



Child Protection & Bullying Policy

Galway Hooker Sailing Club consider the safety and welfare of the child is paramount

- all children, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse
- all suspicions and allegations of poor practice, bullying or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- all staff (paid/unpaid) working in the Club have a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer.

Galway Hooker Sailing Club Children's Officer is Maria Buckley

Staff/volunteers are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred, so please refer anything to the designated Child Protection Officer.

Policy statement/aims

GHSC has a duty of care to safeguard all children and vulnerable adults involved in the Club. *GHSC* will ensure their safety and protection through the promotion of good practice and adherence to current legislation and *GHSC* Child Protection, Bullying and Safety policy guidelines.

The *GHSC* Safety policy is available from the website <http://galwayhookersailingclub.ie> . A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 (The Children Act 1989).

1. Good practice:

- providing children and young people with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of *GHSC*
- allow all staff /volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues
- ensure children are aware that nakedness is expected in a changing room and adults are encouraged to display some modesty.

All personnel should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote children's welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).



- If a child is uncomfortable changing or taking a shower in the club facility, no pressure should be put on them to do so. Encourage them to do so at home.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with trainees e.g.
 - it is not appropriate for staff or volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child (<18years) or to share a room with them
 - Instructors will endeavour to take showers at separate times to trainees
 - If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure instructors/supervisors work in pairs.
- Treating all young people/disabled adults equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and according to guidelines provided by the ISA. Young people and their parents should understand that there may be situations when sailing where man-handling is required for safety or recovery reasons.
- Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport.
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their children in the changing rooms should they so wish. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure parents, teachers, coaches or officials work in pairs.
- Ensuring that if mixed groups are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff. However, remember that same gender abuse can also occur.
- Ensuring that at overnight events/regattas, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms. Parents are encouraged to ask someone to act in Loco Parentis.
- Being an excellent role model - this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol when supervising/caring for/training young people.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and disabled adults - avoiding excessive training or competition and not pushing them against their will.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act *in loco parentis*, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.
- Requesting written parental consent if club officials are required to transport young people in their



cars.

Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer will have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child enters the club activity having been subjected to child abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving the child's self-esteem.

Child abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

2. Practices to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or the child's parents. For example, a child sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to pick a child up at the end of a session:

- avoid spending time alone with children away from others
- avoid taking or dropping off a child to an event or activity.

You should never:

- engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- share a room with a child
- allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching
- allow children to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- make sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun
- reduce a child to tears as a form of control
- fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child
- do things of a personal nature for children or disabled adults, that they can do for themselves
- invite or allow children to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

N.B. It may sometimes be necessary for staff or volunteers to do things of a personal nature for children, particularly if they are young or are disabled. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the sailors involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with him/her about what you are doing and



give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

3. Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the appropriate officer and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents of the child are informed:

- if you accidentally hurt a trainee
- if he/she seems distressed in any manner
- if a trainee/child appears to be sexually aroused by your actions
- if a trainee/child misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.
- Incidents that put the safety of any individual at risk
- Evidence of persistent bad practice

1. Use of photographic/filming equipment at sporting events

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled sportspeople in vulnerable positions. Any concerns should be reported to the Club Child Protection Officer.

Videoing as a coaching aid: Trainees and their parents/carers should be made aware of the possibility that video equipment may be used as part of the coaching programme and their consent obtained. Such films should be stored safely.

5. Recruitment and training of staff and volunteers

GHSC recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with children. Checks include the following:

Interview and induction

All employees are required to undergo an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees and volunteers on the training courses receive an induction, during which

- Applicants are asked to disclose any criminal conviction.
- Qualifications are substantiated and verified
- Job requirements and responsibilities are clarified.

Each employee/volunteer on the course will be made familiar with the Club's Safety, Child Protection and Bullying policies

Last reviewed Sept 2025