



NORTHERN IRELAND PRIVATE GREENS BOWLING LEAGUE

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Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy

This policy includes procedures and guidance for dealing with concerns or allegations of abuse. The Northern Ireland Private Greens League (NIPGL) recognises and acknowledges its responsibility as a Governing Body, to establish a policy which promotes and encourages its affiliated member organisations and clubs to adopt this policy and the highest possible standards of care towards children, and other vulnerable people participating in the game of bowls.

Policy statement

The NIPGL believes that everyone, whether administrator, official, coach or bowler, has a duty of care to safeguard all children from harm. All children and vulnerable adults have a right to protection, and the needs of disabled children and others who may be particularly vulnerable must be taken into account. The NIPGL will ensure the safety and protection of all children and vulnerable adults whilst in the care of the NIPGL through adherence to the Safeguarding guidelines adopted by the NIPGL.

Principles

The following principles form the basis of the policy:

- The welfare of the child/vulnerable adult is paramount.
- All, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse and poor practice will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately.
- Everyone in the NIPGL has a responsibility to report concerns to the appropriate officer. They are not trained to deal with situations of abuse or to decide if abuse has occurred, but it is their responsibility to ensure they report any concerns or allegations of abuse to statutory authorities.

Policy aims

The aim of the NIPGL **Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy** is to promote good practice:

- Providing children, young people and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection whilst in the care of NIPGL.
- Allowing all those in the NIPGL to make informed and confident responses to specific safeguarding issues.

Glossary of Terms

Abuse

Co-operating to Safeguard Children 2003 formally recognises four types of child abuse:

- **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child, or the wilful or neglectful failure to prevent physical injury or suffering. This may include hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, confinement to a room or cot, or inappropriately giving drugs to control behaviour.

- **Emotional Abuse**

Emotional abuse is the 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 children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone. Domestic violence, adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse.

- **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The 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 the production of pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

- **Neglect**

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in significant harm. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate foods, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, failing to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment, lack of stimulation or lack of supervision. It may also include non-organic failure to thrive (faltering growth).

In addition to these the PGL recognise that we have a responsibility to:

“protect children from bullying and to have policies and procedures in places to do so”

Co-operating to Safeguard Children DHSSPS, 2003

Age of consent

On 30 June 2008, the House of Lords passed the Sexual Offences (Northern Ireland) Order 2008. This legislation consolidates sexual offences law in Northern Ireland into one legal statute and modernise, strengthen and harmonise the body of offences and penalties between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom. The Sexual Offences (NI) Order 2008 became operational on 4th February 2009.

This legislation effectively brought Northern Ireland into line with the rest of the UK in terms of the law relating to when young people are deemed to be able to consent to sexual activity. Specifically, the age of consent has been reduced from 17 years old to 16 years old. It has also introduced new offences of sexual abuse against children under the age of 13.

Children & Young People

A child or young person is defined by the law Children (NI) Order in both jurisdictions as a person under the age of 18 years. For the purposes of this document the term children & young people applies to all under the age of 18.

A child is defined in the Children (NI) Order 1995 as a person who has not attained the age of 18.

The above also applies to safeguarding vulnerable adults (“the vulnerable”).

Vulnerable Adults

The existing definition of 'vulnerable adult' varies across Boards and Trusts. It is important that there is a single, agreed definition of this term. The Regional Adult Protection Forum has adopted the Law Commission for England and Wales (1995) definition of a "vulnerable adult" as:

'a person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services or is resident in a continuing care facility by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness or who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation'.

Adults who "may be eligible for community care services" are those whose independence and wellbeing would be at risk if they did not receive appropriate health and social care support. They include adults with physical, sensory and mental impairments and learning disabilities, howsoever those impairments have arisen; e.g. whether present from birth or due to advancing age, chronic illness or injury. They also include informal carers, family and friends who provide personal assistance and care to adults on an unpaid basis

Promoting good practice

Abuse, particularly child abuse, can evoke strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about the appropriate action to take.

