

Child Safeguarding Framework



Promoting a safe and fun environment for children's climbing, hiking and mountaineering on the island of Ireland

www.mountaineering.ie

CONTENTS

	Foreword	Page 3
Section 01	Glossary	Page 4
Section 02	Policy Statement	Page 5
Section 03	Our Core Values for Children + Young People	Page 6
Section 04	Codes of Conduct	Page 7
Section 05	The Role of a Club Children's Officer	Page 9
Section 06	The Role of Designated Liaison Person	Page 10
Section 07	Safer Recruitment	Page 11
Section 08	Vetting	Page 12
Section 09	Bullying	Page 14
Section 10	Online Safety	Page 16
Section 11	Supervision of Children on Day Trips	Page 17
Section 12	Child Welfare and Protection Procedures	Page 18
Section 13	Club Disciplinary, Complaints + Appeals	Page 22
Section 14	Checklist for Clubs	Page 24

FOREWORD

Welcome to Mountaineering Ireland's Child Safeguarding Framework.

This document is designed to support affiliated clubs in meeting their child safeguarding and child protection responsibilities. This document ensures that current best practice is followed whilst complying with legislation in a club's relevant jurisdiction. It outlines our core values, policies and procedures, and the roles and responsibilities of persons involved with children.

This Child Safeguarding Framework signifies the commitment of Mountaineering Ireland in taking the necessary steps in safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable persons whilst participating in our sport.

Mountaineering Ireland recognises, supports, and promotes the unique value and contribution of volunteers to our organisation. Volunteers such as our Club Children's Officers and Designated Liaison Persons are pivotal to implementing this Framework. We advocate for full adherence and application of this Framework which will cultivate a child-centred approach encompassing a safe and enjoyable environment for all.

We thank you for your contribution, commitment, and engagement in this regard.

Catherine Hibbitt

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Catherine Hibbitt,
National Children's Officer
Mountaineering Ireland



GLOSSARY

The glossary explains terms used throughout this document to clarify and set out the meaning of the various terms used.

Access NI - is a criminal history and relevant non-conviction information disclosure service in Northern Ireland.

Adult/Leader/Volunteer - any person, whether paid or unpaid, who acts in a position with responsibility for children; this can include, but not limited to, supervisor, team manager, sports science personnel, chaperone, helpers and/or others who may be acting within the definition of a specified role with the required recognised qualification and for the purpose of this document this term may also include all specified roles otherwise referenced here e.g. children's officer, coach, committee member, instructor. Adults are over 18 years of age.

Adult at Risk - this is any person over the age of 18 years who has a restricted capacity to guard himself or herself against harm by another person.

Child - for the purposes of this document an individual under the age of 18 is considered a child and has a legal right to protection.

Club - refers to a Mountaineering Ireland affiliated club, required to operate under this framework and associated policies and procedures.

Coach / Instructor - refers to an individual who holds a Mountaineering Ireland recognised award or (coaches) by way of experience is recognised by Mountaineering Ireland or his/her club as a coach.

Committee Member - refers to any person appointed to a club or Mountaineering Ireland Committee.

Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) - The Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) is a partnership between the NSPCC (UK), Sport England, Sport Northern Ireland and Sport Wales. The CPSU works to help achieve the NSPCC mission to end child abuse.

Gateway Team - The unit tasked by the Health and Social Care Trust in NI to respond to initial child protection queries.

Leader - see definition under Adult/Leader/Volunteer

Member - any person affiliated to Mountaineering Ireland or acting as a representative of a member of Mountaineering Ireland; categories of membership as defined by the Mountaineering Ireland Memorandum and Articles of Association (M&A).

National Children's Officer - is a paid member of Mountaineering Ireland staff. The National Children's Officer (NCO) will act as a resource to staff members and volunteers on any issues regarding child welfare. They are also the point of contact for Club children's Officers.

National Vetting Bureau - is the statutory body responsible for providing vetting services to Mountaineering Ireland in the Republic of Ireland.

Parent/Guardian - refers to an individual who has parental responsibility for a child.

Sport Ireland - The statutory sports agency responsible for the promotion, development and coordination of sport in the Republic of Ireland.

Sport Northern Ireland - The statutory sports agency responsible for the promotion, development and coordination of sport in Northern Ireland.

Statutory Authority/Authorities - this refers to the government department/agency tasked with receiving reports or concerns relating to child abuse, including the Child and Family Agency, the Garda Síochána, Health and Social Services Trusts (NI) and the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

Tusla - The Child and Family Agency is the State agency responsible for child protection in the Republic of Ireland.

Volunteer - see definition under Adult/Leader/Volunteer

Vulnerable person - this is any person over the age of 18 years who has a restricted capacity to guard himself or herself against harm by another person.

Working - refers to any individual working within sport whether paid or in a voluntary capacity; for those individuals who are employed the requirements of this document need to be observed in conjunction with any employment contract in place.

POLICY STATEMENT

Mountaineering Ireland is recognised as the National Governing Body (NGB) for mountaineering, hillwalking and climbing by Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland.

Mountaineering Ireland provides a range of mountaineering activities and opportunities encompassing the best interests of our members including children, young people and vulnerable persons participating in our sport.

Mountaineering Ireland is committed to keeping all our members safe from harm. The welfare of children, young people and vulnerable persons is a fundamental priority. We acknowledge that all children, young people, and vulnerable persons attending our sporting environments have the right to be valued, welcomed, respected, and protected and that their views will be considered in any decisions regarding matters that affect them.

Mountaineering Ireland understands the impact which the environment, both indoors and outdoors, has on how children develop, learn, and participate to the best of their ability. A high-quality environment is safe,

accessible, challenging, stimulating, nurturing, and ever changing as children grow and develop. We strive to provide environments that helps children to explore, to take advantage of opportunities for fun, to have freedom of choice, to experience challenge and adventure.

This document, the Child Safeguarding Framework, is a summary of the policies, procedures and best practice guidelines for protecting children and young people's welfare. This document applies to anyone working on behalf of Mountaineering Ireland, including all board members, managerial roles, employees, affiliated bodies, committee members, volunteers, independent contractors, and service providers.

