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# The Charter for Sport in Ireland

# Foreword

This Charter sets out the core values<sup>1</sup> for Sport in Ireland, these are what Sport in Ireland stands for and encapsulates how the Irish population feel and think about sport as a proud sporting nation. They are more than just words on a page, they are for volunteers, officials, participants, competitors, spectators, administrators, communities, and sporting organisations: the sports leaders<sup>2</sup>. To truly live these values, we<sup>3</sup> need to show we believe in them, be seen to live by them and uphold them within our individual sports. Therefore, turning these core values<sup>4</sup> into actions must run through sports leaders, who lead the adoption of these values to create the ethos<sup>5</sup> and culture<sup>6</sup> in their sport. Sports leaders in sport provide a key role in both exemplifying these core values and supporting others to live by them too.

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1 The Values are Inclusion, Integrity, Respect, Excellence, Accountability. They are drawn from the Sport Ireland Statement of Strategy 2023 – 2027.

2 For the purpose of this Charter all involved in sport are referred to as ‘Sports Leaders’ unless stated otherwise. All sports leaders have a role to play in ensuring that the Charter is agreed and followed.

3 The collective responsibility of all involved in Sport in Ireland.

4 Principles that help decide what is right and wrong, and how to act in various situations.

5 The distinguishing character, sentiment, moral nature, or guiding beliefs of a person, group, or institution.

6 The customs, institutional behaviours and social organisation of a particular group.

# Introduction

Sport, recreational through to professional, is a fundamental part of life. Supporting health and well-being, personal and physical development, as well as employment, enjoyment and different levels of achievement. Irish sport has a national and worldwide reputation for sporting excellence and sport enjoys high levels of public support.

The core values set out here provide an overarching definition of good conduct for everyone involved in any aspect of sport. Most sport involves some element of competitiveness<sup>7</sup>; it is important that everyone participates and competes fairly. The core values are to ensure that we know how to do the right thing, to do the things we *should* do, not *could* do, even when 'no one is looking': to put the good of the sport above individual gain or benefit.

## The Sporting Imperative

The trust placed in our sports leaders, who are essential for sport to work. We must be able to trust the people involved in sport, the organisations that run sport and the integrity of each and every activity. Therefore, everyone involved in sport must understand and live by the core values of Irish Sport, which are operationalised through the [National Code of Conduct Template] and individual National Governing Bodies' (NGBs) and Local Sports Partnerships (LSP). The core values of Sport in Ireland define the behaviours required of everyone involved in sport, the good habits, and practices, honed and continually repeated over time.

'We are what we repeatedly do.  
Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit'<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Against another team, an individual or against oneself.

<sup>8</sup> Will Durant, *The Story of Philosophy: The Lives and Opinions of the World's Greatest Philosophers*, p76.



# Values

## Inclusion

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Sport should be safe, fun, inclusive and conducted in the spirit of fair play and where everyone can be valued and express themselves through sport. Gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, age, disability, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community<sup>9</sup> infer no advantage or disadvantage, we want people to get involved in any capacity from all backgrounds. Sport provides opportunities for people to play and support, based on the universal truth that *'everyone has equal dignity and worth.'*

All sports involve a community of support, whether it is the team on the field of play, or people behind/supporting the individual competitor or participant. Therefore, *no one is bigger than the team*; and the team only works when all members feel valued. 'Different' is to be embraced, not to be bullied. Humour, or 'the craic', can strengthen teams, but not when it is offensive, or at the expense of an individual or a group: it must include everyone, and not exclude.

Sports leaders play a key role in creating and maintaining a culture that is inclusive, welcoming, and accepting. When people 'get it wrong' support and guide them back to inclusive behaviour.

When we act with integrity and are accountable for upholding these values, being inclusive may require us to tackle issues that are uncomfortable. We may have to challenge the views of the majority in order to progress the needs of a minority, doing the 'right' thing not the 'easy' thing. This requires us to respect the other position, but not necessarily agree with it, or endorse it, and to ensure challenge is accompanied by explanation, understanding and support where appropriate.

High-performance sport, by its nature, is exclusive: however, that exclusivity should only apply to the performance characteristics of that sport, and not apply to any other part of a person's background or lifestyle.

## Integrity

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Integrity is defined as being honest and having strong moral principles. Integrity (a value) is essential to trust (an outcome). Trust is the lifeblood of sport as it binds us together. Trust depends on everyone having integrity, transparency, good communication, and respect. A lack of integrity destroys trust and undermines the cohesion and culture created within a sport.

Integrity makes us reliable; we will always do the right thing: 'pick the right person', 'award the right result', call out poor behaviour. Integrity underpins all the other core values, it means putting our sport before our own personal interests, upholding what is right and what matters for the health of sport.

Integrity means being consistent in our approach, to be reliable and respected, rather than seeking popularity and short-term goals. It also means admitting when we make mistakes and learning from them.

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<sup>9</sup> Equal Status Act 2018.

## Respect

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Respect is fundamental to sport respect towards our own sport, volunteers, officials, participants, competitors, spectators, and the administrators running sport; this includes the sporting environment . In order to give their best, people need to feel respected and be treated fairly.

