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# CHILD PROTECTION POLICY & PROCEDURES





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## **C** HILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT

Glentoran Football Club is committed to providing an environment which values and protects all children and young people, regardless of perceived ability, cultural identity or religious beliefs. Staff and volunteers within the Academy accept and recognise their responsibility to develop awareness of the issues that may cause children harm. They will endeavour to safeguard children by:

- **Being alert to the signs and symptoms of child abuse**
- **Adopting child protection guidelines through a code of behaviour for staff and volunteers**
- **Sharing information about concerns with relevant agencies and involving parents and children appropriately**
- **Providing effective training and support for staff and volunteers**

Glentoran Football Club is committed to reviewing their Child Protection Policy at a minimum of three yearly intervals in order to ensure continued best practice.

This policy relates to children / young people up to eighteen years of age.



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# WHAT IS ABUSE

## Categories of abuse:

Children can be abused in many ways and some children may experience more than one type of abuse at any one time. According to the Area Child Protection Committee Guidelines, child abuse occurs when a child is neglected, harmed or not provided with proper care.

The Children (NI) Order 1995 defines abuse in four broad categories:

Categories	Explanation
<b>PHYSICAL</b>	Deliberate physical injury to a child or wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering to a child, eg. hitting, shaking, throwing etc
<b>NEGLECT</b>	Persistent failure to meet a child’s physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm, eg. failure to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care/treatment, lack of supervision etc.
<b>EMOTIONAL</b>	Persistent emotional ill-treatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to a child he is worthless or unloved, inadequate etc. It may also involve causing a child frequently to feel frightened or in danger.



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## **SEXUAL**

Involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities. These activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative or non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

## **I**NDICATORS OF ABUSE

Staff and volunteers are not expected to be experts in child abuse, nor are they expected to investigate concerns about potential abuse. However, they **ARE** expected to be vigilant to the indicators of abuse so that concerns can be passed on to the relevant authority eg. Social Services.

Glentoran Football Club strive to provide a safe environment by employing people and recruiting volunteers who are suitable for working with children and by having effective clear procedures for reporting any concerns through their own structures to the relevant Health & Social Services Trust.

### **Indications that a child may be abused include:**

- Unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on part of the body not normally prone to injuries
- An injury for which the explanation seems inconsistent



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- The child describes what appears to be an abusive act involving him/her
- Someone else expresses concern about the welfare of another child
- Unexplained changes in behaviour over time e.g. becoming very quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- Inappropriate sexual awareness
- Engagement in sexually explicit behaviour
- Distrust of adults, particularly those with whom a close relationship will normally be expected
- Difficulty in making friends
- Prevented from socialising with other children
- Displays variations in eating patterns including over-eating and loss of appetite
- Loss of weight for no apparent reason
- Deterioration in the child’s physical presentation

***This list is not exhaustive and the presence of one or more of the indicators is not proof that abuse is actually taking place. It is stressed however, that it is not the responsibility of volunteers / staff to prove that abuse is taking place but it is their responsibility to report any concerns in accordance with the Child Protection Policy (See section on Dealing with Disclosures, which can be found on P14.)***



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## **E**FFECTS OF ABUSE

Abuse can have a negative impact on children’s well-being and day to day behaviour as well as potentially causing long-term harm that requires therapeutic intervention.

### **Effects of abuse on children include:**

- Serious injury or death
- Pain and distress
- Behavioural difficulties, such as becoming angry or aggressive
- Problems dealing with authority figures, such as Coaches, Teachers etc
- Developmental delay
  - Physically
  - Emotionally/Socially
  - Mentally
- Low self-esteem, low sense of self-worth
- Difficulty in forming relationships with adults
- Withdrawn/isolated from the group
- Inappropriate behaviour with adults and/or other children



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## **F**actors that increase likelihood of abuse

- Very young children who might have difficulty telling others
- Disabled children who might have difficulty communicating what has happened to them
- Children who are already experiencing some form of discrimination e.g. bullying, racial harassment, as they are more vulnerable within society. They may also perceive the abuse as part of the on-going discrimination.
- Poor relationship between children and parents /carers
- History of abuse or domestic violence in the family
- Children who have been groomed by their abuser
- Children who have been told to keep secrets or where there is an element of fear



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# **A**NTI-BULLYING POLICY

## **Definition of Bullying:**

Bullying has been recognised and defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour usually repeated over a period of time. It can take many forms, but the four main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or sectarian remarks, threats, name-calling), emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of his peer group) and cyber-bullying (eg. through the use of the internet or mobile phones). The harm caused by bullying should not be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, in the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self-harm).

