



Reporting and Protection

Sandy Cove Squash & Tennis Club (the **Club**) accepts that all organisations, which include young people among its members, are vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. This document sets out the procedures for dealing with any welfare or protection issue that may arise in the Club.

Child welfare and the protection of young people is the concern of all adults at all times, irrespective of their role within the Club.

If there are grounds for concern about the safety or welfare of a young person, the Club and any member having such concerns must take appropriate steps to address those concerns.

The Designated Liaison Person (DLP)

In certain limited circumstances it may be necessary to report suspected or known child abuse allegations to Tusla (Child & Family Agency) or An Garda Síochána. The Club has in place a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) whose job it is to receive such reports from Club members. They will then decide if a report should be made to Tusla or indeed in certain circumstances to An Garda Síochána.

The DLP has received specific training for this role. In addition, the person chosen to fulfil the role will be a senior and experienced member of the Club.

Role and Responsibilities of DLP

- To receive reports from Club members (Senior or Junior) regarding suspected or known child abuse.
- To assess such reports and to seek advice from Tusla with regard to the particular circumstances.
- To make formal reports to Tusla and/or to the Garda Síochána regarding suspected or known child abuse.
- To inform the President of the Club that such a report has been made or sought (without disclosing any of the details of the incident).
- To inform the family of an alleged victim of his/her intention to make such a report. (unless doing so would endanger the child/young person or undermine an investigation).
- Assisting the President and other Club Officers in relation to any internal procedures where an allegation concerns a Coach, Club Employee or Sports Leader.

Minimum Requirements for DLP and Desired Skills and Capabilities

- Have attended the Safeguarding 1 – Basic Awareness Workshop in Child Welfare and Protection.
- Have attended the Safeguarding 3 – Designated Liaison Person Workshop.
- The DLP should have good communication and listening skills, be approachable and non-judgmental.
- He/she should have a good knowledge of child welfare and protection codes and guidelines (which will be acquired through appropriate training).
- The position will require the person to be trustworthy, discreet, impartial and sensitive as they will be required to handle and manage confidential material.

Details of the Club's current Designated Liaison Person are on the Notice Board or can be obtained from any member of the Committee.

Regardless of how a concern comes to a tennis coach/Club member's attention it must be reported to the DLP. The DLP will decide, in consultation with the person who raised the concern, if reasonable grounds for concern exist. If reasonable grounds for concern exist, the DLP will report to a Tusla duty social worker. If it is decided not to report the concern to Tusla, the following steps will be taken:

- The reasons for not reporting will be recorded.
- Any actions taken as a result of the concern will be recorded.
- The person who raised the concern will be given a clear written explanation of the reasons why the concern is not being reported to Tusla.
- The person will be advised that if they remain concerned about the situation, they are free to make a report to Tusla or an Garda Siochana.

Responding to a Child or Young Person who Discloses Abuse.

In some circumstances a child or young person may disclose to a trusted adult/ coach/ Club volunteer that they have been or are being abused or harmed, or they may disclose concerns relating to themselves or others. Any adult finding themselves in this situation should follow the guidelines set out below.

- Be as calm and natural as possible.
- Remember that you have been approached because you are trusted and possibly liked
Do not panic.
- Be aware that disclosures can be very difficult for the child/young person.
- Remember that the child or young person may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time.
- Listen to what the child/young person has to say. Give them the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to.
- Do not pressurise the child/young person. Allow him or her to disclose at their own pace and in their own language.
- Conceal any signs of disgust, anger or disbelief.
- Accept what the child or young person has to say (false disclosures are very rare).
- It is important to differentiate between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself.
- It may be necessary to reassure the child/young person that your feelings towards him or her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what they have disclosed.
- Reassure the child/young person that they have taken the right action in talking to you.
- Questions should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification only.
- Avoid leading questions, such as asking whether a specific person carried out the abuse.
- Avoid asking about intimate details or suggesting that something else may have happened other than what you have been told.
- All details given by the child/young person should be recorded and passed to the DLP as soon as possible.

Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse

The following steps will be taken by the DLP in reporting child abuse to the statutory authorities:

- Details such as dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information will be recorded by the DLP. These notes will be retained by the DLP and destroyed when no longer required.
- If the DLP has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, she/he will make a report to Tusla.
- In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the DLP is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Gardai will be contacted. Under no circumstances will a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the statutory authorities.
- If the DLP is unsure if reasonable grounds for concern exist she/he can informally consult with Tusla. She/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report.

