



Safeguarding Information Webinar

2 July 2022

Safeguarding Webinar

- ❑ How to process an allegation of assault (abuse) by an adult on a child**
- ❑ Elaborate on the amendment to Rule 6.5 (a) that a Bye-Law shall not prevent a transfer being granted where the relevant Competitions Control Committee is satisfied that it is necessary to do so to protect a child from harm and to comply with the child safeguarding commitments of the Association**

How to process an allegation of assault by an adult on a child

- **What is the law on this in Ireland?**
- **What has been our experience to date?**
- **The implications for the GAA on an All Ireland basis**

Key Legislation and Guidance

Children First 2015

Outlines the obligations for organisations providing services to children, to keep children safe from harm while availing of those services.and report allegations of abuse, without delay

Criminal Justice - Withholding of Information on Offences Against Children & Vulnerable Persons Act 2012

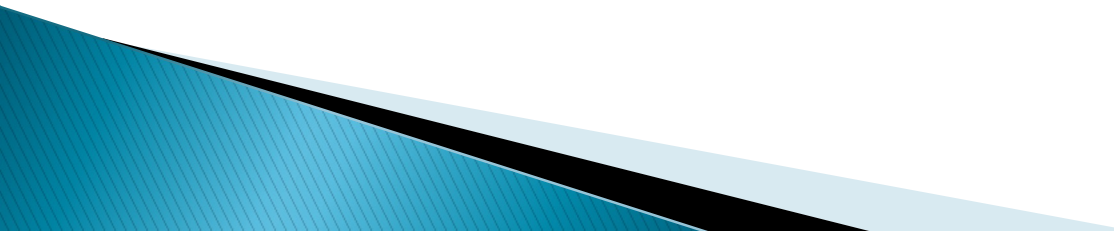
Creates a criminal offence of withholding information relating to the commission of a serious offence...against a person under 18 years or a vulnerable person.

Criminal Law Act (Northern Ireland) 1967

States that anyone with direct knowledge or information about an arrestable offence is required to inform the police within a reasonable time. An arrestable offence may include the non-disclosure of serious cases of child abuse.

Children's (NI) Order 1995 and Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland 2017

GAA Safeguarding Procedures

- ☐ **Code of Behaviour (Underage):** Outlines the minimum level of conduct we require of those who work with children, underage coaches, supporters, referees, parents (Rule 1:13)
 - ☐ **Guidance for Dealing with and Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse**
 - ☐ **Code of Conduct (Rule 1:14)**
 - ☐ **Child Safeguarding Statement – every two years**
 - ☐ **Children's Officers in every Club/County**
 - ☐ **Designated Liaison Person (DLP) in every Club/County**
 - ☐ **CCCs at adult and at juvenile level to deal with games related infractions**
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What's happening out there?

- ❑ **Good practices generally and not so good**
- ❑ **7 cases of alleged assault, by an adult on a child (U18 yr. old) in 7 counties in the last 12 months **NONE** of which were reported to the GAA Children's Office or Tusla or Gateway Teams**
- ❑ **All 7 cases went to County CCCs**
- ❑ **3 new (old) cases reported to our Children's Office within hours of the Ard Stiúrthóir's memo..one going back to August 2021**

What is required of CCCs and County Boards?

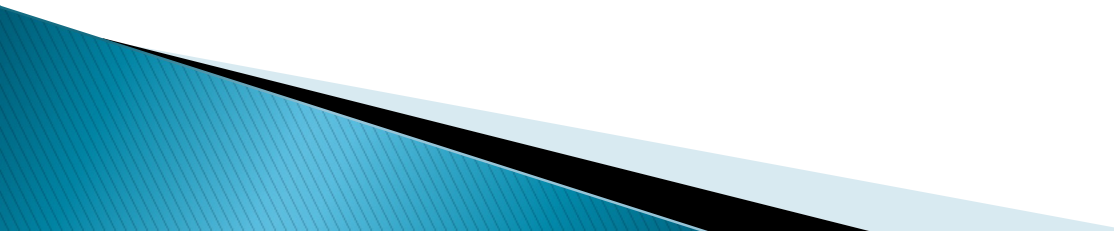
- ❑ Memo from Tom Ryan Ard Stiúrthóir 1st June 2022**
- ❑ Breaches of law:**
 - an assault of a child by an adult**
 - failure to report reasonable grounds for concern**
- ❑ CCCs found that the actions of some coaches to be ‘interference with a player’ but didn’t report**
- ❑ Our Child Safeguarding Statement makes a commitment to keep children safe from harm**
- ❑ Our Child Safeguarding Statement says we will report allegations or concerns of abuse**

