

Child Safeguarding Statement, Elm Mount Chess Club

Foreword from Honorary Secretary

The Children First Act, 2015 provides a statutory framework for the protection and welfare of children. It places obligations on organisations providing services to children, including chess clubs catering for juniors, to put in place child protection arrangements. At this time (August 2015), the various sections of the Act are being implemented on a phased basis.

The Elm Mount Chess Club's Child Safeguarding Statement has been drawn up on foot of the Irish Chess Union's (ICU) Child Protection Policy entitled "Code of Ethics for Chess for Young People¹", (June 2015). The ICU Policy outlines the core principles governing the participation of young people in chess and provides various templates that can be availed of by any organisations that are involved in junior chess.

The ICU Policy takes account of the national guidelines outlined in the following documents:

- Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, Irish Sports Council & Sports Council Northern Ireland, 2006;
- Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2011; and
- Our Duty to Care, Department of Health & Children 2002.

One of the key elements of the Policy is that it outlines how Garda Vetting Services can be accessed in cooperation with "Volunteering Ireland".

This Statement outlines the core principles governing the participation of young people in the Elm Mount Chess Club and is intended to address actual and impending obligations on the club under the 2015 Act.

The implementation of this Statement is the responsibility of all Elm Mount members who should familiarise themselves with its contents and make themselves aware of the responsibilities that we share for the protection and welfare of junior players in the club.

Pat Fitzsimons
Honorary Secretary
Elm Mount Chess Club
August 2015

¹ For the purposes of the ICU Policy and the Elm Mount Chess Club's Child Safeguarding Statement, "young person" is defined as somebody under 18 years of age.

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Section 1 – Child Protection Policy Statement

Child Protection Policy Statement of the Elm Mount Chess Club.

We are fully committed to safeguarding the well-being of our junior members.

Every adult chess club member should at all times, show respect and understanding for members rights, safety and welfare and conduct themselves in a way that reflects:

- the guiding principles of the Chess Club in relation to young players as outlined in this Statement; and
- the guidelines contained in the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*, the main elements of which are included in this Statement.

In working with young people in chess our first priority is their welfare. We are committed to providing a safe, inclusive and supportive environment that will allow young players to:

- learn about the game of chess;
- improve their knowledge of the game and their chess playing skills; and
- perform to the best of their ability in competitions should they chose to participate in them.

Section 2 - Core Values in Chess for Young People

The Elm Mount Chess Club's Safeguarding Statement is fully consistent with the Irish Chess Union's Child Protection Policy (June 2015) as follows:

2.1 Definition of "Young Person"

For the purposes of this Policy "young person/child/children" means a person who is under 18 years of age.

2.2 Guiding Principles for Junior Chess

Young people's experience of chess should be guided by what is best for them. The stages of development and the ability of the young person guides the types of activity provided within the club. Adults will need to have a basic understanding of the needs of young people, including physical, emotional and personal.

2.3 Integrity in Relationships

Adults interacting with young people in the club should do so with integrity and respect for the child. There is a danger that sporting contexts can be used to exploit or undermine children. All adult actions in chess should be guided by what is best for the child and in the context of quality, open working relationships.

2.4 Quality Atmosphere and Ethos

Chess for young people should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. A child-centred ethos will contribute to a safe and enjoyable atmosphere within the club.

2.5 Equality

All children should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, sex, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. Children with disabilities should be involved in chess activities in an integrated way, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children and adult players.

2.6 Fair Play

Fair play is the guiding principle of the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*. All sport for young people should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. The European Code of Sports Ethics defines fair play as: "much more than playing within the rules. It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing with the right spirit. Fair play is defined as "a way of

thinking, not just behaving.” (European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics, Council of Europe, 1992).

2.7 Competition

A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of young people, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. However, competitive demands are often placed on children too early, which results in excessive levels of pressure on them. This can contribute to a high level of drop out from Chess.

In this connection, the Elm Mount Chess Club puts the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second. This child-centred approach helps to ensure that children’s involvement in competition is appropriate to their level of maturity and chess playing capacity. This is particularly important in Chess generally where young people frequently play side by side with adults on an equal footing.

Section 3 - Garda Vetting Arrangements

3.1 Accessing Garda Vetting Services

Neither the Elm Mount Chess Club nor the governing body for chess in Ireland, the Irish Chess Union (ICU) are “Registered Organisations” under the “National Vetting Bureau (Children and Vulnerable Persons), Act, 2012. As a result, arrangements have been made to facilitate the application process for Garda Vetting through the Dublin City Volunteer Centre in respect of Elm Mount Members involved in working directly with children.

The Centre has the appropriate Liaison Persons (authorised signatories) who have been nominated to process Garda Vetting Applications.

