



# GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport





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## Buíochas/Appreciation

The Gaelic Athletic Association wishes to acknowledge the work and commitment of the following people who ensured the completion of this publication which will now be of immense assistance and benefit to all who work with children and young people throughout the Association.

Oilibhéar Ó Gealagáin, Diarmuid Ó hUilín, Micheál Ó hOsáin, Pádraig Mac Gearailt, Liam Ó Maolrunaidh, Tomás Mac Cuinneagáin, Breandán Ó Murchú, Áine Uí Ghibhne, Gearóid Ó Maoilmhichíl

Táimid go mór faoi chomaoin ag na daoine seo as ucht a a ndúthrachta, ní hamháin don Chumann Lúthchleas Gael, ach do chosaint, do chaomhnú agus do fhorbairt óganaigh na tíre le linn dóibh bheith páirteach inár gcluichí agus imeachtaí éagsúla eile.

# Contents

	Page
Réamhrá ó Chriostóir Ó Cuana Uachtarán CLG	5
Glossary of Terms	6
Section 1 Policy Statement	7
Section 2 Dignity and Rights of Young People	8
Section 3 Code of Behaviour when working with underage players	9
Section 4 Young People and the Playing of our Games	21
Section 5 Disability Awareness in the promotion of Gaelic Games	25
Section 6 GAA injury scheme	26
Section 7 Guidelines on the use of photographic images and maintaining web sites in GAA Clubs	27
Section 8 Inclusion and Integration Strategy	30
Section 9 Alcohol & Substance Abuse Prevention Programme	32
Section 10 Recruitment and Selection of persons working with children and young people in the GAA	33
Section 11 Away trips and overnight stays	40
Section 12 Hosting another Club	43
Section 13 The Club and County Children's Officer	44
Section 14 The Designated Person	47
Section 15 Child Welfare and Protection in Sport	48
• Categories and Definition of Child Abuse	48
• Recognising Child Abuse	49
• Indicators of Concern	49
• Responding to a Young Person Disclosing Abuse	49
• Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse	50
• Dealing with an allegation against GAA personnel	51
• Bullying	52
• Complaints Procedures	53
• Confidentiality in the processing of allegations	54
Appendix 1 Useful references	57
Appendix 2 Categories and Definitions of Child Abuse	58
Appendix 3 Parental Consent Form	60
Appendix 4 Juvenile Membership Application Form	61
Appendix 5 Volunteer, Coach, Mentor Application Form	62
Appendix 6 Reporting Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse	64
Appendix 7 Record of attendance at Club Training and Games	66



## Réamhrá ó Chríostóir Ó Cuana Uachtarán CLG



Is mór an onóir dom an réamhrá a scríobh don Chód dea Chleachtais seo.

The Gaelic Athletic Association's Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport has been designed and adopted for the benefit of all who are involved in our games and in other activities promoted at all levels of the Association.

The purpose of this Code is to provide realistic and achievable guidance for all units of the GAA in their work with children and young people. This Code should be adopted by all members and Clubs in a positive manner to help guide us in our work with young people and ensure that we adhere to our legislative responsibilities and the standards required of GAA members.

As we strive to implement the key elements of good practice we will complement this work through targeted training at all levels of the Association and continuously evaluate the implementation of the Code.

We will deliver upon this aim by working with our Games and Coaching personnel, County Boards, Children's Officers at Club and County level and

with team Managers, Coaches, Mentors, Parents/Guardians and other Club personnel to ensure that the welfare and safety of young people in the Gaelic Athletic Association will be paramount in all of our work.

This work will be supported by the various structures of the Association and in particular by the co-ordination of such services through our National Children's Office.

A key aspect of this Code will see us engage directly with young people directly in the implementation of the Code to ensure that all of us who participate in any of the Association's games and activities, understand our shared responsibilities and are in a position to gain the maximum benefit and enjoyment from participation in Gaelic Games.

I wish everyone associated with this aspect of our work and all of our units every success in its implementation.

Guím gach rath oraibh uilig san obair seo romhainn.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, which appears to read 'Christy Ó Cuana'.

**Críostóir Ó Cuana**  
Uachtarán Chumann Lúthchleas Gael  
2009

## Glossary of Terms

### **Young Players/Children/Young People**

For the purpose of this Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport young players, children and young people are recognised as persons under 18 years of age.

Legislation in certain jurisdictions stipulates that a child is a person under the age of 18 who is not or has not been married. For the purpose of this publication, the terms ‘young players, children and young people’ are regularly used and may in some instances reflect the differences in age within this definition.

### **Parents/Guardians**

The terms Parents and or Guardians are used intermittently throughout the Code to indicate the legal Parents and/or Guardians of our under age players.

### **Managers, Coaches and Mentors of under age teams**

Personnel appointed by a Club to oversee the effective organising of a team on behalf of the Club in line with the GAA philosophy of fair play, respect, participation, enjoyment and skills development.

### **Club Children’s Officers**

Persons appointed to ensure the recognition and development of a child and youth centred ethos within each Club and County and to act as the link between the children/young people and adults. The GAA also appoints a National Children’s Officer.

### **Designated Persons**

Persons appointed at Club, County and national level who are responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the Statutory Authorities. These persons will also report such allegations as appropriate to the relevant committee within the Association.

### **A Vulnerable Adult**

Is defined in the Code as having special needs or where vulnerability is defined as ‘a person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services or is resident in a continuing care facility by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness or who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation’.

### **Statutory Authorities**

Statutory Authorities who promote the welfare and protection of children and young people and who have a legal responsibility for the investigation and/or validation of suspected child abuse, i.e. in the Republic of Ireland it is An Garda Síochána and the Health Service Executive and in Northern Ireland it is the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Social Services.

# 1 Policy Statement



The Gaelic Athletic Association is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all young people who wish to participate in our Gaelic Games and activities. We shall take all practicable steps to protect them from discernable forms of abuse, from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment and shall respect their rights, wishes and feelings.

## We do this by;

- Recognising that all children have the right to be protected from harm.
- Ensuring that all our coaches and volunteers are carefully recruited and selected and that they accept responsibility for ensuring the wellbeing of children in their care.
- Responding swiftly and appropriately to protect the welfare of children who participate in our games and related activities.
- Providing parents and children with the opportunity to voice any concerns they may have.
- Appointing Children's Officers in each of our Clubs and at County Board level.
- Appointing a National Children's Officer to oversee the implementation of good child protection and welfare practices within the Association.
- Appointing a Designated Person in each Club and County who will liaise with the statutory authorities as appropriate.
- Appointing a National Designated Person to assist in the processing of child protection and welfare matters.
- Ensuring that all allegations of abuse of young people are confidentially dealt with in accordance the Associations Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse (Fourth Edition 2009) and with statutory guidelines and relevant legislation.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of our Child Protection procedures and policies on an on-going basis.
- Ensuring that members, coaches, team mentors, administrators, parents/guardians and spectators sign up to and adhere to our Code of Behaviour.

## 2 Dignity and Rights of Young People



It is important that all young players are valued and treated with the highest level of respect throughout these important years of their personal, physical and social development. The personal dignity and physical integrity of a young person is of paramount importance and their participation in sport should provide them with a period in their life that enables them to have fun, make friends and present them with an opportunity to improve their levels of skill, regardless of what sport they choose.

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael (GAA) believes that a child and youth centred approach should be adopted by everyone involved in the promotion and development of Gaelic Games at underage level.

We recognise that we have a responsibility to:

- Safeguard and promote the interests and well being of those under 18 years of age who are involved in our games and activities.
- Take all reasonable steps to protect young people from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment.
- Respect the rights that young people have including their wishes and feelings.

- Maintain the professionalism, standards and reputation of the GAA.
- Protect the Association's young members, employees and governing bodies.

The following principles govern the development and implementation of this Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport:

- The welfare of the child and young person is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age have a right to protection from harm.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously, will be responded to swiftly and in an appropriate manner.

This Code of Best Practice will, insofar as is possible, have equal application to vulnerable adults who are defined as having special needs or where vulnerability is defined as 'a person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services or is resident in a continuing care facility by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness or who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

### 3 Code of Behaviour when working with underage players



This Code of Behaviour addresses the minimum appropriate levels of behaviour, practice and conduct required from our young players, coaches, mentors, supporters, parents/guardians, referees and Clubs.

The Code of Behaviour is promoted by the following National Governing Bodies so as to assist those who promote and deliver our Gaelic Games as we comply with the highest possible standards in our work with children and young people.

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael  
(The Gaelic Athletic Association)

Cumann Camógaíochta  
(Camogie Association)

Cumann Peil Gael na mBan  
(Ladies Gaelic Football Association)

Comhairle Liathróid Láimhe na hÉireann  
(Irish Handball Council)

Comhairle Cluiche Corr na hÉireann  
(The Rounders Council of Ireland)

Everyone involved in our sports and activities should accept the roles and responsibilities that they undertake as we commit ourselves to maintaining an enjoyable and safe environment for all.

The safeguarding of our members will always be a key priority as we recognise that the welfare of the child is of paramount importance in our work.

It is recommended to use this Code in tandem with each National Governing Bodies own Codes of Best Practice or Codes of Ethics where roles and responsibilities are outlined in greater detail.

We wish to see this Code developed, promoted and implemented as an initiative that encourages fair play, respect, equality, safety and no discrimination in all aspects of our work with children and young people.

#### YOUNG PLAYERS

Young players can benefit greatly from sports in terms of enjoyment, personal development and learning new skills. As part of their development our players must be encouraged to realise that due to their participation they also have a responsibility to treat others with fairness and respect. With rights there will always be responsibilities.

Young players shall 'sign-up' to this Code and agree to abide by contents of the **Code of Behaviour** and to any other policies or codes in your Club and National Governing Body.

**YOUNG PLAYERS should be entitled to:**

- Be safe and feel safe.
- Have fun and experience a sense of enjoyment and fulfilment.
- Be treated with respect, dignity and sensitivity.
- Comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner.
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality.
- Participate in games and competitions at levels with which they feel comfortable.
- Make their concerns known and have them dealt with in an appropriate manner.
- Be protected from abuse.
- Be listened to.

**YOUNG PLAYERS should always**

- Play fairly, do their best and enjoy themselves.
- Respect fellow team members regardless of ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.
- Support fellow team members whether they do well or not.
- Represent their team, their Club and their family with pride and dignity.
- Respect all coaches, mentors, officials and their opponents.
- Be gracious in defeat and modest in victory.
- Shake hands before and after the game, irrespective of the result.
- Inform their coach/mentor/manager when they are unavailable for training and games.
- Talk to the Club Children's Officer with any concerns or questions they may have.
- Adhere to acceptable standards of behaviour and their Club's Code of Discipline.
- Tell somebody else if they or others have been harmed in any way.
- Take due care of Club equipment.

**YOUNG PLAYERS should never:**

- Cheat – always play by the rules.
- Shout at or argue with a game's official, with their coach, their team mates or opponents and should never use violence.
- Use unfair or bullying tactics to gain advantage or isolate other players.
- Spread rumours.
- Tell lies about adults or other young people.
- Play or train if they feel unwell or are injured.
- Use unacceptable language or racial and/or sectarian references.

**Coaches, Mentors and Trainers**

All Coaches, Mentors and Trainers (referred to hereafter as Coaches) should ensure that young people and children benefit significantly from our games by promoting a positive, healthy and participatory approach in our work with under age players. In developing the skills levels of every player Coaches should always encourage enjoyment and fun while ensuring meaningful participation in our games and activities. Coaches should always remember that they are role models for the players in their care.

**Recruitment of Coaches**

All Coaches working with young people and children are required to be suitable for their chosen role(s), and should be appropriately trained, qualified and supported to fulfil such roles. All persons working or volunteering for such roles will participate in agreed recruitment and selection procedures and shall attend coaching and training courses relevant to their roles.

**Coaches should maintain a child centred approach**

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person.
- Treat each person equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.

- Be positive during coaching sessions, games and other activities so that young players always leave with a sense of achievement and an increased level of self-esteem.
- Recognise the development needs and capacity of all young players, regardless of their ability, by emphasising participation for all while avoiding excessive training and competition. Skills development and personal satisfaction should have priority over competition.
- Develop an understanding of relevant coaching methods and ensure that they have the appropriate level of coaching accreditation.
- Do not equate losing with failure and do not develop a preoccupation with medals and trophies. The level of improvement made by young players is the best indicator of effective coaching.

#### Coaches should lead by example

- Never use foul language or provocative language/gestures to a player, opponent or match official.
- Only enter the field of play with the referee's permission
- Do not question a referee's decisions or integrity.
- Encourage players to respect and accept the judgement of match officials.
- Promote Fair Play.
- Promote the RESPECT initiative
- Avoid smoking while working with young players.
- Do not consume alcohol or non prescribed drugs immediately prior to or while young players are in your care.
- Encourage parents to become involved in your team and Club activities wherever possible.

#### Conduct of Coaches when working with under age players

- Don't shout at or lecture players or reprimand/ridicule them when they make a mistake. Young

players learn best through trial and error and should not be afraid to risk error so as to learn.

- Never use any form of corporal punishment or physical force.
- Avoid incidents of horse play or role play or telling jokes etc that could be misinterpreted.
- Ensure that all physical contact is appropriate and has the permission or understanding of the young person.
- Never undertake any form of therapy or hypnosis, in the training of children.
- Develop an appropriate working relationship with children based on mutual trust and respect.
- Challenge bullying in any form whether physical or emotional. Bullying is not acceptable behaviour be it from a young person, coach, parent/guardian, spectator or match official.

#### Avoid compromising your role as a Coach

- Avoid a situation where you are alone in a car or dressing room with a player.
- Avoid taking coaching sessions on your own.
- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with a player or away from others.
- Avoid taking young players to your home.



**Best practice**

- Ensure that all players are suitably and safely attired to play their chosen sport.
- Keep a record of attendance at training and at games by both players and coaches.
- Be aware of any special medical or dietary requirements of players as indicated on the medical consent/registration forms or as informed by parents/guardians.
- Be punctual and properly attired.
- Rotate the team captaincy and the method used for selecting teams so that the same children are not always selected to the exclusion of others.
- Set realistic – stretching but achievable – performance goals.
- Encourage parents/guardians to play an active role in organising and assisting various activities for your teams and your Club.
- Use mobile phones, if deemed appropriate, only via a group text or email system for communicating with the parents/guardians of players. Any exception to this form of group texting can only occur following permission from parents/guardians.
- Do not communicate individually by text/email with under age players.
- Do not engage in communications with under age players via social network sites.
- Keep a record of any injuries and action subsequently taken. Ensure that another official referee/team mentor is present when a player is being attended to and can corroborate the relevant details.
- Ensure that all dressing rooms and the general areas that are occupied by your players and other Club personnel, prior to, during or immediately following the completion of any match are kept clean and are not damaged in any way.
- If it is necessary to transport a child/young person in your car, ensure that they are seated in a rear seat with seat belts securely fastened.
- Make adequate provision for First Aid services.
- Do not encourage or permit players to play while injured or unwell.

**Parents/Guardians**

Parents/Guardians have an influential role to play in assisting and encouraging their children to fully participate in Gaelic Games, whether by playing our games or attending training or coaching sessions.

In common with coaches and Club personnel the parents/guardians of under age players should act as role models for their children as they participate in Gaelic Games.

Parents/Guardians should encourage their child to:

- Always play by the rules.
- Improve their skills levels.
- Appreciate everybody on their team, regardless of ability.
- Maintain a balanced and healthy lifestyle with regard to exercise, food, rest and play. Advice may be sought if necessary from Club officials on this issue.

Parents/Guardians should lead by example:

- Adopt a positive attitude to their children's participation in our games.
- Respect officials' decisions and encourage children to do likewise.



- Do not exert undue pressure on your child.
- Never admonish your own child or any other child for their standard of play.
- Be realistic in their expectations.
- Show approval for effort, not just results.
- Avoid asking a child or young person, 'How much did you score today or what did you win by or what did you lose by.' Ask them 'did they enjoy themselves.'
- Never embarrass a child or use sarcastic remarks towards a player.
- Applaud good play from all teams.
- Do not criticise playing performances. Identify how improvements may be made.
- Do not seek to unfairly affect a game or player.
- Do not enter the field of play unless specifically invited to do so by an official in charge.



#### Parents/Guardians should:

- Complete and return the registration/permission and medical consent forms for their child's participation in the Club.
- Inform the coaches, and any other relevant Club personnel, of any changes in their child's medical or dietary requirements prior to coaching sessions, games or other activities.
- Ensure that their child punctually attends coaching sessions/games or other activities.
- Provide their child with adequate clothing and equipment as may be required for the playing of our games including for example helmets, shin guards, gum shields etc
- Ensure that the nutrition/hydration and hygiene needs of their child are met.
- Listen to what their child may have to say.
- Show approval whether the team wins, loses or draws a game.
- Never attempt to meet their own needs and aspirations for success and achievement through their children's participation in games.

#### Parents/Guardians should assist their Club by:

- Showing appreciation to volunteers, mentors and Club officials.
- Attending training and games on a regular basis.
- Assisting in the organising of Club activities and events as requested.
- Respecting the rights, dignity and worth of every person and by treating each one equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.

#### Parents/Guardians have the right to:

- Know their child is safe and to make a complaint if they believe that their child's safety is in any way compromised.
- Be informed of problems/concerns relating to their child.
- Be informed if their child gets injured.
- Complain if they have concerns about the standard of coaching.
- Have a say in relation to decisions being made within the Club.

## Supporters

Young players are eager to enjoy and benefit from the support they receive from parents, guardians, friends and other members of the Club who attend our games as spectators. Active, loyal and well behaved supporters are always welcome to attend and support our games but should be aware that their conduct will reflect upon the team, players and Clubs that they support.

Fellow supporters have a responsibility to ensure that all spectators conduct themselves in an acceptable and well behaved manner at all times, when attending under age games and competitions.

Supporters should realise that young players are encouraged to participate in Gaelic Games so that they may enjoy themselves while also improving their skills levels.

Supporters add to the enjoyment of our games by:

- Applauding good performance and efforts from your Club's players and from your opponents, regardless of the result.
- Condemning the use of violence in any form, be it by fellow spectators, coaches, officials or players.
- Encouraging players to participate according to the rules and the referees' decisions.

- Demonstrating appropriate social behaviour by not using foul language or harassing players, mentors or officials.
- Respecting the decisions of all officials.
- Never ridiculing or scolding a player for making a mistake during games or competitions.
- Showing respect to your Club's opponents. Without them there would be no games or competitions.
- Upholding the principles of FAIR PLAY and RESPECT for all.

## Referees

Throughout this Code of Behaviour emphasis has been placed on the need to co-operate with and facilitate those that organise and deliver our games and activities. Referees are key people in the delivery of our games and should be respected and assisted in their roles.

Referees should always remember that they are instrumental in ensuring our games are played fairly and all participants are treated with respect. In common with all others who participate and play our Games referees also have a responsibility to implement this Code of Behaviour. Players, coaches, mentors, parents/guardians



and other Club personnel also have a central role to play in the delivery of this aspect of our Gaelic Games particularly when working with under age players. The manner in which we accept the role, authority and decisions of a referee will naturally be scrutinised very closely by our under age players.

In their capacity as referees of under age games we expect our referees to:

- Apply the playing rules on an impartial and consistent basis.
- Act with integrity and objectivity in all games.
- Communicate decisions to players and team officials in an effective and constructive manner.
- Deal with dissent firmly and fairly.
- Work as a team with other match officials.
- Maintain composure regardless of the circumstances.
- Avail of assessment to improve performance and achieve excellence.

Players, coaches, mentors, supporters, parents/guardians and other Club personnel should recognise the pivotal role that referees play in our under age games and should support them in their role.

## **The Club**

All Clubs that cater for under age players must do so with a child centred approach and philosophy that recognises that the welfare of the child is paramount.

Clubs must ensure that those chosen to work on the Club's behalf with under age players have been selected following a thorough recruitment, selection, training and coaching procedure and must also provide these people with the necessary supports so as to enable them fulfil their roles. Clubs must ensure that those chosen to work with children and young people are at all times competent and confident as to their roles and responsibilities.

Clubs should promote quality participation by:

- Adopting this Code of Behaviour as a basic level of agreement between the Club and their players, their mentors, parents/guardians and supporters.
- Leading by example and ensuring that a user friendly and child centred approach is adopted in our work with young people and that equal opportunities are available for all to participate in our games and activities, regardless of an individual's ability.
- Developing effective procedures for responding to and recording all attendances, incidents, accidents and injuries.
- Accessing relevant information on Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention Programmes and promoting relevant training in this area of health awareness for relevant Club personnel.
- Distributing information on Anti Bullying strategies in our work with young people and by adopting and implementing an Anti Bullying Statement in the Club.

Clubs should encourage the participation of their members by:

- Agreeing the role of each and every coach or mentor working with young people.
- Ensuring that Child Protection in Sport Awareness Training is undertaken by all persons working in an official capacity with children and young people on behalf of the Club.
- Adopting and implementing clearly defined recruitment and selection procedures when choosing mentors and other relevant personnel to work with young people.

Encourage the Participation of Young Players by:

- Ensuring that the types of programmes, rules, equipment, length of games and training schedules are structured to facilitate greater participation by all young players, are suitable to all age categories, and to the ability and maturity level of young players.

- Not imposing responsibilities or roles on young people that may be inappropriate to their age.
- Respecting the rights, dignity and worth of all players and treating them equally regardless of their age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.
- Creating pathways for young people to participate in our games not just as players but by affording them other developmental opportunities including training to become referees, coaches etc.
- Ensuring that on the occasions when the team may travel away and stay overnight that separate sleeping facilities are provided for all adults and for young people. Similarly, for mixed groups separate sleeping quarters for males and females shall be required.
- When your group consists of both males and females you are required to have adequate adult to member ratios and male and female coaches/mentors present.

#### Encourage the Participation of Parents/Guardians by:

- Encouraging parents/guardians to become members of their Club and to make themselves aware as to the running of juvenile games and activities and to the rules and codes that direct us in our work.
- Encouraging the participation of parents and guardians in all aspects of a Club's activities and events and in the organising and delivery of our games.
- Welcoming all parents/guardians to attend the games and training sessions that relate to their children. Information relating to such events should be made known to them at all times.
- Informing parents/guardians as to the identity of their Children's Officer. This person should be available to assist with any concerns or enquiries that parents/guardians may have regarding the welfare and safety of children and young people in the Club.

#### Develop Best Practice in Club Structures and Administration by:

- Ensuring that the Juvenile Section of the Club is structured in accordance with good practice guidelines and that young people are afforded a role in decision making at an appropriate level.
- Ensuring that all Club members are aware as to their responsibilities to all children and young people.
- Appointing a Children's Officer whose role shall include the monitoring of the child centred ethos of the Club and compliance with the Code of Ethics and Good Practice (Irish Sports Council/ SportsNI) and with any policies and guidelines as issued by the Club, by their National Governing Bodies, or by statutory authorities and agencies.
- Appointing a Designated Person whose role shall include liaising with Statutory Authorities and the relevant Governing Body in relation to the reporting of allegations, concerns and/or suspicions of child abuse.
- Ensuring that all players are covered by their relevant Injury Scheme and that all premises etc. in use by your Club and players are equally covered for property/liability insurance as deemed necessary.
- Adopting procedures that facilitate the privacy and safety of all young people in the Club and that such procedures are maintained and regularly reviewed so as to ensure that young people feel safe and are safe in the Club.
- Seeking the agreement of parents/guardians when their sons/daughters under 18yrs of age are invited into adult squads. Boundaries of behaviour in adult groups are normally different from the boundaries that apply to under age teams and squads.

### How to Deal with Alleged Breaches of the Code of Behaviour

This Code of Behaviour outlines the minimum levels of behaviour that we require of those that are involved in under age games and activities. The Code applies equally to under age players, coaches and mentors, to

parents and guardians and to our supporters, referees and Club officials. While the promotion of the Code at Club level may be seen as the responsibility of the Club's Children's Officer ultimately it is everybody's responsibility to ensure that the Code is fully implemented.

Breaches of our Code will unfortunately occur from time to time. This may happen as a result of carelessness, poor practice, lack of understanding or there may in some instances be deliberate or indeed calculated breaches of the Code.

When a minor breach of the Code is witnessed it may be opportune and appropriate to deal with such breaches as they occur. Therefore it may, depending on the level of breach, be deemed appropriate for a coach, mentor or other official to deal with such instances as they happen. However, repeated or non-trivial breaches of the Code would require levels of intervention as outlined in Steps 1- 10.

Many breaches of our Code of Behaviour are in fact instances of poor or bad practice and with the co-operation of all concerned, may be rectified and may not occur again. Certain breaches, due to their nature, may best be dealt as breaches of rules or in more extreme circumstances may actually fall within a category of abuse and should be dealt with accordingly.

Therefore when the Code is breached or when people may refuse to adhere to its contents, certain actions may be deemed necessary so as to protect the integrity of our work with children and young people and ensure that they receive the best possible care and attention while participating in our Games.

### **Dealing with an alleged breach of the Code**

An alleged breach of the Code should be dealt with in a fair and impartial manner with the presumption of innocence maintained until otherwise proven. If at any stage the person against whom the breach is alleged is under 18 years of age no formal meetings should take place with that person without the presence or permission of a parent or guardian.

Any action(s) taken should at all times be seen to be proportionate to the alleged breach that may have taken place.

Should a false allegation be made regarding a breach of the Code and should the matter be subsequently deemed to be of a malicious nature the person making any such false allegation(s) may be subject to sanctions by the relevant Sports Governing Body and/or by the statutory authorities.

There is however a difference between a false allegation and an incorrect assumption or an allegation that may be unproven. Where a person may believe or observe that a breach of the Code has occurred they should report this matter to the person in the relevant Club who may deal with such matters. While it is always preferable that allegations or concerns are received in writing the Club is equally obliged to investigate any alleged breaches of the Code whether they are reported verbally, anonymously or in writing.

### **How is a breach of the Code processed?**

If an alleged breach of the Code of Behaviour is reported or observed it is recommended that the Club Children's Officer initially oversees any enquiry into such an allegation. The following should be adhered to:

#### **Step 1**

##### **Alleged breach of the Code is reported or observed**

- Matter should be reported to the Club's Children's Officer.

#### **Step 2**

##### **Confidentiality**

- At all times the Children's Officer must maintain the highest degree of confidentiality in their work on behalf of the Club and should only discuss the details of any alleged breach of the Code on a need to know basis with those that are required to be informed or consulted. The Club's Children's Officer shall record and retain a record of all discussions and actions taken.

#### **Step 3**

##### **Initial assessments by the Club Children's Officer**

- If possible, following assessment of the matter as reported or witnessed, the Club Children's Officer should identify if the alleged breach would constitute an example of poor practice or a more serious breach of the Code.

**Step 4****Collate the information**

- Carefully take account of what has been reported or alleged and retain a record of all actions taken on behalf of the Club. Such records may be required as part of any subsequent investigation or in the event of an appeal at a later stage.
- Check what has been reported for accuracy.
- Corroborate the facts if necessary with others who may have witnessed the alleged incident.

**Step 5****Inform the person accused of the alleged breach of the Code**

- Inform the person against whom the alleged breach has been made as to the nature of the breach and how it may have contravened the Code.
- Seek a response from the person.
- Inform the person if any further action is deemed necessary or shall be recommended.

**Step 6****If a breach of the Code is acknowledged**

- If a breach of the Code is acknowledged and is not deemed to be of an extreme nature (e.g. poor practice as opposed to a deliberate breach), the Children's Officer should inform the person against whom the breach has been alleged how they may have breached the Code and that they must in future adhere to all aspects of the Code.
- If the breach is deemed to be of a more serious or a re-occurring nature it may then be subject to reporting within the Club. Such matters, on a case by case basis, shall be dealt with in accordance with the principles of natural justice and Club internal disciplinary structures, or in extreme circumstances may be categorised as abuse and would be dealt with accordingly. The Club Children's Officer may not make a decision to remove a person from their role(s) due to a breach of the Code of Behaviour. Such actions may only be taken by the relevant Club Committee but may be recommended by the Club Children's Officer, following an appraisal of the alleged breach.\*

- Should any action be taken against a person deemed to have breached the Code, the action taken will undoubtedly be proportionate to the level of breach that occurred. However, such action could include a verbal warning, a removal from their role for a specific period of time, a permanent removal from their role, a directive that they undertake a specified training programme, a request that the matter be dealt with as a disciplinary issue or a referral of the breach to the Designated Person dealing with allegations of abuse.
- All such action shall be taken by the relevant Club Committee having considered any recommendations that may be made to them.

