



# SSTRAI

GUIDELINES FOR  
SALMON AND SEA TROUT RECREATIONAL ANGLERS  
OF IRELAND  
WITH REGARD TO CHILD PROTECTION  
2009



# Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Angling Sport

## Definition:

**The Child Care Act, 1991, defines "child " as "a person under the age of 18 years other than a person who is or has been married.**

**In these guidelines the words child and young person are used interchangeably and refer to a person under 18 years of age.**

**The principle, which should inform best practice in child protection, is that the welfare of the child is of paramount importance.**

“All organisations, whether statutory or voluntary, have an overall corporate responsibility to safeguard children, and should pay particular attention to

- Safe and clearly defined methods of selecting staff and volunteers
- Developing effective procedures for the reporting and management of child protection concerns
- Identifying a designated staff member / volunteer to act as a liaison with outside agencies and as a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns. The designated person will be responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the Health Boards or An Garda Síochána”.

## Purpose of Guidelines

1. These guidelines are for use by all members of the Salmon and Sea Trout Recreational Anglers of Ireland in their dealings with the public.

2. The purpose of the guidelines is to:

- Provide members with basic information on the nature of child abuse
- Inform members on the procedures they should follow if they are informed a case of child abuse is occurring or they themselves are suspicious that it is occurring.
- Raise members’ awareness of the necessity for good practice so as to help to ensure the protection of young people from abuse and the protection of members against false accusations of abuse.

3. A member could encounter a situation regarding child abuse in a number of ways, including the following:

- A young person discloses to a member that he/she is being abused:
- A young person discloses to a third party who, in turn, tells the member:
- A member may overhear other young people discussing their concerns about a particular young person:
- A member witnesses abuse:
- An allegation or report is made to a member:
- A third party informs the member of his/her suspicions or concerns that a young person is being abused.

### **The Nature of Child Abuse**

1. Child abuse occurs when a child is ill - treated in some manner and requires protection.

2. Child abuse is the abuse of power over a young person by an adult or another person in a way which disadvantages the young person and to which the young person cannot give informed consent.

3. Child abuse can be categorised into four different types:

- Neglect
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

A child may be subjected to more than one form of abuse at any given time.

4. The National Guidelines have adopted the following definitions of child abuse.

### **Neglect**

Neglect is normally defined in terms of *omission*, where a child suffers *significant harm* or impairment of development by being deprived of food, warmth, clothing, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults or medical care. *Harm* is defined as the ill treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is *significant* is determined by his/her health and development as to that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.

### **Emotional Abuse**

The severe adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a young person caused by persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming, over - harsh disciplinary measures or exposure to violence.

The threshold of *significant harm* is reached when abusive interactions become **typical** of the relationship.

### **Physical Abuse**

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child. It occurs by allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others. In essence it is the abuse of children through sexual activity that they do not fully understand and to which they are unable to give informed consent. The sexual exploitation of children is an abuse.

(Children First - National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children - 1999).

## **THE PROCEDURES**

**If there is indisputable evidence that an individual has abused a child the matter must be reported directly, and immediately, to the Gardaí.**

1. If a member of the Salmon and Sea Trout Recreational Anglers of Ireland, receives an allegation, or has a suspicion, that a child is being abused by another member, Salmon and Sea Trout Recreational Anglers of Ireland personnel or family member, the instructor or trainee instructor or supervisor should, in the first instance, report the matter to another instructor or supervisor, normally the SSTRAI coach manager. In this instance the report will be verbal.
2. The instructor and coach manager must advise the Children's Liaison Officer (CLO). The Children's Liaison Officer will be an officer appointed by the SSTRAI National Executive.
3. It is important that the suspicions or allegations be recorded carefully by the C.L.O.
4. This type of discussion would most likely happen in cases where no specific allegation of child abuse has been made but the concern is based on emotional, behavioural and/or physical indications of a particular child.
5. In cases where an allegation has been made the matter must be reported immediately to the relevant authorities i.e. the designated officer of the Health Board or An Garda Síochána.
6. It is essential that, at all times the matter be treated in the strictest confidence and not discussed except among the parties mentioned above.

7. It is not the responsibility of anyone mentioned in No. 2 above to make enquiries of parents and in some cases it could be counter-productive to do so. The role of personnel mentioned in No.2 above is limited and does not include taking over the role of the Health Board.

8. When matters regarding the safety of other children arise in a sporting context it will be necessary for someone in a position of authority to be informed of the allegations made so that suspension of the person from activities that involve children may be carried out until the conclusion of an investigation by the statutory authorities. The Salmon and Sea Trout Recreational Anglers of Ireland have policies and procedures in place regarding suspension for alleged misconduct.

9. The Chairman of SSTRAI should be informed and briefed by the officers of the Affiliated Club or Organisations and consulted at all times.

10. Suspension should not be the responsibility of a single person, rather, an emergency meeting of the officers of the SSTRAI or Affiliated Organisation, or club the SSTRAI Chairman, and the National CLO should be convened within three days and they make a recommendation on suspension of the individual. Should a meeting not be convened within three days then the CLO must fully report the matter to the Chairman SSTRAI. The report shall set out all matters pertaining to the allegation or suspicion including, but without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing, the time and place of the alleged incident(s), the name of the child alleged to be involved, the name of the member or other person alleged to be involved, the nature of the conduct suspected or complained of, and the recommendation regarding suspension.

11. In the case of a suspension, the SSTRAI Chairman should formally notify the person being suspended, in writing.

12. The person against whom allegations have been made should, in the same letter, be invited to meet the officers of the SSTRAI, or Affiliated Organisation or Club, the Chairman of SSTRAI, and the National CLO as soon as possible. The timing of this discussion may be a matter to be decided upon in consultation with the Statutory Authorities.

13. The person against whom the allegation has been made should be informed that this is not an accusation, and the procedures being undertaken are in accordance with statutory guidelines. The person should be assured that within the organisation all information would be dealt with in a sensitive and confidential manner.

14. The person should be made aware generally of the nature of any allegation made against them and of any allegation being made known to the Statutory Authorities.

15. The person should be afforded the opportunity to present a formal response to the allegations to senior personnel in the organisation (the Chairman, and one committee member

of the person's choosing) and the response should be reported to the Health Board if the person so desires.

16. In the case of an allegation of child sexual abuse, in the interest of confidentiality and child protection, it will be necessary to withhold the name of the child and precise details of the abuse.

17. The Rules of the Salmon and Sea Trout Recreational Anglers of Ireland shall govern termination of membership.

### **From this point on, only the Statutory Authorities should deal with the matter.**

#### **Protections for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998**

This act came into operation on 23<sup>rd</sup>. January 1999. The main provisions of the act are:

- The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to designated officers of the health boards or the Gardaí.
- The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report "knowing that statement to be false"

"A person shall not be liable in damages in respect of the communication, whether in writing or otherwise, by him or her to an appropriate person of his or her opinion that

1. a child has been or is being assaulted, ill-treated, neglected or sexually abused, or

2. a child's health, development or welfare has been or is being avoidably impaired or neglected, unless it is proved that he or she has not acted reasonably and in good faith in forming that opinion and communicating it to the appropriate person.

## **IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO A CHILD REPORTING ANY FORM OF ABUSE**

1. It is important to 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 interview the child about details of what has happened.
2. It is important to stay calm and not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately and take what the child is saying seriously.
3. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation.
4. No judgmental statement should be made about the person against whom the allegation is made.
5. The child should be reassured that he/she was right to tell and that he / she will be helped. However no false promises or guarantees of confidentiality should be made.
6. The child should not be questioned unless the nature of what he/she is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, nonspecific questions should be used.
7. The child should be given an indication of what should happen next, such as informing parents and reporting to statutory authority.
8. A detailed account of any discussion regarding alleged or suspected abuse should be written as soon as possible after it has taken place.
9. A detailed account of the steps taken must, also, be kept.

### **Common Difficulties in dealing with child abuse**

Dealing with child abuse is rarely straightforward. Many complications can arise including the following:

- Disclosure is made then withdrawn
- A disclosure is made and secrecy is expected
- A young person may threaten suicide if the report is to be passed on
- The young person will often seek to protect his/her abuser despite these, and other complications that may arise, the member should always follow the procedures and the following code of good practice.

## Code of Good Practice for the Salmon and Sea Trout Recreational Anglers of Ireland

- Maintain the highest standard of personal behaviour.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being.
- Be responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with participants.
- Realise that in certain situations the participant(s) or others could misinterpret friendly actions.
- Another adult should be involved in any demonstrations that require physical contact.
- Members should never allow themselves to be in a one to one situation with a participant(s) nor should a member run a class on their own.
- Ideally male and female members should be present at classes.
- Members should be discouraged from being alone in their cars with participant(s).
- In the case of overnight stays:
  1. written permission should be received from parents/guardians
  2. adults should not share rooms with children
  3. adequate adult: child ratios should be observed
  4. children should not share beds
  5. members are in loco parentis and supervision of the participants is vitally important.

### Children's Liaison Officers

#### Functions:

- To promote awareness of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice within the SSTRAI and affiliated organisations, clubs and particularly among the young people involved.
- This would be best done by the production of information leaflets etc. and by the facilitation of regular information meetings.
- To influence the policy and practice within the organisation to ensure that all policy and decisions take account of the young people's needs.
- To facilitate communication within the organisation. To provide an accessible resource for young people to express their concerns, views or worries regarding their involvement in the organisation.



