



Metro St. Brigid's Athletics Club

Child Welfare at MSB AC

Metropolitan Harriers and St Brigid's Athletic Club (hereinafter referred to as MSB) has responsibility for approximately 200 children and takes child welfare very seriously. We are fully committed to ensuring that young people are safeguarded as they participate in athletics, with a strong focus on fun in a positive and enjoyable environment. All children are respected and treated equally regardless of their ability, gender, social, ethnic or religious background.

We follow best practice in Child Welfare, as advocated by Athletics Ireland's (AI). This includes full adoption and implementation of AI's policies, codes of conduct, and guidelines. Further information available at: <http://www.athleticsireland.ie/juvenile/child-welfare/>

Child Protection Policy Statement

Metropolitan Harriers and St Brigid's Athletic Club (MSB) has a duty of care to our young members and is committed to ensuring that they enjoy their athletics in a positive and enjoyable environment. This requires that all those involved in our club know and accept their responsibilities. Moreover, all coaches are committed to developing and implementing policies and procedures consistent with this objective. For further information please contact our Child Welfare Officers:

- Karima Coquart 086-673-5699 k.coquart@yahoo.co.uk
- Sinead O'Rourke 086-364-0498 sinead.orourke29@gmail.com

The Club and those involved with the club will abide by the following principles/statements:

- All young people participating in athletics have a right to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment.
- All young people within MSB have a right to be treated equally and protected, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, ability or disability.
- All adults involved with the club will provide a safe, positive and fun sporting experience for young people.
- All volunteers, coaches and officials within our club will understand and keep up to date in their responsibilities and role in providing a safe environment in which our young athletes can train and compete.
- Metro Saint Brigid's Athletics Club recognises that it is not the responsibility of those individuals working within the club to determine if abuse has taken place, but it is their responsibility report any concerns to the Child Welfare Officers.
- All concerns/issues relating to child welfare will be taken seriously, managed and dealt with quickly in a manner that is consistent with our club's and AI's policy.
- The club will support and assist coaches, volunteers and officials to remain up-to-date with the latest safeguarding and child protection issues.

Coaches, Officials and Volunteers Code of Conduct

Metropolitan Harriers and St Brigid's Athletic Club (MSB) is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable environment in which our young athletes can train and compete. The primary responsibility of our volunteers, coaches and officials is to create this environment. To assist them, all volunteers, coaches and officials must follow the following rules:

- Be aware of health, safety and welfare issues. Wellbeing and safety of participants is a prerequisite to the development of performance.
- Develop an appropriate working relationship with those in your care. This should be based on mutual trust and respect.
- Make sure all activities, including training and competitions, are appropriate to the age, ability and the experience of those taking part.
- Promote the positive aspects of the sport (e.g. making new friends, fair play, etc.).
- Always respect other volunteers, coaches and officials.
- Lead by example and display consistently high standards of behaviour.
- Follow all guidelines laid down by the Athletics Ireland and our club.
- Be Garda vetted, appropriately qualified and have the required insurance cover.
- Never allow yourself to be in alone with a child (eg. when giving a lift to your athletes).
- Never exert pressure to perform.
- Never exert undue influence over participants to gain personal benefit or reward.
- Never condone rule violations, rough play or the use of prohibited substances.
- Encourage participants to value their performances and not just results.
- Encourage and guide participants to accept responsibility for their own performance and behaviour.
- Never use foul or inappropriate language.
- Read, understand and put into practice all club policies and procedures.

Code of Conduct for Parents/Guardians

Metropolitan Harriers and St Brigid's Athletic Club (MSB) is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable environment in which our young athletes can train and compete. Although the primary responsibility in providing this environment lies with our volunteers, coaches and officials, parents also have important responsibilities if the experience for our young athletes is to be positive. All parents must therefore follow the following rules:

- Always encourage and support your child in a positive manner.
- Ensure your child is on time for training and competitions and that you are available for your child at all times.
- Collect your child immediately once training is finished.
- Ensure your child behaves in an appropriate manner and respects his/her fellow athletes as well as the volunteers within our club.
- Encourage and guide your child to accept responsibility for their own performance and behaviour.
- Set a good example by recognising fair play and applauding good performances of all the young athletes in our and other clubs.
- Never punish or belittle a child for losing or making mistakes.
- Support your child's involvement and help them to enjoy their sport.

- Use correct and proper language at all times.
- Discourage unfair play and always respect coaches and officials within our club and at events.
- Publicly accept officials' judgments.
- Focus on and help your child to recognise good performance, not just results.
- Never force your child to take part in sport or exert pressure to achieve a desired result.

Guidelines for Children

Athletics has much to offer children in terms of their physical, social and emotional development. Moreover, it offers an opportunity to have fun and develop health promoting activities. Creating the correct environment in which our athletes can enjoy athletics and progress depends on the co-operation of all involved, including child members of our club.

Children in sport are entitled to:

- Be listened to.
- Be believed.
- Be safe and to feel safe.
- Participate in activities on an equal basis, appropriate to their ability and stage of development.
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect.
- Be happy, have fun and enjoy athletics.
- Experience competition at a level at which they feel comfortable.
- Comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner.
- Make a complaint in an appropriate way and have it dealt with through an effective complaints procedure.
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality.
- Be represented at meetings within their club.
- Have a voice in the running of their club.
- Approach the Children's Officer/Designated Person with any questions or concerns they may have.

Children also have responsibilities to treat other children and volunteers within our club with fairness and respect. Children should undertake to:

- Play fairly, do their best and have fun.
- Respect officials and accept their decisions.
- Respect fellow club members and always support them fully.
- Exercise self-control and tolerance for others, even if others do not.
- Respect those they are competing against.
- Accept apologies from opponents when they are offered.
- Be modest in victory and be gracious in defeat.
- Shake hands before and after the event.
- Show appropriate loyalty to athletics and all its participants.
- Make high standards of fair play the example others want to follow.

Children should never:

- Cheat
- Act in an aggressive manner.
- Shout at, or argue with, officials, club mates or opponents.
- Take substances to improve performance.
- Bully or use bullying tactics to isolate another child.
- Use unfair or bullying tactics to gain advantage.
- Harm club mates, opponents or their property.
- Tell lies about adults or other children.
- Spread rumours.
- Keep secrets about any person who may have caused them harm.

Bullying Policy

Bullying is defined as repeated aggression conducted by an individual or group against others and may be verbal, psychological or physical. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating and includes teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting behaviour. Bullying may occur in social environments including in school, in sports clubs and on social media.

Warning signs

The following indicators may suggest a child is being bullied and should be investigated:

- Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities.
- Physical signs (eg. bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings).
- Stress-related illness/symptoms including, stomach upset and headaches
- Fearful behaviour (fear of walking to a meeting, going different routes, asking to be driven).
- Frequent loss of, or shortage of, money with vague explanations.
- Having few friends.
- Changes in behaviour (withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed).
- Not eating.
- Attempting suicide or hinting at suicide.
- Anxiety (shown by nail-biting, fearfulness, tics).

Dealing with bullying

Dealing with bullying is normally the responsibility of the Child Welfare Officers and/or other official within the club, although extreme cases may require input from An Garda Síochana and/or HSE Social Services.

Prevention

- Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.
- Immediately deal with any incidents.

- Use a whole group policy or "no-blame approach", i.e., not "bullying the bully" but working with bullies and the group of young people, helping them to understand the hurt they are causing, and so make the problem a "shared concern" of the group, (see below).
- Reinforce that there is "a permission to tell" culture rather than a "might is right."
- Encourage young people co-operate and help others.
- Offer the victim immediate support and put the "no blame approach" into operation.
- Never tell a young person to ignore bullying.
- Never encourage a young person to take the law into their own hands.
- Tell the victim there is nothing wrong with them and it is not their fault.

The 'No Blame' Approach?

Step 1 - Interview with the victim

If you find that there has been an incident of bullying, first talk to the victim. At this stage find out who was involved and what the victim is now feeling. Try asking the following questions:

- Was it verbal or physical intimidation?
- How hurt is the victim?
- Was it within his/her own peer group?
- Ensure the victim that his/her name will not come out in the investigation.
- Actively listen.

Step 2 - Meet with all involved

Arrange to meet with all those involved; this should include some bystanders, those who may have colluded, those who joined in and those who initiated the bullying.

- Have a maximum of six to eight in the group - keep the number controllable.
- Make a point of calling a 'special' meeting.
- Ensure all understands the severity of the topic.
- Speak only of the hurt caused in general terms with no reference to the victim.
- Play on the conscience of all - ask questions like: How would you feel?
- Would you like it done to you?

Step 3 - Explain the problem

The distress being suffered as a result of the bullying incident is explained. At this stage the details of the incident or the allocation of the blame is not discussed.

Explain the feelings of loneliness, feeling left out, rejected, laughed at. Try asking questions:

- Would they like it if it happened to them?
- 'Someone here in this group was bullied by someone within the group, what could we do to see it does not happen again?'
- Listen, watch out for reactions, and pick up on any without isolating anyone

Step 4 - Share the responsibility

Explain what steps/controls may have to be introduced to prevent further incidents and how everyone will lose out as a result.

Step 5 - Ask the group for their ideas

At this stage the group is encouraged to suggest ways that would make the victim feel happier. All positive responses are noted. Use phrases "if it were you" to encourage a response. Listen to all suggestions and note them.

Step 6 - Leave it to them

Now the problem has been identified, solutions suggested, the problem is now handed over to the group to solve. Arrange to meet again in a week's time. Pass responsibility over to the group and give a time frame within which something must be done.

Step 7 - Meet them again

Each member of the group, including the bully, discuss how things are going, who is doing what and have there been other incidents. This allows for continual monitoring and also keeps all involved in the process. Again enforce the idea of the "team" looking after each other.