3.2 Liaison Arrangements

The Club is required to appoint a liaison officer who will be responsible for gathering garda vetting applications and passing them onto the Dublin City Volunteer Centre for onward transmission to the Garda Vetting Service. Currently, ***the Club’s Liaison Officer for this purpose is Fred Armstrong, Honorary Treasurer.***

3.3 Confidentiality

As a condition of facilitating Garda Vetting Services the club has signed a confidentiality agreement with the Dublin City Volunteer Centre. In the vast majority of cases, the Garda Vetting reports received will contain nothing of concern that calls into question an applicant’s suitability to work with children.

3.4 Requirements where an Adverse Report is received from the Garda Vetting Service

If an adverse report is received from the Garda Vetting Service by the club's liaison officer, the club is required to have a committee of 2 to 4 persons in place to consider reports received and make a decision on the suitability of an applicant to work with children. The process to be followed is that:

- the applicant for Garda Vetting should be provided with a copy of any report that contains adverse information and asked for his/her comments on it so that any such comments can be taken into account in the committee's decision on the person's suitability for working with children; and
- The club members who hold the offices of Chairperson, Treasurer, Librarian, Secretary and a parent of a junior club member will make up the club's committee for consideration of Garda Vetting Reports that require a decision about the suitability of an applicant to work with children.

3.5 Use of Information Provided in Garda Vetting Reports

The Club will keep all documents generated through the Garda Vetting Process confidential to the applicant, the Liaison Officer and the Committee established to consider reports referred to above. The only exception to this procedure, that might arise, is where the Liaison Officer and/or the Committee consider that a report needs to be drawn to the attention of the statutory authorities. In such cases, the Liaison Officer will send a copy of the report to Tusla, the Child and Family Agency for their consideration. The applicant will be notified accordingly, subject to advice received from Tusla.

Section 4 - Guidelines for Club Members involved with Young Players

Club members are expected to promote the positive aspects of chess and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct in their interactions with young players based on mutual trust and respect.

4.1 Being a Role Model

Members are expected to:

- Display high standards of language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation;
- Ensure that children in your care respect the rules of the game. Insist on fair play and ensure that they are aware that you will not tolerate cheating or bullying behaviour;
- Encourage the development of respect for opponents, including members of other clubs and avoid criticism of them;
- Avoid the use of alcohol and tobacco products during events and generally while children are in your care;
- Set the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with children. It is advisable for members not to involve children in their personal life i.e. visits to their homes or overnight stays;
- avoid working alone with children and ensure there is adequate supervision for all activities;
- take care not to expose a child intentionally or unintentionally to embarrassment or disparagement by use of sarcastic or flippant remarks about the child or his/her family.

4.2 Creating a Positive Learning Environment

In dealing with children, members should:

- Be generous with praise and never ridicule or shout at children for making mistakes or for losing a game. All children are entitled to respect;
- Be careful to avoid the “star system”. Each child deserves equal time and attention;
- Remember that children play for fun and enjoyment and that skill development and personal satisfaction have priority over highly structured competition. Never make winning the only objective;

- Set realistic goals for the participants and do not push young players. Create a safe and enjoyable environment.

4.3 Guidelines relating to Children playing on “Adult” Teams

Where children are selected to play on club teams that also have adult members, team captains should:

- Ensure that parents/guardian’s consent to their children being invited to play on teams. Boundaries of behaviour in adult groups are normally different from the boundaries that apply to junior groups, so it is important that adult team members are aware of their responsibilities to behave appropriately at all times when in the company of younger team members;
- If provided with any information of a personal or medical nature, about the young player or his/her family, keep this information strictly confidential unless the welfare of the child requires that it be passed on to other parties.

Section 5 - Code of Conduct for Young People

Elm Mount Chess Club wishes to provide the best possible environment for all young players involved in the club so that they have an enjoyable experience of learning about and playing chess. It is also important that young players are apprised of their own responsibilities to treat other players with fairness and respect. The following summarises the key requirements:

Young players are entitled to:

- Be safe and to feel safe;
- Be listened to;
- Be believed;
- Have fun and enjoy chess;
- Have a voice in relation to their activities within chess;
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect;
- Participate on an equitable and fair manner, irrespective of ability, disability, gender, religion, social class, ethnic background etc;
- Experience competition at a level at which they feel comfortable;

Young players should always:

- Treat coaches, club officials, etc with respect;
- Look out for themselves and the welfare of others;
- Play fairly at all times, do their best;
- Respect team members, even when things go wrong;

- Respect opponents, be gracious in defeat;
- Abide by the rules set down by team captains when travelling to away events representing the club;
- Behave in a manner that avoids bringing chess into disrepute;
- Talk to a club committee member if they have any problems.

Young players should never:

- Cheat;
- Engage in irresponsible, abusive or other inappropriate behaviour;
- Shout or argue with arbiters, team mates or opponents;
- Harm team members, opponents or their property.