- To act as an advisory resource to the adults involved in the organisation on child protection issues ensuring that statutory guidelines and procedures are followed.
- To communicate to members the Procedures for Reports or Accusations of Child Abuse drawn up by the organisation.
- To accurately, and immediately, record in the Children's Liaison Record Book the report or suspicion following the reporting of same to him/her and notify the officers of the club or organisation and the Chairman of SSTRAI.
- To attend the meeting of the officers and make his/her report.
- To be confidential regarding any reports received and to discuss the matter with no one apart from those laid down in the procedures.
  - To be a member of the SSTRAI committee.
  - To return the Children's Liaison Record Book to National Executive if there is a change of personnel in the C.L.O. position. This occurs when there are entries in the book.

### **Training:**

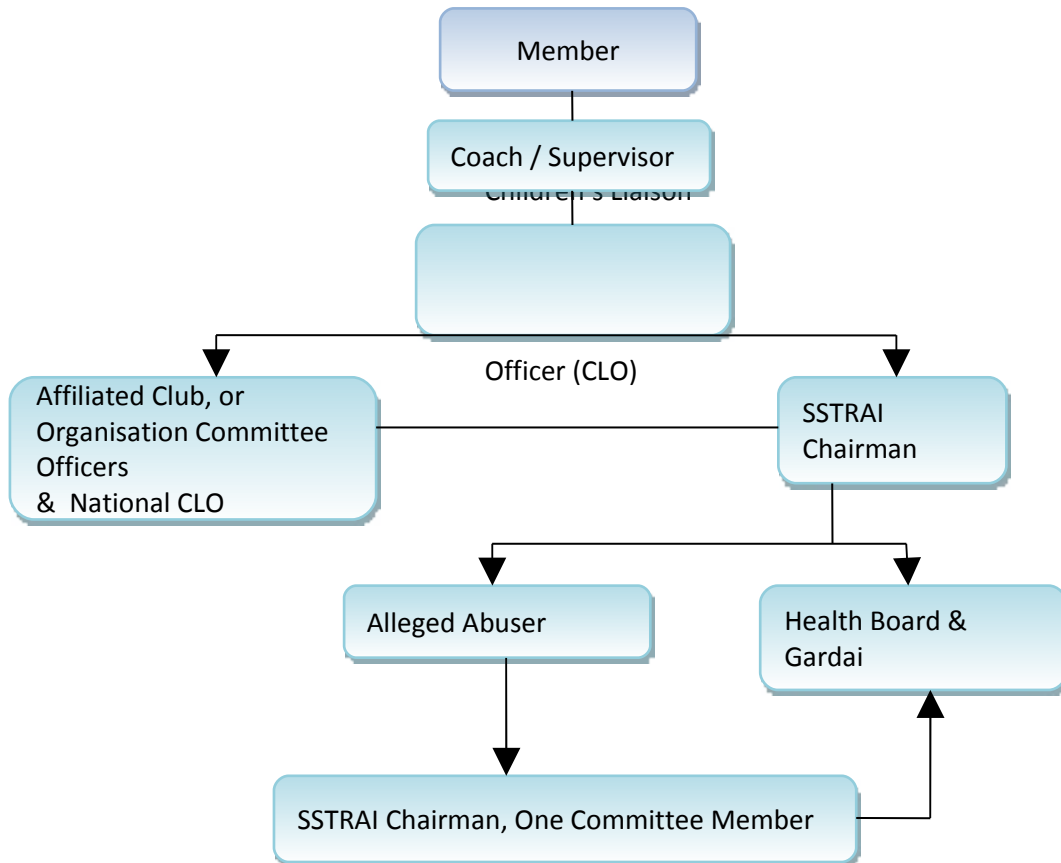
The Children's Liaison Officer should receive training in the following areas:

- The Code of Ethics and Good Practice
- Child protection procedures.
- Basic understanding of children's development.
- Communicating effectively with children and young people.
- Being accessible to, and approachable by, children.

This training should be available to the person through relevant agencies ensuring a quality input and a measure of effectiveness. This training should involve an assessment and evaluative component ensuring that only those suitable to be Children's Liaison Officers would be asked to undertake this function.

Each organisation should have in place a National Children's Liaison Officer who is available to all other CLO's for consultation, direction and training. This may have to be a paid position even in voluntary organisations.

**Children's Liaison Officers have no role in the investigation or validation of child protection concerns within the organisation and would have no counselling or therapeutic role.**



SSTRAI wish to acknowledge the kind permission of the Irish Water Safety Association for the use and adaptation of their literature including Angling Safety Guidelines for their website, [www.SSTRAI.ie](http://www.SSTRAI.ie).