Abuse can occur in many situations including the home, school and the sporting environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people and the vulnerable in order to harm them. A coach, instructor, teacher, official or volunteer will have regular contact with any vulnerable groups and will be an important link in identifying cases where they need protection. All suspicious cases or cases of poor practice should be reported following the guidelines in this document.

When a child or vulnerable person enters the club activity having been subjected to abuse outside the sporting environment, sport can play a crucial role in improving self-esteem. In such instances the club activity organiser must work with the appropriate agencies to ensure that they receive the required support.

Good practice guidelines

Officials and members should be encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to promote individual welfare and reduce the likelihood of allegations being made. The following are common sense examples of how to create a positive culture and climate.

Good practice for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults means:

- Always working in an open environment (e.g. avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets).
- Treating all young people/ the vulnerable equally, and with respect and dignity.
- Always putting welfare first, before winning or achieving goals.
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with players (e.g. it is not appropriate for adult members to have an intimate relationship with a child/the vulnerable or to share a room with them).
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empowers children to share in the decision-making process.
- Ensuring those in positions of responsibility maintain healthy, positive and professional relationships with all bowlers. Coaches and others in positions of authority and trust in relation to bowlers aged 16 and 17 years must not engage in sexual relationships with them while that unequal power relationship exists.
- Making sport fun, enjoyable and promoting fair play.
- Ensuring that if any form of manual/physical support is required, it should be provided openly and according to guidelines provided by the Coach Education Programme. Care is needed, for example, as it is difficult to maintain hand positions when a child is constantly moving. Young people and their parents should always be consulted and their agreement gained.
- Keeping up to date with technical skills, qualifications and insurance in sport.

- Involving parents/carers wherever possible. For example, encouraging them to take responsibility for their children in the changing rooms. If groups have to be supervised in the changing rooms, always ensure parents, club members, coaches or officials work in pairs.
- Ensuring that at bowling events or overnight and away trips, adults should not enter children's rooms or invite children into their rooms.
- Being an excellent role model – this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people, and the vulnerable.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and the vulnerable.
- Securing parental consent in writing to act *in loco parentis*, if the need arises to administer emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment. (see sample NIPGL Parental Consent Form on website)
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given. (see sample NIPGL Sample Accident Reporting Form on website)
- Requesting written parental consent if officials or club members are required to transport young people in coaches, minibuses or cars.

Practices to be avoided when working with children and vulnerable adults

- Avoid spending time alone with them away from others.
- Avoid being isolated with them by taking or dropping them off to an event or activity by yourself.

The above should be avoided except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable it should be with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge in the club or the parents/carers. For example, if they sustain an injury and need to go to hospital, or a parent/carer etc., fails to arrive to pick them up at the end of a session.

Practices never to be sanctioned

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Share a room with a child.
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate physical contact.
- Allow players to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a player, even in fun.
- Reduce a child or vulnerable adult to tears as a form of control.
- Fail to act upon and record any allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult.
- Do things of a personal nature for children or a vulnerable adult that they can do for themselves.
- Invite or allow children or a vulnerable adult to stay with you at your home unsupervised.

N.B. It may sometimes be necessary for officials, coaches or bowlers to do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adult, particularly if they are young or have a disability. These tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of parents and the players involved. There is a need to be responsive to a person's reactions. If a person is fully dependent on you, talk with them about what you are doing and give choices where possible. This is particularly so if you are involved in any dressing or undressing of outer clothing, or where there is physical contact, lifting or assisting a child/vulnerable person to carry out particular activities. Avoid taking on the responsibility for tasks for which you are not appropriately trained.

Incidents that must be reported/recorded

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to the appropriate safeguarding officer and record the incident. You should also ensure the parents/guardians of children or vulnerable people are informed:

- If you accidentally hurt a player.
- If they seem distressed in any manner.
- If a player appears to be sexually aroused by your actions.
- If a player misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done.

Safe Recruitment Procedures for coaches/volunteers working with young people or vulnerable people

- Volunteers and coaches will be carefully selected, trained and supervised. The office bearers of the NIPGL/club (dependent on the level the person is recruited to) committee must vouch for new volunteers/coaches potential involvement and their participation must be ratified by the unanimous approval of executive group/remaining coaches.
- All new coaches/volunteers working in regulated activity must complete the sports own application form that includes a self- declaration section (**see DOC 1 on IBA web site**).
- Individuals must complete and sign the Access NI Disclosure Certificate Application Form, which gives permission to enable the IBA/NIPGL to administer an Access NI check (proof of identity MUST be provided).
- Declaration of past convictions or cases pending and agreement to have an Access NI check completed, is of course a pre-requisite to approval to coach/volunteer to work with young people and those defined as in regulated activity when working with vulnerable adults.
- ALL volunteers/coaches must agree to abide by the IBA/NIPGL's Safeguarding Policy and all are required to sign the Code of Conduct.
- Any concerns or objections with regard to suitability of a coach should be submitted to the NIPGL's designated person. These matters will be raised with the NIPGL case management committee with appropriate action taken including a formal response in writing to the concerned party if required. Clubs should not deal with concerns about a coach in isolation.

Inducting new volunteers/officials/staff/coaches

The following information is current best practice advice provided by the NIPGL for the association and clubs.

Effective Management of Volunteers or staff: Good management of volunteers will contribute to safe activities for children. Good management will also create an atmosphere where volunteers feel valued, are listened to and where issues can be dealt with quickly by systems already in place. We would wish to advise clubs of the following;

1. **Volunteers should be made aware of how to access training.** The NIPGL requires all those coaching/instructing children to attend safeguarding training. In addition to this we would ask clubs to ensure all their volunteers are made aware of IBA/NIPGL reporting procedures that have been sent out to clubs and placed on our web site.
2. **Clubs should take time to induct volunteers** on IBA/NIPGL policies and procedures. A sample induction checklist is available on the PGL website. (**see NIPGL Sample Induction Check List on website**)
3. **Clubs should introduce a system for reviewing a volunteer's role.** Clubs may consider doing this on an annual basis, perhaps as part of pre-season planning. This will help to ensure clubs get the best out of volunteers and will provide volunteers with the opportunity to progress to new roles that accommodate their own particular skills and aptitude. This should assist the clubs to retain volunteers in fulfilling roles".

Training for volunteers/coaches

The IBA/NIPGL will:

- Promote governing body approved coaching sessions for volunteers/coaches.
- When appointing volunteers/coaches consider their current or previous experience either playing or coaching bowling.
- Education and training in the basics of safeguarding will apply to all coaches/volunteers/management committee members working with the children or young members.
- Safeguarding training should include:
 - Basic awareness of Safeguarding issues
 - Our organisation's safeguarding policies and procedures including our code of conduct
- Training will be carefully selected to ensure it is sufficient. For instance a one-hour training session is unlikely to be very useful. A minimum of three hours is required for basic awareness raising, and we will seek that training from a specific training provider with experience and knowledge of good practice in sport.

- Ensure that all new coaches have attended safeguarding awareness workshop within six months of taking up their post. This opportunity should also be made available to parents and other volunteers to enable a culture of a child-focused club to prevail.
- Ensure all volunteers should receive induction, and training appropriate to their role. Training should be updated and reviewed regularly for new volunteers and in line with changing legislation.

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 children and the vulnerable. Officials and all club members should be vigilant and any concerns should be reported to the Safeguarding Officer.

Appointment of Safeguarding Officers

The NIPGL recognises its duty to appoint/elect a Safeguarding Officer with responsibility for child protection and the protection of vulnerable adult members at their Annual General Meeting. It also recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse a vulnerable person in some way and that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with this group. Ideally the appointee could be a teacher, youth organisation leader or a person who will be well versed in working with vulnerable groups with an understanding of safeguarding issues. It is more important though that the person is committed to ensuring a safeguarding culture is consistently established within the sport. The Safeguarding Officer will be a member of the PGL GP Committee, and at club level be members of the management committee, or have access to the committee and its accompanying documents, to ensure that children's and vulnerable adults interests are kept on the PGL/club's agenda, and influence the decisions of, the PGL/club.