**Chapter 9.48 Regional Area Child Protection Procedures, 2005**

## **Glentoran Football Club’s Position on Bullying**

- Bullying is not tolerated by Glentoran Football Club, regardless of by whom, be they child, coach, volunteer or parent.
- Anyone found to be bullying others will be dealt with seriously both in regards to the behaviour exhibited and the reasons for the behaviour in accordance with Child Protection/Disciplinary Policies and Procedures.
- The possibility of people being bullied will be discussed openly within the Club and all young people and staff will be informed of both the Club’s views on bullying and ways in which bullying can be prevented/stopped. This will be achieved through regular meetings with coaches and will be conveyed to young people on an ongoing basis.
- It should be emphasised that anyone can be the victim of bullying and that being or feeling bullied is not a sign of weakness and does not make the victim a less valuable person.



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### **Action to be taken if a child states they are being bullied**

1. Child to be given time to tell how he/she is being bullied and reassured they have done the right thing in coming forward to seek help.
2. Staff member/volunteer to listen and subsequently record all relevant information regarding the bullying.
3. Staff member/volunteer to liaise with Child Welfare Officer regarding how to manage allegations of bullying. It may be deemed appropriate for the situation to be managed by the child’s coach however an action plan should be agreed with the Child Welfare Officer in the first instance.
4. Child Welfare Officer will become involved to directly manage the situation if it is deemed necessary.
5. Child Welfare Officer will liaise with Academy Director and Parents where appropriate to appraise them of the situation, including how it has been managed and resolved.



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## **G**UIDELINES TO GOOD PRACTICE

- Glentoran Football Club have adopted and implemented where possible the ***Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children’s Sport in Ireland*** as an integral part of their policy on children within the club.
- Glentoran Football Club has adopted and will consistently apply a safe and clearly defined method of recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers including vetting of such by the Access NI service.
- Glentoran Football Club has appointed at least one Child Welfare Officer as outlined at 2.6.1. in the *Code of Ethics*.
- Glentoran Football Club have appointed a designated person (Child Welfare Officer) to act as liaison with the statutory authorities in relation to the reporting of allegations or suspicions of child abuse (5.13.2 in the *Code of Ethics*).
- Glentoran Football Club will ensure best practice throughout the Club by disseminating its code of conduct, including the disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures in operation within the Club to all its members. The Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy Statement will also be posted in the Legends Milk Bar at the Oval.
- Glentoran Football Club have in place procedures for dealing with a concern or complaint made to the statutory authorities against a committee member, coach or other staff members of the Club. Regulations stipulate that any member of staff or volunteer, who is the subject of an allegation which has been reported to statutory authorities, should stand aside while the matter is being examined. They will be invited to resume full duties immediately if they are vindicated.
- Glentoran Football Club will ensure that coach’s report to the Academy committee on a regular basis regarding any child protection concerns.



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- Glentoran Football Club has developed effective procedures for responding to and recording accidents and incidents, using the appropriate proformas.
- Glentoran Football Club will ensure that any unusual activity (high level of drop-out, transfers etc.) is investigated and reported by the Academy Director to the Irish Football Association.
- Glentoran Football Club will ensure that all coaches and committee members are given adequate notice of meetings.
- Glentoran Football Club will ensure that all minutes of all meetings are recorded and safely filed away.

*To minimise situations where abuse may occur, the Academy have established relevant policies, including codes of behaviour for staff and volunteers that work or have contact with children directly or indirectly. False allegations of abuse are rare but certain basic guidelines will help safeguard children, volunteers/staff and the Club.*

### **1. Recruitment and selection of staff and volunteers**

It is recognised that anybody may have the potential to abuse children in some way and it is important that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that unsuitable people are prevented from working with children.

As part of the recruitment procedures all staff and volunteers within Glentoran Football Club will be interviewed and asked for two referees, who will then be contacted and the successful applicant/s will then complete an Access NI check before taking up their duties, if and when check is clear. It should be recognised that Access NI checks are an important part of the process to safeguard children from potential abuse.



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## **2. Policy and Procedures**

All staff members and volunteers of Glentoran Football Club must know what to do if there are concerns about abuse and they must have access to the Child Protection Policy and relevant contact details. Documents regarding child protection concerns are to be treated as confidential and will be stored in a safe place.

## **3. Training**

Child Protection training is essential in order to equip staff with the necessary knowledge and awareness required to identify potentially abusive situations. All staff and volunteers will receive suitable and appropriate training to raise awareness of their role in recognising and reporting child protection concerns. This will be facilitated in conjunction with the club and the Irish Football Association and should be completed once every three years.

## **4. Complaints**

Glentoran Football Club has established a Complaints Procedure, which advises staff, volunteers and parents on how to make a complaint regarding the service received. Staff, volunteers and parents will be provided with a written copy of this procedure.



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## **DEALING WITH DISCLOSURES**

It is crucial that all staff and volunteers within Glentoran Football Club know how to respond appropriately to disclosures or allegations of abuse.

- React calmly and do not appear shocked, so as not to frighten the child.
- **LISTEN** to the child and do not ask probing or leading questions – it is not your role to investigate.
- Be patient and let the child tell you their story. Take what he/she is saying seriously.
- Ensure you have a clear and accurate understanding of what the child is telling you. Try to avoid asking them to repeat details unnecessarily as this can cause distress.
- Reassure the child but do not make promises of confidentiality as you are duty bound to pass this information on.
- Record accurately what the child has said as soon as possible after the disclosure. This **MUST** be within 24 hours. Use the child’s own words and do not attempt to interpret what the child has said. The record must be signed and dated. An Incident Report Form must be completed.
- Contact the Child Welfare Officer immediately to pass on this information.
- Child Welfare Officer will liaise with Academy Director/Health and Social Services Trust/PSNI where necessary.



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Anybody who knows or suspects that a child has or is being harmed or is at risk of harm has a duty to convey this concern to the Child Welfare Officer within the Academy. It is essential that suspicions are reported. The consequences of failing to report an allegation or suspicion could far outweigh the risk of being wrong and might even be fatal for the child concerned. ***It cannot be stressed enough that the welfare of the child must always be the first priority.***

**REMEMBER:**

**-RECEIVE**

**-REASSURE**

**-RESPOND**

**-RECORD**

**-REFER**

### **5. Dealing with Parents or Carers**

Concerns should be discussed with the Child Welfare Officer in the first instance. Depending on the situation, either the coach or Child Welfare Officer will then liaise with parents/carers if it is deemed appropriate to do so. In situations where the parent/carer may be responsible for the abuse, the child might be placed at greater risk if the suspicions were discussed. The Child Welfare Officer will contact Social Services to determine how to proceed.



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## 6. Reporting Procedures

Once a member of staff becomes aware or suspects a case of child abuse they should ensure in so far as possible that the child is protected from danger. The member of staff has no power to intervene directly where the alleged abuser is the parent/carer of the child. In this case it is imperative that the next step be taken immediately.

Discussions must not take place with anyone else as this may impede the investigation and breach confidentiality of those involved. It is up to the discretion of the Child Welfare Officer as to who else needs to be informed of the situation.

Staff/volunteers should not initiate an investigation, including a discussion of the potential abuse with other professionals (e.g. schools, health workers) as this is assuming the responsibility of Social Services. By doing so, they could complicate an already sensitive situation and perhaps contaminate evidence, which could have negative consequences for subsequent legal proceedings.

Feedback should be provided to the staff members/volunteer who raised the original concern, as and when it is appropriate to do so. Staff/volunteers who are not satisfied with the handling of an issue can, as an individual, report personal concerns to Social Services, however the person will then be operating outside of the Club's guidelines.



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## **A** LLEGATIONS AGAINST STAFF OR VOLUNTEERS

This includes any member of Glentoran Football Club who has contact with the public. Although it is a sensitive and difficult issue, child abuse may occur within a variety of settings. It is crucial that staff or volunteers are aware of this possibility and that all allegations are taken seriously.

There may be circumstances where allegations relate to poor practice rather than abuse. The decision as to whether the allegation constitutes abuse and/or poor practice should not be made in isolation. All incidents should be reported to the Child Welfare Officer and advice sought from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, where necessary. Where the incident is poor practice, this will be used as an opportunity to review practice and make recommendations for improvement, including relevant training. Where the Child Welfare Officer is the person under suspicion, a report should be sent to the Academy Director.

Glentoran Football Club assures all staff and volunteers that it will fully support anyone who, in good faith, reports their concern that a colleague may be abusing a child.

Where there is a complaint of abuse against a member of staff or volunteer, there may be four types of investigation:

- PSNI investigation
- Social Services investigation
- Joint investigation between PSNI and Social Services
- A disciplinary investigation by Glentoran Football Club



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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:**

Upon registering online at [www.glentoranfcacademy.com](http://www.glentoranfcacademy.com) as a coach or staff member and ticking the box of confirmation that they have read & understood all of the Glentoran Academy policies & procedures, this acknowledgement slip is considered as confirmation that all coaches and staff members have read and fully understand that any misdemeanours or breaches of this **Child Protection Policy** will be dealt with immediately and reported to the designated person. Breaches of the policy may result in dismissal from Glentoran Academy. Dismissals can be appealed with final decisions taken by Glentoran Academy Appeals Committee



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This Policy has been agreed at a committee meeting on the **22.10.2019**  
and signed off by the following club officials

**NAME: Grahame Jenkins**

**POSITION: Club Director**

**SIGNATURE:**

**NAME: Stephen Lowry**

**POSITION: Academy Development Manager**

**SIGNATURE:**