

# Section 3

## Code of Behaviour

### When working with underage players

This Code of Behaviour is one section, albeit a vital section, of the Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport, Our Games - Our Code.

The Code of Behaviour addresses the minimum appropriate levels of behaviour, practice and conduct required from our Young Players, Coaches, Supporters, Parents/Guardians, Referees and Clubs.

The Gaelic Athletic Association, the Camogie Association, Ladies Gaelic Football Association, GAA Handball Ireland and the Rounders Council of Ireland have endorsed this Code so that it may act as a guidance for those who promote and deliver our Gaelic Games and assist them in complying with the highest possible standards in our work with children and young people.

Everyone involved in our sports and in our 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.

This Code should be used in tandem with the overall Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport, Our Games – Our Code, where roles and responsibilities are outlined in greater detail. It is recommended that Coaches, Parents/Guardians and Players sign this Code of Behaviour and present the signed document, as a commitment of its implementation, to their Club Children's Officer.

Our aim is to ensure that young people and children who play our games receive the best possible care, attention and protection while participating in our Gaelic Games.

Should a breach of the Code be alleged, or when people may refuse to adhere to the contents of the Code, certain actions may be deemed necessary and appropriate so as to protect the integrity of our work with children and young people and also to ensure that they receive the best possible care, attention and protection while participating in our Games.

Alleged breaches of this Code may therefore be enquired into, regardless of where or when they occur, in accordance with the guidance contained elsewhere in this Code and with particular reference to the accompanying publication, 'Our Games Our Code: Dealing with Alleged Breaches of the Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport.' Following any such enquiry, and where deemed necessary, sanctions or disciplinary action may be taken against those who have been proven to have breached the Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport.

This Code applies to all underage players and those who assist them in the preparation and playing of our games, regardless of competition or age group. Clubs, County Boards and Games Officials who are responsible for organising our games at all levels are obliged to implement this Code in the preparation of their teams and players for all competitions and at all other levels including Club blitzes and competitions, County development squads and Inter -County games.

It is our wish that this Code is developed, promoted and implemented as an initiative that encourages fair play, respect, equality, safety and non discrimination in all aspects of our work with children and young people.



# Young Players

Young Players can benefit greatly from sports in terms of personal development and enjoyment. Our players are encouraged to realise that as a result of their participation in our Gaelic Games that they also have a responsibility to treat other players and officials with fairness and respect. With rights there will always be responsibilities.

Young Players, and those who work with them in our Associations are required to 'sign up' and abide by this Code of Behaviour and to any other policies or codes in your Club or 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, cultural or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation or religious beliefs.
- Support fellow team members regardless of whether they do well or not.
- Represent their team, their Club and their family with pride and dignity.
- Respect all Coaches, Officials and their opponents.
- Be gracious in defeat and modest in victory.
- Shake hands before and after a game as part of the Give Respect Get Respect initiative, irrespective of the result.
- Inform their Coach/Mentor/Manager in advance if they are unavailable for training and games.
- Take due care of Club equipment.
- Know that it is acceptable to 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.

## YOUNG PLAYERS SHOULD ENGAGE IN GOOD PRACTICE:

- Never cheat – always play by the rules.
- Never shout at or argue with a game's official, with their Coach, their team mates or opponents and should never use violence.
- Never use unfair or Bullying tactics to gain advantage or isolate other players.
- Never spread rumours.
- Never tell lies about adults or other young people.
- Never play or train if they feel unwell or are injured.
- Never use unacceptable language or racial and/or sectarian references to an opponent, a fellow player or official by words, deeds or gesture.
- Never consume non-prescribed drugs or performance enhancing supplements

# 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 underage 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 are required to undertake agreed vetting and background Police checks within the jurisdiction in which they work and to attend coaching and training courses relevant to their roles. All such Coaches must attend relevant child welfare and protection training as provided or instructed by their Governing body and must also complete a basic coach education qualification.

## 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 underage players always leave with a sense of achievement and an increased level of self-esteem.
- Recognise the development needs and capacity of all underage 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 when working with underage players.
- 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 underage 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 and encourage all players and fellow officials to always play by the rules of the game.
- Do not encourage or threaten a player by deed or gesture to act in any unacceptable manner towards an opponent, fellow player or official.

- Promote the RESPECT campaign amongst your players, fellow coaches, parents and supporters.
- Do not smoke while working with underage players.
- Do not consume alcohol or non prescribed drugs immediately prior to or while underage players are in your care.
- Encourage parents to become involved in your team and Club activities wherever possible.

## CONDUCT OF COACHES WHEN WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- 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.
- Don't shout at or lecture players or reprimand/ridicule them when they make a mistake. Children learn best through trial and error. Children and young people should not be afraid to risk error so as to learn.
- The use of any form of physical punishment is prohibited as is any form of physical response to misbehaviour, unless it is by way of restraint.
- Avoid incidents of horse play or role play or telling jokes etc. that could be misinterpreted.
- Never undertake any form of therapy or hypnosis, in the training of children.
- Never encourage players to consume non-prescribed drugs or take performance enhancing supplements.

## AVOID COMPROMISING YOUR ROLE AS A COACH

Some activities may require coaches to come into physical contact with underage players in the course of their duties. However, coaches should;

- Avoid taking coaching sessions on your own.
- Only deliver one to one coaching, if deemed necessary, within a group setting.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with an underage player and never engage in inappropriate touching of a player.
- Be aware that any necessary contact should be determined by the age and development of the player and should only take place with the permission and understanding of the player and in an open environment in the context of developing a player's skills and abilities.

## BEST PRACTICE

- Ensure that all of your players are suitably and safely attired to play their chosen sport. e.g. helmets (Hurling and Camogie), goggles (Handball), shin guards, gum shields (Football).
- As a coach always be punctual and properly attired.
- Be accompanied by at least one other adult at coaching sessions, games and in underage team dressing rooms.
- Set realistic – stretching but achievable – performance goals for your players and teams.
- Keep a record of attendance at training and at games by both players and coaches.

- 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.
- Keep a record of any injuries and actions subsequently taken. Ensure that another official referee/ team mentor is present when a player is being attended to and can corroborate the relevant details.
- Make adequate provision for First Aid services.
- Do not encourage or permit players to play while injured.
- 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.
- 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.
- Be willing to keep the necessary and emergency medication of players in a safe and accessible place in accordance with the wishes and permission of the parents/guardians.
- Do not administer medication or medical aid unless you are willing to do so and have received the necessary training to administer such aid.
- 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 be proceeded with following permission from parents/guardians.
- Do not communicate individually by text/email with underage players.
- Do not engage in communications with underage players via social network sites.
- Encourage parents/guardians to play an active role in organising and assisting various activities for your teams and your Club.
- 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 and that all drivers are adequately insured.
- With the exception of their own child a coach should not transport a child alone, except in emergency or exceptional circumstances.

## 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 underage 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.

- Never encourage your child(ren) to consume non-prescribed drugs or take performance enhancing supplements.
- 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, coaches 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.
- Not entering team dressing rooms unless deemed necessary by the team coach (es) so as to protect the privacy of other underage players.

#### **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 and supporters. 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 and represent.

Fellow supporters have a responsibility to ensure that all spectators conduct themselves in an acceptable and well behaved manner at all times, when attending our games and competitions. Unacceptable conduct by supporters should be reported to stadium stewards or officials in charge.

Supporters should realise and consider 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 behaviour by not using foul language or harassing players, coaches or officials.
- Not entering the field of play, before, during or after a game, unless specifically invited to do so by an official in charge.
- 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 who 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 are conscious of the fact that they are instrumental in ensuring our games are played in a sporting manner in accordance with the rules of the game.

Players, Coaches, Mentors, Parents/Guardians and other Club personnel have a key role to play in the delivery of this aspect of our Gaelic Games particularly when working with underage players. The manner in which we accept the role, authority and decisions of a Referee will naturally be scrutinised very closely by our underage players.

### IN THEIR CAPACITY AS REFEREES OF UNDERAGE GAMES WE EXPECT OUR REFEREES TO:

- Abide fully with the Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport: Our Games – Our Code
- 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 assessments and supports to improve performance.
- Uphold and implement the Give Respect – Get Respect initiative at all levels.

Players, Coaches, Supporters, Parents/Guardians and other Club personnel should recognise the pivotal role that Referees play in our underage games and should support them at all times when fulfilling their roles.

## GIVE RESPECT - GET RESPECT

**Give Respect – Get Respect** is an awareness campaign that seeks to ensure that Gaelic Games are promoted and played in a positive, fair and enjoyable manner and where Players, Coaches, Spectators and Referees Give Respect – Get Respect from each other.

The RESPECT campaign applies at all levels and amongst all players regardless of age, competition or ability. The key participants in the Give Respect – Get Respect campaign are not just the Players themselves but Coaches, Clubs, Parents, Referees and Supporters.

The Give Respect – Get Respect initiative is supported by the GAA, Ladies Gaelic Football Association, the Camogie Association, GAA Handball Ireland and the Rounders Council of Ireland.

### THE RESPECT CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS THE FOLLOWING GOOD PRACTICES:

- All players and coaches shake hands with their opponents and the referee before and after each game.
- Mark out a designated spectators' area around the playing area.
- At relevant underage categories teams should strive to achieve the maximum participation of all players in accordance with agreed playing models.
- The host Club should welcome referees and opposing teams to all games.
- A merit award, based on sporting endeavour and fair play, shall be awarded to players and teams who have upheld the RESPECT principles.
- Adopt and implement the Code of Behaviour when working with underage players as the minimum level of agreement between the Club and players, coaches, parents, guardians and supporters at underage level.
- Organise half time exhibition games during Club and inter County League and Championship Games that promote the principles of the RESPECT campaign in association with Schools, other Clubs and Cumann na mBunscol.

**RESPECT**

- RESPONSIBLE
- ENCOURAGING
- SUPPORTIVE
- POSITIVE
- ENABLING
- CONSIDERATE
- TOLERANT



# The Club

Clubs that cater for underage players must do so with a child centred approach and philosophy that recognises that the welfare of the child is paramount while ensuring that each child is provided with developmental opportunities that are appropriate to their age and abilities.

Clubs must ensure that those chosen to work on their behalf with underage players have been selected following a thorough recruitment, selection, training and coaching procedure which includes relevant vetting in accordance with the jurisdiction requirements in which we operate.

Clubs must also provide those who work on our behalf with the necessary supports so as to enable them to fulfill their roles. Clubs will ensure that those chosen to work with children and young people are at all times competent and confident in their roles, have undertaken comprehensive recruitment procedures including vetting, have received relevant child welfare related training, as provided or instructed by their Governing Body, and must also have completed a basic coach education qualification.

## CLUBS SHOULD PROMOTE QUALITY PARTICIPATION BY:

- Adopting the Code of Behaviour as a basic level of agreement between the Club and their players, their coaches, 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 relevant Child Protection Training is undertaken by all persons working in an official capacity with children and young people in the Club.
- Adopting and implementing clearly defined recruitment and selection procedures when choosing coaches and other relevant personnel to work with young people.

## ENCOURAGE THE PARTICIPATION OF YOUNG PLAYERS BY:

- Ensuring that training schedules, playing rules, use of equipment and length of games are structured to facilitate greater participation by all Young Players, and are suitable to all age categories, and to the ability and maturity level of 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 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 a group consists of both males and females, that an adequate adult to member ratio of male and female coaches is 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 any policies and guidelines as issued by the Club, by their National Governing Bodies, or by statutory authorities and agencies in their jurisdiction.
- Appointing a Designated Liaison 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 all 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 18 years of age are invited into adult squads. Boundaries of behaviour in adult groups are normally different from the boundaries that apply to underage teams and squads.

- Appointing a Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport Hearings Committee at Club level to hear complaints or allegations of breaches of the Code of Best Practice. The Committee of three people shall, through their representation, reflect the integrated nature of the Club, i.e. membership of the GAA, LGFA and Camogie. The functions of this Committee, plus all other procedures relating to dealing with breaches of the Code, may be accessed in a complimentary publication, Our Games Our Code: How to Deal with Alleged Breaches of the Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport.