



NICGC Safeguarding Policy

December 2019



1 – The NICGC Commitment to Safeguarding

The Northern Ireland Commonwealth Games Council (NICGC) acknowledges a duty of care to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people and is committed to ensuring safeguarding practice reflects statutory responsibilities, government guidance and complies with best practice as promoted by the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit.

The policy recognises that the welfare and interests of children are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that regardless of age, ability or disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation, socio-economic background, all children

- have a positive and enjoyable experience of Commonwealth Games, within a safe environment
- are protected from abuse whilst participating in Commonwealth Sport activities.

The NICGC acknowledges that some children, including disabled children and young people or those from ethnic minority communities, can be particularly vulnerable to abuse and we accept the responsibility to take reasonable and appropriate steps to ensure their welfare

As part of our safeguarding policy the NICGC will

- promote and prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and young people
- ensure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities in respect of safeguarding and is provided with appropriate learning opportunities to recognise, identify and respond to signs of abuse, neglect and other safeguarding concerns relating to children and young people
- ensure appropriate action is taken in the event of incidents/concerns of abuse and support provided to the individual/s who raise or disclose the concern
- ensure that confidential, detailed and accurate records of all safeguarding concerns are maintained and securely stored
- prevent the employment/deployment of unsuitable individuals
- ensure robust safeguarding arrangements and procedures are in operation.

The policy and procedures will be widely promoted and are mandatory for everyone involved with the activities of the NICGC. Failure to comply with the policy and procedures will be addressed without delay and may ultimately result in dismissal/exclusion from the organisation's teams.

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed no less than one year before each Commonwealth Youth Games or in the following circumstances:

- changes in legislation and/or government guidance
- as advised by the CPSU
- as required by SportNI
- as a result of any other significant change or event.



2 – Recruitment

The NICGC operates within a four-year cycle, which contains two very distinct periods which could be regarded as ‘regulated activities’ for safeguarding purposes. These are around each Commonwealth Youth Games and Commonwealth Games.

The staff and volunteer structure for the NICGC will vary greatly at each Games with personnel being recruited from a number of sources. Regardless of the source, some key checks will be made:

- All staff and volunteers will complete an application form providing comprehensive contact details.
- All staff and volunteers will complete a Self-Disclosure Form, relevant to their role, providing information about any previous convictions and any ongoing police investigations. This will be held confidentially by the NICGC.
- All staff and volunteers will provide evidence of identity and right to work.
- All staff and volunteers will agree to, and sign, the Code of Conduct for Leaders and Coaches.
- All staff and volunteers in regulated activity will consent to further background checks being carried out through AccessNI, their sport governing body or employer.

2.1 – Vetting

An Enhanced AccessNI Disclosure is required for all staff and volunteers managed by the NICGC. It is recognised that many of these people are already active within the Northern Ireland sporting community and only fall under the remit of the NICGC for a short period during Games when regulated activities take place. It is therefore appropriate to divide vetting requirements into the following categories:

- NICGC staff, including temporary personnel and Interns. To be vetted by the NICGC.
- Governing Body nominated coaches and staff. To be vetted by the relevant governing body, with confirmation provided to the NICGC.
- SportNI staff. To be vetted by SportNI, with confirmation provided to the NICGC.
- Medical staff. To be vetted in line with standard operating procedures managed by the relevant professional body. i.e. General Medical Council, Chartered Society of Physiotherapists etc. with confirmation provided to the NICGC.
- Open recruitment. To be vetted by the NICGC.

Regardless of the category above, all staff and volunteers must have been vetted within the three-year period prior to the Closing Ceremony at the Games attending. If, for any reason, personnel are unable to comply with this three-year timescale, the NICGC will arrange for an Enhanced Disclosure to be carried out prior to the Games. Failure to provide satisfactory evidence of vetting will result in the staff member or volunteer being removed from the NICGC team.



3 – Training and Management

3.1 – Training

The NICGC recognises that simply vetting staff and volunteers does not create a safe environment for children and young people. The importance of appropriate training cannot be overstated.

All staff and volunteers are therefore required to attend a Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport course, or if appropriate (i.e. they have previously attended face to face training) have completed the online refresher course, within the three-year period prior to the Closing Ceremony at the Games attending.

Volunteers from outside Northern Ireland should enquire regarding the equivalence of courses from other jurisdictions, such as Sport Ireland's Safeguarding 1 course.

At each Commonwealth Youth Games and Commonwealth Games, at least three team members will be trained to Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer (DSCO) level.

The senior NICGC staff member and a named Board Safeguarding Lead will be trained to Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer level and be responsible for liaising with the Child Protection in Sport Unit on a regular basis between Games.

The NICGC will support all staff and volunteers to attend safeguarding training. When necessary, course fees will be paid by the NICGC.

3.2 – Management

The NICGC Board holds overall organisational ownership of safeguarding.

Outside of Games periods, which for this purpose can be defined as when the first selected team members have departed for the Games until the last team member returns, the senior staff member and the named Board Safeguarding Lead will hold a delegated authority.

At Games time, the Chef de Mission will have overall responsibility for safeguarding within the Northern Ireland team. The Chef de Mission will work closely with the DSCOs and relevant Organising Committee personnel to ensure the safety of all NICGC team members.



