Olympic Federation of Ireland Child Safeguarding Policy for the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games

The OFI seeks to foster and promote planning, preparing and supporting Team Ireland to compete in Olympic events or all athletes and part of that is recognising their statutory obligation to recognise and report child abuse. Individuals working with young people must be aware of safeguarding the well-being of young people, what constitutes child abuse and understand that it can happen in any setting. By implementing this policy together with all other OFI codes and policies we undertake to uphold our those and create a safe and fun environment for children to participate in the Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games (the Games). This policy helps us strengthen the protection of children in our Team.

This policy provides an awareness of abuse and how to report it, and is divided into the following areas:
Roles – explaining the different roles involved in safeguarding children
Definitions - explaining the terminology used throughout this document
Section 1: General Policies – details the individual areas to ensure the welfare of children
Section 2: Understanding the risk of harm and child abuse – details the importance of dealing with issues and reporting procedure
Appendix A: Recognising child abuse and grounds for concern – includes the different categories of abuse identified across the island of Ireland and what might constitute a concern of harm to a child.
Appendix B: Response to a concern, allegations, or disclosure – includes how to respond to concerns, allegations or disclosures with the procedure for dealing with Team staff or others external to the Team that may be involved and keeping records
Reporting Child Abuse – including recognising grounds for concern, responding to allegations, record keeping, peer to peer abuse and allegations against.

Throughout the Games and whilst children are under the responsibility and care of Team Members it is useful to remember the four 'R's':

Recognise: if you have a concern, notice a problem or receive a direct disclosure – do not ignore this
Respond: to an individual, child or adult, and explain what you will do with the information; a child needs reassurance that they have done the right thing
Refer: the information you have received to the right person – in this case the Safeguarding Lead (DLP), Team Leader or the Chef de Mission
Record: the information you have received exactly as you heard or were told; try not to change any words

Roles involved

Recognising and reporting a concern of abuse to a child is the responsibility of everyone and we encourage individuals to raise concerns to the appropriate person. There are specific roles involved in ensuring the safety of children in Team Ireland:

Chaperone – this is a person nominated by the relevant NF and appointed by the OFI to supervise the welfare of a child or children.

Designated Liaison Person (DLP) – is an appointed individual with the responsibility to consult informally with statutory authorities and/or to report where a reasonable concern exists. The Safeguarding Lead is the DLP.
IOC staff – this refers to specific, identified IOC staff who have been appointed to oversee the welfare of children at the Games, this includes specific roles where mentioned such as the **IOC Welfare Manager**
National Federation (NF) – this is the home federation or governing body for each sporting discipline. Each athlete will have a NF to which they are affiliated.
Mandated Person – is an individual employed specifically in a safeguarding capacity who has a statutory obligation to report concerns that meet or exceed the threshold of significant harm. The Mandated Person is required to co-operate with the statutory authorities where requested to do so.
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Parent – a term indicates the legal guardian (appointed or otherwise) of a child, i.e. parent, guardian, or carer
Safeguarding Lead - this is the person who has been appointed with overall responsibility to ensure this policy is up to date and everyone is aware of what it contains. This person is also the Designated Liaison Person.
Safeguarding Team – this is a team of OFI appointed staff collectively responsible for implementing the measures required to keep children safe whilst in the responsibility of the OFI.
Team Ireland members/Team members – this refers to all team staff and athletes selected by the OFI for the Games. The Team have a responsibility to ensure the safety of each member of the Team. Where required specific groups are referred to e.g. Team Staff, athletes, Support Staff etc

Definitions

There are terms used throughout this policy document, these are defined as:

Term	Definition
Olympic Federation of Ireland/ OFI	The National Olympic Committee recognised by the International Olympic Committee and responsible for the selection and organisation of the Irish Team for the summer and winter Olympic Games (Team Ireland).
Child(ren)	Anyone under the age of 18.
Concern or Disclosure	Information indicating safeguarding concerns for the welfare of a child; a disclosure usually comes from a child
Duty of Care	The duty that rests upon an individual or organisation to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure the safety of any person involved in an activity for which that individual or organisation is responsible.
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs
Games	Dakar 2026 Youth Olympic Games
HQ Staff	OFI staff in the OFI offices – they may not be directly associated with the Games.
IOC	International Olympic Committee

Loco Parentis	The additional obligation on a coach, or other individual with responsibility for Children, to act as a 'reasonable parent' would be expected to act.
Organising Committee	The Organisation constituted by the National Olympic Committee in which the Games are being held to organise the Games in all its aspects.
Position of Trust	This is where an individual, such as a coach or team official who makes decisions for or about a Child, can influence the Child's actions and may misuse that position to groom or abuse the Child. This position can be a positive one, in building confidence and self-esteem in Children.
Risk Assessment	A procedure to help identify possible sources of danger and take appropriate action to minimise these risks taking into account the age, number and competence of participants.
Team Ireland Games Period	The time from which the Chaperone assumes responsibility for a child (as per the Team Agreement) to the time the Chaperone relinquishes responsibility back to the parent/carer
Vetting Disclosure	The information contained on a certificate, or otherwise, issued by one of the Criminal Records checking agencies.

Team Ireland Policies

These policies should be read in conjunction with the team members' agreement and are specific to Team Ireland; they do not replace any NF safeguarding policies.
In case of any doubt as to best practice in respect of any specific situation which is not dealt with below, the Safeguarding Lead should be consulted.
Team members are reminded that that any act or behaviour deemed a criminal offence in the residing country will be reported to the appropriate authorities within that country.

Team Ireland Policies are divided into two sections:

1. General Policies
2. Understanding the risk of harm and child abuse

1. General Policies

a. In Loco Parentis

Parents/carers of all children attending the Games as part of Team Ireland must return an *In Loco Parentis Form* which is part of the team members' agreement and is a condition of participation.
This grants authority for Team Leader / Chaperone to act in the event of an emergency and sets out key details regarding athletes' medical history.

b. Emergency Procedures

Health and safety emergency procedures are specific to our Pre-Games camp, Olympic Village and associated venues. All team members will be briefed upon arrival at each stage and you must ensure you are familiar with the stated emergency and evacuation procedures. The Safeguarding Lead will ensure U18 athletes are fully aware of the procedures required.

c. Medical Provisions

Team Ireland Medical Staff are available in the Olympic Village and OFI pre-Games training camp for any medical need. In addition, Team Ireland and/or Dakar 2026 Medical Staff are available at any official Olympic training or competition venues. Professional etiquette for Team Ireland Medical Staff with U18 athletes will prevail, and athletes will be reminded that they may raise any concern with the Team Leader or any other member of the Team.

d. Transport and travelling with children

The travel arrangements to Pre-Games Camps or the Games will be arranged by the OFI in consultation with the NF. Each Team Ireland member will be notified of the arrangements from their point of departure to the host country with any required parent/carer permission necessary for U18 athletes.

During the Games, all transportation (including to competition and training venues) will be provided by OFI or Dakar 2026. Children will travel with a Chaperone or Team Leader; in exceptional circumstances, in the best interests of the young person, it may be necessary for another adult Team member to travel with a child.

e. Rooming Policy

The accommodation provided for the Games offers a combination of single occupancy and twin bedrooms for members of the team. Rooms will be allocated based on the OFI's rooming Guidelines. The Team Leader will ensure a central log of all team member's rooming allocation is maintained throughout the duration of the Games.

It is not possible for all athletes to have single occupancy rooms. The following guidelines will be observed:

- Support staff may not share a room with an athlete
- Athletes of the same gender will be roomed together
- Athletes of similar ages should be roomed together where possible

- Athletes under 18 should preferably share rooms, any single occupancy involving a child must be discussed and agreed with parent/carer in advance

If, due to the makeup of the Team and allocation of rooms it is not possible to room a child with another child or the child is required to be in a single occupancy room this must be discussed and agreed, in advance of departure, with the parent/carer of the child together with the adult athlete sharing the room. This discussion is the responsibility of the Safeguarding Lead for Team Ireland.

NFs may have their specific rooming policies or arrangements which apply to their sport, however, whilst under the care of the OFI, the OFI rooming policy will apply and is cognisant of the practicalities of any accommodation provided by the Organising Committee whilst ensuring the welfare of children is paramount.

f. Changing Facilities

Changing facilities are provided for all athletes, and these may be open general changing areas or individual cubicles. Changing areas may not be shared between athletes and team staff. Due to the nature of changing areas it is not possible to provide supervision in these areas.
To ensure the safety of any children the following guidance should be followed:

- No photography or images are permitted in any changing area
- Team staff should not change or shower with children
- Where segregated, athletes should only change in the specified changing area for their gender
- Any child who is uncomfortable in the environment should be able to change and shower at their own accommodation
- Children should know who to talk to about any concerns they have

The Safeguarding Lead will discuss the changing facilities provided with any child on the Team to ensure they are aware of the facilities and that they have an opportunity to raise concerns at any time.

g. Substance abuse

No child shall be permitted to smoke, drink alcohol or take/use any recreational drugs at any time when under the care of Team Ireland.
Team Ireland Staff are not permitted to smoke, drink alcohol or take/use any recreational drugs at any time when responsible for children.

h. Photography

As part of the Team Member's Agreement, athletes agree that their photograph/footage can be taken for use by the OFI and or any OFI partner for its own purposes.

The use of photography and film is an excellent way of capturing sporting moments for use in the promotion of the sport and/or to celebrate individual success. OFI will ensure that any photograph or footage of children used on its website and in its promotional documents is appropriate.

All staff should be vigilant and any concerns over the misuse or taking of inappropriate photographs or images of Team Ireland athletes should be reported to the Safeguarding Lead

To reduce the risk of inappropriate photographs or images being taken at the Games the following guidelines should be followed:

- Any media in attendance, including the OFI media team will be accredited by the IOC Organising Committee
- The following will not be permitted:
    - Unsupervised access to children by any journalist or media personnel or one to one photo sessions
    - Unsupervised photo sessions with children outside of the sports competitions
    - The taking of any images/photography in changing areas
- Requests for quotes, interviews, photographs etc. from any media personnel must be referred to the OFI Media Manager. Team members are not permitted to provide an interview or quote if directly approached by any journalist or media personnel.

All team members must be vigilant at all times and report any concerns to the Safeguarding Lead or Team Leader

i. Behaviour

All Team members are subject to the OFI codes of conduct and must abide by these codes at all times when under the care and responsibility of the OFI. Any sexual relationship involving under 18 Team members is strictly forbidden while under the care of the OFI.

The Team may attend different countries for the purposes of attending any Pre-Games training camp and for the Games itself. These countries may have different laws to an athlete's home country; however, the Team is bound by the agreed OFI codes of conduct. Any act or behaviour, including sexual acts, deemed a criminal offence by the home country is regarded as a breach of the code of conduct. Team members also should be aware that any act or behaviour, including sexual acts, deemed a criminal offence in the residing country will be reported to the appropriate authorities within that country.

Anyone who has a concern about breaches of behaviour or a risk of harm that involves a child has a responsibility to pass this on to the Safeguarding Lead.

2. Understanding the risk of harm and child abuse

The OFI understand the importance of understanding the risk of harm to children and all Team staff must be aware of the risks of child abuse as well as have a clear understanding of how to appropriately recognise, respond, refer and record.

The OFI recognise there is a statutory requirement to report harm to a child and this section contains guidance for reporting. This guidance is taken from Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 (ROI) as the registered office for the OFI is located in Ireland.

This section must be read with reference to:
Appendix A – Recognising child abuse and grounds for concern
Appendix B – Response to a concern, allegation, or disclosure

a. Importance of dealing with issues

Being involved in any type of concern is very distressing for anyone who may not be directly involved. For a child on the Team the impact can be felt throughout the Team and the networks of people involved with that child, including the adults who are responsible for their care whilst in the sport. Any traumatic incident needs to be dealt with sensitively and calmly and it is helpful to recognise those who may need to be involved, whilst also recognising that help and support needs to come from those professionally qualified to provide this.
All Team members should be understand that harm and /or abuse can happen to young people.

b. Reporting Procedures

In Ireland, Tusla (Child and Family Agency (CFA)) and An Garda Síochána are the statutory authorities to contact for any concern about a child or disclosure or allegation of abuse concerning a child.

Tusla

The local social work office should be contacted to report a concern, allegation or disclosure of abuse or if you are seeking an informal consultation. This is determined by where a child lives. You can report your concern in person, by telephone or in writing, including by email or online.

The details of each office can be found here:
https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/contact-a-social-worker3/

Any verbal report should be followed up by completing the Child Protection and Welfare Report Form. If the report is a mandated one this should be made by the Mandated Person on appropriate Child Protection and Welfare Report Form.

Reporting forms can be found here:
https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/report-a-concern/

An Garda Síochána

If there is an immediate danger to the safety of a child, for example where a child is due to return to a situation of direct risk of harm and where Tusla cannot be contacted, An Garda Síochána must be called using the emergency number (112 or 999).

Out-of-Hours Service

A social work service dealing with any emergencies occurring outside office hours is available by contacting An Garda Síochána. If you have concerns for the immediate safety of a child or where a child is at immediate risk of harm you can contact An Garda Síochána in an out-of-hours situation. Emergency placements can be made when necessary.

c. Information to provide when reporting

When completing a report, you should provide as much relevant information as you can about the child, his/her home circumstances and the grounds for concern. You do not need to investigate; it is not your responsibility to seek out information you don't know.

Information should include:

- Name and address of the child; include any further information about their location if different in an emergency
- Nature of the harm
- Any need for immediate medical attention
- Concerns that abuse is taking place
- Any action already taken
- Details of disclosure if given
- Other persons involved and action taken

d. Reporting peer to peer abuse

Any individual involved in a concern of abuse under the age of 18 must be reported to the statutory authorities. This means if the person suspected of being responsible for the abuse is under 18 this young person must be included in a report. Peer to peer abuse requires action and reporting in the same way as any other concern with the same information.

If peer to peer abuse is suspected, it is important to take steps to protect all young people. Abusive behaviour should be stopped, and clear explanations as to what is happening and why it is wrong. If possible, accounts from any young person involved should be gathered and parents informed, unless this would endanger the child or the reporter.

Advice should be sought as soon as possible from the statutory authorities and if a criminal offence is suspected this may require intervention from An Garda Síochana. Advice may

also be sought from the Safeguarding Lead. All concerns of abuse should be reported to the Mandated Person.

e. Reporting retrospective abuse

Disclosures of retrospective abuse can be made, where an adult discloses an abusive event or situation from their childhood. This must be reported to determine any current or potential future risk to young people. Retrospective abuse can be difficult for the statutory authorities to investigate however it is important in identifying potential future risks. Anyone who receives a retrospective disclosure should report this to the Safeguarding Lead and/or the Mandated Person. Where necessary advice is sought from the statutory authorities. There is a specific Retrospective Abuse Form for reporting to Tusla which cannot be submitted online.

Appendix A – Recognising child abuse and grounds for concern

Recognising Child Abuse

There are four defined categories of abuse: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse. Further consideration must be given to exploitation and bullying in understanding the different forms that abuse can occur. A young person may be subjected to one or more forms of abuse at any given time.
The definitions of the categories of abuse are taken from Children First Guidance (ROI) and from Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (NI) and would be recognised as such by the NFs of the Team members.

Neglect

Child neglect is the most frequently reported category of abuse. Ongoing chronic neglect is recognised as being extremely harmful to the development and well-being of the child and may have serious long-term negative consequences. Neglect occurs when a child does not receive adequate care or supervision to the extent that the child is harmed physically or developmentally. It is generally defined in terms of an omission of care, where a child's health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, medical care, intellectual stimulation or supervision and safety.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the systematic emotional or psychological ill-treatment of a child as part of the overall relationship between a caregiver and a child. Once-off and occasional difficulties between a parent/carer and child are not considered emotional abuse. Abuse occurs when a child's basic need for attention, affection, approval, consistency and security are not met, due to incapacity or indifference from their parent or caregiver. Emotional abuse may also involve bullying including online bullying through social networks, online games or mobiles phones and can be perpetrated by the child's peers.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is when someone deliberately hurts a child physically or puts them at risk of being physically hurt. It may occur as a single incident or as a pattern of incidents and take many forms including hitting, biting, pinching, throwing, poisoning, burning drowning or suffocating a child. A reasonable concern exists where the child's health and/ or development is, may be, or has been damaged as a result of suspected physical abuse.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or arousal, or for that of others. It includes the child being involved in sexual acts such as masturbation, fondling, oral or penetrative sex or exposing the child to sexual activity directly or through pornography forcing a child to look at sexual images or watch sexual activities. Sexual abuse can be perpetrated by males and females

Exploitation

Exploitation is the intentional ill-treatment, manipulation or abuse of power and control over a young person or to take selfish or unfair advantage over a child for personal gain. Exploitation may take many forms such as child labour, slavery, engaging a child in criminal activity or fraud, begging or trafficking. Exploitation can be sexual in nature.

Bullying

Bullying behaviour is the repeated and intentional use of power or aggression by one or more persons to harm, hurt or adversely affect the rights and needs of another individual or group. An individual or individuals may be targeted through a variety of methods e.g. through social media sites, physically or verbally harmed, through text or other messaging services. Bullying may manifest in different forms such as cyberbullying, exclusion bullying, extortion bullying, gesture bullying, physical bullying and /or verbal bullying.
See the Anti-Bullying Policy for further information.

Signs of Abuse:

You should be alert to and believe the possibility that a welfare or protection concern may arise in relation to young people in the club or region. Young people need to know they can trust an adult and to know that they will be believed and get the help they need.

Grounds for concern

Where there are concerns about a child it can be difficult to decide if the matter should be reported or meets the threshold of significant harm. If an allegation or a disclosure is made it should be reported, the statutory authorities will decide if the threshold of significant harm is met.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- A specific indication from the child that he or she was abused (disclosure)
- An account by a person who a child disclosed to or who strongly believes a child is being abused (allegation)
- A child may show signs of abuse such as an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in another way (concern)
- An admission or indication from an adult or child of an alleged abuse they committed (disclosure)
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse (concern)
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect (concern)
- The behaviour of an adult towards a child that is inappropriate or makes you feel uncomfortable (allegation/concern)
- Evidence of non-contact abuse as through social media, online or other form of technology (concern)

Some children are more vulnerable to harm. It is important that children know they will be believed if they raise a concern or talk to a trusted adult about any harmful situation. Children are more vulnerable to continued abuse if they think they will not be believed and won’t get the help they need.

There are other factors that make children more vulnerable, **however the presence of any of these factors does not automatically mean a child is being abused.**
Such factors to consider are:

- Family/carer circumstances e.g. substance abuse, mental health issues, additions etc.
- The young person e.g. age, ability, communication difficulties, sexuality etc.
- Community factors e.g. cultural or religious norms outside expected child protection practices etc.
- Environmental factors e.g. housing, poverty, bullying or social media concerns etc.
- Poor engagement of parents/careers e.g. lack of understanding, reluctance to engage etc.

Appendix B – Response to a concern, allegation, or disclosure

Responding to a disclosure from a child

If a child discloses that they are being harmed or abused, it is important to be sensitive and to listen. The child has chosen to tell you because they trust you. Children may also disclose a harmful situation in different ways, there may be a hint about what is happening to them, a reluctance to take part in an activity or looking to talk to someone they trust.

If a child discloses to you, you need to:

- Stay calm, the child trusts you and has decided to tell you about what has happened
- Listen and hear, give the child time to speak and accept what you have heard
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing, and tell them what will happen next
- Record in writing as soon as you are able to and, if possible, record the account using the child's words
- Report to the Safeguarding Lead, and record this is done

During a disclosure from a child it is easy to feel panicked, angry or even disgusted, however remember to keep your emotions under control and to let the child speak.
Don't ask leading questions or promise to keep any information a secret – this doesn't help the child.
Listen to what the child tells you, don't make enquiries into the details of the abuse and don't ask the child to repeat their account unnecessarily.
The report must be made immediately to the Safeguarding Lead or directly to the Mandated Person, do not delay in this. Any person with a concern about a child may contact the Statutory Authorities directly.

Responding to information uncovered from other sources

It may be that during an enquiry into a complaint or disciplinary matter or during an investigation into poor practice you uncover significant information and become concerned about abuse occurring or an abusive practice – this is when an informal consultation is required. The Safeguarding Lead must be informed who will seek advice from the statutory authorities. This may be dependent on where any allegations are made. Any person with a concern about a child may contact the Statutory Authorities directly.

Concern, allegation, or disclosure of abuse against an individual(s) external to the Team

If you have a concern involving an individual external to the Team you need to share any information with the appointed Safeguarding Lead, remembering that the safety and well-being of the child takes priority. Where involved, the statutory authorities will decide and/or investigate if a situation is abusive or abuse has occurred. A report can be made immediately, and the Safeguarding Lead may need to liaise with the statutory authorities on the child's return home.

In the event that a disclosure is made by a child or there are grounds for concern about a child during the Games or whilst the Team are away from home it is imperative that this is reported to the Safeguarding Lead without delay. The Safeguarding Lead will need to decide a course of action to ensure the safety and well-being of the child, and this may involve reporting the concern or allegation to the IOC Welfare Manager.

Where a concern or allegation is brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Lead, the following must be considered:

- Is the allegation or concern against an individual involved in the Games?
- Is any child in immediate danger and has any assistance has been sought?
- Is the concern a safeguarding/poor practice issue? It may be necessary to check out some details, without stepping into an investigative role
- Where necessary and able, advice from the statutory authorities on an informal basis will determine the best course of action
- Report the concern of abuse or act on the advice of the statutory authorities; this may need to be done on return home

Where the Safeguarding Lead decides not to report the matter to the statutory authorities the reasons must be recorded as well as any action taken as a result of the concern. The person who raised the concern must be informed as to why the matter was not reported. Any individual is free to report a concern they have directly to the statutory authorities.

Concern, allegation, or disclosure of abuse against a Team Member

If a concern, allegation, or disclosure of abuse involves a Team Member the well-being of any child involved is the primary concern. All protective measures must be taken to ensure no child is exposed to an unnecessary risk.

A concern, allegation or disclosure of abuse must be reported to the Safeguarding Lead. The OFI policy dealing with allegations against OFI staff or team members will be followed. This process will be started immediately to ensure fair treatment of any individual recognising the paramountcy of protecting young people. If an individual does not engage with the process this will be deemed a withdrawal from the process, the individual will be removed from the OFI. It will be necessary to report the concern to the IOC Welfare Manager to ensure the policy for the Games is followed, this may involve the allegation being investigated by the local police or social services.

Where an allegation involves an existing member the OFI, the CEO or Chef de Mission will inform the individual of the allegation and the need to step down from their position. The process involving the local authorities will be explained, and the matter will be handed to the authorities for investigation.

All concerns, allegations or disclosures of abuse must be reported to the Mandated Person/ Safeguarding Lead

Record keeping

Concerns or allegations of abuse must be clearly and factually recorded. All matters must be brought to the attention of the Safeguarding Lead and the following information should be included in the record:

- Date and time
- Nature of the concern – i.e. disclosure, allegation, indication
- People involved
- Advice taken
- Action taken immediately
- Action advised to follow up with

This information must be kept by the Safeguarding Lead safely and securely and should only be used for the intended purpose i.e. to pass on a concern about a young person. Such records should be kept for the length of time specified in the OFI Data Retention Policy. Records should be updated and reviewed if necessary, by the DLP.

Confidentiality of records and sharing information

Information concerning the welfare of a child should be shared on a need to know basis. The best interests of the child takes precedence over the needs of any adult involved. Passing on or sharing information to assist statutory authorities is not a breach of data protection or confidentiality. There may be other people who need to know and if there is any doubt advice should be sought from the Safeguarding Lead

In a case involving a complaint or disciplinary action relating to a child, a parent must always be informed; however, where there is a concern of abuse it may not be possible to share significant information with a parent if this would endanger the child or the person reporting the concern.