



## **Athenry Athletics Club Code of Conduct for Parents and Guardians**

*(Drawn from: Holt, N. L., & Knight, C. J. (2014). Parenting in Youth Sport: From Research to Practice. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge)*

### **General Principles:**

Everyone involved in sport, children, parents/guardians and sports leaders should accept their role and responsibilities and undertake to commit to maintaining an enjoyable and safe environment for all participants. There exists a duty of care on all adults to safeguard children. Adults have a crucial leadership role to play in sport. Whether they are parents/guardians or sports leaders or teachers, they can contribute to the creation of a positive sporting environment for young people. Positive relationships will result in growth, development and fulfilment for all those involved in children's sport.

Parents/guardians play a key role in the support and promotion of an ethical approach to sport and young people's enjoyment in sport. Parents/guardians therefore need to be aware, informed and involved in promoting the safest possible environment for children to enjoy their participation in sport. Sports leaders need the support of parents/guardians in conveying the fair play message. All participants in sport have a responsibility to keep sport safe, fun and conducted with a spirit of fair play for all.

### **Parents/guardians code of conduct**

- Encourage your child to learn the rules & play within them.
- Discourage unfair play & arguing with officials.
- Publicly accept officials' judgments.
- Help your child to recognise good performance, not just results.
- Never force your child to take part in sport.
- Set a good example by recognising fair play & applauding good performances of all.
- Never punish or belittle a child for losing or making mistakes.
- Support your child's involvement & help them to enjoy their sport.
- Use correct & proper language at all times.
- Encourage & guide participants to accept responsibility for their own performance & behavior

The specific behaviours children need from their parents are both person and sport dependent. As a parent it is important to display behaviours that are most helpful for your child and applicable to their sport.

### **Adult-child relationships in sport should always be:**

- Open, positive and encouraging
- Entered into by choice
- Defined by a mutually agreed set of goals and commitments
- Respectful of the creativity and autonomy of children
- Carried out in a context where children are protected and where their rights are promoted
- Free from physical, emotional or sexual abuse and neglect or any threat of such harm
- Respectful of the needs and developmental stage of the child
- Aimed at the promotion of enjoyment and individual progress
- Governed by a code of ethics and good practice in sport that is agreed and adhered to by all
- Respectful, but not unquestioning of authority
- Mindful of the fact that children with disabilities may be more vulnerable



### **Helping children develop the skills to cope with competition:**

Sport can be demanding and children often need to learn the skills to cope with this. As a parent, the way in which you interact with your child can substantially influence their ability to cope with competition. To succeed in most sports, children need to be independent thinkers, able to adapt to different situations and tactics; they need to be accountable for their performance, recognising when and why they are making mistakes so they can change them; they need to be flexible, understanding that opponents perform differently and might employ different tactics. Children also need to be able to cope with the range of emotions they will experience and use these to their advantage. As a parent, if you do too much for your child, explain away mistakes, criticise coaching decisions, or underplay the importance of different situations you may be limiting the opportunities for your child to learn and develop as an individual and an athlete.

### **Address your individual child's needs at competitions:**

Do you know what your child wants from you at competitions? Some children need a pep-talk, others want to listen to music, while some want to talk about something entirely different. What does your child prefer?

During sports some children want their parents to provide a lot of encouragement; others want their parents to be silent. Some do not even want their parents to watch. What does your child prefer? After sports, the feedback children want is likely to depend on the result, their performance, and their personality. It is useful to talk to your child about what he or she wants from you and from sport.

### **Questions you can consider regarding your child's involvement in sport:**

- Why do I support my child's involvement in sport?
- What would I see as "success" for my child?
- Do I know what my child wants to achieve in sport?
- Do I behave in ways that help my child to be most successful?
- Have I spoken to my child about how he/she wants me to support them?

### **Questions you can ask your child:**

- What would you like to achieve in sport?
- What do you need from me to be able to achieve this? What are your goals for this year?
- Is there anything I can do to help you achieve these goals?
- Are there any things that I do at competitions that you really like? Are there any things that I do at competitions that you don't like? How can I help you enjoy your sport more?

### **Questions to ask the club or coach:**

- What are your expectations of parents? What can I expect from you?
- What do you hope to achieve with my child this year?
- When is an appropriate time to talk to you?
- What is the best way to contact you?
- What goals do you have for my child this season?
- What does my child need to achieve these goals?
- How can I best support you this season?

Signed by parent/guardian:

Dated: