

## **Code for Coaches**

### **Relationships**

The good coach will be concerned primarily with the well-being, health and future of the individual player and only secondarily with the optimising of performance.

A key element in a coach/player relationship is the development of independence of the player.

Players must be encouraged to accept responsibility for their own behaviour and performance in training, competition, and in their social life.

The relationship between coach/player relies heavily on mutual trust and respect.

In detail this means that the player should be aware of the coaches' qualifications and experience and must be given the opportunity to consent to or decline proposals for training and performance.

Coaches must not encourage players to violate the laws of the game and should actively seek to discourage such action. Furthermore, coaches should encourage players to obey the spirit of such laws.

Coaches must not compromise their players by advocating measures which could be deemed to constitute seeking to gain an unfair advantage (cheating, diving, bullying).

Above all, coaches must never advocate the use of proscribed drugs or other banned performance enhancing substances.

Coaches must treat opponents and officials with due respect, both in victory and defeat and should encourage their players to act in a similar manner.

Coaches must accept responsibility for the conduct of their players insofar as they will undertake to discourage inappropriate behaviour.

## ***Lead by Example and Demand Best Practice Standards***

### **Personal Standards**

Coaches are given a position of trust by parents/guardians and players, and are therefore expected to show the highest standards of behaviour whilst in the company of under age players. As a coach of under age players, you act in “loco parentis” and therefore your duty of care is more onerous than that of a coach to an adult team.

The coach must consistently display high personal standards and project a favourable image of the game and of coaching - to other players, coaches, officials, spectators, the media and the general public.

Personal appearance is a matter of individual taste but the coach has an obligation to project an image of health, cleanliness and functional efficiency.

Coaches should not drink alcohol so soon before coaching that their judgement may be impaired and the smell of alcohol will still be on their breath when working with players.

Whilst players are present, consumption of alcohol should be avoided. When the event is a social one, with players present, consumption should be moderate.

As persons responsible for the well-being of young people, it is inappropriate to smoke in their presence or to behave in any fashion inconsistent with your position of responsibility.

Coaches/volunteers must respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being and their ultimate right to self-determination. Specifically, coaches/volunteers must treat everyone equally within the context of their activity, regardless of sex, ethnic origin, religion or political persuasion.

## **Safe Practice**

Coaches have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the players with whom they work as far as possible within the limits of their control. Therefore coaches should seek to create a safe and enjoyable environment in which to play and train.

Injuries should be recorded, with a note of action taken in relation to each one. It is recommended that each club maintain an accident/incident book with a specific report form to be completed by the coach/manager.

A first aid kit should be available at all training sessions and matches.

Parents/guardians should be notified of injuries/illness which their children incur while participating in a sporting activity. It would also be advisable for coaches to inform parents if their child becomes upset for whatever reason. The reason why the child became upset may then be clarified. It could be that a child has miss interpreted something that has been said or it could be an indication of bullying.

Parents/guardians should be informed of the starting and finishing times of training sessions and matches.

Besides necessary manipulation of limbs in teaching technique, physical contact is not appropriate. In the sporting context certain types of coaching requires a “hands on approach” i.e. it may be necessary to support a child in order to physically demonstrate a technique.

This should only occur when necessary and in an open and appropriate way with the knowledge, permission and full understanding of the child concerned and where appropriate the parents/guardians.

Coaches should not treat injuries out of sight of others. Use a "Two-Deep" (two personnel, or two players) supervision system. Only personnel who are qualified in administering First Aid or treating sports injuries should attempt to treat an injury.

The comfort level and dignity of the player should always be the priority. Example:  
Only uncover the injured area, or cover private areas of the athlete's body.

*Generally, physical contact between players or coach and players should not involve touching genital area, buttocks, breasts, or mouths and should only occur when others are present. (“Two Deep” supervision)*

Any doubts of a medical nature should be passed on to a suitably qualified medical person.

Coaches should not play injured players.

**Comforting/congratulating players is an important part of the relationship  
between coaches and players.**

Guidelines for this type of touch are:

Limit touching to "safe" areas, such as hand-to-shoulder. It should not involve touching genital area, buttocks, breasts, or mouths.

Make your intention to congratulate or comfort clear to the player.

Get permission from the player before embracing them - remember that personnel are in the position of power.

Respect a players discomfort or rejection of physical contact.

Be sure that touching occurs only when others are present.

**Good Practice**

Coaches are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with their players. This is particularly important when the coach and players are of opposite sex and/or when the player is a young person.

Young players need a coach whom they can respect, therefore it is important that coaches should lead by example.

Young players play for fun and enjoyment therefore skill development and playing for fun take precedence over highly structured competition. Winning is not the only objective.

Coaches should set realistic goals for both the team and individual players and should not push young players into inappropriate or over competitive adult like competitions.

In relation to young players, coaches should ensure that all players participate and “average” players require and deserve equal time and attention. Do not over-burden younger players with too much information.

Coaches should help and encourage young players to develop basic skills and sportsmanship and they should avoid over-specialisation in positional play during their formative years.

Coaches should ensure that all players are aware that “bullying” whether verbal or physical will not be tolerated.

Coaches should advise players and parents on how and whom to go to if they wish to make a complaint. All clubs should have a systematic complaints procedure.

A coach must not attempt to exert undue influence over the player’s performance in order to obtain personal benefit or reward.

The coach must realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted, not only by the player, but by outsiders motivated by jealousy, dislike or mistrust and could lead to allegations of sexual misconduct or impropriety. Therefore coaches should be aware of, and avoid all situations conducive to risk.

The coach will on occasion be required to travel and reside with players in the course of coaching and competitive matches. On such occasions, ensure separate sleeping accommodation for officials and players.

Coaches who use their own vehicles to transport players must ensure that they have adequate insurance cover and be careful not to carry more than the permitted number of passengers.

Coaches should be careful not to expose children especially younger participants to extreme weather conditions. Decisions in this regard should be made from the child's perspective.

Where the team is composed of both genders, there should be a male and female official present.

***The coach should never be in a room or similar alone with a player.*** Where this is unavoidable, leave the door open and be within earshot of others. (“Two Deep” supervision)

Officials should avoid situations where they are alone with young players in changing rooms. Wherever practicable, there should always be two or more adults in changing rooms.

Physical relationships with under-age players are illegal. ***Children are defined in Irish law as any person under the age of 18 years.***

The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco should be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to the playing of the game.

Coaches should strive to eliminate all unfair practices, including the use of drugs which effect performance.

The Football Association of Ireland has amended its rules to include a child protection element in line with recent child welfare legislation and Government Guidelines. Specifically coaches/volunteers are required to operate within these recommended codes of conduct and best practice. Breaches of this code may constitute a disciplinary offence.

**Where possible, coaches should avoid:**

- ❖ spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others
- ❖ taking sessions alone (always employ “Two Deep” supervision)
- ❖ taking children to their homes
- ❖ taking children on journeys alone in their car

**Coaches should not**

- ❖ use any form of corporal punishment or physical force on a child
- ❖ exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward
- ❖ engage in rough physical games, sexually provocative games or allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any kind.
- ❖ make sexually suggestive comments about, or to a child.
- ❖ take measurements or engage in certain types of fitness testing without the presence of another adult. (“Two Deep” supervision)
- ❖ undertake any form of therapy (hypnosis etc.) in the training of children.
- ❖ ridicule or shout at a child for making a mistake or losing a game
- ❖ put undue pressure on a child to please or perform well