**Step 7****If a breach of the code is denied**

- If a breach of the code is denied the Children's Officer must make a determination and may seek the assistance of other Club officials as appropriate to the Club's structures.
- If the facts point to a breach of the Code due process must allow for a response from the person against whom the alleged breach has been made.
- If, following this procedure, it is deemed that a breach of the Code has occurred, the Children's Officer may recommend a course of subsequent action. This matter must also be reported to the relevant Club Committee and also to the person against whom the allegation has been made.
- The relevant Club Committee shall consider the recommendation and reach a conclusion on the matter.
- If the breach is deemed to be of a more serious or a re-occurring nature it may then be subject to reporting within the Club. Such matters, on a case by case basis, shall be dealt with in accordance with the principles of natural justice and Club internal disciplinary structures, or in extreme circumstances may be categorised as abuse and would be dealt with accordingly. The Club Children's Officer may not make a decision to remove a person from their role(s) due to a breach of the Code of Behaviour. Such actions may only be taken by the relevant Club Committee but may

be recommended by the Club Children's Officer, following an appraisal of the alleged breach. \*

- Should any action be taken against a person deemed to have breached the Code the action taken will undoubtedly be proportionate to the level of breach that occurred. However, such action could include a verbal warning, a removal from their role for a specific period of time, a permanent removal from their role, a directive that they undertake a specified training programme, a request that the matter be dealt with as a disciplinary issue or a referral of the breach to the Designated Person dealing with allegations of abuse.

\* Reference has been made throughout this section to the use of 'Club Internal Disciplinary Structures'. Where such actions are required they must be processed in accordance with the procedures as adopted either by Cumann Lúthchleas Gael, Cumann Camógaíochta, Cumann Peil Gael na mBan, Comhairle Liathróid Láimhe na hÉireann or Comhairle Cluiche Corr na hÉireann.

It is recommended that you contact your relevant Governing Body for further information on appropriate disciplinary procedures.

## Step 8

### Appeal against decision

- If the person against whom an allegation has been made is unhappy with the outcome or decision(s) made a right of appeal should be afforded to them in accordance with Club and Governing Body structures.

## Step 9

### Informing the aggrieved party as to any decision reached following a breach of the Code

- Any person, who due to the actions of another may have experienced or have been the recipient of actions deemed to be in breach of the Code is entitled to know what outcomes and decisions have been reached following investigations into such matters. Such persons should be informed in a confidential manner as to what has been agreed but may not be part of the decision making process when determining an outcome.

## Step 10

### Review use of the Code in your Club

- On an on-going basis the Club's Children's Officer should review the implementation of the Code of Behaviour within the Club and where necessary appraise the Club's Executive Committee on how the Code may be promoted at all times.

Let us ensure that everyone working on our behalf emphasises **FAIR PLAY, RESPECT, EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES** and **SAFETY** in all aspects of our work with children and young people.

**Cumann Lúthchleas Gael**

(The Gaelic Athletic Association)

Páirc an Chrócaigh/Croke Park, Dublin 3

Tel: +353 (0) 1 836 3222

Email: [info@gaa.ie](mailto:info@gaa.ie)

<http://www.gaa.ie>

**Comhairle Liathróid Láimhe na hÉireann**

(Irish Handball Council)

Páirc an Chrócaigh/Croke Park, Dublin 3

Tel: +353 (0) 1 8192385

Email: [nationalmanager.handball@gaa.ie](mailto:nationalmanager.handball@gaa.ie)

<http://www.gaahandball.ie>

**Cumann Camógaíochta**

(Camogie Association)

Páirc an Chrócaigh/Croke Park, Dublin 3

Tel: + 353 (0) 1 8658651

Email: [info@camogie.ie](mailto:info@camogie.ie)

<http://www.camogie.ie>

**Comhairle Cluiche Corr na hÉireann**

(The Rounders Council of Ireland)

Bóthar Díseart Diarmuida. An Tulach, Co

Cheatharlach. Tel: + 353 (0) 85 7240831

Email: [secretary.rounders@gaa.ie](mailto:secretary.rounders@gaa.ie)

<http://www.gaarounders.ie>

**Cumann Peil Gael na mBan**

(Ladies Gaelic Football Association)

Páirc an Chrócaigh/Croke Park, Dublin 3

Tel: +353 (0) 1 836 3156

Email: [info@ladiesgaelic.ie](mailto:info@ladiesgaelic.ie)

<http://www.ladiesgaelic.ie>

PLEASE CUT OUT THIS PANEL AND RETURN IT TO YOUR CLUB CHILDREN'S OFFICER OR OTHER NOMINATED OFFICIAL IN YOUR CLUB.

This Code of Behaviour addresses the minimum levels of behaviour, practice and conduct required from our young players, coaches, officials, team mentors, managers, referees, supporters, parents/guardians and Clubs.

DECLARATION

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print name) acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Code of Behaviour, which I have read and understood in full. I agree to be bound by the principles set out in the Code when participating, playing or attending our Gaelic Games.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Produced by the GAA in association with Cumann Camógaíochta, Cumann Peil Gael na mBan, Comhairle Liathróid Láimhe na hÉireann and Comhairle Cluiche Corr na hÉireann.

## 4 Young People and the Playing of our Games



This section of the Code of Best Practice is core to the basic principles of ensuring that those that play and participate in our Gaelic Games do so in a meaningful, participative and developmental manner. This aim applies to all of our members, none more so than our under age players, regardless of their age or ability.

### Mission Statement

The GAA is committed to implementing an integrated Games Development Strategy with a view to maximising participation, optimising playing standards and ensuring that Players' needs are catered for in a balanced and holistic way. The Grassroots to National Programme outlines a series of Games Opportunities and Skill Development Activities which are primed to ensure that young people Play and Stay with the GAA.

### Our Philosophy

The greater the sense of achievement, fun and fair play experienced by young players, the more they enjoy their involvement and the greater the effort they will make to excel.

### Respect

Respect is an integral part of the Grassroots to National Programme. It is an essential element in

terms of recruiting and retaining young players in Gaelic Games with specific regard to the Young Player's right to participation and fair play etc. Young Players also have responsibilities, both to their Coaches, Rules and to Referees and to Match Officials.

We believe that Respect is about Rights, Recruitment, Retainment, Rules, Referees and Responsibilities.

The following underpins our philosophy about Playing our Games with our under age players.

### Play and Stay with the GAA



### Rights

Every Child has the right to an environment that supports and promotes learning and enjoyment. An environment that is conducive to the recruitment and retention of players will by implication be inclusive, safe and supportive.

### Recruitment

The GAA is committed to providing an inclusive environment within which all young players may participate and enjoy Gaelic Games.

As an Association that seeks to fulfil our obligations relating to the welfare of all of our members we are committed to recruiting volunteer coaches, administrators and referees that respect the rights of all Young Players. (See Section 10 Recruitment and Selection of persons working with children and young people in the GAA).

### Retain

Through specific and targeted training and support services the GAA will assist our coaches, administrators and referees as they promote the playing of our Games and the co-ordinating of skills development, particularly among young players. This in turn will support the retention of all players.

### Rules

The Rules are there to explain how the games of hurling and football are played and to perpetuate the following underlying principles of fair play.

- Rules should ensure that the games are played in a spirit of true sportsmanship and with total respect for match officials.
- Rules enhance the prevailing level of skill and reward players who make the ball the focal point of their attention.
- Rules make provision for physical contact while minimising the potential for injury and cynicism.
- Rules ensure that all players take responsibility for their own behaviour and that sanctions are imposed on a proportionate and transparent basis.

### Referees

The standard of our games depends on the quality of our referees. The essential roles, responsibilities and privileges of a Referee are:

- To apply the rules impartially and consistently in order to create the conditions for our Games to be played well.

### Proper application of the rules enables our Referees to:

- Fulfil their responsibilities and in doing so to protect, preserve and promote our Games.
- Creates the conditions for hurlers and footballers to play with confidence.
- Be constructive, positive and caring.
- Oversee the conditions whereby our Games can be played with skill, courage, commitment, genius, flair, strength and legitimate aggression.

### Responsibilities

With rights there come responsibilities. Respect requires the acceptance and fulfilment of all of our responsibilities as Players, Coaches, Administrators, Referees and Parents.

### Pathways

The GAA Grassroots to National Programme (GNP) is informed by an understanding of the stages of development of all players. The GNP outlines games and skill development activities that are appropriate to each particular stage of development and gives practical and true expression to the Code of Best Practice.

In this regard we have particular regard for the differences in the physical, emotional, and social capacities of children, youths and adults.

### Go Games

The Go Games programme gives practical expression to the motivational forces that drive participation and derive from it a Fun Do, Can Do, Want To, Will Do, We

Do experience for young people and in doing so will ensure that participants “Play and Stay with the GAA”.

- Go Games optimise enjoyment on the basis that the playing environment is child-centred, game-based, values-driven, achievement-oriented and volunteer-led.
- Go Games build competency levels by assisting and challenging players, up to the age of 12 yrs. of age to master the basic skills of Hurling & Football in game situations where they are not pressurised into thinking that they “have to win”.
- Go Games encourage children to achieve their full potential and in conjunction with the GAA Respect initiative are provided with unconditional support in pursuit of this objective.
- Players (representing a Club, school or community based team) are deemed to participate in the Go Games Programme when they take part in a total of 5 blitzes a year.
- Go Games organise blitzes on a small-sided, recreational basis where all players get to play for the full duration of each game where no provision is made for league tables or finals etc.

### SuperTouch

Underpinned by a player-centred, game-based, values-driven, achievement-oriented and volunteer led approach, Super Touch aims to maximise competitive outlets – in hurling and football – for those between age 13 and 18 years of age.

- Super Touch optimises health and well being and provides space for teenagers to take on increased responsibility.
- Enhances their level of self-reliance/resilience and contributes to their growing sense of independence.
- Inspires them to excel and to value the importance of discipline, goal setting, collaboration and team work.
- Players (representing a Club, school or community based team) are deemed to participate in the Super Touch Programme when they take part in a total of 5 blitzes a year.
- Blitzes are organised on a small-sided, competitive basis.
- Interchange system is used to maximise the level of player involvement.



### Cúl Camps

- Cúl Camps provides participants, between the ages of 7 and 13 years of age with an action-packed and fun-filled week of activity during the Summer holidays which revolves around maximising enjoyment and sustaining the future involvement of participants in Gaelic Games.
- Activities are game-based with a strong emphasis placed on skill acquisition and all Camps are organised in an age appropriate manner with a view to:
  - optimising learning and enjoyment
  - enhancing friendships
  - improving physical & psychological wellbeing
  - promoting school and Club links

### U-Can Skill Awards

- Provide a basis for encouraging and motivating children to commit to mastering the basic skills of Hurling & Football.
- Skill challenges are set out in a sequential and developmental basis i.e. they become more difficult as children grow and mature.
- The 5 levels of award, with gold, silver & bronze status at each level, serve to reflect the extent to which players achieve bilateral coordination, i.e. are able to perform the underlying skills on the left and right hand side of the body.

### Schools of Excellence (U14/U15)

- The Schools of Excellence system provides talented players with 8 quality coaching sessions and the opportunity to represent their region/county as part of an overall GAA Coaching Academy.
- The Schools of Excellence may be organised on a regional/divisional or county basis depending on the size of the unit concerned and the relative strength of the game.

### Development Squads (U16/U17)

- This Development Squad system provides talented players with 8 quality coaching sessions

and the opportunity to represent their region/county as part of an overall GAA Academy.

- Players are selected on a more exclusive basis i.e. ability, commitment and/or improvement (late developers) etc
- Squads may be organised on a regional/divisional, county or cross-county basis depending on the size of the unit concerned and the relative strength of the game,

## Coaching

**Coaching is informed by the OTú Coaching Model.**

Our OTú Coaches build competence and cohesion by assisting/challenging players to deliver on their full potential – as espoused in the OTú Coaching Model.

### OTú

The term OTú – the O as in oxygen and Tú, the Irish for you – has its origins in the fact that the drive to excel is fuelled primarily from within and flourishes in a system where all elements are aligned and combined in terms of transforming key objectives into quality outcomes. “Ní neart go cur le chéile – There is no strength without working together”.

### GAA OTú Coaching Model

The GAA Céim Ar Aghaidh Resource Pack uses Gaelic Games as a medium to deliver an exciting range of learning activities to support the Primary School Curriculum at Senior (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> Classes), Middle Cycle (3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Classes) and Junior Cycle (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Classes).

This Pack can also be used to support teaching in all subject areas and the exercises can be adapted to suit children of varying abilities through a variety of tasks.

The GAA Céim Ar Aghaidh/Step Ahead and Fun Do Learning Resource Packs combine to provide a comprehensive package in terms of the provision of total learning support for field and classroom based activities which also reflect best practice in terms of the educational principles set out in the Primary School Curriculum.

## 5 Disability awareness in the promotion of Gaelic Games

The GAA Code of Behaviour states that we will respect our players regardless of ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion. Integrating children and young people with any form of disability into our Games and other activities is a key component of this principle. All Clubs and teams should be aware that there are many ways in which the integration and greater involvement of disabled young persons in our Games and other activities can be promoted and achieved by purposeful planning and by a willingness on our behalf to be inclusive.

It is advisable that when the opportunity presents itself that GAA personnel, particularly in decision making capacities and in a coaching role, avail of Disability Awareness Training as it will provide us with an understanding of disability and will ultimately impact positively on the quality of life for disabled people and other marginalised groups in the GAA.

Advanced coaching resources and materials are constantly being developed to enable us focus on the inclusion of people with a disability in sport. While it may prove challenging for some to adapt and at times modify our activities so as to include people with a disability the following tips may be of assistance to us in achieving this aim:

- Treat people with disabilities who participate in sport as athletes.
- Work in partnership with the child, with parents/guardians and with others in your Club so as to identify the safest and most meaningful ways of inclusion.
- Ensure that inclusion is possible before you invite and encourage a young person to join your activity. A risk assessment procedure may be necessary to ensure the safety of all.
- Whether a disability is acquired from birth or later in life it may have an impact on a person's basic skill level.
- Focus on what the athlete can do and has the potential to do. A lack of skill does not necessarily indicate the lack of potential ability.
- Examine the possibilities of adapting your coaching styles to promote active participation from every person.
- Use the athlete as a resource of information on themselves, and ask them what they can do and how specific tasks may be modified to suit their skill level.
- Including people with disabilities is simply good coaching.
- Gather some information about the child's impairment but remember you're working with a child and not a condition.
- Some disability specific training may be useful or required – e.g. on autism or epilepsy.
- Higher coach to player ratios may be required if a child has additional needs or behavioural problems.
- Be open in explaining your policy of inclusion to all children/young people.
- Be aware of any instances of bullying and use existing anti-bullying procedures to deal with such instances.
- Help parents /guardians of non disabled children to understand our commitment to inclusion.
- Be aware that some children with a disability may be more at risk to abuse and plan your activities so as to protect them from such occurrences.

