

Showjumping Ireland

PHYSICAL CONTACT POLICY



The purpose of this Policy is to ensure best safeguarding Practice and Procedures exist to protect vulnerable members as well as facilitate and enhance the operations of **Showjumping Ireland**.

The procedures following are produced to ensure all **Showjumping Ireland** staff, relevant volunteers and stakeholders have a clear understanding of the policy and how it applies to their role.

Showjumping Ireland supports the policy of appropriate physical contact which is in response to the needs of a child and not the adult, taking into account the child's age and stage of development. Physical contact should be in an open environment and only with the permission of the young person.

Adults involved with children and young people in **Showjumping Ireland** should avoid unnecessary physical contact and never engage in inappropriate touching. Misleading or inaccurate information relating to physical contact can undermine the confidence of adults working with children and young people. This can also have serious safety implications for children.

Appropriate Physical Contact

Physical contact between adults and children in sport should take place only when necessary to:

- **Teach or develop a skill or technique that the child cannot accomplish without help**
 - Seek prior permission from Child/Young person and/or parent in attendance
 - Explain the nature and the reason for the physical contact
 - Example: Demonstration of correct hand position on reins
 - Must be within the scope of the qualification of Adult
- **It is required by the nature of the activity**
 - Example – helping young athlete to mount pony
 - Seek prior permission from Child/Young person and/or parent in attendance
- **An Injury requires treatment**
 - Child should be informed about what is happening, and what physical contact is about to take place
 - Seek prior permission from Child/Young person unless emergency first aid dictates
 - Encourage child/young person to be involved in minor first aid i.e. hold dressings
- **Comfort a distressed child or to celebrate their success.**
 - In absence of Parent/Guardian, - caution and discretion should be used.
 - Seek prior permission from Child/Young person
- **Award Presentations**
 - Avoid wrap-a-round arm gestures
 - Should only be for duration required – prolonged or extended contact may be unwelcome or uncomfortable for Child/Young person
- **Prevent an injury or accident from occurring.**

Best Practice & Good Principles

Contact that an adult may feel is appropriate may be unwanted or uncomfortable to a young person. Any contact should be in response to the **needs of the child and not the needs of the adult and in an open environment.**

- All children must be treated with dignity and respect with any level of physical contact required. A young person's permission should be requested where any physical contact is required
- Leaders should convey approval with verbal encouragement and praise, rather than the use of repetitive physical contact.
- Any contact should be in an open environment not take place in secret or out of sight of others.
- Contact should not involve touching genital areas, buttocks, breasts or any other part of the body that might cause a child distress or embarrassment.
- Well intentioned gestures such as putting a hand on the shoulder or arm, can, if repeated regularly, lead to the possibility of questions being raised by observers.
- Adults in positions of responsibility should not make gratuitous or unnecessary physical contact with children and young people.
- **Children should be encouraged to voice any concern if they feel uncomfortable or threatened. Children should know how and who to voice any concerns to – through their parents or the Child Protection Officer, another coach/leader or a trusted adult.**
- Any form of physical contact as a punishment or as a response to misbehaviour is unlawful. Only necessary and appropriate physical intervention may be used to prevent a child or young person from harming themselves, others or damaging property. Misbehaviour may need to be dealt with under breaches of the code of conduct through the complaints and disciplinary procedures.
- Resistance from a child should be respected

A child in distress may require comfort and reassurance in a manner that would normally be provided by a parent or guardian.

A young person may also react to victory or success with an expression of affection to an adult, a hug for example.

Adults must ensure that their reaction to the child in distress or because of a success does not become unnecessary and unjustified physical contact, particularly with the same young person over a period of time. Contact that an adult may feel is appropriate may be unwanted or uncomfortable to a young person. Contact in this context should be **in response to the needs of the child and not the needs of the adult and in an open environment.**