

2021 Brief for all those having a Role with Children – Donegal



This Brief addresses the minimum levels of behaviour, practice and conduct required from those who work with Children on our behalf. Much of this Brief also forms part of the overall Code of Behaviour (Underage) which can be accessed in full at [ohl9oq3mbgtnoi6arn22.pdf \(gaa.ie\)](#). Alleged breaches of the Code of Behaviour (Underage) may be enquired into at Club, County, Provincial or National level in accordance with the guidance contained within the Code of Behaviour with particular reference to the section that outlines 'How to Deal with Alleged Breaches of the Code of Behaviour' which can be accessed in full at [vwghntg0z6cmao9twzcz.pdf \(gaa.ie\)](#). The Code of Behaviour applies to all young players under 18 years of age, and those who assist them in the preparation and playing of games, regardless of competition or age groups. Clubs and County Boards who are responsible for organising games at local level are obliged to implement the Code of Behaviour in the preparation of their teams and players for all competitions and at all levels including Club blitzes, inter Club games, County development squads and inter County games.

CONTACT DETAILS:

1. County Childrens Officer – Daireen McMenamin Childrensofficer.donegal@gaa.ie
2. Designated Liaison Person (DLP) County Chairperson – Mick McGrath Chairperson.donegal@gaa.ie
3. Mandated Person - Gearóid Ó Maoilmhichíl mandatedperson@gaa.ie
4. County Administrator – Noreen Doherty Administrator.donegal@gaa.ie

COACHES, MENTORS, TRAINERS and ANY OTHER PERSONS HAVING A ROLE WITH CHILDREN (hereinafter referred to as "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.

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION:

All adults who have undertaken a role of responsibility with children and young people, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, should undergo a recruitment and selection procedure prior to commencing their role. The recruitment of adults to work with underage teams should be co-ordinated by a senior and experienced member of the Club/ County.

- a. **ROLE CLARIFICATION** The role and responsibilities envisaged e.g. manager, coach, and the team's age group should be clearly known and stated at the outset. Any specific levels of experience or qualifications required should also be clarified at the outset.
- b. **ROLE ASSISTANCE** The various supports available should be provided e.g. Foundation Level Coaching, Child Safeguarding Training for adults who wish to work with underage teams

- c. **REFERENCES** Applicants should submit references. These may refer to the person's character and if applicable to their previous background in sports and in Gaelic Games. References should be verified.
- d. **VETTING AND POLICE CHECKS** All applicants are required to complete Garda Vetting and/or Police Checks, as appropriate, prior to the commencement of their role(s) with young people in the Association. See further information below.
- e. **CHILD SAFEGUARDING TRAINING AND COACHING QUALIFICATION** All persons working with underage players are required to undertake recognised Child Safeguarding Training as promoted by the Gaelic Games Associations and must also possess a coaching qualification.
- f. **MEET THE APPLICANT** A senior representative 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.
- g. **CODE OF BEHAVIOUR (UNDERAGE)** All persons who work with young people will be required to sign the Code of Behaviour
- h. **SUPPORT AND REVIEW** Continuous supports should be made available to all coaches etc. so as to enable them fulfil their roles as required

VETTING:

- a. **WHO NEEDS TO BE VETTED?** Any person who carries out a role of responsibility such as coaching, managing or training underage teams or indeed adult teams that contain any player under 18 yrs. of age must be vetted. This requirement also applies to organising underage activities or refereeing underage games, to bus drivers employed and to physios working with our underage players.
- b. **IS IT AN OFFENCE TO WORK WITH CHILDREN IF YOU ARE NOT VETTED?** It is a criminal offence, for a person acting on behalf of the Gaelic Games Associations, or for any of our Associations to permit any person to commence working with children on our behalf without that person first obtaining a vetting disclosure from the National Vetting Bureau in respect of the role for which they have been recruited. It is also a breach of Association rules if you are working with children or vulnerable adults on behalf of any of our Associations and have not been vetted.