Section 6 - Guidelines for Parents

The Club believes that a parent should:

- Be a role model for your child and maintain the highest standards of conduct when interacting with children, other parents, club officers and members;
- Think about your child's safety and put their safety and interests first when participating in chess events;
- Do not put another parent or club member under obligation to transport your child to chess events or to look after him/her as a refusal could cause embarrassment to both parties;
- Always behave responsibly and do not seek to unfairly affect a player or to affect the outcome of a game;
- Never intentionally expose any child to embarrassment or disparagement by the use of flippant or sarcastic remarks;
- Always recognise the value and importance of the officials and volunteers who provide recreational opportunities for your child. Parents are welcome to attend events and coaching sessions but should not interfere with the coach while working with the player;
- Encourage your child to play by the rules. Teach your child that honest endeavour is as important as winning and do all you can to encourage good sporting behaviour;

- Set a good example by acknowledging good play and encouraging mutual respect for other children, teammates and opponents.

Section 7 - General Guidelines in relation to working with Children

7.1 Travelling Arrangements

There is extra responsibility taken on by team captains and coaches when they travel with children to events. When travelling with young people they should:

- Not travel with children unless accompanied by another adult;
- Not carry more than the permitted number of passengers;
- Ensure use of safety belts.

7.2 Supervision

- Avoid being alone with one child, if you need to talk separately do so in an open environment, in view of others;
- Clearly state the time for the start and end of coaching sessions or competitions, Coaches/volunteers should remain in pairs until all participants have been collected;
- Ensure that at least one parent is present at a coaching session or a chess event, (for safety and supervision purposes) so that a coach/volunteer is never alone with children.

7.3 Physical Contact

Chess does not require direct physical contact between coaches/volunteers and young players. The only physical contact during a chess game is the requirement to shake hands with an opponent at the start of a game. According, coaches and volunteers:

- Should avoid physical contact; and
- Where physical contact is necessary it should be in response to the needs of the child and not the adult.

7.4 Photographic and Filming Equipment

All necessary steps should be taken to ensure that young people are protected from the inappropriate use of their images in media publications, on the internet and elsewhere. Where it is proposed to take photographs of children at chess events, you should:

- Inform children and parents that photographs may be taken and ensure they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs;
- Ask for parental permission to use the child's image and consult with the person about its usage;
- Ensure the content of the photograph focuses on the chess not on a particular child.

7.5 Mobile Phones

Young people value their mobile phones as it gives them a sense of independence and they can often be given to them for security to enable parents to keep in touch. However, technology facilitates direct personal contact between adults and young people and in some cases, adults have used this to cross personal boundaries and cause harm. The following guidelines should be followed:

7.6 As Team Captain/Coach/Volunteer

- Use group texts/chats for communication among players and teams and inform parents of this at the start of the season, tournament or event;
- Limit contact with an individual young player to whatever is reasonably necessary to keep the player informed of dates of fixtures, details of tournaments etc.

7.7 As a Young Chess Player:

- If you receive an offensive message, email or photo don't reply to it, save it, make a note of times and dates and tell a parent/guardian, event organiser, club committee member or another responsible adult that you trust;
- Be careful about whom you give your number or email address to and don't respond to unfamiliar numbers;
- Treat your phone as you would any valuable item so that you can guard against theft;
- Fully comply with the rules about turning off mobile devices during chess matches.

7.8 Bullying Behaviour

Bullying behaviour can occur between an adult and child, and between children. In either case it is not acceptable within Chess. The competitive nature of chess can create an environment that provides opportunities for bullying behaviours. Such behaviours might arise from a parent who pushes a

child too hard, a coach who adopts a win-at-all costs philosophy, a child who intimidates another child or an official who places unfair pressure on a person.

Bullying behaviour can only survive in an environment where the victim of such behaviour does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so. Such behaviours will not arise if all parties involved in the Chess Club fully adhere to this Child Safeguarding Statement. Where an incident does arise, it is important that it is dealt with quickly and sensitively by the club official with whom the issue is raised. In addressing the issue, the club official should follow the suggested guidelines set out at Appendix 1.

Section 9 of the Irish Chess Union's (ICU's) Child Protection Policy entitled "Code of Ethics for Chess for Young People", (June 2015) sets out the procedure which can be followed should a potentially serious child welfare issue arise. The Policy also provides a template for a disciplinary process to be followed, if required. The Elm Mount Chess Club will follow these provisions of the ICU's Child Protection Policy, should the need arise. (see www.icu.ie, junior home page and link to Child Protection Policy).

Appendix 1 – Guidance for addressing proposed incidents of alleged bullying behaviour

- Establish the facts by discussing the alleged incident(s) with the parties involved;
- Draw their attention to the contents of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the various duties and responsibilities within it that all parties involved with the chess club are obliged to adhere to;
- Reinforce that there is 'a permission to tell' culture rather than a 'might is right approach';
- Encourage children to negotiate, co-operate and help others, particularly new members or children with specific needs;
- Never tell a child to ignore behaviour that makes them feel uncomfortable or to retaliate against the person or persons whose behaviour is the cause of their concern;
- In attempting to resolve an issue, it may be appropriate to use a whole group policy or 'no-blame approach' to make the problem a 'shared concern' of the group;
- Seek assistance from other club officers, if necessary.