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Photographs And Images Of Children

There have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people through the use of photographs on sports websites and other publications. Photographs can be used as a means of identifying children when they are accompanied with personal information – this is X who lives at Y, is a member of the Z Tennis club and who likes a certain music group. This information can make a child vulnerable to an individual who may wish to start to “groom” that child for abuse. Secondly the content of the photo can be used or adapted for inappropriate use. There is evidence of this adapted material finding its way onto child pornography sites.

Sporting organisations and clubs need to develop a policy in relation to the use of images of athletes on their websites and in other publications. The sport will need to make decisions about the type of images they consider suitable and that appropriately represent the sport, without putting children at increased risk. They will want to ensure that parents support their policy. When assessing the potential risks in the use of images of athletes, the most important factor is the potential of inappropriate use of images of children.

If sporting organisations are aware of the potential risks and take appropriate steps, the potential for misuse of images can be reduced.

Tennis Ireland would advise sporting bodies to:

- Consider using models or illustrations if you are promoting an activity
- Avoid the use of the first name and surname of individuals in a photograph. This reduces the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and outside the sport.

Easy rules to remember are:

- If the child is named, avoid using their photograph
- If a photograph is used, avoid naming the child
- Ask for the child’s permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport. A Child’s Permission Form is one way of achieving this
- Ask for parental permission to use an image of a young person. This ensures that parents are aware of the way the image of their child is representing the sport. A Parental Permission Form is one way of achieving this

- Only use images of children in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. With regard to the actual content it is difficult to specify exactly what is appropriate given the wide diversity of sports. However there are clearly some sports activities - swimming, gymnastics and athletics for example when the risk of potential misuse is much greater than for other sports. With these sports the content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child and should avoid full face and body shots. So for example shots of children in a pool would be appropriate or if poolside, waist or shoulder up
- Create a recognised procedure for reporting the use of inappropriate images to reduce the risks to children. Follow your child protection procedures, ensuring both your sports child protection officer and the Social Services and/or Police are informed.

First steps and things to think about...

- Establish the type of images that appropriately represent the sport for the Web and other media
- Think about the level of consideration you give to the use of images of children in other publications, for example, the processes involved in choosing appropriate images for the newsletter or magazine. Apply an increased level of consideration to the images of children and young people used in the web site.

Guidelines for Use of Photographic Filming Equipment at Sporting Events

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour, including the displaying of notices at each event
- Issue the photographer with identification which must be worn at all times
- Inform children and parents that a photographer will be in attendance at an event and ensure they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs
- Do not allow unsupervised access to children or one to one photo sessions at events
- Do not approve/allow photo sessions outside the events or at a child's home
- If parents or other spectators are intending to photograph or video at an event they should also be made aware of your expectations
- Spectators should be asked to register at an event if they wish to use photographic equipment
- Children and parents should be informed that if they have concerns they can report these to the organiser
- Concerns regarding inappropriate or intrusive photography should be reported to the event organiser or official and recorded in the same manner as any other child protection concern.