

Guidelines on Transporting Young People

Ratoath Tennis Club could not operate without the goodwill of volunteers and parents ensuring that children are transported to events and returned home in a private car. Sport Ireland and Sport NI do not state that coaches/ volunteers can never transport a young person by themselves. They do, however, recommend individuals and organisations recognise the risks and put in place appropriate measures to reduce these risks.

The risks

The vast majority of coaches and volunteers will help out through a genuine desire to see children or their particular sport develop. Unfortunately, we must face the reality that a small minority of people will join a sports club as an opportunity to gain access to children. These adults create an air of acceptability about their role, therefore justifying their close contact with children.

Although those who want to abuse children may find it more difficult to do so in a group setting, such as a leisure centre or sports pitch, they can use this time to gain the trust of not only the young person but also other adults, including parents/carers. This is known as 'grooming' or 'entrapment'. Developing credibility is an essential part of any abusers 'grooming process.' An abuser will "groom" the environment i.e., creating a justifiable reason for getting the child alone.

Easy rules to remember when organising transport

- It is good practice to receive informed consent from parents and young people who will be transporting their child, why and how long the journey will take.
- Attempt to have more than one child in the car.
- Alternate drivers if possible and which child is dropped off last.
- Driver should have a point of contact/mobile phone.
- A person other than the planned driver should talk to the child about transport arrangements to check they are comfortable about the plans.
- The driver must ensure that they have insurance to carry others.
- Drivers representing and volunteering on behalf of a club should be vetted through National Vetting Bureau if driving regularly, and therefore meeting the regulated activity criteria. May 2021
- Consider the need for booster seats.
- Parents and coaches can also download Sport Irelands Safe Sport App at https://www.sportireland.ie/Participation/Code_of_Ethics/Code-Of-Ethics-App.
- One of the features of the App is a 'Travel Tracker' function. This allows parents and coaches who are driving someone else's child/children home, for example after a training session, to permit the child's parent or guardian to view and have oversight of their location for a specified period of time while they are travelling on a journey.

Personal arrangements between parents

- If parents make personal arrangements between themselves this is not the responsibility of the club unless there are particular concerns about a parent's ability to drive for example due to the consumption of alcohol.

The use of booster seats

- From 2006, the law in Europe requires all children in cars, vans and other goods vehicles to be carried using an appropriate child restraint until either they have reached the age of 12 years or are 150 cm (5') in Republic of Ireland or whichever comes first with very few exceptions. The European law allowed countries to opt for a minimum height of between 135 and 150 cm. For more information visit:
- Republic of Ireland: <http://www.rsa.ie/en/RSA/Your-Vehicle/About-your-Vehicle/Exampleof-non-Dup/Seat-belts--child-restraints/>
- Northern Ireland: <http://www.childcarseats.org.uk/the-law/>

