: 31st December 2022

Overview

It is important to note that the investigation of suspected child abuse is the responsibility of the Statutory Authorities (Tusla and/or the Gardaí) and therefore will not be undertaken by the Club Children's Officer, Designated Liaison Person or any other club personnel.

It is not the role of the person who conveys a complaint or suspicion about abuse to determine the guilt or innocence of the accused but every complaint must be made and acted upon without delay.

All allegations of child abuse **must** be referred to the Child and Family Agency, **Tusla, or in the event of an emergency to the Gardaí**. Referrals to Tusla should be done by completing a **Standard Reporting Form**, available from

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Child_Protection_and_Welfare_Report_Form_FINAL.pdf

All Club personnel have a duty to report any concerns they may have for the protection or welfare of a child or young person.

When an allegation is received by the Club it will be assessed promptly and carefully. It will be necessary to decide if a formal report should be made to Tusla. This decision should be based on reasonable grounds for concern.

Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children states that "Tusla should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected".

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- Evidence of an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way;
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse;
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect;
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused;
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed;
- An account from a person who saw a child being abused.

Wherever appropriate, any issues should be checked with the parents/guardians when considering whether a concern exists, unless doing so may further endanger the child or the person considering making the report.

Abuse is not always committed through personal contact with a child or young person and may be perpetrated through social media or the use of information and communication technology.

Concerns will be passed on by the Club Child Protection Officer and/or Designated Liaison Person

to the Statutory Authorities if we do receive any complaints with reasonable grounds for concern.

Procedure:

Step One

Any allegation of abuse must in the first instance be brought to the attention of the Club Children's Officer of the club.

Should the Club Children's Officer be unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist, they can informally consult with the local duty social worker, who will advise whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

The Club Children's Officer will also consult with the Designated Liaison Person.

In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Club Children's Officer is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Gardaí shall be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.

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

Formal reporting of allegations of abuse will be by submission to Tusla of a Standard Reporting Form.

Step Two

Should Rathnew AFC become aware of an allegation of abuse of a child or children by a volunteer during the execution of that volunteer's duties, the Club Children's Officer will privately inform the coach/volunteer of the following:

1. The fact that the allegation has been made against him/her;
2. The nature of the allegation;
3. Inform the volunteer that they must step down from all duties within the club until the investigation has reached its full conclusion.

Step Three

The volunteer should be afforded an opportunity to respond.

The club will note the response and pass on this information when making the formal report to the Statutory Authorities.

The report to Tusla should be factual and contain observations, dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.

Records on child protection concerns, allegations and disclosures will be kept securely and in line with Data Protection legislation.

Step Four

Our Club Children's Officer/Designated Liaison Person, if reporting suspected 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.

It should be noted that should a formal notification be made, we are not accusing anyone of child abuse, rather we are passing on concerns for investigation by the appropriate Statutory Authorities in keeping with the principle that "the welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration".

Step Five

All subsequent actions following an allegation of abuse against a coach/volunteer will be taken in consultation with the Statutory Authorities 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.

Step Six

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/manager/volunteer concerned will 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.

Step Seven

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.

Internal club disciplinary proceedings can only be initiated after the Statutory Authorities have completed theirs.

Confidentiality

Where child protection and welfare concerns arise, information must be shared on a 'need to know' basis in the best interest of the child/young person with the relevant Statutory Authorities and with parents/guardians.

No undertakings regarding secrecy can be given. The proportionate provision of information to the Statutory Authorities necessary for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality or data protection.

Parents/guardians and children/young people have a right to know if personal information is being shared, unless doing so could put the child/young person at further risk or may put the reporter at risk.