4 – Reporting

Every Board, staff and team member plays an important role in safeguarding young people within NICGC activities. They contribute to the creation of a welcoming, safe, environment while acting as the organisation's eyes and ears. It is therefore important that everyone feels confident in the reporting procedures in the event of a suspected incident of abuse.

The following steps should be taken to report suspected or alleged abuse:

- Observe and note dates, times, locations, and contexts in which the incident occurred, or concern was aroused, together with any other relevant information. The NICGC Safeguarding Incident Recording Form will act as a useful template.
- Report the matter as soon as possible to a DSCO.
- If the DSCO has reasonable grounds to suspect that a child or young person has been harmed, abused, or is at risk of abuse, the matter should be reported to the relevant Health & Social Care Trust (HSCT).
- If the DSCO is unsure whether reasonable grounds exist for reporting to the HSCT or police, further advice can be obtained from either the NSPCC (0808 800 5000), Child Protection in Sport Unit or local Gateway team.
- In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk, the police should be contacted immediately. A child should not be left at risk simply due to the inability to contact the local statutory agencies.

A DSCO reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the statutory agencies will first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine any further investigation.

It is not the responsibility of NICGC staff or volunteers to decide if child abuse is taking place. The onus is on prompt reporting to the appropriate authorities which can then make enquiries and take any necessary action.

Information should always be shared on a 'need to know' basis to ensure that any investigation is not compromised.

Any Board, staff or team member subject to a formal safeguarding investigation being carried out by their governing body, social services or police will be stood down from NICGC activities with immediate effect until the conclusion of the investigation. This is not a sign of any apportioning of blame or guilt but simply a way of managing any potential or perceived risk while protecting all parties and the integrity of the investigation.



5 – Codes of Conduct

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Codes of Conduct that set out the rights and responsibilities of those connected to the NICGC. The Codes must be signed before each Commonwealth Youth Games and Commonwealth Games and will remain in force for the same duration as the Team Agreement.

Three distinct Codes are available:

- Code of Conduct for Leaders and Coaches
- Code of Code for Young People
- Code of Conduct for Parents

It is important that all concerned have an opportunity to read, evaluate and ask questions regarding their particular Code of Conduct. The NICGC's DSCOs will make themselves available to discuss any queries regarding the Codes.

Parents are encouraged to discuss the content of the Code of Conduct for Young People with their child before countersigning it.

Failure to complete a Code of Conduct will result in removal from the Games team.



6 – Communicating

While the existence of a robust Safeguarding Policy is important, the NICGC recognises that the Policy must also be readily available to interested parties.

Up to date safeguarding documentation is available on the NICGC website, www.nicgc.org, under Resources/Safeguarding. Information includes:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Code of Conduct for Leaders and Coaches
- Code of Conduct for Parents
- Code of Conduct for Young People
- Contact details for NICGC staff and Board DSCOs

The information above will be provided to each member sport's Commonwealth Games Liaison Officer before nominations open for either coaches or athletes at each Commonwealth Youth Games or Commonwealth Games.

Both SportNI and the CPSU are provided with this Safeguarding Policy at regular intervals as part of standard governance reviews of the NICGC.

Upon selection to a Commonwealth Youth Games or Commonwealth Games team, all members will receive an electronic copy of the Safeguarding Policy along with their relevant Code of Conduct. Leaders and coaches will also receive a copy of the relevant Self-Declaration Form. Parents of young athletes will receive the Code of Conduct for Parents and paperwork relevant to room sharing, use of images etc.

It is particularly important that young people are provided with contact information for, and introduced to, all three DSCOs who are operational at Games time.



7 – General

Throughout most of its four-year cycle, the NICGC is not engaged in regulated activities with young people. However, the general safe management of premises and activities remains a priority. The NICGC operates in compliance with legislation under The Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978.

At each Commonwealth Youth Games and Commonwealth Games, the NICGC works closely with the host Organising Committee. While safeguarding standards differ from country to country, the NICGC always adheres to the levels of good practice as found in Northern Ireland. While this has occasionally placed the NICGC at odds with previous hosts, the refusal to compromise has helped to ensure the safety and enjoyment of young people within the team.

Commonwealth Youth Games and Commonwealth Games provide a wonderful opportunity for young people. These sporting events see young people from Northern Ireland compete against athletes from many different countries and cultures while sharing the Games Village environment. In preparation for each Games, the NICGC delivers an induction programme which provides information on the Games environment and the local culture. This induction programme also highlights behaviours which may be deemed unusual or wrong in Northern Ireland but that are common in other countries and therefore may be encountered at the Games.

Safeguarding is a standing Agenda item for the NICGC Board for a minimum period of one year prior to each Commonwealth Youth Games and Commonwealth Games.

A corporate Risk Register is held by the NICGC, with safeguarding being a permanent subject heading.

The NICGC respects the expertise and experience within each of its member governing bodies. This is particularly true when considering coaching methods and how young people are treated within any particular sport. However, the NICGC reserves the right to reject coach and/or athlete nominations from any sport which is found to not be in good standing with the CPSU or SportNI's assessment of governance and safeguarding standards. The NICGC works with Safeguarding Officers within member sports to ensure the needs of young people can be supported.