Future actions required of CCCs*

- ❑ It is not necessary to prove that abuse has occurred to report a concern to Tusla or a Gateway Team. All that is required is that you have reasonable grounds for concern.**
- ❑ If an allegation of abuse e.g. assault, involving an adult and a child, comes to the a CCC or County Committee, you just immediately report this matter to the GAA Children's Office, in addition to any statutory reporting that occurs.**

Reasonable Grounds for Concern

If the threshold for 'reasonable grounds for concern' has been reached we must act on this both internally & externally

- ☐ Evidence, for example of an injury or behaviour, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way
 - ☐ Any concern about possible sexual abuse
 - ☐ Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect
 - ☐ A child saying or indicating that he or she has been abused
 - ☐ Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse
 - ☐ An account from a person who saw a child being abused
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Example of assaults that occurred

- ❑ Coach of underage Team A hits 14 yr. old boy from Team B on the head as they walk off the pitch at the end of a game. A row ensues. CCC investigates. Coach received 8 week suspension. Matter not reported to GAA Children's Office or to statutory authorities.**
- ❑ Coach subsequently charged with assault.**

Example (2) of assaults that occurred

- ❑ Umpire allegedly struck Tom an underage player, Tom, during a break in play, as ‘he was dogging’ the umpire’s own son during the game. Tom’s father witnessed the alleged act. Tom and father submitted detailed statements to CCC and statutory authority. CCC held a hearing. Referee did not see the alleged act. Nobody was prepared to make a statement as the umpire is very popular.**
- ❑ CCC found that the matter could not be proven, due to “the absence of independent witnesses”. Tom and his father mysteriously withdrew their complaint, making it impossible for the statutory authorities to carry out their investigation.**
- ❑ Never reported by County to Children’s Office**

What is required of CCCs and Counties?

- ▶ Our Association and legal responsibilities require that if an allegation of abuse, (assault), involving an adult and a child comes to the attention of a CCC or County Committee (at any level) this concern or allegation must be reported to the GAA Children's Office.
- ▶ The matter may at any time be reported to the statutory authorities, by anybody, before, after or while being reported to the GAA.

Amendment to Transfer Rule at Congress 2022

**Rule 6.5 (a) re Transfers within
a County**

RULE 6.5 (a)

A County shall have a Bye-Law governing the transfer of players from one Club to another within the County. Such Bye-Law shall be consistent with Rule. Such Bye-Law may restrict the eligibility of a player to a transfer by reference to such matters as the County shall consider appropriate (e.g. by reference to permanent residence or Other Relevant Connections between the transfer applicant and the Catchment Area of the proposed new Club etc.).

A County shall have the option, within County Bye-Law, to allow a player to play with a Club in the area in which he works. **However, a Bye-Law shall not prevent a transfer being granted where the relevant Competitions Control Committee is satisfied that it is necessary to do so to protect a child from harm and to comply with the child safeguarding commitments of the Association.....**

Relative to Motion 24, the following Directive is issued by Central Council to Competitions Control Committees (under Rule 3.43(b)):

*If a transfer request cites child safeguarding as one of the grounds for the request, **that ground should only be considered if there has been a prior complaint in relation to child safeguarding to a Children's Officer – Club, County, Provincial or National.***

Where such a complaint has been made, the CCC considering the transfer request shall obtain a report of any investigation carried out by the relevant Children's Officer before considering the Transfer request. If there has been no complaint or investigation, then the Transfer request should be adjudicated upon without reference to child safeguarding.

Implementing the change in Rule

- ▶ **Note:** This is effective since 26 March 2022. The ‘safeguarding issue,’ if considered under Rule 6.6, must **prior** to submitting the transfer request have been investigated or considered by the relevant Children’s Officer.
- ▶ **SAFEGUARDING**
‘to keep children safe from **harm** while they avail of our services’

CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

Please print in A3

Your Club Crest

Child Safeguarding Statement



The Gaelic Athletic Associations (GAA, LGFA, Camogie, Handball and Rounders) in accordance with our Code of Behaviour (Underage), our policies, procedures and our legislative requirements have agreed this Child Safeguarding Statement, which is binding on all members and units of our Associations.

The basic aims of the Gaelic Athletic Associations include fostering and developing our Gaelic Games and Irish cultural activities among young people and children. These games and related activities are organised and promoted by dedicated volunteers at Club, County, Provincial and National levels with the cooperation and support of an equally

dedicated cohort of staff all of whom are committed to the safeguarding of children and young people in our Association as we seek to create a safe environment for young people to grow and develop.

PRINCIPLES TO SAFEGUARD CHILDREN FROM HARM

This statement recognises that in accordance with legislation and with the requirements of our Codes and Rules that the welfare and interests of children are paramount in all circumstances. It aims to ensure that all children and young people have a positive, developmental and enjoyable experience of Gaelic Games and when participating in our activities that they do so, as far as is practicable, in a safe and enjoyable environment.

RISK ASSESSMENT

In preparing this statement we have completed a risk assessment of the potential for harm to children when they are participating in our games and attending our activities under the following headings: Club and Coaching Practices; Complaints & Discipline; Reporting Procedures; Facilities; Recruitment; Communications and General Risk of Harm.

To the right is a list of areas of risk identified and the list of procedures and policies that address these risks.

RISK IDENTIFIED

Risk of harm including assault, ill treatment or neglect of a child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development or welfare or sexual abuse of a child

Risk of harm of abuse when hosting an activity and/or an away trip
Risk of harm of online abuse through social media
Bullying of a child

PROCEDURE/POLICIES IN PLACE

Code of Behaviour (Underage) (QR code 1)
Maintaining Good Practice and Behaviour (QR code 2)
Recruitment Policy
Vetting Policy
Safeguarding Training Policy
Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse (QR code 3)

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Code of Behaviour (Underage)-Hosting, Away Trips & Transport
Code of Behaviour (Underage)
Association Social Media Policy
Anti-Bullying Statement, Guidelines & Training

PROCEDURES

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been prepared in accordance with the legislative requirements contained in the Children First Act 2015, Children's First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017), the Children (NI) Order 1995, Tusla's Child Safeguarding: A Guide for Policy, Procedure and Practice and as required by our Association rules.

Each Club shall maintain a list of members who, if known, and in accordance with the Children First Act 2015 are specified as mandated persons, regardless of what role (if any), they hold in the Club.

The following procedures contained in our risk assessment support our intention to safeguard children while they are availing of our services.

- Procedure in respect of the management of allegations of abuse against any member, non-member or staff/volunteer of a child availing of our services
- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children and young people
- Procedure for provision of and access to Gaelic Games Child Safeguarding Training and information including the identification of the occurrence of harm
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection or welfare concerns to the Association, Tusla and/or Gateway Team as applicable
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person i.e. the Children's Officer (National, Club and County as appropriate) who is the relevant person for the purpose of this statement (see name below)

MANDATED PERSON PROCEDURES

The Mandated Person, who has a legal obligation to report harm of children as per legislation and who has been employed for the purpose of performing the child welfare and protection functions within each of our Associations is:

GAA/Rounders

Gearóid Ó Maoilmhichíl

mandatedperson@gaa.ie

Camogie

Roberta Farrell

mandatedperson@camogie.ie

Handball

John Kelly

mandatedperson.handball@gaa.ie

LGFA

Paula Prunty

mandatedperson@lgfa.ie

All policies and procedures listed above are available at www.gaa.ie/the-gaa/child-welfare-and-protection

IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

The Gaelic Athletic Associations recognise that implementation is an ongoing process. The Associations are committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the accompanying child safeguarding policies and procedures that support our intention to keep children and young people safe from harm while availing of our service. This Statement adopted and endorsed by our Club Executive Committee will be reviewed by 31st of May 2023 or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers.



Club Children's Officer