



Bullying Policy

Kilcoole AC is committed to encouraging children to participate in and enjoy athletics in safe and secure environment where the emphasis is on enabling children to reach their potential. Kilcoole AC is committed to ensuring that any bullying is addressed and dealt with in an appropriate manner. This procedure sets out what bullying is and what steps will be taken to address this issue.

What is Bullying?

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating. It includes behaviours such as teasing, taunting, threatening, hitting and extortion behaviour by one or more children against a victim.

How would you know if a child is being bullied?

All bullies operate using furtiveness, threats and fear. Bullying can therefore only survive in an environment where the victim does not feel empowered to tell someone who can help or in which it is not safe to do so.

The following indicators are warning signs that a young person might be getting bullied.

- Reluctance to come to a venue or take part in activities.
- Physical signs (unexplained bruises, scratches, or damage to belongings).
- Stress-caused illness – headaches, and stomach aches which seem unexplained.
- 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- Changes in behaviour (withdrawn, stammering, moody, irritable, upset, distressed).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).

There are other possible reasons for many of the above

Who should deal with bullying?

While the more extreme forms of bullying would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse and are reported to the health board or An Garda Síochana, dealing with bullying behaviour is normally the responsibility of all Leaders within Kilcoole AC.

How can it be prevented?

Kilcoole AC, its coaches, officials and volunteers will:

- Ensure that all members follow the code of conduct, which promotes the rights and dignity of each member.
- Deal with any incidents as they arise.

- 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 to negotiate, co-operate and help others, particularly new or different children.
- Offer the victim immediate support and put the “no blame approach” into operation.
- Never tell a young person to ignore bullying, they can’t ignore it, it hurts too much.
- Never encourage a young person to take the law into their own hands and beat the bully at their own game.
- Tell the victim there is nothing wrong with them and it is not their fault.

What is the ‘No Blame’ Approach?

Step 1 – Interview with the victim

If the club, its coaches, officials or volunteers find that there has been an incident of bullying, they will first talk to the victim. At this stage they will find out who was involved and what the victim is now feeling. The following questions may be asked:

- 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

The club, its coaches, officials or volunteers will arrange to meet with all those involved; this will include some bystanders, those who may have colluded, those who joined in and those who initiated the bullying. This will involve:

- Having a maximum of six to eight in the group to keep the number controllable.
- Making a point of calling a “special” meeting.
- Ensuring the severity of the topic is understood by all.
- Speaking only of the hurt caused in general terms with no reference to the victim.
- Playing 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. This may involve asking some of the following 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 loose out as a result.

Step 5 – Ask the group for their ideas

At this stage the group will be 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. The club, its coaches, officials or volunteers will 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. The club, its coaches, officials or volunteers will arrange to meet again in a week's time.

They will 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. The idea of the "team" looking after each will be enforced.