For the purposes of this document, all individuals under the age of 18 are considered as children/young people.

For the purposes of this document the term 'vulnerable persons' will be utilised to refer to the jurisdictions of both the ROI and NI where the preferred term is 'Adult at Risk.'

This policy has been drawn up on the basis of legislation, policy and guidance that seeks to protect children.

The following legislation also formed the basis for our all our policies and procedures:

- Safeguarding Guidance for Young People in Sport (Sport Ireland 2019)
- Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (Department of Health 2017)
- Children First Act 2015
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (DCYA 2017)
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007
- National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012
- Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017
- The Children's Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015
- The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)
- Protection of Freedoms Act 2012

This framework should be read alongside our organisational policies, procedures, guidance, and other related documents:

- Child Safeguarding Statement
- Child safeguarding Risk Assessment
- Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities
- Safeguarding Training
- Code of Conducts
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Vetting Policy and procedures
- Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Wellbeing and Mental Health Policy
- Poor Practice and Whistleblowing Policy
- Complaints and Disciplinary procedures
- Missing or Found Child Policy
- Safe Use of changing Facilities Policy
- Social Media Policy
- Supervision Policy
- Travel, Hosting and Away Trips Policy
- Physical Contact Policy
- Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy
- Club Inclusion Policy

OUR CORE VALUES FOR CHILDREN + YOUNG PEOPLE

Mountaineering Ireland encompasses all board members, managerial roles, employees, affiliated bodies, committee members, volunteers, independent contractors, and service providers in each area, and advocates practice which is:

A CHILD CENTRED APPROACH

Mountaineering Ireland adopts a child centred approach to safeguarding. A child centred approach means that any procedures consider the rights, feelings and experience of the individual child and working in partnership with them and their families. **To take a child centred approach to safeguarding you must:**

- Ensure that you recognise the rights of the child as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989).
- Always focus on the child giving prominence to their needs and interests.
- Build a good relationship with the children, young people, and their families.
- Listen to children.
- Respect and value every child.

IMPORTANCE OF CHILDHOOD

The importance of childhood should be understood and valued by everyone involved in sport. Childhood experiences provides the foundation for all future learning, behaviour, and health. A strong foundation helps children develop the skills they need to become well-functioning adults. Children learn through their experiences and within the environments they interact with.

NEEDS OF THE CHILD

All children's sport experiences should be guided by what is best for children. This means that adults should have a basic understanding of the emotional, physical, and personal needs of children and young people. Their needs include to feel safe and secure, be accepted, have protection from harm, consistency, exercise, mental wellbeing, and positive role models.

QUALITY ATMOSPHERE + ETHOS

Children's sport should be conducted in a safe, positive, and encouraging atmosphere. A child-centred focus will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept

in their appropriate place. Too often competitive demands are placed on children too early resulting in excessive levels of pressure on them and consequently, high levels of drop-out from sport.

INTEGRITY IN RELATIONSHIPS

Integrity builds trust. Adults interacting with children and young people in sport are in a position of trust and influence. They should always ensure that children are treated with integrity and respect, and the self-esteem of children and young people is enhanced. Integrity can be demonstrated through friendliness, respect, basic manners, honesty, transparency, positive communication, and professionalism. We must exhibit the behaviour we expect them to display.

FAIR PLAY

All children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. The principles of fair play should always be emphasised, and organisers should give clear guidelines regarding acceptable standards of behaviour. Fair play incorporates the concepts of friendship, modesty, respect for others, equality and always taking part with the right spirit and attitude. The importance of participation for everyone, best effort, and enjoyment rather than winning should take priority.

COMPETITION

Competition is an essential element of sport and should be encouraged in an age-appropriate manner. A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of young people, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment, challenge, and satisfaction. Leaders should aim to put the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second.

EQUALITY

All children should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of ability, age, gender, religion, social and ethnic background, or political persuasion. Children with disabilities should be involved in sporting activities in a way that creates participation opportunities and experiences alongside and with other children.

OUR CORE VALUES FOR CHILDREN + YOUNG PEOPLE (cont'd)

CHILDREN + YOUNG PEOPLE'S VIEWS

The island of Ireland committed to ensure that the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) are incorporated into everything in relation to children in each jurisdiction.

The four core principles are:



These principles are at the heart of every action in relation to children. Failure to respect these core principles is a failure to respect the basic human rights of children. Article 12 of the UNCRC encompasses children's right to participation. In the context of article 12, the term 'participation' is used to describe children's right to involvement in decisions and actions that affect them and to have those views taken into account.

Children's right to participation can be incorporated into the decision-making process by implementing The Lundy Model. This model encourages us to consider four distinct, albeit interrelated, elements. **The four elements have a rational chronological order: space, voice, audience, influence.**

ARTICLE 12

- The right to express views.
- The right to have views given due weight.

- **Space:** Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their views.
- **Voice:** Children must be facilitated to express their views.
- **Audience:** The view must be listened to.
- **Influence:** The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.

Mountaineering Ireland is fully committed to actively listening to the voices of children and young people and involving them in matters that affect them.

RESOURCES FOR CLUBS: The Lundy Model organisation, club and young people's checklists: [Click here to download](#)

Mountaineering Ireland acknowledges that children have said that they need:

- **Vigilance:** to have adults notice when things are troubling them
- **Understanding and action:** to understand what is happening, to be heard and understood, and to have that understanding acted upon.
- **Stability:** to be able to develop an on-going stable relationship of trust with those helping them.
- **Respect:** to be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not.
- **Information and engagement:** to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns, and plans.
- **Explanation:** to be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons their views have not met with a positive response.
- **Support:** to be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family.
- **Advocacy:** to be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views.
- **Protection:** to be protected against all forms of abuse and discrimination and the right to special protection and help if a refugee.

(Source: Working together to Safeguard Children)

CODES OF CONDUCT

Mountaineering provides an excellent pathway for children and young people to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own potential. Through their participation, they can learn and develop life skills, have fun and enjoyment, make friends and experience life in a way that can enhance their personal growth throughout their lives.

Mountaineering Ireland is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of all its members. It believes that it is important that children, young people, members, coaches, volunteers, and parents associated with our sport should, at all times, show respect and understanding for the safety and welfare of others.

Sport Ireland's launched its new national code of conduct template on the 10th of August 2023. The initiative

aims to foster a culture of respect, integrity, and fairness within the sporting community. The code of conduct sets forth a set of guidelines and principles that promotes the behaviour and conduct expected from athletes, coaches, parents/guardians, supporters, officials, and club members. Mountaineering Ireland adopts this new code as a tool in creating a safer and more respectful environment for everyone involved in our sport. The Sport Ireland Code of Conduct template is available [here](#).



The key elements of the National Code of Conduct Template include:

- **Promoting Fairness and Respect:** The code outlines the importance of treating all participants, coaches, athletes, officials, and supporters with respect and fairness.
- **Supporting Positive Development:** Emphasising the crucial role of parents/guardians and supporters in encouraging positive development in young participants and avoiding actions that may have a lasting emotional impact.
- **Minimising Breaches:** The template defines the minimum levels of behaviour and conduct required and highlights the disciplinary procedures or sanctions that may be applied in case of code breaches.
- **Reporting Mechanisms:** Participants are encouraged to report any breaches of the code promptly, ensuring that matters are addressed swiftly and appropriately.

Mountaineering Ireland's Code of Conducts for children, young people, coaches, parents/guardians, volunteers, and providers are available on our website: www.mountaineering.ie

If you are aware of any breaches of Mountaineering Ireland's code of conduct, please get in touch with your Club Children's Officer or the National Children's Officer at safeguarding@mountaineering.ie. No matter how small/lower level you may think the concern is, it is always best to seek advice and gain support for yourself and in turn, those who may be impacted by any breaches. If you do not speak up for a child then who?

THE ROLE OF A CLUB CHILDREN'S OFFICER

Club Children's Officers (CCO) act as a resource with regard to children's issues. In summary Children's Officers should review current policies in relation to young people, check that all activities are safe and fun, and inform adults of how to deal with any concerns that may arise in relation to the protection of children and young people. The CCO should be child centred in focus and have as the primary aim the establishment of a child centred ethos within the club. S/he is the link between the children and the adults in the club. S/he also takes responsibility for monitoring and reporting to the Club Management Committee on how club policy impacts on young people and Sports Leaders.

The CCO should have the following role:

To promote awareness of safeguarding guidelines within the club, among young members and their parents/guardians. This could be achieved by: - the production / distribution of information leaflets, the establishment of children's/age group specific notice boards, regular information meetings for the young people and their parents/guardians.

- To influence policy and practice within the club in order to prioritise children's needs.
- Establish contact with the National Children's Officer **Catherine Hibbitt** at safeguarding@mountaineering.ie
- To ensure that children know how to make concerns known to appropriate adults or agencies.
- To encourage the appropriate involvement of parents/ guardians in the club activities.
- To act as an advisory resource to Sports Leaders on best practice in children's sport.
- To report regularly to the Club Management Committee.
- To monitor changes in membership and follow up any unusual dropout, absenteeism or club transfers by children or Sports Leaders.
- To ensure that the children have a voice in the running of their club and ensure that there are steps young people can take to express concerns about their sports activities / experiences.
- Establish communication with other branches of the club, e.g., facilitate parent's information sessions at the start of the season
- Keep records on each member on file, including junior members, their contact numbers and any special needs of the child that should be known to leaders
- Ensure each member signs an annual membership form that includes signing up to the code of conduct for sports leaders and children and young people.
- Ensure that the club rules and regulations include a complaint, disciplinary and appeals procedure, an anti-bullying policy, a safety statement, rules in relation to travel with children and the supervision and recruitment of leaders.
- The CCO should monitor the clubs 3-year refresh of Vetting and Safeguarding Training.

Ensure that the club rules and regulations include:

- Complaints, disciplinary and appeals procedures.
- An anti-bullying policy.
- A Child Safeguarding Statement to include Risk Assessment and named Relevant Person.
- Rules in relation to traveling with children.
- Supervision and recruitment of leaders.



THE ROLE OF DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON

Each Club must appoint a Designated Liaison Person (DLP). This person may or may not also fulfil the role of Children's Officer. Mountaineering Ireland also requires that a Deputy DLP be appointed in all its affiliated clubs to have two persons with knowledge of safeguarding procedures in case of any absences. The DLP is a resource for volunteers/coaches and should ensure that the clubs reporting procedures are followed. The DLP reports any suspected cases of child neglect or abuse to the Duty Social Worker in Child and Family Agency/Túsla or An Garda Síochána/ Gateway team or PSNI and may contact the National Children's Officer (NCO) for support and guidance.

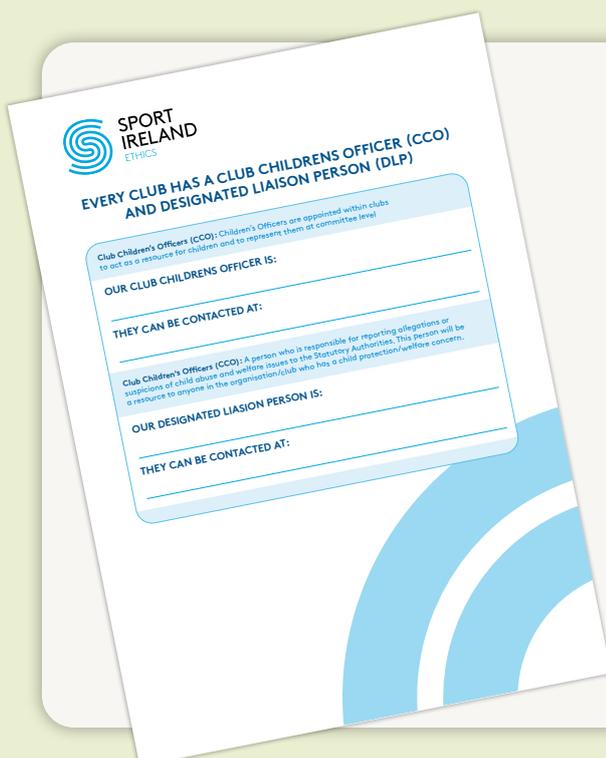
The DLP should also inform the NCO that a report has been submitted without identifying details.