While sport may be about the 'contest', that does not, and must not, diminish the role of everyone else. Without other volunteers, officials, participants, competitors, spectators and the administrators there is no sport. There are different roles, they are all important, and should be equally respected. Everyone's accomplishments should be valued. For example, a personal goal or best may not win the contest but is just as worthy and just as precious.

Respect for others creates an inclusive culture where diversity is welcomed, and diversity of view is actively sought. Decision-making must follow a rigorous exchange of ideas, where ideas are tested and challenge is welcomed and applied with respect, and the right decision is made, not the easy one. This will make Sport in Ireland stronger and more life-affirming.

## Excellence

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The pursuit of excellence applies to all levels of sport. It includes the wellbeing of volunteers, officials, participants, competitors, spectators, and the administrators, and in the way we organise and run it. Through continuous improvement we seek to make Sport in Ireland world class, with a culture that promotes physical literacy and where lifelong participation in physical activity can flourish.

Our pursuit of excellence must be inspirational, to encourage others to achieve their full potential. It should not segregate and exclude people as not being good enough.

We lead through our personal example, striving to set and maintain high standards in everything we do, or are involved in. We recognise that people are engaged in sport for a variety of reasons, so as we exemplify the core values of sport in Ireland, we support them to become the best versions of themselves, to achieve their ambitions and goals.

## Accountability

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We are all accountable for our behaviour, for the example we set and our shortcomings. We have the integrity to hold others accountable for their conduct too, and we can, because we should do it to ourselves.

Being accountable means, we make decisions that are evidence based, open and transparent, that preserve the integrity of our sport. Therefore, we communicate with, and listen to, all our stakeholders, so they feel included and therefore valued. We reflect on those conversations and use them to inform our pursuit of excellence. Being accountable means, we act with integrity.

# Application

The core values of Sport in Ireland are a package. All five need to be applied together. No one value is any more or less important. Following each value needs us to apply the other four values equally. Together they provide guidance on how to behave in a difficult situation and to do the right thing.

NGBs and LSPs should develop and maintain a culture in their organisations that is founded on this Charter: through the example of sports leaders, the implementation of the values and supporting policies and procedures.

# Conclusion

The Charter for Sport in Ireland expects commitment from everyone involved in sport, to make sport safe, enjoyable, valued and life-affirming. This involves all of us, whatever our involvement in sport, embracing the core values and incorporating them into every aspect of our sporting lives. They are central to our ethos, provide additional structure to the running of our sports, and underpin the positive role of sport in Ireland. Sports Leaders play an important role in setting and maintaining a culture that embodies these core values: the values we accept define us.

# Glossary

## **Equal Status Act 2000-2018 – 9 Grounds of Discrimination**

The Equal Status Acts 2000-2018 ('the Acts') prohibit discrimination in the provision of goods and services, accommodation, and education. They cover the nine grounds of gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, sexual orientation, race, religion, and membership of the Traveller community.

## **Discrimination**

The Acts prohibit discrimination subject to some exemptions, in access to and use of goods and service, including indirect discrimination and discrimination by association, sexual harassment and harassment, and victimisation. The Acts allow positive action to promote equality for disadvantaged persons or to cater for the special needs of persons.

Discriminatory advertising is also prohibited. It is prohibited to publish, display or cause to be published or displayed, an advertisement which indicates an intention to discriminate, harass or sexually harass or might reasonably be understood as indicating such an intention.

## **Participants & Athletes**

For the purpose of this Charter a participant is a person who takes part in a sporting activity, whether in a formal or informal capacity, within all National Governing Bodies recognised by Sport Ireland.

## **Team & Teamwork**

A team is a group of individuals, all working together for a common purpose. The individuals comprising a team ideally should have common goals and objectives.

Teamwork is the collaborative effort of a group to achieve a common goal or to complete a task in the most effective and efficient way. This concept is seen within the greater framework of a team, which is a group of interdependent individuals who work together towards a common goal.

## **Coaches, Selectors, Assistants**

A coach is a person who facilitates a process that provides guidance, feedback and direction to enable participants or performers to achieve their goals in their chosen sport or physical activity. A selector is an individual who has responsibility for the selection of participants for teams, squads, competitions, and events.

Assistants are those people who provide back-up to any of the roles outlined in this section and often such assistants are involved on an intermittent basis (e.g., provision of lifts to matches or competitions, checking equipment, etc.).

## **Referees/Officials**

A referee/official is an individual charged with the responsibility of ensuring that the rules of an activity are adhered to in a formal way. This category includes referees, judges, umpires, etc.

## **Sporting Organisations (Sport Ireland Funded Bodies)**

Sport Ireland funded bodies include the recognised National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs) across Ireland, Federation of Irish Sport, Student Sport Ireland, Irish Special Schools, Olympic Federation of Ireland, Paralympics Ireland, Pentathlon Ireland, Snow Sports Ireland, Age and Opportunity, and Active Disability Ireland.





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