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Policy Statement

Fitness Northern Ireland accepts responsibility that each child in the care of their Instructors will be treated as an individual by meeting the needs of each child. That the relationship between child and parent/guardian can be shared to create a safe, secure, stimulating and happy environment. While the main area of expertise of the instructor is in physical development and movement, other areas of care include personal, social and emotional development.

Duty of Care

Teachers and Instructors are in a position of trust and owe a 'duty of care' to the children and young people they work with. The teacher/instructor must be competent to teach health-related activities. If a child is injured, the teacher/instructor will be judged against the standard of a 'reasonable fitness professional'.

Introduction

We all want to believe that children are looked after in ways which promote their safety and comfort. For most children this is indeed the case. However Fitness Northern Ireland also recognises that some children do not experience this level of care. It has therefore drawn together some simple and common sense guidance for coaches/teachers/instructors, children and their parents/guardians in:-

- i) encouraging the adoption of the highest possible standards of care
- ii) out-lining a strategy for action if any concerns or suspicions are raised.

This document concerns the welfare of young people under the age of 18 years.

CHILD PROTECTION

Fitness Northern Ireland wants to ensure that children are protected and kept safe from harm whilst taking part in health-related activities. There is a broad range of legislation that affects teachers and instructors of health-related activities. This section will:-

- outline a broad legal framework affecting those working with children
- provide teachers / instructors with information about child protection
- provide good practice guidelines for:-
 1. children and young people when taking part in health related activities
 2. parents / guardians
 3. teachers / instructors working with children and young people
- outline a system to deal with complaints and reports of misconduct
- give information about a register of appropriately qualified teachers / instructors

Legislation

The Children's (NI) Order 1995 defines harm as 'ill treatment or the impairment of health or development'. The definition includes physical, intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural development, physical and mental health and any form of abuse (not just sexual abuse). Further legislation which affects teachers and instructors includes:

- the UN Convention Rights of the Child
- Children Order 1995
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003
- Cooperating to Safeguard Children 2003
- The Care Standards Act 2000
- Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2000 and the
- Disability Discrimination Act 2001
- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order 2007

Much of the legislation is directed towards people who care for children (nurseries or childminders). Teachers and Instructors, however need to understand their legal duties to those they teach.

There are two main areas that affect those working with children.

1. For those teaching health-related activities, the care provided is considered usually to be incidental (eg. Care is not the main purpose of holding classes). Most teachers / instructors will not need to be registered with the Dept. of Education. However, this will depend on the age of children, the length of time the child spends in sessions and the frequency of the provision.
2. Teachers must be fit to work with children.
3. The Protection of Children & Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order makes it a criminal offence for someone to apply for or accept any work if s/he is disqualified from working with children. It is also an offence to employ someone who is disqualified (eg. someone with a criminal record for the abuse of children). When the safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Order is implemented all those completing the 'Tots 2 teens' course will only obtain their certificate if they are registered with the Independent Safeguarding Authority. This will enable the continual monitoring of the individual and for relevant information to be communicated to Fitness Northern Ireland.

What is Child Abuse

The term 'child abuse' is used to describe ways in which children are harmed by someone in a position of power. There are many different ways in which children can be harmed, the common denominator that the child feels not valued and worthless. Abuse can happen anywhere, however research indicates that the perpetrators are likely to be known and trusted by the child.

However, it is not the intention of this document to make coaches/ teachers/ instructors experts in recognising child abuse.

There are 4 recognised categories defined in the Cooperating to Safeguard Children

- **Physical** Physical abuse is the deliberate physical injury to a child or the wilful 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.
- **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 food, 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).
- **Sexual** 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.
- **Emotional** 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.

Smothering a child's development through over-protection can also be a form of abuse. 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.

In addition to these four official definitions, **Bullying** has been recognised and defined as:

“deliberately hurtful behaviour usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or sectarian remarks, threats, name-calling and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of his/her peer group). The damage inflicted by bullying can frequently be underestimated. It can cause considerable distress to children, to the extent that it affects their health and development or, at the extreme, causes them significant harm (including self harm).

The effect of abuse on the child can be devastating and often long lasting.

What should you do?

Child abuse is not easy to recognise and many people fear reading too much into a situation thereby causing unnecessary upset. Most children are subject to minor accidental injuries, but there may be occasions when you are concerned about the nature and frequency of injury.

Listed below are some of the signs that may give cause for concern. It does not necessarily follow that the occurrence of one or more of these indicators means that child abuse is happening. However, the principle upon which this document is written is that **it is not your responsibility as an instructor to decide that child abuse is occurring. It is your responsibility to act on those concerns and to do something about it**

Possible signs of abuse

1	Behaviour changes for no reason, withdrawn, moodiness, anger
2	Bruising in unusual places such as arms, stomach, around the mouth, head or back
3	Bruised eye
4	Cigarette burns
5	Finger marks
6	Bite Marks
7	Child or young person not using an arm or leg because it may have been injured by a blow
8	Inadequate clothing for the time of year (does not generally happen to teenagers)
9	Changes in eating patterns- loss of appetite or overeating
10	Unexplained weight loss
11	Child or young person looking increasingly dirty or unkempt
12	Disclosure of an abusive act by the child
13	Expression of concern for welfare of the child by another adult or child
14	Sexual awareness inappropriate to age

How to react and what to do

The one thing you must not do is nothing.

There is no one set of hard and fast rules to follow when responding to these situations. If you receive information from a child or another person, which raises concerns, the procedure below should be followed

Do	Do Not
Stay calm Listen carefully Allow time for the person to say what they want to say Tell the child that s/he is not to blame Reassure him/her that they have done the right thing in telling Show/tell the child that you take seriously what s/he is telling you	Panic Promise to keep secrets
Keep questions to a minimum Record in writing, as soon as possible, the name and address of the child, what has been said, heard or seen Include dates, times and a description of any visual bruising or injury. Also include details of who you have informed e.g. person in charge Be honest and explain that you may have to tell someone else to help protect the child.	Inquire into the details of the abuse Make the child repeat the story unnecessarily

If you have received information, or your own observations over a period of time give cause for concern, what action do you take?