A DLP reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities will first inform the family of the alleged victim of his/her intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation.

Allegations against Coaches/Club Employees/Sports Leaders

The following are the agreed procedures to be followed in cases of alleged child abuse complaints concerning a Coach, Club Employee or Sports Leader. If such an allegation is made against a Coach/Club Employee/Sports Leader working within the Club, two separate procedures will be followed in tandem:

1. The reporting to the statutory authorities by the DLP in respect of suspected or disclosed child abuse. (see above for details).
2. The Club will also follow its own internal procedure in dealing with the Coach/Club Employee/Sports Leader from a Club perspective.

The Internal Procedure will be as follows:

- As soon as the DLP is made aware of allegations which concern a Coach/Club Employee/Sports Leader within the Club he/she will make the President aware of the situation. If the allegations concern the President then the DLP will convene a meeting of the other officers of the Club and brief them on the situation.
- The first thing to consider at this stage is the safety of the child making the allegation and the safety of any other children who may be at risk. The Club will immediately take any steps considered necessary to protect children in its care.
- The next step will be to appoint a senior member of the Club to deal with the matter. Under normal circumstances this person will be selected by the DLP together with the President. Where the allegations concern the President, the person will be selected by the DLP and the other Club officers.
- The senior Club member will privately inform the Coach/Club Employee/Sports Leader that (a) an allegation has been made against him/her and (b) the nature of the allegation. He/she will be afforded an opportunity to respond. If a formal report is made to Tusla this response will be passed on to Tusla also. The Coach/Club Employee /Sports Leader will be offered the option to have representation and informed that any response may be shared with Tusla.
- The Coach/Club Employee/Sports Leader will be suspended from their position pending the outcome of the Club's investigation. The senior Club member will clarify that this suspension is only a precautionary measure and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings. Any investigation of the allegations by the statutory authorities will take precedence over any separate investigation by the Club into the allegations. The Club will liaise closely if required with Tusla or An Garda Síochána and ensure that its actions do not undermine any other investigations.

- The Club will retain the right to take disciplinary action against the Coach/Club Employee/Sports Leader on foot of the allegations.

Confidentiality

Given the sensitive nature of these issues, confidentiality will be a very important consideration. The Club will be guided in this regard by the following:

- In all matters of child protection and welfare, information will 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 undertaking will be given regarding secrecy, and this will be made clear to parents/guardians and to the child/young person.
- The proportionate provision of information to the statutory agencies 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.

Anonymous Complaints/Rumours

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but will not be ignored. Rumours will not be allowed to persist and will be dealt with by the Committee as soon as it becomes aware of such rumours. All concerns relating to inappropriate behaviour will be brought to the attention of the DLP in order that they may be dealt with as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of every member who becomes aware of such concerns to report them to the DLP. The information will be checked out and handled in a confidential manner. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child/children will be paramount.

Protection for the Person Reporting possible Child Abuse

It is important to reassure anyone who is in the position of receiving information or directly becoming aware of possible child abuse that in making a report they won't be subject to litigation. In this regard the Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse ‘reasonably and in good faith’ to Tusla or the Gardaí (directly or via a Designated Person). The act also covers the offence of ‘false reporting’. The main provisions of the Act are:

1. The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse “reasonably and in good faith” to designated officers of Tusla or any member of An Garda Síochána.
2. The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including dismissal.
3. The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities “knowing that statement to be false”. This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

Record Keeping

All records kept by the DLP will be factual and include details of contacts, consultations and any actions taken. These records will be shared with the statutory authorities in the event of any child protection or welfare issue. All records will be kept securely and accessed only by the DLP or President if necessary. These records can only be used for the purpose intended. These records will be updated as required and reviewed regularly by the DLP. The records will be destroyed as soon as they are no longer required. Records will only be shared on a “need to know” basis in the best interests of the child/young person.

Tusla Dublin South East Dedicated Contact Point:

Child & Family Agency, Unit 9 Nutgrove Retail Park, Churchtown, Dublin 14 Tel: (087) 1870412

DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON (DLP) 2021

The current Designated Liaison Person is: **Keith O'Byrne Mobile No: 087 9416701**

If you are aware of any Child Protection concerns (inside or outside the Club) you should immediately inform the DLP.