- The DLP should be knowledgeable about child protection and undertake any training considered necessary i.e., Safeguarding 3
- The DLP should familiarise themselves with the statutory and support services within their locality
- Have knowledge of the Safeguarding Code and relevant child protection legislation (Children First Act 2015 (ROI)/ National Vetting Bureau Act 2012-2016 (ROI) and Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017.

REMEMBER!

The Designated Liaison Officer does not have the responsibility to investigate or validate child/vulnerable adult protection allegations or concerns within the Club. Rather, it is their responsibility to report any concerns to the relevant bodies. The concern will be investigated by trained professionals in the relevant authorities who will decide on any further action required.

The CCO and DLP should be easily identified by both children, parents, and all members throughout each club.



SPORT IRELAND ETHICS

EVERY CLUB HAS A CLUB CHILDRENS OFFICER (CCO) AND DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON (DLP)

Club Children's Officers (CCO): Children's Officers are appointed within clubs to act as a resource for children and to represent them at committee level

OUR CLUB CHILDRENS OFFICER IS:

THEY CAN BE CONTACTED AT:

Club Children's Officers (CCO): A person who is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse and welfare issues to the Statutory Authorities. This person will be a resource to anyone in the organisation/club who has a child protection/welfare concern.

OUR DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON IS:

THEY CAN BE CONTACTED AT:



Mountaineering Ireland's Designated Liaison Person and the Relevant Person for Mountaineering Ireland's CSS is: **Catherine Hibbitt**
available at:
safeguarding@mountaineering.ie or
by phone at **087 605 7925**



SAFER RECRUITMENT

Safe recruitment is the first step to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children in Sport. Mountaineering Ireland and its affiliated clubs are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and vulnerable adults in their care. All staff and volunteers are expected to share in this commitment.

Mountaineering Ireland and affiliated clubs will take all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to work with children, young people, and vulnerable persons by adopting and consistently applying a safe and clearly defined method of recruiting volunteers and staff.

Safer Recruitment Procedures include:

- Job Role/Job Descriptions
- Persons Specification
- Advertisements
- Application Forms
- Self-Declaration Form
- References
- Vetting
- Interviews
- Requesting Identification
- Probation Periods
- Risk Assessment Information
- Safeguarding Training
- Induction
- Onboarding
- Support and Supervision
- Codes of Conduct

A description of each procedure including relevant templates and forms are provided in Mountaineering Ireland Safer Recruitment Policy and available on our website:
www.mountaineering.ie

Related Policy:

- Safer Recruitment
- Volunteer Policy
- Vetting Policy and Procedures
- Safeguarding Training
- Code of Conduct



VETTING

Please refer to Mountaineering Ireland's Vetting Policy and procedures for a full description of Garda Vetting and Access NI Checks.

Vetting checks are carried out on all persons, who on behalf of the organisation, engage in 'relevant work' (ROI) or a 'regulated activity' (NI), whether in a voluntary or paid capacity, with children and/or vulnerable people.

There are two types of vetting checks available to Mountaineering Ireland - Garda Vetting and Access NI. Garda vetting is the vetting process carried out by the National Vetting Bureau (NVB) in the Republic of Ireland. Vetting checks in Northern Ireland are carried out by Access NI. **Both checks are applicable to Mountaineering Ireland members, depending on where in Ireland the individual intends to engage with young people or other vulnerable populations.**

- The vetting process does not provide clearance for people but provides information that may be relevant for an organisation in deciding the suitability of an individual to carry out a certain role working with or having access to children, young people, and vulnerable persons.
- In addition to legal requirements, vetting as part of the safe recruitment process is the minimum requirement expected by club members, parents, and wider society to demonstrate that the club takes safeguarding of its members seriously. As part of our safe recruitment guidance, vetting will help ensure that our organisation and clubs are better protected against the risk of having someone within, or joining our organisation, who is unsuitable to work with children or vulnerable adults.

Garda Vetting

Garda vetting is the pre-checking of an applicant's background for criminal convictions or prosecutions. It is a legal requirement under The National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons) Act 2012 to 2016, that all persons engaging in relevant work with young / vulnerable people on a regular and ongoing basis complete a Garda Vetting check prior to up taking their position within the organisation. 'Relevant work' is defined by the above Act. It includes both paid and voluntary positions. More information regarding this type of activity can be found in Mountaineering Ireland's Vetting Policy. Mountaineering Ireland's Designated Liaison Person will process vetting applications on your behalf.

A Garda Vetting disclosure certificate will reveal information of any criminal record, or 'specified information' in relation to the vetting subject.

AccessNI Checks

AccessNI is the statutory body established to carry out vetting checks on people who as part of their employment or volunteer involvement have access to a child/vulnerable person (adult at risk). All personnel engaging in a regulated activity (NI) with young/vulnerable people within the North must be vetted. In Northern Ireland, there is a legal requirement to not recruit/allow a barred individual (as defined by the Disclosure and Barring Scheme) to take up a regulated activity position. In order to satisfy this requirement, it is essential that the subject completes an AccessNI enhanced check prior to up taking their role within the organisation.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily bar you from working with Mountaineering Ireland. This will depend on the nature of the position and the circumstances and background of your offences.

An AccessNI enhanced check disclosure certificate will reveal information of criminal record, 'non-conviction information' and 'barred lists'. The 'barred lists' refers to the 'Disclosure and Barring Service' which includes two lists; People who are unsuitable for working with children; People who are unsuitable for working with adults at risk.

Any information received will be treated confidentially and is subject to applicable Data Protection Acts.

Related Policy:

- Vetting Policy and procedures
- Safer Recruitment
- Safeguarding Training
- Volunteer Policy



VETTING

Who is subject to Vetting?

All members of Mountaineering Ireland, both voluntary and paid staff, who regularly work with and have direct responsibility for children and vulnerable adults on a regular and on-going basis in our sport must complete a vetting application. An individual will not work / volunteer with children or vulnerable persons in Mountaineering Ireland until their vetting application has been completed. It will be an offence to start a person in relevant work before a vetting application has been completed.

