

# Racquetball Association of Ireland

## ANTI BULLYING POLICY

The Racquetball Association of Ireland(RAI) acknowledges the right of all its members, young players and leaders, to enjoy participating in the sport of racquetball in a secure environment.

The RAI recognises that bullying behaviour is increasingly prevalent in society, the workplace, home, schools, sports clubs and sports groups.

Bullying by any member of the RAI will not be accepted or condoned and all concerns raised about bullying will be treated seriously and will be dealt with as set down in the RAI Disciplinary Procedures.

While we accept that there is no instant solution to the problem of bullying we are committed to doing all we can to address this problem. Ignoring bullying behaviour is not an option as failure to act gives a silent but powerful message that aggressive behaviour is appropriate and acceptable.

Under our duty of care to young players we all must be aware of bullying behaviour and to do all we can to prevent it happening in our groups and clubs

Every affiliated club and provincial organisation should adopt the Association's anti-bullying policy as part of their safeguarding policy in their written constitution.

### ***Guidelines:***

#### **Elements of Anti-Bullying Policy:**

- A clear definition of bullying and the forms it takes (General Information attached)
- A statement that bullying is unacceptable behaviour and will not be tolerated
- A clear statement on how the Clubs will deal with an alleged case of bullying.
- Acknowledgement that bullying can and does happen and that we all have the ability to bully others.
- Group leaders must be made aware of the importance of having adequate supervision.
- Coaches who suspect bullying is taking place should be supported in their efforts to deal with this behaviour.

Strategies/Management

In a general way, regularly discuss bullying behaviour with the group – where possible involve junior members, parents coaches and leaders see anti-bullying activities on Child Protection in Sport web site [www.thecpsu.org.uk](http://www.thecpsu.org.uk) or [www.antibullyingcampaign.ie](http://www.antibullyingcampaign.ie) .

Make it known:

- That young players in the club/provincial organisation can support each other by reporting instances of bullying.
- That it is always right to tell a responsible adult when they see something wrong.

Emphasise

- That anyone can experience bullying and everyone needs to be careful not to display bullying behaviour
- That the person displaying bullying behaviour needs to be engaged to address the problem
- That all reports of bullying behaviour will be investigated and dealt with sympathetically.

Take a “**no blame**” approach if possible – address the behaviour and avoid punishing or isolating the bully.

Support both the person experiencing bullying and the person displaying bullying behaviour - change the behaviour and don't just focus on punishing the person displaying bullying behaviour.

Challenge incidents of bullying behaviour – when you see negative behaviour highlight it.

Appoint a **Designated Liaison Person (DLP)**.

Make sure junior members know that the Club Children's Officer will listen to them and support them.

Publish help lines on the club notice board.

Think about the sort of sanctions that can be applied, they need to be realistic, given the age of the youngsters, they need to be fair, and they need to be easily understood and implemented. Sanctions should be about stopping the bullying behaviour – not humiliating the bully.

**If a young player states they are being bullied:**

- Encourage them by telling them that you will take their concern seriously and ask them what they would like to be done.
- Build up their self-esteem as much as possible.
- Give them time to say how they are being bullied.
- Reassure them that they are right to tell.
- DLP/Responsible Adult should keep the young person informed of proposed action and take into account any fears they have about proposed action.

**Responding to the Problem.**

You may be able to nip a bullying problem in the bud by asking questions informally. It may be a question of managing the group differently or increasing supervision in particular places or at particular times. Remember most people who are experiencing bullying behaviour just want it to stop, they are not overly concerned with punishing the person bullying them – make that the focus when dealing with the problem.

