



IRTS

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Approved for Issue: September 2021

1 Irish Radio Transmitters Society Child Protection Policy

1.1 Introduction

Everyone who participates in IRTS activities is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. IRTS has a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people at IRTS events and other events involving young people participants and volunteers provide them with the highest possible standard of care. IRTS is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone at IRTS activities accepts their responsibilities for safeguarding children from harm and abuse. This means following procedures to protect children and report any concerns about their welfare to a designated authority.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children and young people with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of IRTS and to allow staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

For the purpose of this policy, a child/young person is defined as a person under the age of 18.

1.1 Policy Statement

IRTS is committed to the following principles:

- the welfare of the child shall be paramount
- all children, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in IRTS activities in a fun and safe environment
- all reasonable steps shall be taken to protect children from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse shall be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- all IRTS volunteers who work with children shall be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility, and shall be provided with guidance in good practice and child protection procedures

1.2 Monitoring and reviewing the policy and procedures

Procedures as set out below will be applied universally at IRTS activities. The implementation of the procedures will be regularly monitored and reviewed. The IRTS President will report progress, challenges, difficulties, achievements gaps and areas where changes are required, to the IRTS Committee.

This policy will be reviewed whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

2 Promoting Good Practice

2.1 Introduction

To provide children with the best possible experience and opportunities in IRTS activities everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework. This policy is based on the principle that every person involved in IRTS activities has a responsibility to report any concerns about child protection

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of IRTS volunteers or participants in IRTS activities to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. **It is however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the child, as explained in section 4.**

This section will help you identify what is meant by good practice and poor practice.

In the case of an activity in which IRTS volunteers are participating but not the organizers, it is the responsibility of the organizers to provide a Child Protection Policy.

2.2 Procedures for Good Practice

Everyone should adhere to the following principles and action:

- **All young people participating in IRTS activities must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian and, involve parents/guardians wherever possible e.g. where young people need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents to take responsibility for their own child. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms always ensure parents, coaches etc. work in pairs.**
- always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- make the experience of IRTS activities fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying
- treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity

- always put the welfare of the young person first, before winning
- maintain a safe and appropriate distance with participants (e.g. it is not appropriate for volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them)
- avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the young person's consent has been given
- request written parental consent if IRTS volunteers are required to transport young people in their cars or where overnight stays are involved
- ensure that at off-site events adults do not enter a young person's room or invite young people to their rooms
- be an excellent role model, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people
- boys and girls should sleep in separate rooms
- always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- recognise the developmental needs and capacity of the young person and do not risk sacrificing welfare in a desire for team or personal achievements. This means avoiding excessive training or competition and not placing unreasonable physical demands on them
- secure written parental consent for IRTS to act *in loco parentis*, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises
- keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given

2.3 Poor Practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided by all personnel:

- unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- taking young people alone in a car on journeys, however short

- taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you
- engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including “horseplay”/fooling around
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- allowing young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- sharing a room with a young person
- making sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun
- reducing a young person to tears as a form of control
- allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- do things of a personal nature that the young person can do for themselves

When a case arises where it is impractical/impossible to avoid certain situation e.g. transporting a young person in your car, the tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/guardian and the young person involved.

If during your care you accidentally hurt a young person, the young person seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions and/or if the young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague and make a written note of it, there are templates in the appendix of this document for this purpose. Parents should also be informed of the incident.

3 Defining Child Abuse

3.1 Introduction

Child abuse is any form of physical, emotional or sexual mistreatment or lack of care that leads to injury or harm, it commonly occurs within a relationship of trust or responsibility and is an abuse of power or a breach of trust. Abuse can happen to a young person regardless of their age, gender, race or ability.

There are four main types of abuse: **physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse and neglect**. The abuser may be a family member, someone the young person encounters in residential care or in the community, including sports and leisure activities. Any individual

may abuse or neglect a young person directly or may be responsible for abuse because they fail to prevent another person harming the young person.

Abuse in all of its forms can affect a young person at any age. The effects can be so damaging that if not treated may follow the individual into adulthood

Young people with disabilities may be at increased risk of abuse through various factors such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, isolation and a powerlessness to protect themselves or adequately communicate that abuse had occurred.

3.2 Types of Abuse

- **Physical Abuse:** where adults physically hurt or injure a young person e.g. hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning, biting, scalding, suffocating, drowning. Giving young people alcohol or inappropriate drugs would also constitute physical abuse.