A Vetting or Disclosure check will be required where an individual undertakes relevant work or activities relating to children or vulnerable adults. Access NI Enhanced checks are normally required where the applicant will work or volunteer in a role providing services to or having close and regular supervision of children or vulnerable adults (referred to as Adults at Risk in NI).

The requirement for vetting must be included in any job/role description for a regulated activity position.

Relevant work or activities which require vetting include but are not limited to the following:

- Coaches
- Instructors
- Leaders
- Training Providers (where relevant)
- Committee member U18 Club (where relevant)
- Club Children's Officer (CCO)
- Designated Liaison Person (DLP)
- Deputy DLP
- Volunteers involved in youth activities.
- Board Members (where relevant)
- Club PRO/Photographer (where relevant)
- Leaders of youth groups
- Parents who assist in one or more sessions a week (on a regular and consistent basis)
- Helpers on away or residential trips (unless a parent is with a child)
- Mountaineering Ireland employee (where relevant)
- Others – as deemed necessary.

Who is Responsible for Vetting?

Mountaineering Ireland is responsible for processing applications through ANI or the NVB and for making decisions regarding an applicant's suitability to be appointed for a particular role. Final decisions on roles requiring vetting are made by Mountaineering Ireland's National Children's Officer, Designated Liaison Person, and the CEO in accordance with the relevant legislation.

Club committees are responsible for ensuring recruited and appointed individuals are vetted in accordance with this policy. Mountaineering Ireland is responsible for ensuring individuals recruited and appointed at national level and Associates are vetted in accordance with this policy.

Re-Vetting

All individuals will undergo re-vetting after 3 years or as determined by Mountaineering Ireland. Mountaineering Ireland reserves the right to re-vet members on a random basis or as deemed appropriate by the National Children's Officer, the Designated Liaison Person, and the CEO.

Any individual may be re-vetted if information that would affect a decision concerning an individual's suitability to work with children comes to the attention of a Club and/or Mountaineering Ireland. Re vetting is required where a Mountaineering Ireland member (employee or volunteer) has been suspended from the sport and then returns.

Any existing Mountaineering Ireland member (employee or volunteer) may be re-vetted if information concerning an individual's suitability to work with children comes to the attention of a Club, or Mountaineering Ireland. The individual's permission must be sought if re-vetting is part of an investigative process. Re-vetting is required if an individual comes from another sport to work with young people in the sport of Mountaineering – even if they have a Certificate from elsewhere. Re-vetting is required where a Mountaineering Ireland member leaves the sport voluntarily and then returns.

BULLYING

“Bullying is in-person and online behaviour between children and young people within a social network that causes physical, emotional, or social harm to targeted young people. It is characterized by an imbalance of power that is enabled or inhibited by the social and institutional norms and context of schools/organisations and the education system. Bullying implies an absence of effective responses and care towards the target by peers and adults.”

- UNESCO, 2020

Bullying can take many forms, including:

Unwanted aggressive behavior

Intended to hurt someone physically, verbally, emotionally or electronically.

Imbalance of power socially, physically, or emotionally.

Repeated over time

Mountaineering Ireland adopts a zero-tolerance policy to bullying. Bullying behaviour, whether between young people, adults, or both, is unacceptable in Mountaineering Ireland clubs and in all areas of the organisation.

REMEMBER!

Bullying is never your fault. Speak to a trusted adult, such as a parent, coach, Club Children's Officer or The National Children's Officer if you feel you are being bullied or if you witness someone else being bullied.

The No-Blame Approach to Bullying

1

Interview victim about how they are feeling.

When the member of staff finds out that the bullying has happened they will talk to the victim.

2

Meeting with the people involved.

3

Explain the problem.

Tell the group about how the victim is feeling.

4

Share responsibility - 'no blame'.

Blame is not given to anyone but the group are informed that they do have responsibility and they can do something to help.

5

Suggestions.

Group members are encouraged to make suggestions as to how they can help make the victim's time in club better.

6

Leave it up to them.

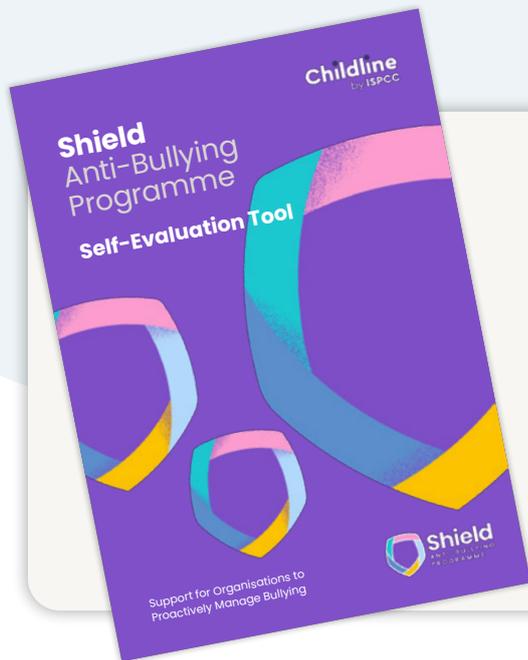
The responsibility is passed over to the group to solve the problem. The member of staff arranges to meet with the group to see how things are going.

7

Meet again for individual interviews.

About a week later the member of staff discusses with each participant, including the victim, how things have been going. This helps to monitor the bullying and keep all the individuals involved.

BULLYING (cont'd)



A resource for Clubs

(see the Anti-Bullying Policy on our Website for more information:

www.mountaineering.ie)

Clubs should strive to provide a place where:

- Name calling will not be tolerated.
- No one suffers abuse of any nature.
- No one is victimised.
- Each member is supported and listened to.
- All members are treated equally.
- Solutions to problems are the concern of all.

Each participant, coach, volunteer will:

- ✓ Encourage individuals to speak out about bullying behaviour.
- ✓ Respect every child's need for, and right to, a play environment where safety, security, and praise are adopted and promoted.
- ✓ Respect the feelings and views of others.
- ✓ Recognise that everyone is important and equal, and that our differences make each of us special and worthy of being valued.
- ✓ Show appreciation of others by acknowledging individual qualities, contributions, and progress.
- ✓ Ensure safety by having rules and practices carefully explained and displayed for all to see.
- ✓ Report incidents of buying behaviour they see – by doing nothing you are condoning the behaviour.