MAINTAINING A CHILD CENTRED APPROACH:

- a. Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person.
- b. Treat each person equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.
- c. 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.
- d. 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.
- e. Ensure all those eligible to participate in any team within the club are provided with an opportunity to do so with preference given to their own age group.
- f. Develop an understanding of relevant coaching methods and ensure that they have the appropriate level of coaching accreditation.
- g. 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:

- a. Never use foul language or provocative language/gestures to a player, opponent or match official.
- b. Only enter the field of play with the Referee's permission.
- c. Do not question a Referee's decisions or integrity.
- d. Encourage players to respect and accept the judgement of match officials.
- e. Promote Fair Play and encourage all players and fellow officials to always play by the rules of the game.
- f. Do not encourage or threaten a player by deed or gesture to act in any unacceptable manner towards an opponent, fellow player or official.

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

CONDUCT OF COACHES WHEN WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE:

- a. Develop an appropriate working relationship with children based on mutual trust and respect.
- b. 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.
- c. Don't shout at or lecture players or reprimand/ridicule them when they make a mistake.
- d. 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.
- e. Avoid incidents of horse play or role play or telling jokes etc. that could be misinterpreted.
- f. Never undertake any form of therapy or hypnosis, in the training of children.
- g. Never encourage players to consume non-prescribed drugs or take performance enhancing supplements.
- h. Do not make energy enhancing products available to children.

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;

- a. Avoid taking coaching sessions on your own.
- b. Only deliver one to one coaching, if deemed necessary, within a group setting.
- c. Avoid unnecessary physical contact with an underage player and never engage in inappropriate touching of a player.
- d. 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.
- e. Where a team consist of both boys and girls, and for the avoidance of doubt, the coaching team must also consist of both male and female personnel while male only teams must include at least one male coach and female only teams must include at least one female coach.

SUPERVISION RATIOS:

Supervision ratios will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the players and any special needs of the group.

- a. It is recommended that a minimum ratio of 1:8 for under 12 years of age players and
- b. A ratio of 1:10 for players over 12 yrs. of age.
- c. When abiding by such ratios a coach must always be accompanied by at least one other suitably qualified adult at all times. Such recommended ratios act as a guide to the minimum ratios of adults to children and may vary depending on the circumstances, e.g. players with special needs, very young players, and mixed gender groups or on away trips.
- d. Where a team or training group consist of both boys and girls, the supervision and coaching personnel, consisting of coach(es) and supervisor(s), must also comprise of both male and female personnel.

PEOPLE ALLOCATED A SUPERVISORY ROLE SHOULD:

- a. Avoid being alone with any player, if you need to talk separately do so in an open environment, in view of others.

- b. Not enter or be in team dressing rooms in which there are underage players or teams unless their presence is deemed necessary by the team coach(es) and they are accompanied by another adult (who has met the Association's recruitment criteria).
- c. When organising a club trip always be mindful of ensuring that additional adults accompany the group in case of emergencies or unforeseen circumstances.
- d. When participating in an overnight stay a specific ratio of adults to children should be agreed in advance. This ratio, is dependent on the age category of the children/young people, whether it is a single or mixed gender group and whether the group may be participating in certain outdoor activities or in water sports etc.
- e. Always clearly state start/finish times of training and if possible of games (home or away) and other activities including trips away from home.
- f. Remain in pairs until players have been collected or have left in accordance with parental or guardian permission.
- g. Keep attendance records and record any injuries/incidents as they arise.
- h. Where a team consist of both boys and girls, and for the avoidance of doubt, the coaching team must also consist of both male and female personnel while male only teams must include at least one male coach and female only teams must include at least one female coach

BEST PRACTICE

- a. Make adequate provision for First Aid services.
- b. Do not encourage or permit players to play while injured.
- c. 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.
- d. Always inform parents/guardians if their child has been injured or becomes unwell at games or training.
- e. 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.
- f. 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.
- g. Do not administer medication or medical aid unless you are willing to do so and have received the necessary training to administer such aid.
- h. 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.
- i. Do not communicate individually by text, email or via social network sites and or apps with underage players.
- j. Do not engage in communications with underage players via social network sites.
- k. 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.
- l. With the exception of their own child a coach should not transport a child alone, except in emergency or CODE OF BEHAVIOUR UNDERAGE SECTION 3 10 exceptional circumstances.
- m. Should you be aware of or have concerns regarding the possible abuse of a child you should report this to the relevant statutory authority or may seek the assistance of your Designated Liaison Person (DLP) so that they may assist you in forwarding the concern to the relevant statutory authority. All such reports must also be forwarded to your Association's Mandated Person, without delay. Details at end of Brief.

