



## **Arklow Lawn Tennis Club – Child Protection Policy**

### **Child Welfare and Protection Procedures**

Arklow Lawn Tennis Club accepts that all organisations, which include young people among its members, are vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. This document sets out the procedures for dealing with any welfare or protection issue that may arise in the club.

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

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

#### **The Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**

In certain limited circumstances it may be necessary to report suspected or known child abuse allegations to the Tusla or An Garda Síochána.

The club has in place a Designated Person whose job it is to receive such reports from club members. They will then decide if a report should be made to the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) indeed in certain circumstances to An Garda Síochána.

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

#### **Role and Responsibilities**

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



### **Minimum Requirements**

- Have attended the Safeguarding 1 – Basic Awareness Workshop in Child Welfare and Protection.
- Have attended the Safeguarding 3 – Designated Liaison Person Workshop.

### **Desirable qualities and skills.**

- The Designated Person should have good communication and listening skills, be approachable and non-judgmental.
- He/She should have a good knowledge of child welfare and protection codes and guidelines (which will be acquired through appropriate training).
- The position will require the person to be trustworthy, discreet, impartial and sensitive as they will be required to handle and manage confidential material.

<p><b>Details of the club's current Designated Person are on the Notice Board or can be obtained from any member of the Committee.</b></p>
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If in doubt the member should always contact the Designated Person to discuss any child protection matter of concern. The Designated Person who will then deal with the matter as they see fit.

It is important to realise that it is not the responsibility of anyone working within the tennis club, in a paid or voluntary capacity, to take responsibility or decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. That is the job of the statutory authorities. However, there is a responsibility to protect children by assisting the appropriate agencies so that they can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the young person.

### **Responding to a Child Disclosing Abuse.**

In some circumstances a young person may disclose to a trusted adult instances of abuse or other concerns relating to themselves or others.

Any adult finding themselves in this situation should follow the guidelines set out below.

If a young person discloses information of suspected abuse you should:

- Deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened.
- Stay calm and don't show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately and take what the child is saying seriously.



- Understand that the child has decided to tell 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 the investigation.
- Be honest with the child and tell them that it is not possible to keep information a secret.
- Make no judgmental statements against the person whom the allegation is made.
- Do not question the child unless the nature of what she/he is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as *"Can you explain to me what you mean by that"*.
- Give the child some indication of what would happen next, such as informing the Designated Person, parents/guardians, social services or the Garda. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.
- Carefully record the details as soon as possible after receiving the report.
- Pass on this information to the club's Designated Person.

### **Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse.**

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

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

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



### **Protection for the Person Reporting possible Child Abuse.**

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

The main provisions of the Act are:

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

### **Allegations against Coaches/Club Employees/Sports Leaders.**

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

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

The Internal Procedure will be as follows.

- As soon as the Designated Person is made aware of allegations which concern a Coach/Club Employee/Sports Leader within the club he/she will make the Club Chairman/President aware of the situation. If the allegations concern the Chairperson/President then the Designated Person will convene a meeting of the other officers of the club and brief them on the situation.
- The first thing to consider at this stage is the safety of the child making the allegation and the safety of any other children who may be at risk. The club will immediately take any steps considered necessary to protect children in its care.
- The next step will be to appoint a senior member of the club to deal with the matter. Under normal circumstances this person will be selected by the Designated Person together with the Chairperson. Where the allegations concern the Chairperson/President the person will be selected by the Designated Person and the other club officers.



- The senior club member will privately inform the Coach/Club Employee/Sports Leader that
  - an allegation has been made against him/her
  - the nature of the allegation.
  - He/she will be afforded an opportunity to respond and informed that any response will be noted and passed on to the statutory authorities.
- The Coach/Club Employee/Sports Leader will be suspended from their position pending the outcome of the club's investigation. Any investigation of the allegations by the statutory authorities will take precedence over any separate investigation by the club into the allegations. The senior club member will clarify that this suspension is only a precautionary measure and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings.
- The club will retain the right to take disciplinary action against the Coach/Club Employee/Sports Leader on foot of the allegations.

### **Confidentiality**

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

- Appropriate but not absolute confidentiality will be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in cases of abuse, welfare or bad practice. It is important that the rights of both the alleged victim and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected.
- A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the child will supersede all other considerations.
- All information will be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and will be discussed only with those who need to know.
- Information will be conveyed to the parents/guardians of the child in a sensitive way.
- Giving information to others on a 'need to know' basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.
- All persons involved in a child protection process will be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure.
- Information will be stored in a secure place, with access to it limited to the Designated Person and appropriate personnel as decided by the Designated Person.
- The requirements of Data Protection laws will be adhered to.

### **Anonymous Complaints/Rumors**

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but will not be ignored. Rumors will not be allowed to persist and will be dealt with by the Executive Committee as soon as it becomes aware of such rumors. All concerns relating to inappropriate behavior will be brought to the attention of the Designated Person in order that they may be dealt with as soon as possible. It is the responsibility of every member who becomes aware of such concerns to report them to the Designated Person. The



information will be checked out and handled in a confidential manner. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child/children will be paramount.

**DETAILS OF THE CHILD PROTECTION OFFICERS AND THE DESIGNATED LIAISON PERSON CAN BE FOUND EITHER ON THE NOTICE BOARD IN THE CLUBHOUSE OR ON THE CLUB WEBSITE AT [WWW.ALTC.IE](http://WWW.ALTC.IE).**

**If you are aware of any Child Protection concerns (inside or outside the club) you should immediately inform the Designated Person.**

### **Adult Supervision of Children's' Activities**

Arklow Lawn Tennis Club is rightly proud of the welcome and support given to its Junior members of all ages. The Club encourages all members to make full use of its facilities as often as possible.

As part of its obligations in regard to the protection of children the club sets out in this document the details of adequate adult supervision of junior members provided by the club.

The club will ensure that all children's activities organised by the club will be adequately supervised by adults. Good practice dictates that more than one adult is present to supervise these activities. This will help to ensure the safety of the children as well as protect adults. In this regard the club will be guided by the recommendations contained in Chapter 4 of the Code. As a minimum all club-organised activities will be supervised by one male and one female adult.

Adult supervisors will ensure that they are not left alone with young participants. If an adult needs to talk separately to a child this will be done in an open environment, in view of others.

Leaders and adult supervisors should not be left alone with young people at the end of any activity. Start and finish times for coaching, training and/or other activities will be clearly stated. Parents are requested to collect their children as punctually as possible. If late collections occur leaders/supervisors should remain in pairs until all participants have left. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to make arrangements for the timely collection of young people in their charge. Consistent late collection may require alternative arrangements to be put in place.

If a parent is unavoidably delayed they should contact the club on one of the Coaches whose contact numbers will be provided to parents at the beginning of the event. In the event that no contact is made with the club/ Junior Committee the supervisor will attempt to contact the parent using the contact number(s) provided by them on the completed Consent Form. If there is no answer they will ask the child if there is another family member whom they can contact. If no contact can still be made the supervisor plus another adult will wait with the child at the club or venue until the child has been collected by a parent or other adult nominated by the parent.



Children attending for club-organised coaching should let one of the adult supervisors know when they have arrived at the club – it is the responsibility of parents to ensure that children do this. When they are finished their coaching session and are leaving with the adult nominated to collect them they (or the adult) should inform the supervisor that they are leaving. Under no circumstances should a child leave the club premises without informing the adult supervisor.

If a child suffers an injury or accident the parents/guardians will be informed and an Accident Report Form will be completed. (Form 2-Accident report)  
Attendance records and records of any incidents or accidents that occur will be kept safely by the club.

Supervision of changing rooms if necessary (where children are very young or need special assistance), will only be in pairs of the appropriate gender.

The club welcomes and indeed encourages parents who wish to stay and supervise sessions, (for safety and supervision, not necessarily for their 'technical' expertise!)

Parents should note that adequate adult supervision as described above is provided only at the following times:-

- During your child's allocated coaching period as part of the club's Junior Coaching Programme.
- During any of the internal junior activities organized and run by the Junior Committee of the club.
- During any of the closed club tournaments run by the Junior Committee of the club.

Arrangements for supervision during home or away matches etc. are outlined in the Travel & Hosting Policy (Appendix 9).

The details of the times of the above-listed activities are available from the \*Junior Committee. If you have any difficulty getting this information please contact any member of the committee.

We wish to make it clear that while there may be adults present in the club premises at other times the club does not regard their presence as the provision of adequate adult supervision and it is not responsible for the safety and protection of your child outside of the specific activities listed above.

While the Club takes every reasonable measure to ensure the safety and protection of all its members including Junior members while they are on the premises such measures do not extend to the provision of adequate adult supervision other than for the activities listed above. In that regard it is the responsibility of each parent/guardian to ensure that their child is adequately supervised at all other times that they are on the club premises. (including times when the child is receiving private coaching organized by the child's parents).