Physical abuse may occur when the nature and intensity of training or duration of activity, disregarding the capacity of the child's immature and growing body

- **Emotional Abuse:** the persistent emotional ill treatment of a young person, likely to cause severe and lasting adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve telling a young person they are useless, worthless, unloved, inadequate or valued in terms of only meeting the needs of another person. It may feature expectations of young people that are not appropriate to their age or development. It may cause a young person to be frightened or in danger by being constantly shouted at, threatened or taunted which may make the young person frightened or withdrawn.

Ill treatment of children, whatever form it takes, typically features a degree of emotional abuse.

Emotional abuse in sport may occur when the young person is constant criticised, given negative feedback, expected to perform at levels that are above their capability. Other forms of emotional abuse could take the form of name calling and bullying.

- **Bullying** may come from another young person or an adult. Bullying or mocking is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. There are three main types of bullying.

It may be physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, slapping), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, name calling, graffiti, threats, abusive text messages), emotional (e.g. tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, ignoring, isolating from the group), or sexual (e.g. unwanted physical contact or abusive comments).

In IRTS activities, bullying may arise when a participant or parent pushes the young person too hard to succeed, or a rival or official uses bullying behaviour.

- **Neglect** occurs when an adult fails to meet the young person's basic physical and/or psychological needs, to an extent that is likely to result in serious impairment of the child's health or development. For example, failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect from physical harm or danger, or failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment.

Refusal to give parental love, affection and attention can also be a form of neglect.

Neglect in sport could occur when a coach does not keep the young person safe, or exposes them to undue cold/heat or unnecessary risk of injury.

- **Sexual Abuse** occurs when adults (male and female) use children to meet their own sexual needs. This could include full sexual intercourse, masturbation, oral sex, anal intercourse and fondling. Showing young people pornography or talking to them in a sexually explicit manner are also forms of sexual abuse.

In IRTS activities, activities which might involve physical contact with young people could potentially create situations where sexual abuse may go unnoticed. Also, the power of the adult participant/volunteer over younger participants, if misused, may lead to abusive situations developing.

3.3 Indicators of Abuse

Even for those experienced in working with child abuse, it is not always easy to recognise a situation where abuse may occur or has already taken place. Most people are not experts in such recognition, but indications that a child is being abused may include one or more of the following:

- unexplained or suspicious injuries such as bruising, cuts or burns, particularly if situated on a part of the body not normally prone to such injuries
- an injury for which an explanation seems inconsistent
- the young person describes what appears to be an abusive act involving them
- another young person or adult expresses concern about the welfare of a young person
- unexplained changes in a young person's behaviour e.g. becoming very upset, quiet, withdrawn or displaying sudden outbursts of temper
- inappropriate sexual awareness
- engaging in sexually explicit behaviour

- distrust of adult's, particularly those whom a close relationship would normally be expected
- difficulty in making friends
- being prevented from socialising with others
- displaying variations in eating patterns including overeating or loss of appetite
- losing weight for no apparent reason
- becoming increasingly dirty or unkempt

Signs of bullying include:

- behavioural changes such as reduced concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, clingy, depressed, tearful, emotionally up and down, reluctance to go training or to competitions
- an unexplained drop-off in performance
- physical signs such as stomach aches, headaches, difficulty in sleeping, bed wetting, scratching and bruising, damaged clothes, bingeing e.g. on food, alcohol or cigarettes
- a shortage of money or frequents loss of possessions

It must be recognised that the above list is not exhaustive, but also that the presence of one or more of the indications is not proof that abuse is taking place. It is **NOT** the responsibility of those working in IRTS to decide that child abuse is occurring. It **IS** their responsibility to act on any concerns.

3.4 Use of Photographic/Filming Equipment at Sporting Events

There is evidence that some people have used sporting events as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young people. The IRTS will be vigilant, and any concerns should be reported to the event organiser or president of the IRTS.

All parents and participants should be made aware when IRTS volunteers use video equipment.

4 Responding to Suspicions and Allegations

4.1 Introduction

It is not the responsibility of any volunteer working in the IRTS to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However, there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the young person. This applies **BOTH** to allegations/suspensions of abuse occurring within IRTS and to allegations/suspensions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

This section explains how to respond to allegations/suspensions.

4.2 Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it is happening because of signs such as those listed in section 3 of this document, it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the young person affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a young person says or indicates that they are being abused, you should:

- **stay calm** so as not to frighten the young person
- **reassure** the child that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- **listen** to the child, showing that you are taking them seriously
- **keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning. Only ask questions to clarify
- **inform** the child that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell the child this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
- **safety of the child** is paramount. If the child needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a child protection issue
- **record** all information
- **report** the incident to the event organiser and the President of the IRTS

4.3 Recording Information

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. In recording you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions. Templates for recording information are included in the appendix of this document.