## 6 GAA Injury Scheme

The Gaelic Athletic Association operates an injury scheme that applies to adults and to young players and other relevant personnel in registered Clubs and affiliated units of the Association.

For the purpose of the injury scheme benefits apply to members under 18 years of age (youth) or over 18 years of age (adult) providing their Club is registered within the scheme.

### What is the GAA Injury Scheme?

The mandatory scheme provides benefit to members playing the national games of Hurling, Gaelic Football, Handball and Rounders whose Clubs are registered with the scheme and also to accredited Club personnel performing designated duties in connection with the activities of Clubs registered in the scheme.

The Injury Scheme is funded entirely from Club and GAA funds with no outside (e.g. insurance) involvement. There is no legal obligation on the GAA to provide such a scheme. Risk is an inherent factor in sport, as in life. When members voluntarily take part in Club Activities, they accept the risks that such participation may bring. Legal representation is not required as part of the scheme and there is strictly no Legal Expenses Cover amongst the benefits provided.

The Injury Scheme does not seek to compensate fully for injury but to supplement other schemes such as Personal Accident or Health Insurance. The scheme only provides cover for unrecoverable losses up to the limit specified under the scheme.

Ultimately, the responsibility to ensure that adequate cover is in place lies with the individual member, commensurate with his/her specific needs.

### The scheme applies to:

- Players on a team registered with the scheme who incur an injury while playing Hurling, Gaelic Football, Handball or Rounders only, either:
  - (a) in the course of an official competitive game or a challenge game or
  - (b) in the course of an official and supervised team training session
- Match officials i.e. referees, linesmen or umpires injured whilst officiating at an official game of Hurling, Handball, Gaelic Football or Rounders as specified above.
- Voluntary coaches, team managers, selectors and members of official team parties injured during games or training as specified above.
- Members performing designated duties under request/instruction of a Club Officer, in a strictly voluntary capacity, on GAA property or on property under the exclusive use of the GAA.

The scheme covers Adult and Youth members of the GAA and, also, players registered with the Scheme through Primary, Post-Primary and Third-level Schools and Colleges and Inter-Firm Units.

For the purpose of the scheme, an Adult is a Full Registered member of the GAA who was 18 years of age or over on registration of his team(s) with the Scheme.

A Youth is a Youth member of the GAA who was under 18 years of age on registration of his team(s) with the Scheme.

Detailed information on the GAA Injury Scheme can be obtained by contacting:

Willis, Grand Mill Quay, Barrow Street Dublin 4

Tel: + 353 (0) 1 639 6343

GAA Injury Scheme, Croke Park, Dublin 3

Tel: + 353 (0) 1 836 3222

## 7 Guidelines on the use of photographic images and maintaining web sites in GAA Clubs



Taking photographs of players, using web sites to publicise GAA activities and the videoing of events, games, training and coaching sessions are normal daily activities within most GAA Clubs. The GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport does not seek in any way to eliminate or curtail these activities but proposes certain safeguards so as to ensure that we minimise the risk or threats that inappropriate use of photographs or the recording of images may pose, particularly for young people.

These safeguards should still permit and facilitate the recording of relevant and suitable materials, should allow us to photograph the enjoyment gained by participating in our games, should enable coaches to use the latest technology in the delivery of training skills and should also enable Clubs to promote their activities in a safe and non threatening manner. This we can do whether it be through the printing of photographs or displaying suitable materials on Club or other GAA web sites.

The key concerns regarding the use of images and photographs of children/young people relate to:

- The possible identification of children when a photograph is accompanied by personal information and its inappropriate use thereafter.
- The inappropriate use, adaptation or copying of images for use in child pornography or illegal website.
- The taking of inappropriate photographs or recorded images of children.

A common sense approach is required when deciding on what may or may not be appropriate as we do not wish to prohibit the recording of games, coaching or celebrations at Club level through the use of photography or by recording on video equipment.

Outlining the Club's photography and recording policy at the outset will clarify matters for all concerned. It may also be useful to request players and their parents to give the Club signed permission for the recording of photographic and recorded images etc as part of the player's registration process.

It should be noted that we have little or no influence on what photographs may be taken and published in local or national newspapers as such photography is covered by a different set of guidelines. Should we ever be unhappy with the publication of such photographs or images we can address this matter with the individual newspaper or the Press Council of Ireland and the Office of the Press Ombudsman.

Photography and the recording of images in a public place do not generally require explicit or prior consent. However if an event e.g. a game or training session is taking place, involving under age players, in a public, private or local authority park, and if you are in charge of such an event you are entitled to request a person to resist from taking photos if you feel that such action or photography may be inappropriate.

#### **Guidelines for Photographic/Recorded Images**

- First and foremost ensure parents/guardians and the young people themselves have granted their consent for the taking and publication of photographic images. This permission may be sought by the Club when the player registers on an annual basis.
- All children/young people featured in recordings must be appropriately dressed.
- The photograph or recording should focus on the activity rather than a particular young person.
- No personal details relating to the young person should be revealed as accompanying materials to the photograph or recorded image.
- Clubs, coaches and volunteers should be permitted to use video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid and as a means of recording special occasions; however, care should be taken in the dissemination, storage and use of such material.
- Parents and spectators taking photographs/recordings should seek permission in advance from the Club and should also be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state the purpose for their photography/filming. If Club personnel are unhappy about any matter relating to such photography the permission granted should be withdrawn immediately.
- Group and team photographs may be taken but it is not necessary to match a player's name with the position in which they may be standing or seated in the team photograph. i.e. The photograph may appear with the player's name recorded underneath but need not be in the order in which they appear in the photograph.

This is a precautionary recommendation based on previous examples of misuse of photographs by those who sought to exploit the gathering of young people together in an enjoyable and fun environment.

- It is recognised that on certain occasions individual young people may receive recognition and may be presented with an award. When this happens in the case of an under age player certain levels of sensitivity and indeed of common sense are required and a balance should be drawn between the publication of a photograph of an individual, who may or may not be named, and the safety aspects of publication. Any such photography or recording of events that involves individual presentations should be discussed in advance of the event and agreement reached with all parties, including the Club, parents and the young person themselves, as to what is and what is not permitted.
- Create recognised procedures for reporting the use of inappropriate images to reduce the risks to under age players. Any instances of the use of inappropriate images should be reported to the Club's Children's Officer and/or Designated Person and also to the relevant statutory authorities as deemed appropriate.

#### **Web site usage**

Many if not most of our GAA Clubs have well established web sites that enable them publicise their Club activities, improve their means of communication with members and the general public and are also used as a general publicity forum for local, national and possible international use.

The Internet is an exciting and user friendly communication outlet for young people and it is therefore important that we attempt to engage with our young players in an equally user friendly manner and publicise GAA activities as being modern, presentable, popular and relevant to their needs and interests.

The most successful and newsworthy of GAA web sites are regularly used by our under age or younger members. It is important that while not wishing in any way to restrict the use of and accessibility to such sites that we recognise our responsibility in maintaining web sites that are purposeful, educational, newsworthy, attractive in design and use and above all else are safe.

The Guidelines for use of photography and filming, as previously outlined elsewhere in Section 7, also apply to those that maintain a Club web site. These guidelines are particularly applicable when photographs and images of under age players, teams and individuals are uploaded to the Club web site.

#### Web site guidance

- Agree a Club web site policy also known as an Acceptable Use Policy (UAP) following discussions at your Club Management or Executive Committee and with members, including the under age members of the Club. This UAP will promote your strategy on the safe use of the Internet and also outlines the parameters of behaviour and specifies the consequences of breaching those parameters.
- Decide at the outset what purpose your web site serves.
- Appoint a web master to manage your web site on behalf of the Club.
- Ensure that the web master is answerable to a member of the Club's Management Committee e.g. Chairperson, Secretary, PRO, etc.
- The Club Management Committee should agree at the outset the style, design and content policy of the web site with the appointed web master, prior to going on-line.
- Agree if you will have a specific youth section and if so also agree the extent and the limitations on its content etc.
- Decisions on the appropriate use of photographic images and other similar content should be in accordance with the Guidelines for Photographic/Recorded Images as outlined elsewhere in this section.



- Consider the age of children and young people when deciding on the web site policy.
- Consult with the Club's Children's Officer when designing the web site and agreeing the usage policy and content material.
- Agree to review the overall maintenance and upkeep of the web site at regular intervals.
- Agree a procedure in the Club for dealing with any complaints or concerns that may be raised about the content of your web site.

## 8 Inclusion and Integration Strategy



The playing of Gaelic Games is a unique and integral part of Irish culture and tradition. The Gaelic Athletic Association was founded in 1884 to promote Irish pastimes and culture, including the playing of Gaelic Football and Hurling. These games have been played throughout Ireland for many centuries and the founding of the Association put in place a structure that resulted in Clubs developing in every town and village in Ireland. Our games have grown to be the country's most popular sports and over 2,000 Clubs exist in Ireland catering for Hurling, Football, Handball and Rounders.

The popularity of our games abroad, particularly amongst the Irish Diaspora, is also on the increase and there are now over 400 Clubs playing Gaelic games around the world in Australasia, Europe, North America, and Asia. Ireland has seen enormous demographic changes in recent years and people of many nationalities and ethnicities have been welcomed to our shores and to the playing of our Gaelic Games.

Following consultations with members and non members the GAA, and in collaboration with Ladies Football, Camogie, Handball and Rounders a series of

recommendations and proposals to promote greater Inclusion and Integration in our Games have now been adopted as policy.

Specific proposals and recommendations were made to the GAA's National Strategic Planning Group resulting in a dedicated section on Inclusion and Integration being included as one of the eleven key themes in the Association's Strategic Vision and Action Plan 2009-2015.

### Mission, Vision, Values of the GAA

The GAA's values are the heart and soul of our Association. In every Club around the world they are what binds us, what makes us unique and what attracts more and more players, members, volunteers and supporters.

For additional information on the GAA Inclusion and Integration Strategy please contact [inclusion@gaa.ie](mailto:inclusion@gaa.ie)

# Mission, Vision, Values of the GAA

## GAA Inclusion and Integration Strategy

### Mission

**“The GAA is a community based volunteer organisation promoting Gaelic games, culture and lifelong participation.”**

The GAA is a volunteer organisation. We develop and promote Gaelic games at the core of Irish identity and culture.

We are dedicated to ensuring that our family of games, and the values we live, enrich the lives of our members, families and the communities we serve.

We are committed to active lifelong participation for all and to providing the best facilities.

We reach out to and include all members of our society. We promote individual development and well-being and strive to enable all our members achieve their full potential in their chosen roles.



### Vision

**Our vision is that everybody has the opportunity to be welcomed to take part in our games and culture, to participate fully, to grow and develop and to be inspired to keep a lifelong engagement with our Association.**

### Values

VALUE	What this means
<b>Community Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community is at the heart of our Association. Everything we do helps to enrich the communities we serve</li> <li>We foster a clear sense of identity and place</li> </ul>
<b>Amateur Status</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are a volunteer led organisation</li> <li>All our members play and engage in our games as amateurs</li> <li>We provide a games programme at all levels to meet the needs of all our players</li> </ul>
<b>Inclusiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We welcome everybody to be part of our Association</li> <li>We are anti sectarian</li> <li>We are anti racist</li> </ul>
<b>Respect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We respect each other on and off the playing fields</li> <li>We operate with integrity at all levels</li> <li>We listen and respect the views of all</li> </ul>
<b>Player Welfare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We provide the best playing experience for all our players.</li> <li>We structure our games to allow players of all abilities reach their potential</li> </ul>
<b>Teamwork</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effective teamwork on and off the field is the cornerstone of our Association</li> <li>Ní neart go cur le chéile (There is no strength without working together)</li> </ul>

## 9 Alcohol & Substance Abuse Prevention Programme

The subject of alcohol, substances and drugs can be sensitive and may at times be a daunting matter to broach at Club level. For many reasons, be they personal or otherwise, this can also cause discomfort and stress for many. The GAA has designed and is implementing a comprehensive programme for responding to alcohol and drug related issues at all levels of the Association so as to assist us in awareness raising on this important matter.

**The GAA Alcohol & Substance Prevention Programme (ASAP)** is designed to help Clubs and individuals respond in a positive way to the difficulties that alcohol and other drugs may cause at Club level or for individuals in our Clubs.

The ASAP Programme is aimed at both our adult and our younger players. As we continue to study the use of alcohol and drugs the GAA is anxious to develop an expertise and a level of knowledge within the Association so as to prevent this initial abuse of drugs and alcohol. We further aim to educate our members on this subject and to respond as appropriate to misuse and to incidents that arise from such abuse in as appropriate a manner as possible.

When fully implemented, the aim of the ASAP Programme is to have a team of trained ASAP officers at Club, County, Provincial and national level.

The ASAP Programme proposes that every Club should develop a Club Drug and Alcohol Policy as a roadmap for what can be achieved in their local area. The manner in which they may commence this work plus a range of other guidance is outlined in greater detail in the ASAP manual.

The ASAP Programme is designed to operate at three levels as follows:



### PREVENTION

This aspect of the Programme is designed to prevent the abuse of alcohol and other drugs in the first instance. The prevention strategies explore how to reduce the exposure that young people may have to alcohol or drugs and outlines how we can contribute to a more positive approach on such matters.

### EDUCATION

This part of the Programme is designed to raise knowledge and confidence levels around alcohol and other drug related issues. It examines how we can also address alcohol and drugs matters in the context of safeguarding our younger members and as a child welfare and safety matter.

### RESPONSE

The response section of the programme is designed to assist our Clubs as they respond to drug or alcohol related incidents. It emphasises the close co-operation that should be developed with other agencies and the need to deal with drug and alcohol incidents in a sensitive and confidential manner.

For further details, please check out the GAA Club Manual for Dealing with Drug and Alcohol Related Issues or check out the ASAP web site at [www.gaa.ie/asap](http://www.gaa.ie/asap).