The NIPGL requires the designated Safeguarding Officer to:

- Attend a recognised 3-hour good practice and child protection and vulnerable adults awareness-training workshop, to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of a positive culture towards good practice and child protection.
- Receive advisory information outlining good practice and informing them about what to do if they have concerns about the safety of a young person or vulnerable adult.
- Gain national first aid training (where necessary).
- Attend update training when necessary. Information about meeting training needs can be obtained from, the NSPCC, and Sport NI.
- Have knowledge of the Sport NI's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport and Statutory guidelines.
- Have knowledge of categories and indicators of abuse.
- Assist with the ongoing development and implementation of the PGL's safeguarding training needs.
- Provide information and advice on safeguarding within the organisation.
- Communicate with parents and/or agencies as appropriate.
- Be aware of national and local services responsible for safeguarding, i.e. the Gateway teams and adult services, etc.
- The PGL will encourage member clubs to adopt these policies, procedures and guidelines to inform and promote good practice with regard to child protection and the protection of vulnerable adults.
- Recommend member clubs adopt and implement the IBA/NIPGL policy.
- Encourage member clubs to appoint a Safeguarding Officer. These individuals will be checked using Access NI as part of the process of ensuring there is no known reason why that person may be unsuitable to take on this role.

Responding to allegations or concerns

Most safeguarding issues that the NIPGL or our member club's will be required to deal with will be issues of poor practice, these can often be dealt with the NIPGL or even the club. But the NIPGL or club can still consult with statutory authorities or the NSPCC for any clarification about a concern they may have around poor practice that could be abusive.

The NIPGL will assure all officials or members that it will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child or vulnerable adult.

Where there is a complaint against an official/member of the NIPGL/club's there may be three types of investigation:

- A criminal investigation.
- A HSCT investigation.
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation.

The results of a Police or Health and Social Care Trust investigation may well influence and inform the disciplinary investigation, but all available information will be used to reach a decision.

Action if there are concerns

1. Concerns about poor practice:

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice; the designated Safeguarding Officer will deal with it as a misconduct issue.
- If the allegation is about poor practice by the NIPGL Safeguarding Officer, or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the NIPGL Secretary who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

2. Concerns about suspected abuse:

Any suspicion that a vulnerable person has been abused by either an official or a member of the PGL should be reported to the PGL Safeguarding Officer, who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the vulnerable person in question and any other person who may be at risk.

If suspicion of abuse is reported:

- The NIPGL Safeguarding Officer will refer the allegation to the IBA Safeguarding Officer and/or Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) who may involve the Police.
- The parents or carers of the vulnerable person will be contacted as soon as possible (if doing so does not place the person at further risk) following advice from HSCT.
- The NIPGL Safeguarding Officer should also notify the PGL Secretary who will deal with any media enquiries.
- If the NIPGL Safeguarding Officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the NIPGL Secretary or in his absence another senior office bearer who will refer the allegation to the HSCT as soon as possible.

It is not the responsibility of anyone within the PGL or its member clubs to decide whether or not abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns by reporting these to the appropriate officer or the appropriate authorities.

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 NIPGL Safeguarding Officer.
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused (unless to do so would place the person at more risk).
- The person making the allegation.
- HSCT/Police.
- The NIPGL Secretary
- Seek HSCT advice on who should approach the alleged abuser (or parents if the alleged abuser is a child).

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

- The NIPGL Safeguarding Officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further Police and HSCT inquiries.
- Irrespective of the findings of the HSCT or Police inquiries the NIPGL Case Management Committee (CMC) will assess all individual cases to decide whether an official or a member can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the Police. In such cases, the NIPGL CMC must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on a balance of probability; it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult should remain of paramount importance throughout.

Support to deal with the aftermath of abuse:

- Consideration should be given to the kind of support that children, parents, officials and members may need. Use of helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association for Counselling Directory is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, E-mail: bac@bacp.co.uk, Internet: <http://www.bacp.co.uk/>.
- Consideration should be given to what kind of support may be appropriate for the alleged perpetrator.

Allegations of previous abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child or by a member of staff who is still currently working with children).

Where such an allegation is made, the club should follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the HSCT or the Police. This is because other children or vulnerable adults, either within or outside sport, may be at risk from this person's behaviour. Anyone who is a barred individual is automatically excluded from working with a vulnerable person in bowls.

Concerns outside the immediate sporting environment (e.g. a parent or carer):

- Report your concerns to the NIPGL Safeguarding Officer, who should contact the Health and Social Care trust (HSCT) or the Police as soon as possible.
- If the NIPGL Safeguarding Officer is not available, the person being told of or discovering the abuse should contact the IBA Safeguarding Officer and/or HSCT or the Police immediately.
- HSCT and the IBA/NIPGL Safeguarding Officer will decide how to involve the parents/carers.
- The NIPGL Case management Committee should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident plays a role in the NIPGL and act accordingly (following advice from HSCT).
- Maintain confidentiality, information should be shared on a **need to know** basis only.
- See below regarding information needed for the HSCT.

Information for the HSCT or the Police about suspected child abuse

To ensure that this information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern, which should include the following:

- The alleged victims name, age and date of birth if under 18.
- Their home address and parents/carers telephone number.
- Whether or not the person making the report is expressing their own concerns or those of someone else.
- The nature of the allegation. Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information.
- Stick to the facts
- Avoid opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes.
- Details of witnesses to the incidents.

- The victim's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Have the parents/carers been contacted?
- If so what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so record details.
- If the alleged victim was not the person who reported the incident, have they been spoken to? If so what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.
- Where possible referral to HSCT or the Police should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours and the name of the contact who took the referral should be recorded.

See sample incident reporting form (**see NIPGL Safeguarding Reporting Form on the website**)

If you are worried about sharing concerns about abuse with a senior colleague, you can contact the HSCT or the Police directly. Alternatively you may want to contact the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline on 0808 800 5000, or Elder Abuse Helpline 0808 808 8141

Clubs with under 18's should also promote advice lines for young people such as; Childline on 0800 1111.

Responding to Bullying

If the bullying is taking place within bowling, the parent and child should be reassured that it will be dealt with as a priority and should be asked for their views on what would be helpful to deal with the situation.

The designated safeguarding officer (DSO), having spoken to the child who has been bullied and the child's parent/carer, should also speak to the bully (or bullies) and obtain their account of what has happened or is happening. This should be noted in writing and the parents/carers of the bully (or bullies) should be informed. The bully and his or her parents/carers should be asked for their views on what should be done to put a stop to any further bullying and to repair the damage that has been done.

Apart from very minor incidents that have been directly observed by a coach/club official and dealt with at the time, all bullying that takes place at should be discussed within the club/ group within five working days.

At the meeting, the bullying incident should be discussed and the details of a draft plan drawn up to address the situation, taking into account any suggestions made by the children involved and their parents/carers.

The following areas should be covered:

- Details of any apology that has been or should be offered by the bully (or bullies)
- Details of any support for the person who has been bullied e.g. use of buddy scheme, extra input from the DSO, referral to another service
- Details of any consequences for the bully, in addition to making an apology, with reference to the code of conduct
- Details of any support for the bully, with reference to the behaviour code
- Details of any further discussions or work to be done with others in the group, including children who may have observed or encouraged the bullying
- Details of any changes in how the sport/club may handle issues of bullying in future.

If the bullying occurs in another setting (i.e. a school or church facility) you should inform the safeguarding officer for that setting if they have any responsibility for the activity or participant. The plan should be shared with the children concerned and their parents and should be reviewed regularly.

This policy is based on the:

- Advice from the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) web site www.thecpsu.org.uk .
- **Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport** (Sport NI and the Irish Sports Council).
- **Previous safeguarding policies and guidance developed by NIPBA**