Related Policies:

- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse Policy.
- Codes of Conduct.
- Safeguarding Training.
- Complaints and Disciplinary procedures.
- Wellbeing and Mental Health Policy.
- Club Inclusion Policy.
- Poor Practice and Whistleblowing Policy.

ONLINE SAFETY

Mountaineering Irelands Social Media Policy provides guidance on the procedures that will support and underpin the use of social media and other online services within your club. It is important that all staff, volunteers, coaches, officials, board/trustee members, or anyone working on behalf of the Mountaineering Ireland are aware of this policy and agree to its terms.

Club Online Safety Checklist

- 1 Understand the safety aspects including what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour when using digital technology such as social media sites (e.g., Twitter and Facebook), apps, mobile phones, game consoles and the internet.
- 2 When engaging with digital technology/social media companies (e.g., Facebook, Twitter or Instagram) it is important to ensure that they adhere to relevant legislation and good practice guidelines.
- 3 Regularly review existing safeguarding policies and procedures to ensure that online safeguarding issues are fully integrated including:
 - reporting online concerns about possible abuse
 - reporting other breaches of procedures and codes of conduct
- 4 Decide how your sports webpage/profile will be managed within your including:
 - vetting and managing the webpage/profile
 - training for the person/s managing the organisation's online profile.
 - involvement from your club's children's officer
 - ensure any interactive content is moderated by someone trained to be aware of safeguarding issues, e.g., club social media page/discussion forums.
- 5 Registration or 'signing up' to your sports club:
 - choose an appropriate email address to register/set up a profile/account.
 - ensure appropriate security settings are set up to store personal information.
- 6 Ensure that adequate privacy settings are in place either restricting or allowing access to photos, personal information, comments about others, friends, and followers.
- 7 Ensure that staff and volunteers, including coaches and athletes, are aware of the need to protect their privacy online. Staff and volunteers should be encouraged by the club to carefully consider who they give access to their personal information online. All staff and volunteers should ensure that a clear differentiation between their personal and professional profiles.
- 8 Address safety when adding content to your webpage/profile:
 - sports contact details to promote your sports webpage/profile and to promote safe and responsible use.
 - avoid taking personal details of children and young people.
 - when uploading content – 'think before you post'
 - report fake or impostor webpage/profiles.
- 9 Address safeguarding when promoting the sport, organisation, events, and competitions.



Related Policies:

- Anti-bullying Policy
- Wellbeing + Mental Health Policy
- Filming + Photography Policy
- Recognising + Reporting Child Abuse Policy
- Poor Practice + Whistleblowing Policy
- Complaints + Disciplinary procedures

(Source: CPSU Sample online safety policy)

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN ON DAY TRIPS

Making arrangements for the proper supervision of children is one of the most effective ways of minimising opportunities for children to suffer harm of any kind whilst in your care. It is good practice when organising journeys/visits/trips that the following should be adhered to:

Planned Activities:

- The organisers of journeys/visits should plan and prepare a detailed programme of activities for the children who are involved in the project.
- Organisers are responsible for the welfare and safety of the children for the whole time they are away from home.
- Young people should not be left to their own devices in, for example, a town for the evening or shopping expeditions.
- All children should be adequately supervised and engaged in suitable activities at all times.
- In circumstances when planned activities are disrupted, e.g., due to weather conditions, then organisers should have a number of alternative activities planned.
- Organisers should obtain, in writing, parental consent to children joining an organised trip.
- Parents should be given full information about a trip, including details of the programme of events, the activities in which the children will be engaged and the supervision ratios.

Supervision of Children:

- Leaders in charge must be satisfied that those workers and adults who accompany group parties are fully competent to do so.
- Children must be supervised at all times.
- Children must not be left unsupervised at any venue whether it be indoors or out of doors.
- Workers should know at all times where children are and what they are doing.
- Any activity using potentially dangerous equipment should have constant adult supervision.
- Children will be safer if supervised by two or more adults.
- Dangerous behaviour by children should not be allowed.

Related Policies:

- Supervision Policy,
- Travel, Hosting + Away Trips Policy
- Safe Use of Changing Facilities Policy
- Physical Contact Policy
- Missing or Found Child Policy

Adult/Child Ratios

Levels of supervision must be adequate whether at the organisation's venue or on a journey/visit. Therefore, when deciding how many adults are required to supervise, leaders must take into consideration a range of practical matters.

1. The number of participants in the group.
2. The nature of site/venue.
3. The activities to be undertaken. If the activity is one of a hazardous nature, e.g., mountain climbing, then there are specific ratios of adults to children, which must be adhered to. This can be verified by contacting relevant sporting bodies or the Education and Library Board Youth Service.
4. It is important that each individual supervisor knows the responsibilities s/he is expected to bear.
5. It is recommended that no journey/visit should be undertaken without a minimum of two adults in attendance, one of whom must be a worker. Bus drivers should not be considered as supervisors.
6. It is for the leader in charge to exercise his/her professional judgement in deciding the level of supervision taking into account the guidance as stated above.
7. Where a party consists of children of both sexes, both male and female supervision should be provided unless otherwise agreed.
8. Where an activity involves harnessing, and the children are under eight years of age then the ratio must be one adult to one child.
9. The standard recommended ratios are:
 - 0 - 2 years 1 member of staff to 3 children
 - 2 - 3 years 1 member of staff to 4 children
 - 3 - 7 years 1 member of staff to 8 children
 - 8 years and over 2 members of staff (preferably one of each gender) for up to 20 children.
 There should be one additional staff member for every 10 extra children and/or young people. The ratio of staff and volunteers to children with disabilities is dependent on the needs of the individual child.

Source: Our Duty to Care (2011)

CHILD WELFARE + PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Full Policy and Procedures available within the Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse Policy on our website. Reporting templates and forms are also available on the Mountaineering Ireland website.