## 10 Recruitment and Selection of persons working with children and young people in the GAA

The GAA, as Ireland's leading sporting organisation, is steeped in the tradition of voluntarism and this is most apparent by the manner in which parents, former players and other adults give their time freely so as to encourage and assist our younger players who wish to participate in our Games and other related activities.

### Adult-child sporting relationship

From their early years to their late teens young people can gain from the knowledge, experience and skills that adults bring to coaching sessions and games. The philosophy that the GAA has adopted in promoting and developing our Games (See Section 4) states that the greater the sense of achievement, fun and fair play experienced by young players, the more they enjoy their involvement and the greater the effort they themselves will make to excel.

For more than 125 years, since the foundation of the GAA, adults have promoted our Gaelic Games among our younger population in a well motivated

and committed manner. This is still the case and in these changing times the GAA has a responsibility to young people and to their parents and guardians to ensure that those that work with children and young people, on behalf of the GAA, are selected in a careful, sensible and effective manner.

This unique bond in sport is based on a trusting and mutually respectful relationship and can be enhanced by the recruitment, selection and up-skilling of adults who are suitable to such roles. The role of the adult may vary from team to team and from age group to age group. It is however essential that regardless of their role that adults are fully aware at the outset as to what is expected of them, what supports they will receive and the levels of responsibility, that they themselves have on behalf of the Association and on behalf of their team, the Club, the parents and the young people in their care.

This we can achieve by adopting good practice procedures when recruiting our managers, coaches and other personnel who work with children and young people in the GAA.

The GAA relies on the time commitment of adults to our youth structures and is greatly indebted to those that give freely of their time on behalf of the Association. The following recruitment and selection guidelines are put in place to ensure that these adult roles are seen as a positive contribution to the development of young players, regardless of age, and that the GAA adheres to the best possible standards when recruiting persons to work with young people on our behalf at Club, County, Provincial and National level.

GAA personnel who work with children, young people or vulnerable adults should have appropriate child awareness training and be vetted through the



Garda Vetting Unit which is co-ordinated by County Boards via the National Children's Office in Croke Park. Similarly Ulster GAA co-ordinate the vetting for AccessNI applicants.

### **Recruitment of adults to work with children/young people in the GAA**

It is essential that all adults taking responsibility for young people, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, in the Club or elsewhere in the Association should undergo a recruitment and selection process. The recruitment of adults to work with under age teams should be co-ordinated by a senior and experienced member of the Club and should be done in a confidential manner.

The following procedures will assist Clubs when choosing to place coaches and other personnel in the position to which they are best suited.

### **Role clarification**

The role envisaged e.g. manager, coach, etc. should be clearly stated. The responsibilities relating to the role and the level of experience or qualifications required should be clarified at the outset.

### **Role assistance**

The various supports available via the Club, e.g. Foundation Level Coaching that would be of assistance to the adult should be made known and if deemed appropriate should be offered to the adult as they are recruited.

### **Application form**

Applicants should complete an application form prior to commencing their role in the GAA (see Appendix 5).

### **References**

As part of the recruitment process references should be sought from applicants. These may refer to the person's character and if applicable to the applicants previous background in sports and in Gaelic Games. All references should be verified by the Club.

### **Vetting and AccessNI checks**

All applicants will be required to complete Garda Vetting and/or AccessNI checks, as appropriate, prior to the commencement of their role(s) with young people in the Association.

### **Meet the applicant**

A senior representative of the Club should meet with each applicant to ensure that they are aware of the role(s) allocated to them and they may use the occasion to clarify any issues that may arise and identify any coaching or up-skilling needs as appropriate.

### **GAA Code of Behaviour for all Persons Working with Young People**

All persons who work with young people in the GAA will be required to sign the GAA Code of Behaviour. This declaration should be retained by the Club in respect of everybody working with under age personnel, regardless of their role.

### **Support and Review**

Continuous supports should be made available to all coaches etc so as to enable them fulfil their roles as requested. The role of the Club 'Coiste na nÓg' and of the Club Children's Officer may be invaluable in identifying such supports. The Club should review the role of all under age personnel on an annual basis.

### **Garda Vetting and AccessNI checks**

The GAA administers the Garda Vetting and AccessNI checks of all persons who on behalf of the Association work in any capacity with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This service is but one part of the overall recommended GAA recruitment and selection procedures for those who on our behalf work in areas of responsibility with children and young people, or who may do at a later stage.

Garda vetting, which is the pre-checking of an applicant's background for criminal convictions or prosecutions is recommended by the Irish Sports Council, by Sports NI in Northern Ireland and as part

of Children First – the National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

### The GAA and Garda Vetting

It is no longer possible or permissible for an individual to have a vetting application processed for themselves. Vetting applications will only be accepted from organisations that have been so recognised by the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU). The GAA is an organisation recognised by the GCVU to process vetting on behalf of our members and a number of Authorised Signatories have been selected by the GAA to fulfil this role.

The GAA has agreed to the implementation of vetting of all persons who on behalf of the Association work in any capacity with children, young people and vulnerable adults in the delivery of our games or other activities. In effect this means that any person working on behalf of the Association or on behalf of any of our Clubs with people under the age of 18 years of age will be required to be vetted. Vetting via the Garda Vetting Unit is outlined below while vetting via AccessNI and for Ulster GAA is outlined on page 34.

### How can a member of the GAA avail of Garda vetting?

**Step 1:** A vetting applicant, i.e. an under age coach, mentor, manager etc. will receive a GAA Vetting Application Form from the Club's Children's Officer or from a nominated person in their Club. This form has to be completed in full by the applicant and collected locally (in the Club) or forwarded directly to a nominated person who will collate these forms at County level.

**Step 2:** Forms are forwarded to the County Board nominated Garda Vetting Co-Ordinator who will only check forms for accuracy and will return incorrectly forms to applicants. The County Board nominated person will also record the name and address of each

applicant on a 'batch form' and send this electronically to the National Children's Officer in Croke Park.

**Step 3:** All forms are sent by secure post to the National Children's Officer, GAA, Croke Park, Dublin 3. All forms must be sent to the National Children's Officer (NCO) in Croke Park for processing and not to An Garda Síochána.

The National Children's Officer will then process all correctly completed forms with the GCVU. Processed forms will on their return contain a statement that there are no convictions recorded against the individual in the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere, or a statement of all convictions and/or prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed, in the State or elsewhere as the case may be.

**In most instances it is convictions and/or prosecutions of a most serious nature and particularly against children/minors that MAY deem a person unsuitable to work with children in the GAA.**

Please note that certain convictions and unsuccessful prosecutions MAY have NO bearing whatsoever on the acceptance of an individual in the Association as it is recommended that all cases be treated individually and confidentially and that they be assessed as per the requirements of the post/role and the work that it entails.

**Step 4:** Following the processing of the vetting form it is the GAA National Children's Officer who will inform each applicant individually by letter if their application is or is not being recommended for acceptance.

**Step 5:** If the recommendation is positive the applicant will receive a letter confirming this and requesting them to furnish their Club with the letter of acceptance.

**Step 6:** If the recommendation is negative and if

the applicant is not being recommended for acceptance a letter informing them of this decision will be sent to them by the GAA National Children's Officer. The applicant will be afforded an opportunity to appeal this decision within 14 days and the process of appeal will be outlined to the applicant. A specially appointed Appeals Group will hear this appeal and will issue their findings directly to the applicant.

**Step 7:** If the Appeals Committee recommends acceptance of the vetting application Step 5 comes into operation.

**Step 8:** If the Appeals Committee upholds the recommendation of rejection the applicant and their Club will be duly informed. Over a period of time all persons who on behalf of the GAA work in any capacity with children and young people will have furnished their Club with a Garda Vetting letter of acceptance. The absence of such a letter will deem a person ineligible to work in such a capacity.

The GAA central data base will retain the vetting application outcomes. Clubs will be issued with a list of persons who receive the

Garda Vetting 'letter of acceptance' from the National Children's Officer.

### **Protocol on Vetting Application Outcomes**

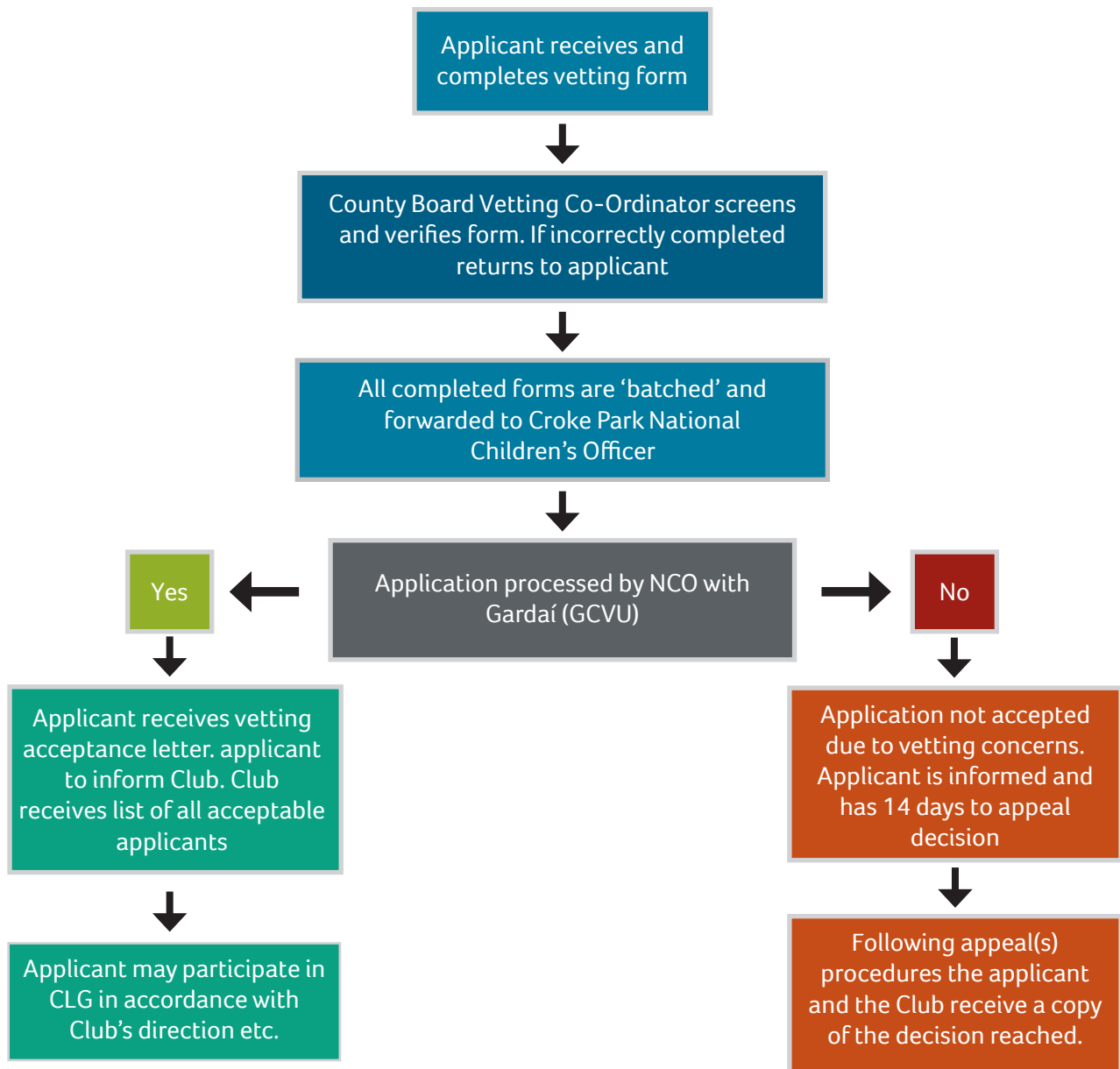
There are established procedures in place to conduct vetting of all persons who work in any capacity with children, young people and vulnerable adults in the delivery of our games and activities.

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael recognises that there is a standardised vetting system operated by Ladies Gaelic Football, Cumann Camógaíochta na nGael, Irish Handball Council and The Rounders Council of Ireland, which functions for the purpose of determining the suitability of personnel to deliver our games and activities in settings which may facilitate unsupervised access to children and/or vulnerable adults, within each of the above bodies.

The status and validity of decisions reached in each body in respect of the suitability of an individual for a position within it is acknowledged and accepted by each other body.



### Outline of Garda Vetting in the Gaelic Athletic Association



### How can a member of the GAA avail of vetting through Ulster GAA?

In the first instance the vetting applicant should contact their Club/County Secretary, Children's Officer as appropriate. The Club/County Secretary, Children's Officer should then make direct contact with the Ulster GAA Children's Officer who will advise the process for how they can take forward the vetting application either through Garda vetting or AccessNI.

The GAA is a registered body with the Garda Central Vetting Unit and as a result of such recognition the Association was allocated a number of Authorised Signatories to administer vetting within the Association. Ulster GAA has been allocated one of these Authorised Signatories and as such administers Garda vetting in Ulster.

Ulster GAA is also a registered Umbrella Body with AccessNI. to carry out similar vetting checks as part of the AccessNI service through a heads of agreement with, all County Boards, Clubs, Ulster Camogie and other affiliated bodies.

#### The GAA and AccessNI vetting

AccessNI is the statutory body established to carry out vetting checks on people who as part of their employment or volunteer involvement have access to a child.

**An Umbrella Body** is an organisation which has registered with AccessNI to make applications for vetting checks (Standard or Enhanced Disclosures) on behalf of other organisations or individuals.

As part of the GAA Code of Best Practice in relation to child protection and to comply with current child protection, all personnel working with children, young people or vulnerable adults within the Province must be vetted.

In order to comply with legislation under The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order

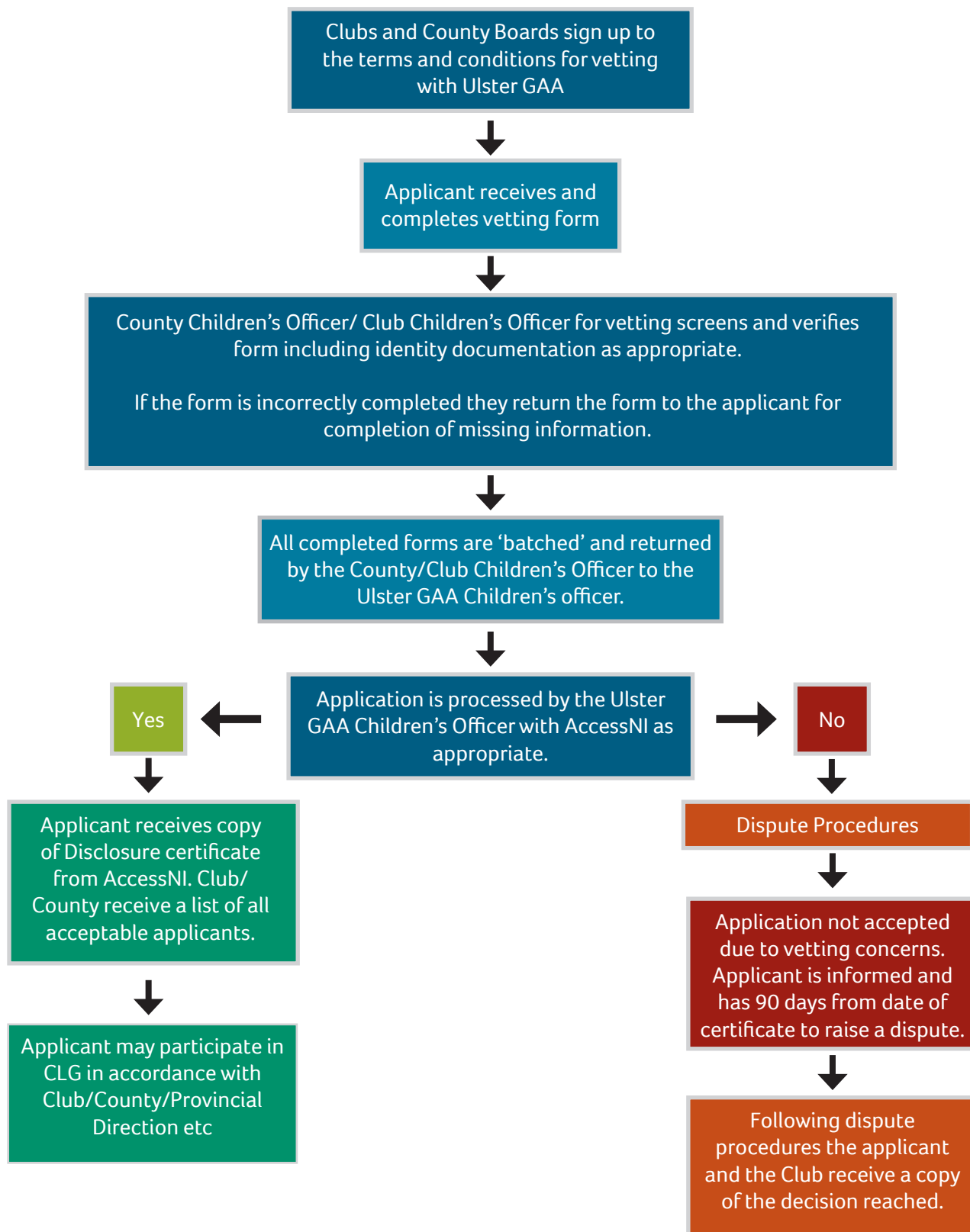
2003, Ulster GAA has since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2004 ensured that relevant checks were carried out through the POCVA system. These checks are now carried out by AccessNI or the Garda Vetting Unit as appropriate so as to ensure that individuals who work in any capacity on behalf of the Association and who might pose a threat or risk to children and/or vulnerable adults are not being used as coaches, mentors or external tutors, team managers, assistants, or work in any other capacity on behalf of the Association.

These checks will inform us

- If the applicant has a criminal record;
- If their name is included on the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) Disqualification from Working with Children List
- If they are included on the Department of Education (DE) List and/or the DHSSPS Disqualified from Working with Vulnerable Adults List

Any information received will be treated confidentially and is subject to the Data Protection Act. Should it be necessary to meet or speak with the applicant regarding any information received this will be done without delay.

### Outline of AccessNI Vetting in the Gaelic Athletic Association



## 11 Away Trips and Overnight Stays



Many teams and Clubs participate in trips away from home throughout the year. Such trips are often viewed as a means by which young teams and players may be rewarded for their endeavours at the end of their season or as a means by which greater team morale and camaraderie can be developed, regardless of age.

Attending inter-county matches, at an away venue, is a popular means by which young people may see and attend games where their chosen code is played at a high level of skill and competitiveness. Visiting other Clubs and playing matches against teams of a similar age group in other areas or counties will also give younger players an insight into the broad geographical nature and community ethos of the GAA while creating greater camaraderie with their colleagues and within their own Clubs.

The pre-planning and detailed organising of such trips for younger players will require a high degree of care and preparation and adults should always remember the key roles of responsibilities they have during such trips on behalf of their Club, on behalf of parents and on behalf of the young people themselves.

### Pre trip preparations

- A detailed programme of activity should be approved in advance at Club level following agreement with the other Club(s) involved in the away trip.
- Where possible a member of your organising group should be familiar with the away venue, should visit the venue if deemed necessary and ensure themselves that the venue can cater for the entire programme of activities. This is particularly relevant should an overnight stay be required.
- Parental/guardian consent must be obtained in writing so as to permit any young person under 18 yrs of age participate in any organised trip. A separate Parental Consent Form (See Appendix 3) should be completed for each child on the trip.
- Young people (of an appropriate age) and their parents/guardians should sign a form agreeing to abide by the programme and to any agreed procedures that relate to the organised trip.
- An agreed code of behaviour, specifically designed for the trip, should be discussed, outlined and agreed with all players and adults that are participating on the trip.

- Medical information as deemed relevant by the parents/guardians of players should be made known to the leaders of the Club's trip. Club leaders should also be made aware as to any medication that players may be taking and what may be required of them in the case of an emergency. (See Parental Consent Form Appendix 3)
- Such information, including food or other related allergies should have previously been recorded on the annual/registration form of each under age Club member (See Juvenile Application Form Appendix 4).
- A detailed programme which includes the following should be presented to all players and their parents/guardians:
  - A time schedule of departure and arrival at your destination.
  - Full information about the trip; including all activities and events planned.
  - Emergency contact numbers during the trip.
- All adults accompanying the under age team should be made aware as to what their responsibilities are and what role(s) they may have during the trip.
- It is the Club's responsibility to ensure that the trip itself and all activities taking place throughout the trip adhere to insurance cover, that all participants are eligible members of the GAA injury scheme and that the activities of the trip do not compromise the conditions of the GAA injury scheme or any additional insurance policy.
- Where it is deemed necessary the organisers of all such trips should seek and gain the permission of their County Board prior to announcing the details of the programme to their members.

### Transport

Transport is a central element of any trip taken by an under age teams. It is advisable not to use members' cars when travelling on away trips. Most

Club trips avail of bus or coach transport and it is essential therefore that all aspects of the transport arrangements are checked out and agreed in advance. Safety should be considered a priority at all times, regardless of cost.

The following should be considered:

- All vehicles should be well-maintained and roadworthy and should be properly taxed and insured.
- Transport should be fully accessible for people with disabilities whether they are members of the group or for others who may accompany them.
- Seat belts must be worn at all times on buses and coaches.
- Alternative access to transport should be available in case of emergency.



- Vehicles should be equipped with a First Aid kit and a fire extinguisher and leaders of the group should be familiar with how to use them.
- When hiring a vehicle information should be sought as to the company's reputation and reliability.
- Ensure that passengers remain safely seated at all times.

#### During the trip

- It is essential that at least one individual with first aid qualifications be part of your organising group and that this individual be present or available throughout the trip.
- Young people must be adequately supervised throughout the trip as per our recommended ratios of adults to young people. This ratio may differ depending on the age group of participants, the activities to be undertaken, whether there is an overnight stay, if the trip is abroad etc.
- A generally acceptable ratio of 1:8, i.e. one adult per eight young people, is deemed in most instances to be a normal sports activity ratio. Organisers of Club trips should always be mindful of ensuring that additional adults accompany their group in case of emergencies or unforeseen circumstances.
- There must be at least two adults of each gender with mixed groups.
- Adults are required to be familiar with the agreed rules on smoking and on the consumption of alcohol during the trip, as outlined in the GAA Code of Behaviour. As a basic minimum, adults are required to avoid smoking while working with young players and must not consume alcohol or non prescribed drugs while young players are in their care.

#### Overnight Stays

- When participating in an overnight stay a specific ratio of adults to children should have

been agreed in advance. This ratio, which is very dependent on the age category of the children/ young people, may also vary should the group be participating in certain outdoor activities or in watersports etc.

- Check out the proposed accommodation for children/young people and Club leaders. Ensure that it complies with health and safety regulations, is accessible, is of a suitable standard and is appropriate for the particular group and programme.
- When availing of overnight accommodation adults should not share a room with a child. If exceptional or emergency circumstances so dictate and the presence of an adult is deemed necessary there should be more than one child in the room with the adult.
- Where children and young people are sharing a room it should be done so with others of the same age grouping and gender. It is also preferably that the sharing of rooms be done with fellow Club members at an inter Club event.

#### Review of trip

A full review of the trip should involve all who participated from the Club and the result of the review should be retained and reviewed if and when the group intend organising another or similar trip or if the Club intends re-visiting the area or the host Club again.

## 12 Hosting another Club

Hosting another Club whether it is for a day trip or on overnight stay can be a very challenging but also a rewarding experience.

When an under age team is visiting your Club agree the detailed timetable with your visitors as soon as is practically possible prior to the visit taking place. Be conscious that your visitors have their own deadlines to meet and must also furnish the parents of their own players with a schedule for the day.

Prior planning is the key to success and consideration should be given to appointing a specially appointed group to deliver this task.

The following needs to be considered:

- The age group of the visiting Club.
  - The number of people in your own group and from the visiting Club.
  - The timetable for all games and events.
  - Referees and other officials.
  - Catering arrangements with a choice of food that caters for all needs and dietary requirements.
  - Availability and attendance of First Aid personnel.
  - Emergency contact numbers.
  - An alternative programme of events should the weather or some other factors attempt to spoil your day.
- The following requires consideration in advance of the event or the visit of the other Club(s):
- Host families must provide a safe and caring environment for young people.
  - All houses must be checked for suitability by the host Club.
  - The Club should seek references of hosting families if deemed necessary and must avail of the GAA vetting and Police check services for the vetting of host family adults as deemed appropriate.
  - The Club should provide an itinerary of events to the host family.
  - More than one child should be staying in a host home.
  - The Club should make host families aware of any special needs (medical or dietary) as required by the young people.
  - Parents / Guardians and the young people should have a contact number for the host and for an official in charge.
  - Young people should not be asked to share a room with an adult.
  - Young people should not share a room with a member of opposite sex.

### Hosting overnight

Should your Club be providing overnight accommodation special care must be taken in the selection of homes in which young people will reside. It is the responsibility of the host Club to provide suitable accommodation which has been deemed acceptable in advance of the arrival of your visiting Club.

## 13 The Club and County Children's Officer

The appointment of a Children's Officers at both Club and County level is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere and establishing a child and youth centered ethos at both Club and County level.

All of the Gaelic Games' Associations are committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all young people\* who participate in our Gaelic Games and activities. In our work with young people and with adults a number of national policy documents act as a resource to us and govern these commitments:

- A Code of Behaviour - when working with underage players - jointly published by the Gaelic Athletic Association, Camogie Association, Ladies Football Association, Rounders Council of Ireland and the Irish Handball Council
- GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport
- GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse
- Camogie Association's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players
- Ladies Football Association's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players

The appointment of a Children's Officer at both Club and County level is not just essential but is also a mandatory requirement. This leaflet, promoted by the Gaelic Athletic Association, Camogie Association, Ladies Football Association, Rounders Council of Ireland and the Irish Handball Council, outlines the roles and responsibilities of these Children's Officer so as to be of assistance to those that undertake such roles.

### The Club Children's Officer

The Club Children's Officers shall assist in promoting a child and youth centered ethos in the Club. In their work the Club Children's Officer shall be the link

between the children/young people and the adults within the Club. In their role the Club Children's Officer should:

- Have good communication skills, be approachable and open minded
- Have good knowledge and be familiar with their Child Welfare and Protection Codes and Guidelines
- Have an understanding of relevant child welfare/ protection legislation
- Have undertaken a Garda Vetting/Access NI/CRB check relevant to their jurisdiction
- Have attended the relevant awareness training on child welfare and protection and availed of Children's Officer training

### Key role

The key role of the Club Children's Officer is to ensure the implementation and promotion of the relevant Child Welfare Codes and Guidelines for good practice in their Club so as to ensure that young people can participate, enjoy and benefit from our Gaelic Games in safe and enjoyable surroundings.

### Key tasks

- Promote awareness of the relevant Codes of Behaviour and Best Practice within the Club
- Distribute copies of the **Joint Code of Behaviour - when working with underage players - at Club level**
- Identify the need and facilitate the delivery of Child Protection in Sport Awareness Workshops and other relevant Child Protection and Welfare training within the Club
- Ensure in so far as possible, that all Players, Coaches, Team Mentors, Parents, Guardians, Officials and Spectators adhere to the **Joint Code of Behaviour - when working with underage players**

- Ensure that each under age member signs and submits an annual membership form
- Support the implementation of the **RESPECT** initiative at Club level in co-operation with team personnel, underage members, referees, spectators, parents and guardians
- Influence policy and practice in the Club in order to prioritise young people's needs
- Promote greater consultation with under age players and participation by them in Club activities and planning
- Ensure that there are steps young people may take to express concerns about their sports activities / experiences within the Club
- Encourage the involvement of parents/guardians in organising Club activities
- Develop good practice procedures in the recruitment and selection of persons working with young people in the Club
- Oversee the implementation of Garda Vetting/ Access NI/CRB checks, as appropriate, within the Club
- Monitor, in association with team coaches, any significant trends or developments relating to the participation of young people in Gaelic Games and report accordingly to the Club Executive or Management Committee
- Maintain on-going contact with the County Board Children's Officer and with other Club Children's Officers
- Report regularly to the Club Executive as required
- Deal with breaches of the code as per relevant guidelines
- Make referrals of alleged allegations of abuse to the Club Designated Person
- Conduct an annual audit of best practice in child protection and welfare within the Club and report accordingly

## The County Children's Officer

In the context of promoting and implementing our commitment to creating a safe and enjoyable environment for all young people\* who participate in Gaelic Games and activities, County Boards are obliged at the outset to appoint a County Children's Officer. The County Children's Officer's should:

- Have good communication skills, be approachable and open minded
- Be familiar with their Child Welfare and Protection Codes and Guidelines
- Have undertaken a Garda Vetting/Access NI/CRB check relevant to their jurisdiction
- Have attended the relevant basic awareness training on child welfare and protection and Children's Officer training
- Be familiar with relevant child welfare/protection legislation
- Have a commitment to attend other relevant training as required
- Have the confidence of all Clubs and in the particular of Club Children's Officers within the County

### Key role

The key role of the County Children's Officer is to oversee the implementation and promote awareness of the Gaelic Games' Codes of Best Practice and Behaviour with the co-operation of Clubs in the County and with Club Children's Officers

### Key tasks

- Ensure that each Club has appointed a Club Children's Officer
- Regularly liaise with all Club Children's Officers; respond to their queries; support and assist them to develop and implement an annual work plan
- Promote and co-ordinate Child Protection in Sport Awareness Workshops for all Clubs in the

County; regularly liaise with workshop tutors; ensure that all relevant materials for workshops are provided in a timely manner to the relevant Club/tutor; post-workshop ensure that feedback/registration sheets are collected and returned to the National Children's Officer and to Irish Sports Council/Sports NI

- Ensure that all underage County development squads and County teams' activities are compliant with the relevant Gaelic Games Codes, in co-operation with Coiste na nÓg where relevant
- Ensure that County development squads and/or County under age players, their parents and mentors are compliant with the relevant Gaelic Games Codes, in co-operation with Coiste na nÓg where relevant
- As required, liaise and advise the County Coaching and Games Development structures on strengthening a child centred ethos in their programmes and activities
- Assist, where required, the County Vetting Co-ordinator in the processing of vetting applications on behalf of the Association to the relevant authorities
- Advise on good practice in the recruitment and selection of persons working with young people by all Clubs
- Promote greater consultation with under age players and participation by them in Club and County activities
- Deal with breaches of the Code as per relevant guidelines
- Monitor and report to the County Board and relevant Committees on any significant trends or developments relating to the participation of young people in Gaelic Games
- Review and report to the County Board Executive on the extent and nature of implementation of the relevant Association Codes within the County and by Clubs

- Maintain regular communication and liaison with the National Children's Officer and provide reports as required
- Provide an Annual Report to each Annual County Board Convention

#### \*Young People

The term 'young people' is used throughout this leaflet and denotes any person under the age of 18 years.

This leaflet is published and promoted by the Gaelic Athletic Association, Camogie Association, Ladies Football Association, Rounders Council of Ireland and the Irish Handball Council

## 14 The Designated Person

The Club Designated Person will be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children in the Club. The designated person is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the County Board Designated Person, Health Service Executive (ROI) or Social Services (NI) and/or An Garda Síochána/Police Service of Northern Ireland.

The Club Designated Person should;

- Have detailed knowledge of the GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport and the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse document (Fourth Edition 2009).
- Have knowledge of the Code of Ethics Good Practice for Children's Sport (Irish Sports Council and Sport Northern Ireland).
- Have knowledge of statutory guidelines and relevant legislation as they relate to child protection and welfare of young people.
- Have knowledge of definitions, categorisation and indicators of abuse.
- Undertake Code of Ethics (ISC/SportNI) Basic Awareness training provided by Cumann Lúthchleas Gael and any other training relating to their role or to Child Protection and Welfare matters.
- Be familiar with and able to carry out reporting procedures as outlined in the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse (Fourth Edition 2009).
- Communicate with parents and external agencies as appropriate.
- Assist with and identify the need for Code of Ethics (ISC/SportNI) training within the Club and other appropriate training in consultation with the Club's Children's Officer.

- Be aware of local contacts and support services that may assist in developing and delivering their role(s).
- Advise, as appropriate, Club administrators on issues of confidentiality, record keeping and data protection.

The distinct role of the GAA Club Designated Person is outlined in the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse (Fourth Edition 2009). It is important to note that the Designated Officer does not have a counselling or therapeutic role or a responsibility for investigating or validating child protection concerns within their Club.

Investigations of alleged abuse are carried out by the relevant Statutory Authorities as outlined in Children First and Our Duty to Care or by specially appointed trained personnel in counselling, psychological and child therapeutic services. Further review and consideration of any Allegations of Abuse within the GAA structures may be carried out as deemed necessary by the appropriate body in the GAA, appointed for such purposes.

Further details on the role of the Club and County Designated Persons may be obtained in the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse (Fourth Edition 2009).

## 15 Child Welfare and Protection in Sport



The philosophy that the GAA has adopted in the promotion of our Games recognises that every young person has the right to enjoy an inclusive, safe and supportive environment. This we can achieve through the manner in which we coach our young players, play our games, recruit our managers and other personnel and by adopting good practice procedures that ensure players' needs are catered for in a balanced and holistic way.

This section of the Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport seeks to make our personnel more aware of what may be defined as abuse. It is however important to state that individual members of the GAA, whether they be parents or coaches have no authority to investigate allegations of abuse. The procedures for dealing with such allegations are outlined in detail in the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse (Fourth Edition) and such allegations should at the outset be referred to the Club's Designated Person or the County Board Designated Person. A specially appointed group the GAA Child Protection and Welfare Committee is charged with the implementation of the Guidelines on Dealing with Allegations of Abuse in the GAA.

Reluctance to think badly of people or a lack of awareness can lead to resistance in hearing,

recognising and dealing with the possibility of abuse. It is important that coaches, mentors and parents are aware of the possibility for abuse to take place within and outside the Association and it is essential that the mechanism exists as described above to enable them to address any Child Protection concerns that they may experience.

Essentially, the steps to be taken in respect of allegations of abuse and procedures to be followed in respect of an allegation against either volunteer coaches or employees within the Association are contained in the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse.

### Categories and Definition of Child Abuse

Child abuse has generally been defined into four main categories:

Neglect, Emotional Abuse, Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse. A child – defined as a person under 18 yrs of age who is not or who has not been married – may at any given time be subjected to more than one form of abuse.

Appendix 2 outlines in detail the definitions of Neglect, Emotional Abuse, Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse.

## Recognising Child Abuse

The ability to recognise child abuse depends as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on knowledge and information. It is important to note that child abuse is not always readily visible, and may not be clearly observable. It is also important to avoid either a situation where volunteers/employees are constantly wary and on the lookout for abuse or one where complacency exists. Essentially, we should consider, in a measured way, the possibility of child abuse if:

- a young person appears to have suffered a suspicious injury for which no reasonable explanation can be offered
- a young person seems distressed without obvious reason or displays persistent or new behavioural problems
- a young person shows unusual or fearful responses to an adult who is responsible for their care at any particular time

It is important to remember that many signs of child abuse are non-specific, and that alternative explanations for indicators should always be considered.

## Indicators of Concern

Young people will sometimes, though not always, disclose that they are being physically or sexually abused, and are less likely to disclose emotional abuse or neglect. It is possible that volunteers/employees will become concerned because of a young person's behaviour, or because of something that is reported by another person. The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern and should be reported to the Club's Designated Person in the first instance:

- disclosures of abuse by a young person
- age-inappropriate or abnormal sexual play or knowledge
- specific injuries or patterns of injuries

- signs of injury for which there is no explanation, or which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in any other way
- absconding from home
- attempted suicide
- under-age pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease
- someone else (a parent, friend) may disclose that a young person has told them they are being abused, or may have witnessed the abuse themselves
- a young person's behaviour may raise concerns
- a volunteer/employee may personally witness abuse taking place
- there may be consistent indication, over a period of time, that a young person is suffering from emotional or physical neglect
- signs in one or more of the above categories at any one time

A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indicator of abuse or neglect would not constitute a reasonable suspicion, or be reasonable grounds for concern.

Under no circumstances should any individual member of a Club attempt to confront an alleged abuser. Proper procedures should be followed at all times as outlined in our Guidelines for Dealing with Allegation of Abuse. It is the statutory authorities in whatever jurisdiction in which an allegation or report has been made who ultimately will determine how far and in what manner an investigation should be conducted

## Responding to a Young Person Disclosing Abuse

When a child or young person discloses information of actual or suspected abuse you should where possible involve the Club's Designated Person immediately in any form of response:

- (a) deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened
- (b) stay calm and do not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately, and take what the child is saying seriously
- (c) understand that the child has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation
- (d) be honest with the child and tell them that it is not possible to keep information a secret
- (e) make no judgmental statements against the person whom the allegation is made
- (f) do not question the child unless the nature of what s/he is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as "Can you explain to me what you mean by that"
- (g) check out the concerns with the parents/guardians before making a report unless doing so would endanger the child or compromise an investigation (advice from the HSE/Social Services can be sought by the Designated Person in relation to this).
- (h) give the child some indication of what will happen next, such as informing parents/guardians, Health Service Executive or Social Services. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.
- (i) carefully record the details
- (j) pass on this information to your Designated Person
- (k) reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you

Further information on Responding to a Disclosure of Abuse may be obtained in the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse (Fourth Edition 2009).

## Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse

The following steps should be taken in reporting child abuse to statutory authorities:

- (a) Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred, allegation made, report made or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.
- (b) Report the matter as soon as possible to the Designated Person with responsibility for reporting abuse. This may be your Club or County Designated Person.
- (c) If the Designated Person has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, s/he will make a report to the health service executive/social services or Gardaí/Police that have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse.
- (d) The Designated Person shall also, in accordance with the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse, report such matters to the County Designated Person. Such reports will as a matter of course be forwarded to the GAA Child Welfare and Protection Committee who may deal with reports in accordance with the above mentioned Guidelines.
- (e) In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Designated Person is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Gardaí/Police should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.
- (f) If the Designated Person is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist s/he can

informally consult with the local HSE/Social Services. S/he will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report. This report may be made on a standard Reporting Form. (See Reporting Allegations or Suspicions and Abuse Appendix 6)

- (g) If the Designated Person, having consulted with the statutory authorities, decides not to make a formal report to the statutory authorities, they are obliged to facilitate the person that may have made the allegation or report and in facilitating them should inform them as to how they may, if they so wish, make a the report themselves.
- (h) The Designated Person is obliged to keep a record of all actions and decisions taken during the reporting process.

A Designated Person reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities will first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation (advice from the social work department should be sought in relation to this).

In the Republic of Ireland, The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse 'reasonably and in good faith' to the Health Service Executive or the Gardaí. The Act also covers the offence of 'false reporting'.

The main provisions of the Act are:

1. The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse "reasonably and in good faith" to designated officers of Health |Service Executive or any member of An Garda Síochána;
2. The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including, dismissal;
3. The creation of a new offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities

"knowing that statement to be false". This is a new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

While this law does not exist in Northern Ireland, it should be noted that an individual who reports concerns in 'good faith' is not deliberately attempting to slander another person's name., The Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967 exists in Northern Ireland which places the responsibility on everyone to report offences or to forward information to the police by emphasising the, '**duty of every other person, who knows or believes, (a) that the offence or some other arrestable offences has been committed: and (b) that he has information which is likely to secure, or to be material assistance in securing, the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of any person for that offence**'

### **Dealing with an allegation against GAA personnel**

If the Designated Person has reasonable grounds for believing that a child has been or may be in danger of abuse they are obliged to report this matter to the statutory authorities and also to the GAA, through their County Designated Person or as deemed appropriate to the GAA National Children's Office in Croke Park. Should an allegation that merits reporting to the statutory authorities involve a person acting on behalf of the Association or a person associated with the GAA, this person shall be requested or instructed to step aside from their role(s) pending an investigation of the allegation. Failure to step aside may result in the removal of that person from their role(s) pending the outcome of the investigation by the statutory authorities or consideration of the matter by the GAA Child Welfare and Protection Committee.

This action does not conflict with the reporting of such concerns to the statutory authorities nor does it in any way impinge on a person's individual rights as a member of the GAA.

Further information on **Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse** may be obtained in the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse (Fourth Edition 2009).

## Bullying

GAA Clubs have become increasingly aware of the issue of bullying and the detrimental impact it may have on those involved, i.e. victims, perpetrators, families, bystanders and the Association in general. It is vital therefore that all units of the Association are equipped to deal with any instances of bullying and in doing so will seek to counteract and prevent such unacceptable behaviour occurring in the future.

### What is Bullying?

Bullying behaviour can be defined as repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others.

Bullying contains seven key features:

- An intention to be hurtful.
- This intention is carried out.
- The behaviour harms the target (the person or persons being bullied).
- The bully overwhelms the target with his or her power.
- There is often no justification for the action.
- The behaviour repeats itself again and again.
- The bully derives a sense of satisfaction from hurting the target.

There are a number of forms or types of bullying which may take place in a sports context. These include:

- Direct bullying – where the behaviour is obvious and bystanders are aware of it, e.g. physical or verbal bullying.
- Indirect bullying – where the behaviour is more difficult to recognise, e.g. intimidation or isolation.

- Verbal bullying – including slandering, ridiculing, slagging, abusive telephone calls, name calling etc.
- Physical bullying- including pushing, shoving, assaults, damage to person's property.
- Gesture bullying – including non-verbal gestures/ glances which can convey threatening or frightening messages/intent.
- E-bullying/Cyber-bullying – using web pages, emails, text etc to abuse, intimidate and attack others, either directly or indirectly.
- Relational bullying – behaviour which sets out to deliberately damage another person's friendship or feelings of inclusion in a friendship group, e.g. exclusion, isolation etc.
- Extortion – the deliberate extortion of money or other items of property accompanied by threats.
- Homophobic bullying – bullying that is typically aimed at young people who are gay or who are perceived to be gay. It can include name calling, isolation and violence.
- Racial bullying – can be expressed physically, socially or psychologically when one is labelled negatively as being different from others according to one's race.
- Mobbing – This means that the target is being bullied by a group of perpetrators and not just one perpetrator.

All types and forms of Bullying are unacceptable. It is important to be aware that the Bullying of a child in a GAA Club may be carried out by other children, younger or older, by children individually or as part of a group or by an adult or adults involved in the Club. Indeed a child may be suffering from Bullying outside of the Club but the actions suffered may still impinge upon the child's participation in your Club activities and your games.

Bullying is a 'whole organisation matter and as such requires a 'whole organisation' approach. This means that any anti-bullying approach should step beyond those children and young people and other

personnel who are directly involved and take account of everyone in the Association, as they all have a part to play in countering bullying. A whole organisation approach aims to create a supportive environment where it is not acceptable to bully and where the ethos of the organisation is that it is 'ok to tell'. In creating this type of environment, the cycle of silence in relation to bullying can be broken.

All Clubs should develop and implement strategies both in relation to prevention and intervention in order to adequately address the issue of bullying.

Prevention strategies include anti-bullying policy, awareness raising through training, codes of behaviour, peer mentoring, and health education programmes. Intervention strategies include mediation, No Blame Approach, Method of Shared Concern, Parental/Guardian Involvement and disciplinary measures.

Bullying behaviour may take place in any setting whether it be in schools, the home or in a sports Club setting. In the first instance, it is the responsibility of the Club whether it is through their Children's Officer, their volunteer coaches, or employees to deal with any instances of bullying at Club level.

The more extreme forms of bullying behaviour would be regarded as physical or emotional abuse, and as such should be referred to the Club's Designated Person who in line with GAA guidelines may deal with the matter as a reported allegation of abuse which may be reportable to the statutory authorities. Each Club should have a clear policy on countering bullying behaviour which is known to members and implemented throughout the Club.

### Complaints Procedures

Certain complaints and breaches of rules and procedures are dealt with in the GAA by:

- The GAA Official Guide (which contains the Constitution and Rules of the GAA)

- GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegation of Abuse (Fourth Edition 2009)
- The GAA Code of Behaviour and
- The GAA Code of Conduct

At local level some other matters of complaint that may not come under the immediate ambit of the above procedural rules and guidelines may be dealt with via a Complaints Procedure and it should be recognised that individuals in the GAA, including players (adult and under age), and the parents of under age players have a right to make complaints and have these complaints dealt with in a fair and efficient manner.

All Clubs should develop a clear complaints procedure for use by young people or by parents who are dissatisfied with any aspect of activities or services provided. The procedure should be promoted with children and young people, parents/guardians, staff and volunteers.



**What is a complaint?**

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, which suggests a failure to perform a function or provide a service in line with stated practices and policies.

**Purpose of Complaint:**

A complaint gives an organisation the opportunity to:

- Put something right which has gone wrong
- Restore the service to the required standard
- Ensure that faults/mistakes are acknowledged
- Provide a remedy

**Key elements for consideration**

Those who make complaints should have easy access to an effective procedure to allow a quick resolution of their complaint.

Who is the first point of contact for a complaint? This should be made known to all and the contact details of the person receiving such complaints on behalf of the Club or County also made known in advance.

**Stages in a complaints procedure**

There are normally two or three stages in a complaints procedure:

**Stage 1 (informal)**

The Association acknowledges the complaint and attempts to resolve the issue at local level. Experience has shown that the vast majority of complaints are best resolved informally and at the point nearest delivery of the service.

**Stage 2 (Formal)**

If the complaint cannot be resolved at the first stage, it is necessary to outline how it will be dealt with subsequently. This stage may involve formalising the complaint by completing a complaints form or writing a letter. A realistic time frame for acknowledgement of the complaint and subsequent investigation should be identified. This time frame for resolving a complaint should be short and not drawn out for any purpose unless it is beyond your control. Those with

responsibility for investigating complaints should be clearly identified. All parties need to be informed of the outcome in writing.

An appropriate final decision making point should be identified and options for appeals should be outlined.

**Additional considerations:**

Everyone involved – the complainant and the subject (s) – should be given the right of representation. They may for example be accompanied or represented by a friend or colleague.

Any process should be clearly and accurately recorded at every stage. Good practice would indicate that it is preferable to confirm arrangements in writing. All information from the process – written or verbal – should be kept confidential.

When dealing with a complaint it is important to be clear about:

- The particular incident of concern
- Any previous incidents taken into account
- Any remedial action to be taken, e.g. an apology
- Any new behaviour expected
- What will happen if the arrangements agreed are not adhered to?

In the event of a particularly serious incident where a criminal offence is suspected, the Gardaí should conduct the investigation. Complaints that may infer any forms of Abuse should be dealt with under the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse.

**Confidentiality in the processing of allegations**

Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in cases of abuse, welfare or bad practice. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected.



The following points should be kept in mind:

- A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the child will supersede all other considerations.
- All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know.
- Information should be conveyed to the parents / guardians of the child in a sensitive way. Discussion with the statutory authorities should take place in relation to information sharing with all parties when ongoing investigations are taking place.
- Giving information to others on a 'need to know' basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality.
- All persons involved in a child protection process (the child, his/her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family, coaches) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure.

- Information should be stored in a secure place, with limited access only by designated people.
- The requirements of Data Protection legislation should be adhered to.

Any breaches of confidentiality shall be deemed as a serious matter and dealt with accordingly within the Association.

#### Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but should not be ignored. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child/children is paramount. Any such complaints relating to possible child protection concerns should be brought to the attention of the Designated Person.



## Appendices

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Appendix 1  
Useful references

Appendix 2  
Categories and Definitions of Child Abuse

Appendix 3  
Parental Consent Form

Appendix 4  
Juvenile Membership Application Form

Appendix 5  
Volunteer, Coach, Mentor Application Form

Appendix 6  
Reporting Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse

Appendix 7  
Record of attendance at Club Training and Games

## Appendix 1 Useful References

**Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport**  
Irish Sports Council and Sport Northern Ireland, Irish Sports Council, West End Office Park, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15

**Code of Behaviour for all persons working with young people**

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael (GAA). Published in association with Cumann Camógaíochta na nGael, Cumann Peil Gael na mBan, Comhairle Liathróid Láimhe na hÉireann and Comhairle Cluiche Corr na hÉireann, Páirc an Chrócaigh, Dublin 3

**Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse**  
Cumann Lúthchleas Gael (GAA) (Fourth Edition 2009)  
Páirc an Chrócaigh, Dublin 3

**Children First**, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children,  
Department of Health and Children, Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2

**Our Duty to Care (NI)**

Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People  
Volunteer Development Agency, 129 Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 1SH

**Our Duty to Care (ROI)**

Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People  
Department of Health and Children, Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2

**Let's Beat Bullying**

An anti-bullying resource for those working with young people in Youth Work Settings  
National Youth Council of Ireland, 3 Montague Street, Dublin 2

**Guidelines for taking and using images of children and young people in the arts sector**

The Arts Council, 70 Merrion Square, Dublin 2

**Code of Good Practice for the Youth Work Sector**

Department of Education and Science, Marlborough Street, Dublin 1

**Webwise**

For information on the safe use of the Internet check [www.webwise.ie](http://www.webwise.ie)

The GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport, the Code of Behaviour for all Persons Working with Young People and Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse (Fourth Edition 2009) are downloadable at <http://www.gaa.ie>

## Appendix 2 Categories and Definitions of Child Abuse

Child abuse has generally been defined into four main categories:

Neglect, Emotional Abuse, Physical Abuse and Sexual Abuse. A child – defined as a person under 18 yrs of age who is not or who has not been married – may at any given time be subjected to more than one form of abuse.

### Neglect

Neglect is normally defined in terms of an omission, where a child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, or medical care.

**Harm** can be defined as the ill treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is **significant** is determined by his/her health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a similar child.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways **over a period of time** rather than at one specific point. For instance, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having his or her needs met for supervision and safety. A child whose ongoing failure to gain weight or whose height is significantly below average may be deprived of adequate nutrition. A child who consistently misses school may be deprived of intellectual stimulation. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his/her well-being and/or development are severely affected.

### Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a caregiver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It

occurs when a child's needs for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms. Examples of emotional abuse include:

- a. persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming.
- b. conditional parenting, in which the level of care shown to a child is made contingent on his or her behaviour or actions.
- c. emotional unavailability by the child's parent/ carer.
- d. unresponsiveness, inconsistent or inappropriate expectations of a child.
- e. premature imposition of responsibility on a child.
- f. unrealistic or inappropriate expectations of a child's capacity to understand something or to behave and control himself in a certain way.
- g. under or over protection of a child.
- h. failure to show interest in, or provide age appropriate opportunities for a child's cognitive and emotional development.
- i. use of unreasonable or over harsh disciplinary measures.
- j. exposure to domestic violence.

Children show signs of emotional abuse by their behaviour (for example, excessive clinginess to, or avoidance of the parent/carer), their emotional state (low self-esteem, unhappiness), or their development (non-organic failure to thrive). The **threshold of significant harm** is reached when abusive interactions become typical of the relationship between the child and parent/carer.

### Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child, including:

- a. shaking
- b. use of excessive force in handling
- c. deliberate poisoning

- d. suffocation
- e. munchausen's syndrome by proxy (where parents fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness)
- f. allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child

The above definitions of child sexual abuse presented here are not necessarily deemed to be legal definitions but are adopted from statutory guidelines that govern our work with children and young people and from the Code of Ethics and Good Practice in Youth Sport as issued by the Irish Sports Council and Sport NI.

### **Sexual Abuse**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his/her gratification or sexual arousal, or for that of others, for example:

- a. exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child
- b. intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification
- c. masturbation in the presence of a child or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation
- d. sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal
- e. sexual exploitation of a child
- f. consensual sexual activity between an adult and a child under 17 years. In relation to child sexual abuse, it should be noted that, for the purposes of the criminal law, the age of consent to sexual intercourse is 17 years. This means, for example, that sexual intercourse between a 16 year old girl and her 17 year old boyfriend is illegal, although it might not be regarded as constituting child sexual abuse

## Appendix 3 Parental Consent Form

Please complete this form in full and return to your Child's Team Manager or your Club's Children's Officer. The completion of this form is essential so as to enable your child participate in all GAA games, training and other activities in your Club.

I wish to inform you that as a Parent/Guardian of my child I give permission for

\_\_\_\_\_ (child) to participate in

\_\_\_\_\_ (name of Club) games and other related activities

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Child's Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Home Telephone No \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact Numbers \_\_\_\_\_

Please state if your child has been diagnosed with any specific illnesses, condition, allergies or disabilities of which we should be aware (i.e. asthma, diabetes, epilepsy, and allergies etc to particular food or drink).

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Is your child currently taking any form of medication? Yes / No

If yes, please give details. \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child need to be in possession of or need to be able to administer medication while participating in GAA games or other activities? Yes / No

Can your child administer this medication without assistance? Yes / No

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 4 Juvenile Membership Application Form

### **GAA Club Juvenile Membership Application Form**

To be completed and returned to your team manager with your membership fee please

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Home telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_ Emergency contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

Team \_\_\_\_\_

Manager \_\_\_\_\_

Child's School \_\_\_\_\_

Child's relevant medical condition or relevant medication information

--

Information on team training, games or Club news will be sent to you on a regular basis via group texts. It is the Club's wish that this information be sent to the parents or guardians of our under age players rather than directly to the under age players. What telephone contact number may we use to contact your child?

Information contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

I accept and understand the GAA Code of Behaviour, on my own behalf and on behalf of my child

Signature of parent/guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

During the season our teams may be photographed or filmed for coaching purposes, or as part of match coverage in newspapers or for use on our Club web site or for publicising our Club. Such photographs will adhere to the GAA Guidelines for use of photography and filming and should you object to your child being photographed or filmed please inform your team manager as part of this registration procedure.

## Appendix 5 Volunteer, Coach, Mentor Application Form

GAA Volunteer, Coach, Mentor Application Form	
1. Surname: _____	Forename: _____
2. Previous name (if any): _____	
3. Address: _____ _____ _____	
Telephone number: _____	Mobile number: _____
4. Date of Birth: ____ / ____ / ____	Place of Birth: _____
5. Occupation: _____	
6. Please outline why you wish to become involved in the GAA? _____ _____ _____	
7. Please give details of any previous involvement in the GAA, or in any other sports organisation, including coaching experience and relevant qualifications: _____ _____ _____	
8. Do you suffer from any illness or medical condition which may at times affect your ability to work with young people in the GAA? If so, please give details: _____ _____ _____	

9. Please supply the name, address, and a contact telephone number of two people (non-relative), who from personal knowledge are willing to support your application. If you have a previous involvement in a sports organisation one of these two named person (below) should be from that sports organisations:

Name 1: \_\_\_\_\_ Name 2: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel No: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

**Declaration**

10.1 I confirm that nothing within my personal or professional background deems me unsuitable for a position which involves working with children/young people in the GAA.

10.2 I declare that the above information is true and agree to abide by the GAA Code of Behaviour and Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**For Club use only**

Checked by phone \_\_\_\_\_ Visit \_\_\_\_\_ Letter \_\_\_\_\_

Checked by: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 6 Reporting Allegations or Suspicions of Abuse

### Standard Form for Reporting Child Protection and/or Welfare Concerns to the HSE.

This form has been re-produced from Children First -  
National Guideline for the Protection and Welfare of Children

### PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

**In case of Emergency or outside of HSE hours, contact should be made with An Garda Síochána.**

- A.** To Principal Social Worker/Designate: \_\_\_\_\_  
This will be printed as relevant to each Community Care Area.

**1. Details of Child:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Male: ☐ Female: ☐

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Age/D.O.B.: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1a.** Name of Mother: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Father: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of Mother if different to Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Address of Father if different to Child: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1b.** Care and Custody arrangements regarding child, if known: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- 1c.** Household Composition:

Name	Relationship to Child	Date of Birth	Additional Information e.g. School/Occupation

Note: A separate report form must be completed in respect of each child being reported.

2. **Details of concern(s), allegation(s) or incident(s) dates, times, who was present, description of any observed injuries, parent's view(s), child's view(s) if known.**

3. **Details of person(s) allegedly causing concern in relation to the child:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Male: ☐ Female: ☐

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to Child: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

4. **Name and Address of other personnel or agencies involved with this child:**

Social Workers: \_\_\_\_\_ School: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Public Health Nurse: \_\_\_\_\_ Gardaí: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

G.P.: \_\_\_\_\_ Pre-School/Crèche/Youth Club: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hospital: \_\_\_\_\_ Other (Specify e.g. Youth Groups etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. **Are Parents/Legal Guardians aware of this referral to the Social Work Department?**

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, what is their attitude? \_\_\_\_\_

6. **Details of Person reporting concerns:**

(Please see Guidance Notes re. Limitations of confidentiality)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Nature and extent of contact with Child/Family: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. **Details of Person completing form:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_ Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 7 Record of Attendance at Club Training and Games

Please record the names of all players, coaches and managers in attendance at G (Games) or T (Training).

Please record any injuries or disciplinary issues on a separate sheet.

[illegible]

## Notes

## Notes

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