

MHC Guidelines for Sports Leaders



Monkstown Hockey Club recognises the key role leaders (coaches, youth administrators, captains, selectors and team managers, etc.) play in the lives of young people in sport. Leaders in Hockey should strive to create a positive environment for the children in their care. They have an overall responsibility to take the necessary steps to ensure that positive and healthy experiences are provided. All leaders should have as their first priority the children's safety and enjoyment of hockey and should adhere to the safeguarding guidelines and regulations set out in the club's Code of Ethics.

Leaders should:

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every child and must treat everyone equally, regardless of gender, disability, ethnic origin, religion, etc.

Leaders working with young people in Hockey should:

- Be suitable and have the necessary qualifications. Leaders will be expected to go through appropriate recruitment and selection procedures, that apply to all persons with substantial access to young people, (known as regulated positions in NI), whether paid or unpaid. References will be needed and will be followed up.
- Comply with a 'sign-up' procedure, whereby the appointed/reappointed leaders agree to abide by the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children in Sport* and to the policies and Code of the Conduct of Hockey.
- Know and understand the child protection policies and procedures in Hockey.
- Act as a role model and promote the positive aspects of hockey and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct.
- Develop an appropriate relationship with young people, based on mutual trust and respect. Remember your behaviour to players, other officials, and opponents will have an effect on the players in your care.
- Report any concerns they have to the Designated Person.

As a role model they:

- Will be required to display high standards of language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation.
- Ensure that players in their care respect the rules of the game. Insist on fair play and ensure players are aware that you will not tolerate cheating or bullying behaviour.
- Encourage the development of respect for opponents, officials, selectors and other leaders and avoid criticism of fellow trainers and coaches. Do not criticise other leaders.
- Must actively discourage the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity.
- Must avoid the use of alcohol and banned substances, before coaching and training, during events, while supervising trips with young players.

Protection for leaders and young people

- Leaders are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with players. It is advisable for leaders not to involve young players in their personal lives. It is important to realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted by the participant or by outsiders.
- Avoid working alone and ensure there is adequate supervision for all activities.
- Where possible work in an open environment and ensure that physical contact is appropriate and has the permission or understanding of the young person
- Care must be taken 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.
- Physical punishment or physical force must never be used. Never punish a mistake - by verbal means, physical means, or exclusion.

A positive environment

- Be generous with praise and never ridicule or shout at players for making mistakes or for losing a game. All young players are entitled to respect.
- Be careful to avoid the “star system”. Each child deserves equal time and attention.
- Remember that young players 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 and appropriate challenges for the participants and do not push young players. Create a safe and enjoyable environment.
- When approached to take on or taking on a new player, ensure that the relationship with the previous club/coach has been ended in a professional manner.
- When young players are invited into adult groups/squads, it is advisable to get agreement from a parent/guardian. Boundaries of behaviour in adult groups are normally different from the boundaries that apply to junior groups/squads.
- Leaders who become aware of a conflict between their obligation to their players and their obligation to the club/organisation must make explicit the nature of the conflict and the loyalties and responsibilities involved, to all parties concerned.
- Leaders should communicate and co-operate with medical and ancillary practitioners in the diagnosis, treatment and management of their players’ medical or related problems. Avoid giving advice of a personal or medical nature if you are not qualified to do so. Any information of a personal or medical nature must be kept strictly confidential unless the welfare of the child requires the passing on of this information. Any referral to medical and ancillary practitioners requires parental consent.
- The nature of the relationship between leader and a participant can often mean that a leader will hear confidential information about a player or player’s family. This information must be regarded as confidential and must not be divulged to a third party without the express permission of the young person/family, except where abuse or neglect is suspected.