All those involved in sport have a moral duty of care to report child protection concerns in order to help create a safe environment for children. You should always inform Tusla (ROI) or Health and Social Care Trust (NI) when you have reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being, or is at risk of being abused or neglected. If you ignore what may be symptoms of abuse, it could result in ongoing harm to the child. If you think the child is in immediate danger and you cannot contact Tusla/HSCT, you should contact the Gardaí/ PSNI without delay. The safety and wellbeing of the child must take priority over concerns about adults against whom an allegation may be made. It is not necessary for you to prove that abuse has occurred to report a concern. All that is required is that you have reasonable grounds for concern.

Reasonable grounds for a child protection or welfare concern include:

- Evidence, for example 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 the child being abused.

The Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017) and Co-Operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2017) name four categories of abuse. They are neglect, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.

Some examples include:

Physical

- Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas
- Bites, burns and scalds
- Reluctance to change clothing
- Becoming withdrawn or aggressive

Emotional

- Drop in performance
- Regressive behaviour
- Crying
- Excessive clinginess

Neglect

- Weight loss
- Changes in attendance
- Untreated fractures
- Reluctance to go home

Sexual

- Torn or bloodstained clothing
- Distrustful of adults
- Inappropriate sexual awareness, behaviour, or language
- Sudden drop in performance



CHILD WELFARE + PROTECTION PROCEDURES



Responding to a child disclosure of abuse:

- ✓ Deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way. This should be done by listening to the child and by facilitating the child to talk about the problem. Do not try to interview the child about the details of what happened.
- ✓ Stay calm and do not show any extreme reactions to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately and take what the child is saying seriously. Do not panic.
- ✓ Understand that the child has decided to tell you something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in an investigation.
- ✓ Be honest with the child; tell them that it is not possible to keep information a secret.
- ✓ Make no judgmental statements against the person whom the allegation is made.
- ✓ Leading questions should be avoided, such as asking whether a specific person carried out the abuse. Questions should be supportive and for clarification purposes only.
- ✓ Inform parents/guardians before making a report unless doing so would endanger the child.
- ✓ Give the child some indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents/guardians, statutory authorities. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.
- ✓ Observe and note dates, times, locations, and contexts in which the incident occurred, or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information. If a child has disclosed information, record this information in the child's words as far as possible. Do not input opinion.
- ✓ Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.

CHILD WELFARE + PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Reporting Concerns about a Child:

- 1 Seek advice and guidance. Report the matter as soon as possible to the Club's Designated Liaison Person (DLP) or National Children's Officer (NCO). The **Mountaineering Ireland Incident Report Form** can be used to report and record incidents of a lower level, for example, some poor practice. You can also seek advice and guidance through an informal consultation with the Tusla social work office in the child's/young person's area.
- 2 The DLP/NCO may also contact the Tusla social work office, the Health and Social Care Trusts or NSPCC (NI), if they are unsure whether a report should be made.
- 3 The DLP may have reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse and will make a report to the statutory authorities who have a responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse.
- 4 The report can be made using the **Mountaineering Ireland Child Protection and Welfare Report Form or the Gateway Teams Report Form**. This can be forward by registered post under confidential cover to the Tusla Duty Social Worker/Gateway Team by the DLP. Reports can also be made on Tusla's secure web portal. This information must be kept by the DLP safely and securely and should only be used for the intended purpose i.e., to pass on a concern about a young person.
- 5 If you are making a mandated report, you should indicate that you are a mandated person and that your report is about a mandated concern. You can report directly to Tusla. The report can be made using the **Mountaineering Ireland Child Protection and Welfare Report Form**. You cannot ask another person to make a report for you. It is advised that you make the mandated report jointly with the DLP. Otherwise, provide a copy of the mandated report you have submitted to Tusla, to the DLP. All records and copies of child protection and welfare concerns should be held securely by the DLP.
- 6 In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the DLP/NCO is unable to contact a duty social worker, the police authorities should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.
- 7 Where the person allegedly causing harm to a child is another child (peer abuse), reports should be made to Tusla for both children.
- 8 Adult disclosures of child abuse require the Retrospective Abuse Report Form when reporting any concerns about retrospective abuse. **Download: [Tusla's Retrospective Abuse Report Form.](#)**
- 9 For cases not reported to Tusla/HSCT, the DLP responsible for reporting must, in writing, detail the reasons for not making a report and forward same to the National Children's Officer. The person who initially reported the matter can still report the abuse using the **Mountaineering Ireland Child Protection and Welfare Report Form** forwarded to Tusla or the **Gateway Teams Report Form**, and forward either to the NCO and/or through the above procedures if they still feel a report should be made.



CHILD WELFARE + PROTECTION PROCEDURES

Making an Anonymous Report

While it is possible to report a concern without giving your name, it may make it difficult for Tusla to assess your concern. All information that you provide will be dealt with in a professional manner. While Tusla cannot guarantee confidentiality, in general it will not reveal the names of members of the public who report suspected child abuse without their permission. Remember, if you are a mandated person, you cannot submit a report of a mandated concern anonymously, as to do so will mean you are not complying with your obligations under the Children First Act 2015.

Rumours:

Rumours should not be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Designated Liaison Person who should decide what action can be taken on the information received. Advice can be sought from the National Children's Officer.

Complaints Procedure in relation to child Safety + Protection

Mountaineering Ireland is committed to ensuring the safety and welfare of all children and young people with whom we work and volunteer with. We have put in place a complaints procedure to cover any situations which may arise, when children, young people or their parents/guardians are not happy with the way they were treated by Mountaineering Ireland. Complaints regarding the safety and welfare of children, young people and vulnerable persons should be directed to the National Children's Officer in Mountaineering Ireland. Other complaints should be directed to the relevant senior volunteer/staff member.

The Mountaineering Ireland Child Protection and Welfare Report Form, the Gateway Teams Report Form and Mountaineering Ireland Incident Report Form are available on Mountaineering Ireland's website.

Please note the full policy and procedures for reporting concerns is accessible in the Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse Policy on Mountaineering Ireland's Website.

In the Republic of Ireland, concerns should be passed on to your local duty social worker in Tusla (The Child and Family Agency). Find your local duty social worker here: [Tusla's Duty Social Work Teams Contact](#)

In case of emergency, where you cannot get in touch with your local duty social worker, or if it is out of hours, contact An Garda Síochána on 112.