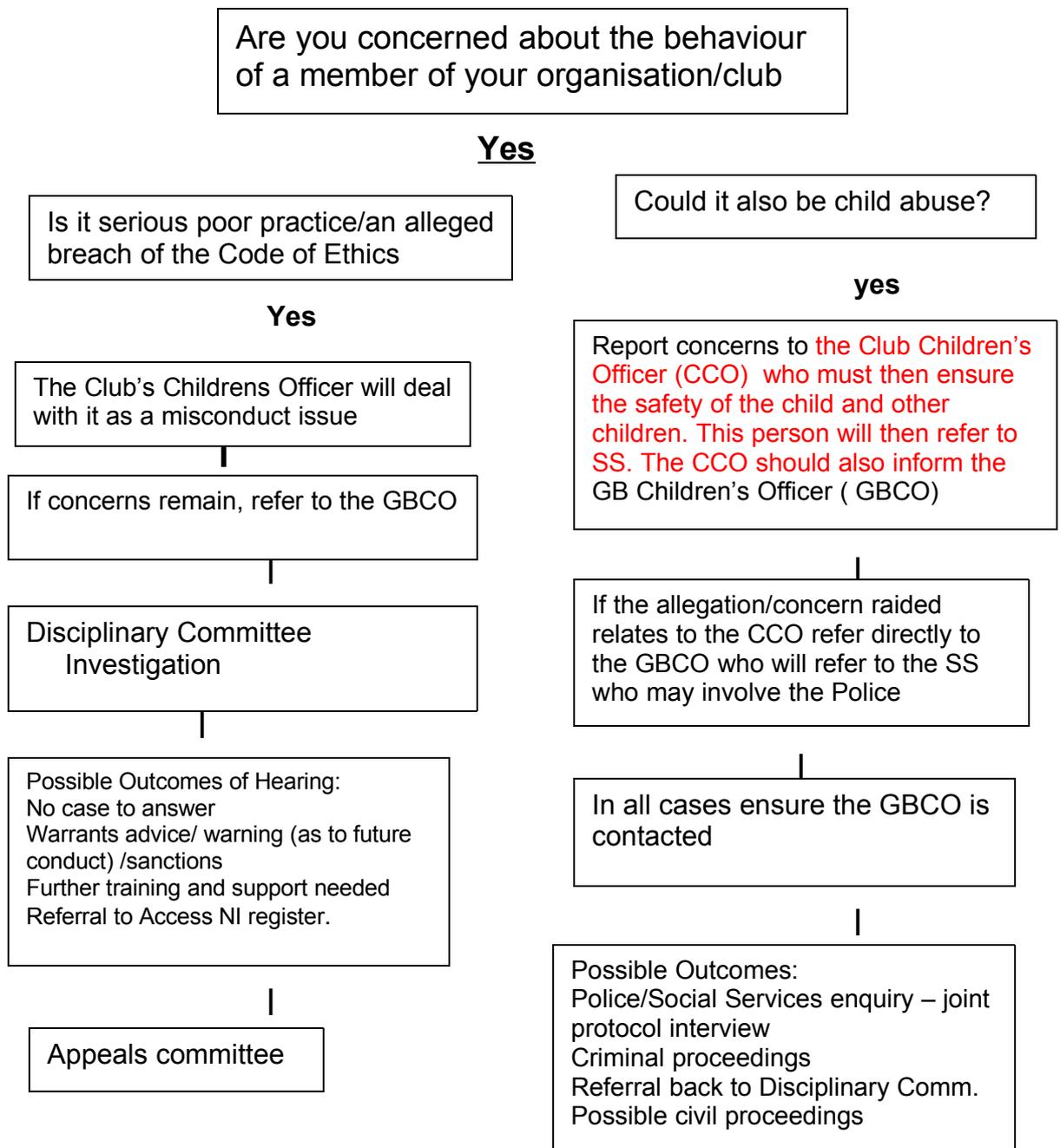
In the first instance, inform the parents/guardians unless the information received concerns their actions. It may be that there has been some family trauma, which is making the child unhappy.

Always inform the person in charge. This could be the children's programme co-ordinator, the centre's crèche manager or the personnel manager, centre manager or duty officer. All centres operating children's sessions should have an in-house policy to deal with issues of this type.

It is the person in charge's responsibility to act. If you are operating alone then you should take on that responsibility yourself.

Immediately inform the Social Services Dept., NSPCC office and /or the Police, also the designated Child Protection Officer of FNI. They will be able to advise you on what action you should take. However, under the Children's Order 1995, Social Services have a statutory duty to ensure the welfare of the child. When a referral is made it is Social Services' responsibility to investigate. The investigation may be made jointly with the Police. The telephone number of your local Social Services office can be found in the telephone directory.

Any information passed to the Social Services should be accurate. By following the procedures for responding outlined in the table above you will be able to provide a useful record of the incident/allegations



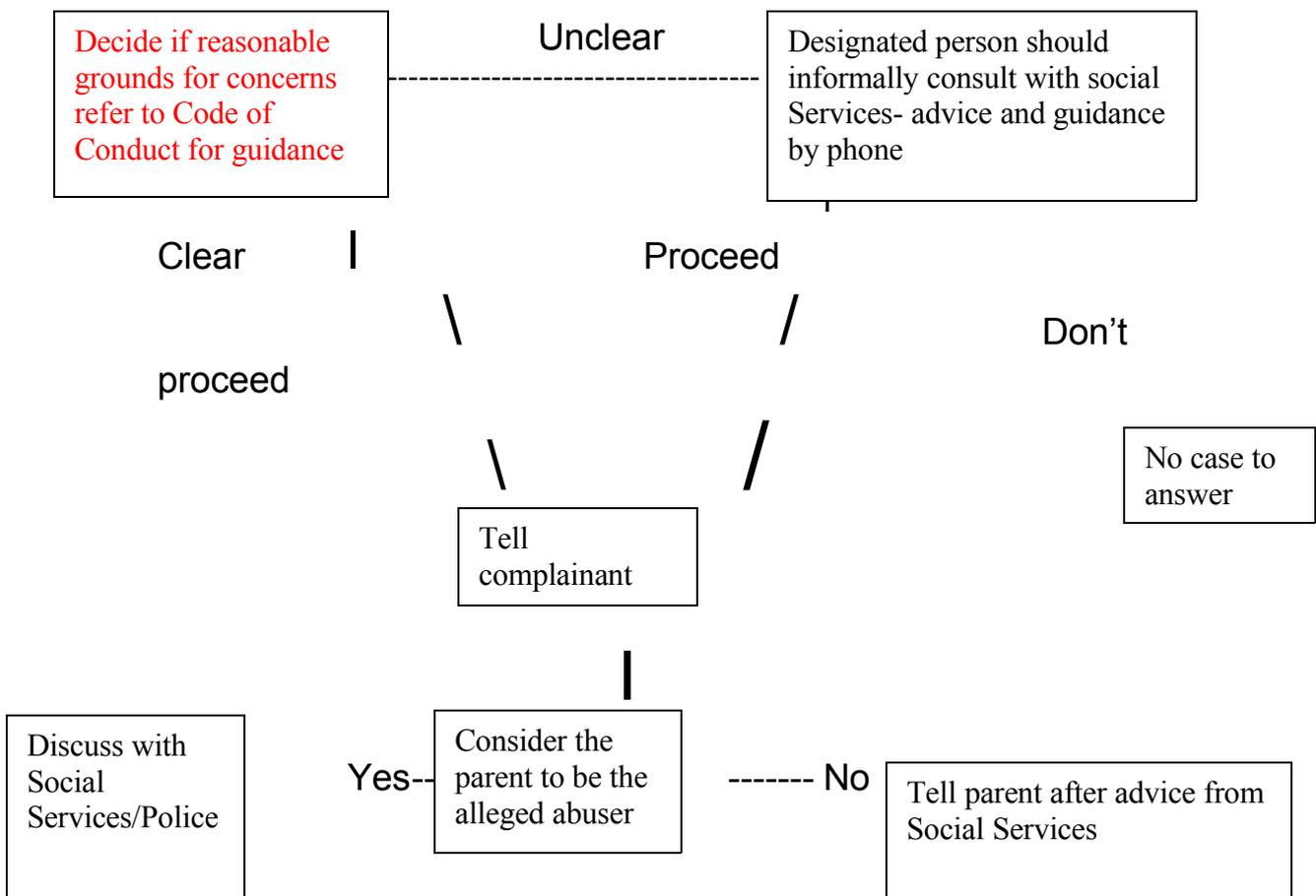
If you do not know who to turn to for advice or are worried about sharing your concerns with a senior colleague, you should contact the Social Services direct (or the NSPCC on 0808 800 5000). At any stage during the process in the left hand column the issue can be refered externally either formally or informally for advice. Following the external (right column) outcome the matter may be refered back to the organisation's Disciplinary Committee.

The vast majority of people who work with children are well motivated and would never harm a child. Unfortunately a few do and it is essential that organisations create a culture that makes all involved willing and comfortable to voice their concerns, particularly those about someone with whom they work or whom they know. The Child protection procedures should be followed.

During an investigation, support should be given both to the individual who voices concerns and to the suspected abuser. Once the investigation is completed, the Association must decide what action, if any is necessary to prevent a similar situation arising again.

When the complaint is about possible abuse outside the association

A report could be from a parent, child, other staff, outside agencies or anonymous



Allegations made against a member of Fitness Northern Ireland

Confidentiality

Information should be handled and disseminated on a 'need to know' basis only.

This may include:-

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (a) The person in charge | (b) The alleged perpetrator |
| (c) The child's parents/guardian | (d) The child /young person |
| (e) Social Services | (f) Fitness NI |

(the alleged perpetrator should only be informed following advice from Social Services)

Fitness Northern Ireland recognises the difficult issues raised and will support anyone who in good faith reports misconduct by a colleague.

If you suspect the actions of a colleague report your concerns with full details to the person in charge. It is then his/her responsibility to act.. This may take 2 forms:-

1. **Poor professional practice:** The accusation may be dealt with by in-house methods as a disciplinary matter. The person in charge should also contact the Chairman of Fitness Northern Ireland. Fitness NI's disciplinary procedure will be implemented, which could result in a registered member of the association:
 - a) receiving a recommendation to undertake further training
 - b) being suspended from membership from Fitness Northern Ireland's register for a period of time
 - c) being removed from membership of Fitness Northern Ireland.
- 2 **Child Abuse:** Where an allegation indicates serious malpractice against a child and abuse is suspected, the person in charge must report this to the Social Services Dept or the Police. This will result in the following types of investigation:
 - Child protection investigation by the Social Services
 - A criminal investigation.

The person in charge should also report this to the FNI Designated Officer for Child protection, who will then decide on what action to take. This may involve temporary suspension from membership of FNI until the allegations are proven.

Staying safe – Advice for children and young people

The following advice is to help you feel confident about yourself and the activities you take part in.

Travelling:

- Where possible, travel to and from your sessions with a friend or a parent / guardian.
- Keep to well lit roads if walking.
- Always face oncoming traffic if walking.
- If you have a mobile phone ensure it is charged or have some spare change or a phone card
- Only accept a lift if you know the driver and are comfortable getting into the car with them. Make sure others know who you are taking a lift from.

At the exercise session:

- Always tell the person in charge if you have to temporarily leave the session, tell him/her where you are going, for how long and why.
- Avoid being left alone with anyone
- Always tell the person in charge if you are feeling unwell or not up to participating at your usual level.
- If someone talks to you in a very personal manner which makes you feel uncomfortable or embarrassed, tell the person in charge, or another responsible adult you are comfortable with.
- If someone teased you, touches you in an intimate way, hits, punches you or takes your belongings tell the person in charge, or another responsible adult.
- Always talk to your parents / guardian if you are worried or upset, they will help you to complain to the person in charge or the session staff.
- Always inform the person in charge if you cannot undertake a task, do not feel confident or find the environment frightening.

Staying Safe – Advice to Parents/Guardians

- Always meet and talk to the session staff and person in charge when enrolling your child
- Check which procedures the centre has for recruiting staff for working with children.
- Discuss the type of activities the child will be taking part in with session staff.
- Encourage your child to talk about the session and any concerns they have regarding the session content, session staff and other children.
- Be familiar with the centre's complaints procedure.

Staying Safe – Advice to Teachers, Coaches and Instructors

The role of Fitness Northern Ireland is to promote high standards of professional practice. The following are examples of good practice when conducting sessions with children and young people. By adhering to them you will prevent yourself from being placed in a potentially vulnerable situation and maintain the high standards expected by Fitness NI.

- Check that you are personally covered for indemnity and liability.
- Be appropriately qualified.
- Accept that the child's welfare is paramount. This means respecting the child's view of what h/she wants from the session. Negotiate rather than impose.
- Conduct all sessions in an open manner, be observable by colleague / parents /guardians/centre staff.
- Insure that parents/ guardians are responsible for their own children in the changing rooms. Where this is impossible, adults should ideally work in pairs when supervising the changing rooms.
- Be sensitive to different cultures and codes of dress. Some cultures may restrict physical activity on certain religious days.
- Avoid unnecessary or inappropriate physical contact, eg rough play. Acceptable contact would be holding hands in a circle.
- Avoid being on your own with a child for any length of time.
- Avoid taking children home in your own car unless you have contacted the parents/ guardians for their agreement and the young person is happy with this arrangement.
- If the child is upset in your presence or has had an accident /injury during the session, this should be recorded in writing, reported to the person in charge, and the parents /guardians informed.
- Avoid becoming over-friendly with children and young people.
- Avoid any 'horseplay'
- Do not tolerate the use of offensive language or anti-social behaviour by children.

- Supervise the departure of children and do not leave the premises until all the children have left.

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Competition Stewards

Volunteers who act as stewards during the NICMAC event, will complete an application form to register with the association. Request for two written references should be included. They should also disclose any criminal conviction or disqualification from working with children and we recommend they complete a Child Protection Awareness Training session. Also volunteers should also be in full knowledge of the FNI Code of Ethical Practice and the FNI Child Protection Policy. These will be provided by FNI.

Induction

The NICMAC committee will have defined the role and responsibilities and these will be explained to each volunteer in respect of tasks necessary for the care and supervision of the children during the smooth running of the event. Regulations will be explained as in the policy under 'Staying Safe – Advice to Teachers, Coaches and Instructors'.

The 'named' first aid person will be appointed for the event from the list of volunteers or the committee who are qualified in Emergency First Aid.

FNI do not coordinate any away trips or residentials for young people as an organisation.

Qualified Instructors

Registered instructors may add to their Continuing Professional Development by undertaking the Tots 2 Teens course. The outcome is that they can deliver a safe activity session for children as defined on the course.

Prior to the start of the course, candidates will be required to:-

- Complete an application form
- Provide two referees
- Disclose any criminal conviction or disqualification
- **Be interviewed for suitability before the start of the course.**
- Provide 2 forms of identification – one photographic and one to confirm address.
- Give a commitment to undertake the Child Protection Awareness training.
- Have knowledge of the contents of the Child Protection Policy
- (The last 2 are incorporated into the course)

Regulated Positions

It should be understood that FNI have the expertise to train those interested in working with children as far as their professional skills and knowledge of child development and health are concerned. FNI will ensure that only those who pass all aspects of checking and safeguarding are trained to work with children. After training FNI do not have any involvement in the place of employment. Instructors are essentially freelance.

Vulnerability of those with a Disability

In the largest study into the issue of disabled children and abuse, Sullivan & Knutson (2000) found that 31% of disabled children had been abused, compared to a percentage rate of 9% among non-disabled child population.

It is recognised that children with a disability,

- have the same needs and require the same safeguards as all children.
- may also have additional needs associated with their disability, which may increase their vulnerability to abuse.
- are often more dependent on adults e.g. in intimate care needs and may be cared for by a number of different adults. Such children often spend a lot of time away from home.
- may be unable to recognise abusive behaviour because they may have learning difficulties or a lack of awareness, and /or reduced exposure to the norm of adult/children interactions. For example a child with disabilities may have difficulty in differentiating between appropriate and inappropriate touching
- particularly those with physical disabilities, may have a poor and/or incomplete body image and therefore may not recognise inappropriate behaviour
- communication difficulties often leads to misunderstandings and frustration for the child.

FNI are committed to working with young people with disabilities or special needs and their parents to ensure our activity is inclusive for all. Our instructors are advised to ask the experts i.e. the young person and their parents to ensure they have a clear understanding of the young persons needs.

NSPCC Helpline 08088005000

**Child Protection in Sport Unit
NSPCC**

Jennymount Business Park
North Derby Street
Belfast BT15 3NH

Tel: 02890 351135

Access NI (Agency for disclosures)

Brooklyn
65 Knock Road
Belfast BT5 6LE

Tel: 02890 259160

Fitness Northern Ireland

Robinson Centre
Montgomery Road
Belfast BT6 9HS

Tel: 02890 704080

www.fitnessni.org
fitnessni@aol.com

Designated Officer for Child Protection

Emma Donnelly

Tel: 007738902828

Confidentiality must be maintained at all times

You are bound by the Fitness Northern Ireland Code of Good Ethical Practice.

Fitness Northern Ireland has produced this Child Protection Policy which is incorporated into the Constitution of the

Association. This Policy will be reviewed every three years. The next review will be in December 2010.