Information should include the following:

- the child's name, age and date of birth
- the child's home address and telephone number
- whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or someone else's
- the nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information

- a description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also, any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- details of witnesses to the incidents
- the child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred
- have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?
- has anyone else been consulted? If so record details
- has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record detail

4.4 Reporting the Concern

All suspicions and allegations MUST be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

IRTS expects its volunteers and event participants to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the person in charge/event organiser and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken.

A summary of reporting procedures is provided in Appendix 2. Where there is a complaint against an employee or volunteer, there may be three types of investigation.

- **Criminal** in which case the police are immediately involved
- **Child protection** in which case the Officers of IRTS and possibly local social services will be involved
- **Disciplinary or misconduct** in which case Officers of IRTS will be involved

As mentioned previously in this document, members of IRTS are not child protection experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. All suspicions and allegations must be shared with the event organiser who will discuss the concerns with the IRTS President.

NB: If there is any doubt, you must report the incident: it may be just one of a series of other incidences which together cause concern

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by an employee or a volunteer should be reported to the event organiser who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- IRTS will refer the matter to a relevant authority
- the parent/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible
- the IRTS President should be notified to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings
- if the President of the IRTS is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report must be made to the Vice-President of the IRTS

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures.

4.5 Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. This includes the following people:

- The IRTS President
- The parents of the child
- The person making the allegation
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child)
- In serious cases, the local police will need to be involved where a crime appears to have been committed.

All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

5 IRTS Requirements for volunteers and event participants who work with children (young people under the age of 18)

It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that all those participating in IRTS activities understand the standards of behaviour which are required when working with children.

All such people will be provided with a brief on acceptable behaviour, and will be asked to sign to confirm they have read and understood their obligations

Those charged with the welfare of young people at IRTS events must be asked to confirm that they understand their responsibilities.

Event organisers: must read the full child protection policy and agree to abide by its requirements (see Appendix 1)

Team leaders: Must read the child protection principles (Appendix 7) and sign to confirm that they agree to abide by the requirements set out therein (Appendix 2)

Parents of a young person must formally agree to the involvement of their child in an IRTS event (Appendix 3)

Appendix 1: Declaration to be signed by event organisers, event jury members/judges and organising volunteers

I, the undersigned, have read, and do understand the requirements of IRTS activities in respect of Child Protection. I will observe the requirements of the Child Protection Policy and take all reasonable steps to ensure it is adhered to during the [*name of event*].

I confirm that I am not subject to any criminal proceedings and have no criminal record, excluding traffic, motor vehicle or driving offences which are summary or administrative in nature.

Signed:

Name:

Position within [_____]:

Date:

Declaration to be signed by all volunteers running an event

Appendix 2: Declaration to be signed by all leaders of participating teams

On behalf of [] team, I the undersigned, have read, and do understand the requirements of IRTS activities in respect of Child Protection. I will observe the requirements of the Child Protection Principles and take all reasonable steps to ensure they are adhered to.

I confirm that I am not subject to any criminal proceedings and have no criminal record, excluding traffic, motor vehicle or driving offences which are summary or administrative in nature.

Signed:

Name:

Position within []:

Date:

Appendix 4: Letter of parental consent for Photography and Social Media

Event: [*Name of event*]

I, [*Name of parent*] am a parent/legal guardian of [*Name of participant*] (born on [DD.MM.YYYY]).

I give my permission for my child's photograph and name to appear in local press/media or on social media.

Parents' phone number: []

Parents' address: []

Signed on [*date*] by

[*Name of parent/legal guardian*]

Appendix 5: Incident report form

INJURED PARTY DETAILS:

Name: _____

Surname: _____

DOB: [___ / ___ / _____]

Sex: Male/Female

Home Address:

Name of Parent/Legal guardian: _____

Phone number of parent/legal guardian: _____

INJURY DETAILS:

Date(s) of incident [___ / ___ / _____]

Incident Summary :

Incident type:

- Injured/damaged by a person
- Struck by/contact with
- Caught in/under
- Slip/trip/fall
- Sharps
- Road Traffic Accident/Crash
- Exposure to substances/environments
- Manual Handling
- Property damage
- Other (please specify)

Injury type:

- Fatality
 - Bruise
 - Concussion
 - Internal Injury
 - Abrasion/Graze
 - Fracture
 - Sprain
 - Torn Ligaments
 - Burns/Scalds
 - Frostbite
 - Injury not ascertained
 - Trauma
 - Other (please specify)
-
-

Part of body injured:

- Head (except eyes)
 - Eyes
 - Face
 - Neck/Back/Spine
 - Chest/Abdomen
 - Shoulder
 - Upper Arm
 - Elbow
 - Lower Arm/Wrist
 - Hand
 - Finger (one or more)
 - Hip/Thigh/Knee
 - Lower Leg
 - Ankle
 - Foot
 - Toe (one or more)
 - Multiple Injures
 - Trauma/Shock
 - Other (please specify)
-
-

have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?

has anyone else been consulted? If so record details

ASSESSOR DETAILS:

Name: _____

Surname: _____

Date: [___ / ___ / _____]

Signature: _____

Appendix 6: Child Protection Concern Form

CHILD DETAILS:

Name: _____

Surname: _____

DOB: [___ / ___ / _____]

Sex: Male/Female

Home Address:

Name of Parent/Legal guardian: _____

Phone number of parent/legal guardian: _____

DETAILS:

Concern Summary

(Please complete the following section with as much detail about the specific child protection or welfare concern or allegation as possible. Include dates, times, incident details and names of anyone who observed any incident. Please include the parents and child's view, if known. Please attach additional sheets, if necessary)

Concern type:

- Child Welfare
- Emotional Abuse
- Neglect
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?

has anyone else been consulted? If so record details

does the child have any physical injuries? If so record details with the Incident Report Form for Injuries.

DETAILS OF REPORTER:

Name: _____

Surname: _____

Organisation: _____

Home Address:

Phone number: _____

Email Address: _____

DETAILS OF PERSON(S) ALLEGEDLY CAUSING HARM:

Name: _____

Surname: _____

DOB: [___ / ___ / _____]

Gender: Male/Female

Organisation: _____

Home Address:

Phone number: _____

Email Address: _____

Relationship to Child: _____

ASSESSOR DETAILS:

Name: _____

Surname: _____

Organisation: _____

Phone number: _____

Email Address: _____

Date: [___ / ___ / _____]

Signature: _____

Appendix 7: Child Protection Principles

- 1 IRTS shall do everything practicable to ensure that IRTS events involving children (children = young people under the age of 18) take place in an environment where children can feel safe and unthreatened, such that the welfare of the child is at all times paramount.
- 2 Those organising events shall always be aware of, and operate to, the IRTS Child Protection Policy (“the Policy”)
- 3 The core points of the Policy shall form the Child Protection Principles comprising this document
- 4 Event organisers shall be required to read and understand the Policy, and to sign to say that they will operate to its requirements. They shall also ensure that they and other participants are guided by the examples of good practice in the Appendix to this paper, and shall avoid any of the poor practices listed
- 5 Everyone else involved in events where children are present shall ensure that they are aware of the Child Protection Principles and will operate to them. It is the responsibility of everyone taking part in an IRTS event to report any examples of behaviour not consistent with the Policy to the event organiser
- 6 The organiser shall undertake a full investigation where such behaviour is reported. The investigation shall be performed thoroughly, with discretion and with the welfare of the child as a priority
- 7 Where there is proven inappropriate behaviour, the individual responsible shall be formally warned and, if the case is serious enough, banned from future IRTS events
- 8 The IRTS Executive Committee shall be formally notified of any cases which are the subject of an investigation and of the outcome of the investigation.

Good Practice: everyone adheres to the following

- always work in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- make the experience of IRTS activities fun and enjoyable: promote fairness, confront and deal with bullying
- treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity
- always put the welfare of the young person first, before winning

- maintain a safe and appropriate distance with participants (e.g. it is not appropriate for volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or to share a room with them)
- avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where any form of manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person. Physical contact can be appropriate so long as it is neither intrusive nor disturbing and the young person's consent has been given
- involve parents or teamleaders wherever possible, e.g. where young people need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents to take responsibility for their own child. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms always ensure parents, coaches etc work in pairs
- request written parental consent if IRTS volunteers are required to transport young people in their cars
- gain written parental consent for any significant travel arrangements e.g. overnight stays
- except in the case of an emergency at an away event, ensure that adults shall not enter a young person's room or invite young people to their rooms
- boys and girls shall sleep in separate rooms
- be an excellent role model, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people
- always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- recognise the developmental needs and capacity of the young person and do not risk sacrificing welfare in a desire for team or personal achievements. This means avoiding excessive training or competition and not placing unreasonable physical demands on them
- secure written parental consent for IRTS to act *in loco parentis*, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises
- keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given
Poor practice: the following shall be avoided:
- unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- taking young people alone in a car on journeys, however short
- taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you

- engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including “horseplay”/fooling around
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- allowing young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- making sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun
- reducing a young person to tears as a form of control
- allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- do things of a personal nature that the young person can do for themselves