In Northern Ireland, concerns should be passed to the Gateway Team of your regional Health and Social Care Trust. Find your local Gateway Team here: [Northern Ireland Local Gateway Teams](#)

You may also contact the Regional Emergency Social Work Service, out of hours and on bank holidays on 028 9504 9999 and information through this link: [NI Regional Emergency Social Work Service](#)

You can also talk with an NSPCC counsellor for free, 24 hours a day. Call 0808 800 500. In case of emergency, where you cannot get in touch with a social worker, contact the PSNI on 999.



Related Policies:

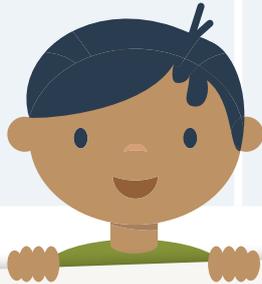
- Recognising and Reporting Child Abuse Policy.
- Anti-Bullying Policy.
- Safeguarding Training.
- Vetting Policy and procedures.

CLUB DISCIPLINARY, COMPLAINTS + APPEALS

Each club should ensure that it has adequate disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures in place.

Lower level and medium level complaints may be resolved through the club themselves, but advice may be sought from Mountaineering Ireland. Higher level complaints should always be referred to Mountaineering Ireland who will convene their Case Management Group or reported to Statutory Authorities if the complaint involves suspected abuse or a criminal offence. More detailed information can be found in Mountaineering Ireland's Poor Practice and Whistleblowing Policy.

LEVEL OF SAFEGUARDING CONCERNS		
LOWER-LEVEL CONCERNS ←		→ CHILD-PROTECTION CONCERNS
LEVEL 1	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 3
Child safeguarding or more general welfare concern, or minor breach of code of conduct.	Breach of a code of conduct, other behaviour, or other information that may identify a safeguarding issue or concern.	Breach of code of conduct, other behaviour, or other information that raises concerns about the safety of a child or the suitability of a person to be involved in the sport. OR Child protection concerns that meet the statutory threshold for referral to Tusla/social care or the police/Gardaí.



Recommended procedures for clubs include having the following best practice steps in place:

- A code of conduct reflecting a child centred ethos, widely shared amongst members.
- Each club, on receiving a poor practice complaint, should appoint a case management group (CMG) with either the powers to dispense disciplinary decision or to make recommendations to disciplinary committee to resolve problems relating to the conduct of its members. This may include bullying behaviour. The complaint should ideally be in writing to the secretary or Children's Officer and should be responded to within 5 working days. The CMG should consist of a representative from the Management Committee, the Children's Officer and ordinary registered members of the club ideally with experience in safeguarding or dispute management.
- If the complaint involves suspected abuse or a criminal offence the designated liaison person should be consulted and no further action by the CMG until the statutory authorities have been informed and they advise of what further action can be taken. Mountaineering Ireland's DLP should be consulted.
- The CMG should review any relevant paperwork and hold any necessary meetings with all parties to proceed with complaints into any incident of suspected misconduct that does not relate to child abuse. It should, as soon as possible, inform the Management Committee that it is dealing with a complaint while maintaining confidentiality and not identifying any individuals unless there is a requirement to stand a person down from their role. This should be done within 10 working days.

The CMG should furnish the individual with the nature of the complaint being made against them and afford them the opportunity of providing a response either verbally or in writing, but usually at a meeting with the CMG.
- Written confidential records of all complaints should be safely and confidentially kept and club procedures should be defined for the possession of such records in the event of election of new officers.

CLUB DISCIPLINARY, COMPLAINTS + APPEALS

Recommended procedures for clubs include having the following best practice steps in place:

- Where it is established that an incident of misconduct has taken place, the CMG should notify the member of any sanction being imposed. The notification should be made in writing, setting out the reasons for the sanction. If the member is under 18 years of age, correspondence should be addressed to the parents/guardians.
- If the member against whom the complaint was made is unhappy with the findings of the CMG or the disciplinary sanction, they should have the right to appeal the decision to an appeals committee (independent of a CMG/disciplinary committee). Any appeal should be made in writing within an agreed period after issue, usually 10 days of the decision of the CMG/disciplinary committee. The chairperson of the appeals committee should be a member of the Management Committee. The appeals committee may consult with the National Children's Officer in relation to issues of child welfare and codes of conduct.
- The appeals committee should have the power to confirm, set aside or change any sanction imposed by the CMG/disciplinary committee while following the principle that the welfare of the child is paramount, and the decision-making process is based on the balance of probability. If any party is not satisfied with the outcome the matter can be referred to Mountaineering Ireland. However, efforts to resolve the issue at local level should be exhausted before Mountaineering Ireland is engaged in attempts to resolve the matter.

Related policies:

- Complaints and Disciplinary procedures.
- Poor Practice and Whistleblowing Policy.
- Codes of Conduct.
- Safeguarding Training.
- Safeguarding Roles and Responsibilities.

Mountaineering Ireland should always be notified and kept up to date on progress or difficulties in resolving complaints and appeals.

Mountaineering Ireland reserves the right to take over from/guide the club process if deemed appropriate, for example, for level 2 or 3 concerns and/or inadequate club processes.



CHECKLIST FOR CLUBS

Club affiliated to Mountaineering Ireland.

Club Risk Assessment.

Child Safeguarding Statement (visible at your venue).

Child Safeguarding Policy/Framework.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

Club Children's Officer (CCO).

Deputy DLP.

A procedure for reporting of child protection concerns.

Garda Vetting or Access NI requirements.

Advice and procedures for child safeguarding training.

Codes of Conduct (volunteers, parents, coaches, children).

A safe recruitment procedure.

A procedure for allegations of abuse of children by staff/volunteers.

A procedure to effectively deal with bullying.

Procedures to ensure inclusion of all children.

Consultation and participation processes with children and young people.



www.mountaineering.ie



Irish Sports HQ, National Sports Campus,
Blanchardstown, Dublin 15, D15 DY62
(01) 625 1115