

Dundalk Sport Centre's Child Admission Policy

The aim of Dundalk Sports Centre's child admission policy is to protect those deemed most at risk entering the centre and its outdoor facilities. This policy is implemented in partnership with parents and it ensures the ongoing enjoyment of the facility by children. It balances the level of risk for children using the centre and its facilities and the benefits to be gained by such use.

Dundalk Sports Centre staff cannot and should not be expected to replace the care and supervision of a parent. All staff are trained (*or will be within their first 6 weeks of employment*) to identify when adult/child ratios in the centre may be a cause for concern and the appropriate steps are followed, as defined in the centre's Normal Operating Procedures.

In Ireland, a child is legally defined as being under the age of 18. However children under 8 years of age have been identified within Ireland as being most at risk. This could be due to the fact that their judgment of dangerous situations may be poor. For this reason the following restrictions are recommended to be implemented in this centre as being best practice which will clearly define how particular age groups should be catered for in the sports centre environment.

Minimum recommendations for Non-Programmed Activities

- Children aged 1-5 must be accompanied by a responsible adult in the centre at all times
- Children aged 6-12 must be accompanied by a responsible adult who must remain in view of the child
- Children aged 13 and upwards may be unaccompanied.

Minimum recommendations for Programmed Activities

For all Dundalk Sports Centre activities, the age of a child is something that is always considered, depending upon the nature of the activity and obtaining parent/guardian permission. The following will steer facility operators to look at the factors which will help to control risks. They will also provide guidance in arriving at a practical and positive policy for child safety. It is impossible to arrive at a finite set of guidelines that would cover the many types of centers now being built for public use.

It is also impossible to account for the varying abilities and the physical and psychological development found in children of similar ages.

A full risk assessment will be required before the Child Admission Policy for the facility is defined. This will have to consider factors such as centre design and layout, general staffing levels and staff experience.

The above factors, when considered in the light of the Risk Assessment findings, will help sports centre staff determine the appropriate child/adult ratios. As with all Risk Assessments regular reviews must be undertaken. For the purposes of these guidelines the health and safety of children must be paramount to all centre procedures and rules.

Some general guidelines are as follows:

- All children, as defined for the purposes of these guidelines, should be under constant staff or parental supervision within the facility
- Operators may outline specific rules for younger children and those with special needs
- For example, a policy for children aged five and under, should be enforced during open leisure times. This should state that children under five may only enter the centre under strict supervision. The minder must supervise the child from a safe distance i.e. be able to maintain visual contact with the child at all times. This policy may not apply during structured sessions e.g. camps, after schools.

Any changes to the facility's recommended ratios should be explained and justified in the centre's written operating procedures.

Children's use of changing rooms: issues sometimes arise for other users when a child of the opposite sex has to share the dressing room with the person minding them. This is best eliminated by the provision of other changing options. Other guidelines in this respect are as follows:

- Sport Centre management should train their staff to be aware of people behaving in an inappropriate and suspicious manner. Once trained, staff should be able to intervene directly for the protection of the child
- All centre facilities should have appropriate reporting and intervention strategies in place to ensure protection of children from suspicious persons
- The overwhelming consideration in all circumstances has to be the safety of the child.

The Child Admissions Policy shall be implemented on completion of a thorough risk assessment and after consultation with users. It should then be displayed at the main points of public access to the facility.

The admission policy should cater separately for specific groups of children, such as schools, children's parties and club groups. Special consideration must also be made for those with special needs and their carer's.

Factors, which might be altered for such groups are as follows:

- Ratio of carer to children
- Numbers of staff on duty
- Limiting use of the centre to designated areas
- Age requirements may also be altered

A thorough Risk Assessment will indicate specific requirements and highlight any alterations, which might be made for the different category of user.

Facilities

All children aged 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult while on our premises or using our facilities. Only children signed in through our camps and after school programmes may be permitted on the premises as they will be in the supervision of our camp leaders/coaches.

Toilets

All children aged 12 and under must be accompanied by an adult at all times.

Changing Rooms

Changing rooms must be allocated male and female. All mixed groups must use appropriate changing rooms. When other adult groups are using the changing rooms at the same time, alternative changing facilities should be used, i.e. gallery room, studio. Under no circumstance should children and adults share a changing room.

After Schools Activity Programmes

All children must be signed in on the first day by their parent; they must fill in all relevant registration forms; including child's full details and medical history. Children cannot be dropped more than 5 minutes before the program begins and must be picked up within 5 minutes of program ending. Children must be age appropriate to participate in our programs. Minimum age is 6 years old and the maximum age is 12 years old.

Outreach Programmes

Outreach programmes will take on the appropriate admissions policy of the building/school the programme is being delivered in.