- Initially try to sort out the problem within the group without identifying any particular person or action – through group discussion on bullying and its impact.
- Address the behaviour – don't just think about punishing the person(s).
- If there is no immediate danger give the person displaying the bullying behaviour the benefit of the doubt (didn't know the harm he/she was doing). Make it clear:
  - That the behaviour was wrong.
  - They now know it to be wrong.
  - It will no longer be tolerated and if continued, will be sanctioned.
- Protect the person being bullied while giving the displaying the bullying behaviour a chance to change
- Avoid sanctions which involved long periods of isolation, or which make individuals look or feel foolish in front of others.
- The chairperson of the club/leader of the group should be informed of any incident so that policies and practices can be reviewed on a regular basis.
- If suspected bullying is of a serious nature – this should be discussed with the DLP.
- If bullying is putting any young person in immediate serious danger this should be reported to the Garda/PSNI/Statutory Authorities – *see Code for list of useful contacts.*

#### Support Change:

Bullying is very isolating. Once you have identified and dealt with the immediate problem:

- Offer support and reassurance to the person experiencing bullying.
- Consider assigning another member of the group/team/club as a buddy.
- Build up their self-esteem by emphasising positive aspects of their activities.
- Keep an eye on the person displaying the bullying behaviour - make sure the bullying isn't continuing in a secretive way
- Support **both** children – build up the self- esteem of the person displaying the bullying behaviour as well – emphasise his/her good points.
- Let parents know of any action being taken and listen to their views.
- The parent of a person displaying the bullying behaviour child may be very upset – allow for this while being firm about the club's policy of dealing with bullying.

#### Support for Coaches/Leaders

- Coaches should be supported in their efforts to deal with any problem of bullying in their group/club.
- Coaches themselves may be bullied by groups of young players or their parents – the club/county/branch should be willing to address this issue.

## General Information

### Definition

Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

**Bullying can include:**

- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, mess fights used to disguise inflicting pain
- Name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent emotional torment through ridicule, humiliation or constant ignoring of certain individuals
- Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual comments and/or suggestions including comments about sexual orientation
- Unwanted physical contact
- Damage to property
- Extortion
- Intimidation

**Exclusion Bullying**

A person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or the entire group. This type of bullying behaviour is particularly hurtful; it isolates the young person from his/her peer group and it is very difficult of them to combat as it directly attacks their self- confidence/ self- image.

**Cyber -Bullying**

This is a particularly poisonous strain of bullying which utilises social media apps, emails and text messages to abuse, intimidate and attack others directly or indirectly i.e. rumour mongering.

**Slagging**

This usually refers to good-natured banter. However, when it extends to very personal remarks aimed again and again at the one individual about appearance, clothing, personal hygiene or involves references of an uncomplimentary nature to members of one's family, particularly if couched in sexual innuendo, it assumes the form of bullying.

**The Experiencing Bullying Behaviour (Targeted person)**

In groups, it is common and normal for young players to tease or taunt each other. However, at a certain point, teasing and taunting may become bullying behaviour. There is a perception that people who are 'different' (smaller, taller, fatter, thinner) are more prone to encounter such behaviour. However, there is no 'type' – the target can be anyone. While it is true that people who are most at risk of becoming targets are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner, it is not unusual to find that many popular and socially well-adjusted children are targeted by those who display bullying behaviour.

Bullying can be triggered by jealousy or can have situational/vulnerable time trigger – e.g. joining a new club or team, being selected above others, not being selected with others.

**The Person Displaying Bullying Behaviour.**

It is generally accepted that bullying is a learned behaviour. The person(s) displaying the bullying behaviour tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline. They can lack any sense of remorse; often they convince themselves that the victim deserves the treatment meted out.

Person(s) displaying the bullying behaviour may also be seeking attention; often they set out to impress bystanders and enjoy the reaction their behaviour provokes. They tend to lack the ability to empathise and may be unaware or indifferent to the target's feelings. Some person(s) displaying the bullying behaviour seem to enjoy inflicting pain. It is of note that many will suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem. It is also not uncommon to find that those who bully have been or are being bullied themselves. Person(s) displaying the bullying behaviour tend to be easily provoked and frequently provoke others. Bullying can occur between adult and young person or between young person and young person.

