



## **Policy and Procedure for the Management of Allegations of Abuse Against Club Volunteer 2024**

### **Introduction and Statement of Commitment to Children and Underage Members of the Club**

- The Executive Committee of FMBC takes its responsibility and duty of care to all its members and volunteers seriously and is committed to comply fully with statutory agencies and relevant legislation. It is recognised that from time to time incidents happen that need to be handled carefully and clearly to;
  - to protect the safety of underage members within the club so that wherever possible their experience of Sport will be a positive one.
  - to ensure similar risks can be managed for the future.
  - minimise harm caused to All children
  
- The Executive Committee will appoint a DLP. The DLP is charged with the statutory responsibility under Children's First Act 2015. As such the DLP will ensure they have appropriate up to date training and are competent to carry out this role. To ensure this is possible the Executive Committee will ensure adequate training and support is available for the DLP. It is fully intended that the DLP will be the expert in the area of management of allegations of abuse against a club volunteer, within the club.
  
- To ensure accessibility, any club member, including children can instigate these policies and the Executive Committee aims to support this by fostering an ethos of child welfare within the club. Open trusting relationships between adults and children will help to ensure that all-important issues are dealt with in a constructive manner.
  
- The Executive Committee will put into place appropriate training and supervision structures to ensure volunteers in the club are equipped to identify signs of abuse (see Procedures for Access to Safeguarding Training)
  
- FMBC takes responsibility to volunteers seriously and will ensure the following steps are taken to minimise the possibilities for abuse within the activities of FMBC;
  - Implement safe policies and provide sufficient resources to minimise the potential for abuse

- Apply rigorous recruitment and selection procedures in accordance with the club's "policy and procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of new and existing volunteer"
  - Provide induction for all new volunteers to ensure that they are aware of the standards expected from them
  - Provide effective supervision, support and training for all volunteers so that they are aware of the standards expected from them and shortfalls in standards are dealt with promptly
  - Provide Safeguarding training in accordance with the "policy and procedure on provision of Safeguarding Training" so that they are fully aware that the welfare of underage members is of paramount importance and know the action to be taken if abuse is suspected or alleged
  - Manage allegations of abuse against volunteers promptly and with due regard for their rights to fair procedures whilst safeguarding the welfare of underage members.
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- In considering whether an in/action constitutes abuse we will consider harm to a child or children in its widest context in accordance with Guidance from An Tusla. If it is unclear which policy is best suited, the DLP will advise.



## Policy and Procedure for the Management of Allegations of Abuse Against Club Volunteers

### **Purpose**

- FMBC believes underage club members should be encouraged to raise their problems or concerns directly to any trusted adult within the club e.g. coaches, children's officer, or the CSL and will ensure training is provided to all volunteers to assist this.
- If the allegation raises reasonable concern that harm is/was or maybe in the future caused to an underage club member/s, (regardless of their role) by a club volunteer the 'Allegations of Abuse Procedure' should be followed. In the case of any other harm or allegation the FMBC 'Disciplinary Policy' should be followed.

### **Scope**

- This procedure can be activated by an underage member themselves or by any adult club member on their behalf, simply by communicating a concern that harm has been caused to an underage club member.
- The CSL or the DLP will follow Basketball Ireland Child safeguarding Policy 2023, Sport Ireland Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People in Sport 2018 (Section 2) and guidance from An Tusla. As An Tusla have lead statutory responsibility for safeguarding, their advice and guidance will **always** be sought under this policy.
- When an allegation of abuse is made against a club volunteer, two procedures will be followed:
  - *"The Procedure for Reporting of a Cause for Concern and Guidance Notes"*.
  - *"The Policy for Managing Allegations of Abuse Against Club Volunteers"* (below)
- Where the allegation concerns the FMBC CSL, the DLP or another member of the FMBC Executive Committee, the complainant is entitled and encouraged to take

their complaint straight to the Child Welfare Officer of Basketball Ireland or directly to An Tusla or An Garda Siochana.

## **Policy**

- Any information relating to inappropriate behaviour/harm to underage club members should be brought to the attention of the CSL or the DLP as soon as possible. The information will be treated with respect and the CSL or the DLP will follow the procedure below.
- **The safety of the child making the allegation and any others who are/may be at risk should be ensured and this should take precedence over any other consideration.** In this regard, CSL or the DLP will seek advice from statutory agencies regarding high risk, out of hours and emergency situations and take any necessary steps advised.
- Any volunteer against whom an allegation is raised should be treated with respect and fairness. They will be informed, in private that an allegation has been made against them, the nature of the allegation and will be afforded an opportunity to respond. Their response will be recorded and included in any report made.
- In a situation where a volunteer is asked to “stand aside” they will be made aware that “standing aside” is only a precautionary measure and will not prejudice any later possible disciplinary proceedings or be used in any way by any external agency as part of any assessment about guilt.
- In considering whether an in/action constitutes abuse, ‘harm’ will be considered in accordance with Guidance pursuant to the Children’s First Act 2015. Harm may include: sexual harm; physical harm; neglect and welfare issues; emotional harm.
- Every effort will be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information will be handled and disseminated on a need to know basis only. Information should be stored in a secure place, with limited access to designated people. The requirements of the Data Protection laws will be adhered to.
- Anonymous complaints will not be ignored. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child/children is paramount

- Rumours should not be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour/harm to underage club members should be brought to the attention of the CSL or the DLP who will instigate the procedure below.
- Allegations brought to the attention of the CSL and the DLP which involve sports leaders from other organisations will be passed onto the DLP of the appropriate organisation for action.
- Where an Executive Committee member becomes aware of an allegation of abuse against a Club Volunteer that occurred outside the club, (that does not necessarily relate to basketball or FMBC members), all relevant information should be passed immediately to the CSL or the DLP who will convene a Child Safety Review Meeting to consider what action may be necessary for the Club to take to ensure the safety of its underage members.

## Procedure

**Any person becoming aware of an allegation of harm caused by a Club Volunteer to an underage Club member MUST report it immediately to the CSL or the DLP. The DLP will take a lead role in managing any necessary action.**

**Thus, it could be an underage member, parent, or volunteer initially bringing the matter to attention and instigating this procedure.**

## Collection of information Stage

The DLP will make a record of the initial information given and follow the procedure below UNLESS ADVISED NOT TO BY AN TUSLA AT ANY STAGE;

- 1 Consider the information immediately available and whether;
  - there is **reasonable grounds for concern** that harm has been caused to a child by a Club Volunteer
  - the harm meets the threshold of 'cause for concern' for reporting to An Tusla, following all advice available on An Tusla website.
  - further information is required to make this decision. If so, this information must be collected promptly, discreetly and only as a fact collection exercise. **It is imperative that further stress is not caused to any children in this process. It is not the responsibility of Club Officers to determine if abuse has occurred.**

## Reporting Stage

2.A If there is found to be information to suggest there is reasonable grounds for concern that harm has been/will be or is being caused to an underage member of the club by a club volunteer, the DLP will;

- seek advice immediately from the local An Tusla team with regard to any action the club may need to take to protect the child/children who may be at immediate risk, including informing or liaising with An Garda Siochana.
- follow the An Tusla reporting procedure as outlined in the '*procedure for reporting a cause for concern and guidance notes*' and any informal advice given by An Tusla local area team.
- keep a full record of all conversations and keep all such records confidentially stored
- immediately inform the club secretary who will immediately arrange a conversation with the DLP and the volunteer involved (involving their parent/guardian if they are under 18) to inform them of the allegation, to record their comments and to ask them to stand aside whilst an investigation is conducted.
- inform the DLP belonging to any relevant professional body that the sports leader has been asked to stand aside (details will not be released to anyone not deemed necessary).

2B. If, in the opinion of the DLP there is inconclusive information available to establish if there is a reasonable grounds that harm has been caused, the DLP should immediately seek advice and guidance from An Tusla, local area team, record and follow this advice.

3. If it is decided not to report a cause for concern the DLP must record the reasons and inform the original source of these in writing. They must also be informed that they can still report the information themselves using the An Tusla portal and should furnish the Club with a copy.

## Review Stage

4. Immediately (within a week) following the implementation of the advice from An Tusla and/or An Garda Siochana, or once any investigation by the statutory agencies is completed the CSL will convene an Internal Child Safety Review Meeting with the Children's Officers/or 2 other persons deemed suitable (to be selected by CSL), and seek any specialist advice deemed necessary. (These two people will not be Executive Committee members). The remit of the Internal Child Safety Review Meeting is to review all evidence collected, any action taken so far and consider what action the Club should take to protect children going forward. Possible outcomes that will be considered include;

- a. Changes to relevant FMBC policies and procedures
- b. Withdrawal of permission to volunteer for the sports leader involved, as per FMBC procedure for safe recruitment of volunteers
- c. Provision of support for the family of the child involved.

- d. Disciplinary proceedings against the sports leader and /or other club members, in accordance with FMBC disciplinary policy.
- e. provision of support for the volunteer against whom the allegation is made.

As part of this review, it may be necessary to collect more information from witnesses, club members etc. This process must be conducted promptly and with regard to fair process, confidentiality and duty of care for all involved.

5.The CSL will keep a written record of the review meeting and a report will be made within two weeks to the Club Executive Committee including an anonymised summary of the incident, the advice given and the review meeting recommendations. Confidentiality will be considered carefully under the club's duty of care to all involved. The club Secretary is responsible for ensuring all reasonable action recommended by the review committee is carried out and for keeping records of Executive Committee discussions and actions.

6.Unless advised not to do so by Tusla or An Garda Siochana the volunteer involved in the allegations will be invited to meet with the members of the Internal Child Safety Review Meeting once its decision and recommendations have been made and will be informed of the outcome of the review.

Signed off by of Father Mathew's Basketball Club

Date; April 2024

To be reviewed on; April 2026