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**Governance Code for Sport**

**Anti-Gambling Charter**

Guidance Notes

Disclaimer

Sport Ireland is making available a range of resources including guidance notes, policy documents and templates for selected areas aligned to the Governance Code for Sport which will support sport organisations, boards, management and staff in the development of relevant governance processes and procedures particular to their own organisation.

For the avoidance of doubt, the final decision on the nature, type, extent and format of approved governance policies, procedures and processes for each organisation is a matter for the board / highest governing structure of the organisation and the resources and material provided may assist the approval process.

This document is not, nor is it intended to be, a definitive statement of the law and it does not constitute legal advice.

This document is not a substitute for professional advice from an appropriately qualified source and it is recommended that sport organisations consult their governing document or obtain their own independent legal advice where necessary. Sport Ireland does not accept any responsibility or liability for any errors, inaccuracies or omissions in this document.

**Why an organisation needs an anti-gambling charter?**

Welfare means the general care and support of participants, members, staff and volunteers within a sport. Everyone involved in sport and activity, whether they are a volunteer, staff member, participant, spectator or an elite athlete, should feel that the sport is one that cares about their health, safety and welfare. Welfare policies include those around mental health, alcohol and drugs, and gambling. Having an anti-gambling charter demonstrates to the sports stakeholders that the organisation cares about the welfare of its participants.

For Type C organisations, sport often comes with a public profile, national success and the opportunity for betting/gambling on the sport. There is a moral threat and reputational risk to an organisation should athletes or coaching staff be involved in gambling on the sport in which they are competing. Excessive, problematic or pathological gambling has been repeatedly shown to result in consequences that can include deviant anti-social behaviours, decreased academic performance, impaired athletics performance, and criminal and legal problems. Gambling has the highest suicide rate of any addiction and can create huge problems for the person affected and their families. Good welfare policies within an organisation will seek to understand, support and prevent addictions such as gambling before they become a problem.

Having an anti-gambling charter speaks to a number of the principles of the Code, especially:

* Principle 1: Leading our organisation
* Principle 2. Exercising Control Over Our Organisation
* Principle 5. Behaving With Integrity

Having an anti-gambling charter is important because:

* It protects the welfare of staff, volunteers, athletes and coaches
* It underpins the culture and values of the organisation
* It protects the organization against reputational and other risks

Whose responsibility is it to develop an anti-gambling charter?

It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure that all the principles of the Code are being upheld and delivered. The executive lead / Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is tasked with ensuring that the principles of the Code are being implemented in the organisation and thus will be responsible for ensuring there are welfare policies, including an anti-gambling charter in use in the organisation. In larger Type C organisations there may be a Head of Human Resources or Head of Player Welfare, whose role will include producing welfare policies.

What should an anti-gambling charter include?

* Explanation of the aim of the charter, e.g.:
  + To support the health and wellbeing of its members;
  + To protect the integrity of the sport and its players/athletes;
  + To provide a positive example in breaking damaging links between sport and betting
* Explanation of what gambling is e.g., a gambling addiction, also called compulsive gambling, is the uncontrollable urge to keep gambling despite the toll it takes on the person’s life. A gambling addiction has the potential to ruin more than one life if left untreated.
* Explanation of what supports the organization may offer or recommend to its club network and members e.g., how to make the club aware of issues around compulsive gambling and support any members who may be showing symptoms of a gambling addiction to seek professional help.
* Explanation of the ethical standard e.g., an athlete must never bet on any match she/he or their team is involved in as it would trigger a conflict of interest that compromises the integrity of sport.  The athlete risks having their image and reputation tarnished, being banned from sport (possibly for life) and possibly becoming the subject of a criminal investigation and/or prosecution.
* Checklist to spot signs of potential gambling addiction in a staff member/volunteer or athlete:

1. Financial signs
2. Regularly short of money even though they earn a wage
3. Borrowing money on a regular basis
4. Money going missing from bank accounts or money jar
5. Mood and behavioural signs
   1. Becoming withdrawn from others
   2. Performance on the pitch is being affected
   3. Seeming worried, agitated or upset for no apparent reason
   4. Reporting feeling hopeless, depressed, frustrated or suicidal
   5. Changes in personality
6. Time related signs
   1. Being secretive about unexplained absences
   2. Often being late for commitments
   3. Taking a lot of sick days or days off

* Explanation of the supports that can be made available e.g., confidential discussions, mental health support, etc.
* Any detail of activities around gambling awareness and prevention e.g., gambling awareness educational opportunities for young male athletes
* Whether or not the organization allows any betting sponsors, or any betting related communications on any of its social or other media channels

Implementing an anti-gambling charter: how and when to use it

Board, staff and volunteers can be given a copy of the Charter on their induction, and it should be included in the employee handbook and into the documentation shared with volunteers. A copy could be on the organisation’s website, and on display at the company’s offices. The organisation should also share it though the membership and seek to ensure that it is in place (perhaps through workshops) at club and athlete level, where it may have greatest impact.

Further links and resources

[Public Health Website](https://publichealth.ie/)

[Department of Justice Website](http://www.justice.ie/) (Note Gambling Regulator due to be established in 2021 by Department of Justice)