### **The Bully may be:**

- A parent who pushes too hard
- A coach who adopts a win-at-all costs philosophy
- A young player who intimidates inappropriately
- An older player who intimidates inappropriately
- An official who places unfair pressure on a person

### **The Third Party**

Nearly all bullying is witnessed by other people. Positive action by this third party can change the behaviour of the group. Make sure others in the group know who to go to if they have witnessed incidents of bullying.

### **Adult Behaviour.**

An adult may unwittingly or otherwise, engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways:

- Using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning form of language when addressing young players.
- Making negative comments about a player's appearance or background.
- Humiliating, directly or indirectly, a player who is particularly weak or particularly outstanding or vulnerable in other ways.
- Using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidatory nature or any form of degrading physical contact or exercise.
- There is a difference between fair criticism and ridicule.
- Parents should not be allowed to bully young players or coaches/leaders/other adults.
- Subtle bullying, glances, looks and sniggers, or the more overt form of physical intimidation may be exacerbated if group leaders allow derogatory comments about other players or leaders.

### **Where does Bullying happen?**

Bullying can happen almost anywhere, but particularly where there is either inadequate or no adult supervision (A.B.C Trinity College 2001).

In sports clubs bullying often takes place out of sight of group leaders, in hidden or obscured parts of the hall. Where lots of activity is taking place, it is easy to single out and harass another player. It is worth noting that when the 'bully gang' is focusing on a target, that target may appear to be the aggressor because he/she finally gives vent to his/her frustration. **Toilets, cloakrooms, locker areas, changing rooms and showers** may be the scene of verbal,

psychological and physical harassment and the behaviour of players in these areas needs careful monitoring.

### **Effects of Bullying Behaviour**

Young people who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity and extreme anxiety and may thus become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of their self-esteem. Some effects of bullying include:

- Stress
- Reduced ability to concentrate
- Lack of Motivation or energy
- Poor or deteriorating performance
- Inability to take any criticism
- Reluctance to use changing rooms/dashing out before the group.
- Anxiety about going to the club/group
- Loss of confidence/Self esteem
- Aggressive behaviour
- Depression
- Panic attacks
- Nervous breakdown
- Attempted Suicide.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a player is being bullied. However, if repeated or occurring in combination these signs do warrant concern as to what is affecting the player.

### **MYTHS**

#### **There a 'Target' type – UNTRUE**

No one type of person is more likely than another to be targeted by a person displaying bullying behavior. The target can be anyone.

#### **Kids grow out of it – UNTRUE.**

This is learned behaviour - the child displaying bullying behaviour left unchallenged, becomes an adult bullying others.

#### **Bullying makes the 'target' stronger – UNTRUE**

The harm carries on through life - the damage is lasting if not addressed.

#### **Bullying can't be stopped – UNTRUE.**

It may not be easy but it can be stopped if there's a will – particularly a collective or organisational will.

### **IGNORING BULLYING IS NOT AN OPTION**

#### **Source material:**

ABC Research & Resource Centre

Sport NI

Sport Ireland

Myths & Strategies Presentation – Eileen O'Rourke

Depart. Of Education & Science

NSPCC – Child Protection in Sport Unit

**Useful Websites/Information Sources:**

[www.antibullyingalliance.org](http://www.antibullyingalliance.org)

Anti-Bullying Research Centre (ABC) Trinity College

[www.antibullyingcampaign.ie](http://www.antibullyingcampaign.ie)

[www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie)

[www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)

[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

[www.irishsportsCouncil.ie](http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie)

[www.sportni.net](http://www.sportni.net)

[www.thecpsu.org.uk](http://www.thecpsu.org.uk)

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)

**Support line numbers:**

- ISPCC Childline 1800 666 666 (ROI)
- NSPCC Childline 0800 11 11 (NI)
- Barnardo's National Children's Resource Centre 01 4530355
- National Parents Council Helpline for Bullying in Schools 01 8874477
- Irish Association for Victim Support 1850 661 771
- NI Anti-Bullying Forum - <http://www.endbullying.org.uk/>