REFEREES:

IN THEIR CAPACITY AS REFEREES OF UNDERAGE GAMES, REFEREES ARE EXPECTED TO:

- a. Apply the playing rules on an impartial and consistent basis.
- b. Act with integrity and objectivity in all games.

- c. Communicate decisions to players and team officials in an effective and constructive manner in consideration of the age groups playing our games.
- d. Deal with dissent firmly and fairly.
- e. Work as a team with other match officials.
- f. Maintain composure regardless of the circumstances.
- g. Avail of assessments and supports to improve performance.
- h. Uphold and implement the Give Respect – Get Respect initiative at all levels.
- i. Report any misconduct of players, team officials or supporters conscious of the fact that such matters may be followed up by Club or County Children’s Officers.
- j. Undertake agreed vetting and background Police checks within the jurisdiction in which they work and attend relevant child safeguarding training.

TRANSPORT:

Adequate preparation and an insistence on the use of safe transport arrangements regardless of the length of journey are key elements of good practice when considering any trip taken by an underage team or players. The safety and welfare of children is paramount and must be considered a priority at all times when transporting our underage players from one venue to another.

A NUMBER OF BASIC REQUIREMENTS APPLY WHEN TRAVELLING TO GAMES AS FOLLOWS:

- a. That every parent has supplied at least two emergency contact numbers to the team coaches that may be used in the event of an emergency concerning their child or the group or in the event of a change in schedule
- b. That all players have completed a travel consent form
- c. That any medical conditions of players are made known to team coaches in advance of any trip and as part of the annual registration process
- d. That parents are supplied with the contact telephone number of the team coach in charge on the day and of any other accompanying coaches
- e. That any particular rules or regulations relating to a trip are made known to parents and children alike and agreed in advance of departure
- f. That the Club is satisfied that the proposed trip has been planned and agreed in accordance with child welfare procedures where the safety of the child is paramount in all preplanning of the

1. BUS AND COACH TRANSPORT:

The following should be considered when availing of bus and coach transport:

- a. The company chosen must be a reputable transport company with a proven track record in transporting children
- b. The driver must be vetted in advance of the trip by the bus company or your Club
- c. All vehicles should be well-maintained and roadworthy and should be properly taxed and insured
- d. Transport should be fully accessible for people with disabilities whether they are members of the group or for others who may accompany them
- e. Seat belts must be worn at all times on buses and coaches
- f. Alternative transport should be available in case of emergency
- g. 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
- h. When hiring a vehicle, personnel should have no hesitation in enquiring as to the company’s reputation and reliability
- i. Adult coaches should ensure that children remain safely seated at all times during the journey
- j. An adequate ratio of adults to children on the bus must be ensured at all times taking the age of the group members into consideration and the need for male/female ratios with mixed gender groups.

2. PRIVATE TRANSPORT IN CARS

If an adult has to transport a child/children there are a number of safety measures that should be agreed so as to minimise any potential child welfare or safety risks to their children and or adults:

- a. If a child is being transported by car, the parents of the child should be informed as to who will be transporting their child, why this mode of transport has been chosen, how long the journey may take, the departure time and the estimated time of return
- b. Drivers must ensure that they have adequate insurance to carry the required number of passengers
- c. If the driver is in a paid position in the Association or is in receipt of expenses for the trip they may be required to have additional insurance cover to enable them transport any passengers
- k. Central collection and drop off points are recommended when transporting children
- l. The driver (and other team personnel) should be contactable by mobile phone in case of emergencies
- m. With the exception of their own child an adult should not transport a child alone, except in emergency or exceptional circumstances
- n. In accordance with transport legislation where applicable children must use appropriate child restraints and seat belts when travelling in a car or other vehicles.
- o. No driver should ever consume alcohol or non-prescribed drugs prior to driving
- p. No driver should smoke in the car when transporting children on behalf of the Club or Association
- q. Where a driver may be under medical care or taking prescribed medication he/she must ensure that such medication may not inhibit their driving abilities
- r. All drivers and persons who have access to children on our behalf should have undertaken a vetting background check in accordance with the Association's guidelines and should have been informed that their vetting application has been accepted.

3. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

When using public transport please ensure that

- a. That the full travel schedule is made known in advance to all parents and players
- b. That drop off and pick arrangements have been agreed in advance
- c. That where available, seat booking arrangements are agreed in advance e.g. trains
- d. That an adequate number of adults accompany the group in a supervisory role
- e. That a contingency plan is in place in case a scheduled public transport arrangement or booking is cancelled, is late, or has been missed by the group

COMMUNICATIONS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Members of the Associations shall be held responsible for their use of social media and where such usage may at any time impact negatively on the general welfare of a child in the Association or on the ethos of the Association, disciplinary action may follow.

COMMUNICATIONS IN RELATION TO UNDERAGE TEAM ACTIVITIES

- a. All coaches should make it known that the Associations' preferred option of communicating team information for underage teams is via the parental/guardian mobile phone of each players and not via the mobile phone of the child.
- b. If requested by a parent to send messages regarding games or training via the mobile phone of the child the coach/club should enquire as to the rationale of such requests and if in agreement must receive any such request in writing.
- c. Upon any agreement any messages sent to the child can only be as part of the team group text that will also go to their parents and to all other members of that group text.
- d. Coaches are not permitted to communicate individually via social media with underage players.
- e. Any form of individual social media communication by a coach with an underage player shall be deemed a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour (Underage).CODE OF BEHAVIOUR UNDERAGE SECTION 9 51

GUIDELINES FOR PHOTOGRAPHIC/RECORDED IMAGES

The key issues that should be addressed regarding the use of images and photographs of children/young people are:

- a. Ensuring agreement and permission of parents/ guardians in the taking and any use of images/ photographs
- b. Seeking such agreement as part of the annual membership affiliation process or by use of parental consent forms
- c. Avoiding the individual identification of children in group or team photographs unless by agreement e.g. for special events, an award or achievements ceremony
- d. Ensuring prior accreditation is given to 'professional photographers' who may attend your games or events
- e. Ensuring that images/photographs chosen are suitable and in good taste with the images chosen or recorded focussing on activity rather than a particular child
- f. Clubs, coaches and volunteers permitting the use of 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
- g. Parents and spectators taking photographs/recordings should where possible seek permission in advance from the Club/County Board and should also be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state the purpose for their photography/filming. If Club/County Board personnel are unhappy about any matter relating to such photography the permission granted may be withdrawn immediately 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.

SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

We must be aware that while these communication tools can be used in promoting our activities within the membership and to a wider audience, vigilance is also required to ensure that our use of such communication methods shall at all times be appropriate. Each individual is responsible for any posting, comments or their conduct while engaging with such sites.

MOBILE PHONES

While the ownership and general use of the mobile is primarily a matter between the child and their parents the use or accessing of the mobiles at events or in clubhouses or dressing rooms is a matter for us to monitor. While we never wish to curtail the rights of a child we can in relation to the use of a mobile limit the use of mobiles on our premises and if doing so we should inform the parents in advance.

Guidance in relation to mobile phone usage includes:

- a. Do not permit the use of any phones in dressing rooms or shower area
- b. Avoid any instances of individual communication via mobile phone with any of the underage players
- c. If in agreement with other coaches seek parental permission for all phones of underage players to be 'bagged' prior to a game and returned to the players after each game
- d. Be vigilant as to the use, or excessive use, of a mobile phone by any underage player while they are under your care
- e. Advise children if they receive an offensive photo, email or messages, not to reply, but to save the offensive materials, note the time and date of receipt and that they should inform their parents.
- f. Should any such incident regarding the use of mobile phones occur during their attendance at the Club the team coach should note this and report the matter to the Children's Officer.

DEALING WITH BULLYING

Unfortunately, Bullying may occur where a small cohort of people may choose or even direct others to engage in Bullying behaviour. Bullying behaviour can be defined as unwanted negative behaviour be it verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others and which is repeated over time.

This includes cyber bullying and identity based bullying such as homophobic bullying and racist bullying. Bullying can happen from Young Person to Young Person, Young Person to Adult, Adult to Young Person and Adult to Adult. Our duty and our challenge as Club leaders, coaches or parents is to challenge, counteract and eliminate such unacceptable behaviour through awareness, education and proactive measures that are based on inclusivity and respect for all in our Clubs.

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE/ADULTS

Bullying is considered a breach of the Code of Behaviour (Underage) and is dealt with as per the relevant Section 4 of the Code (Dealing with Alleged Breaches of the Code of Behaviour).

RACISM

Since it was adopted in 2010 the Code of Behaviour (Underage) has highlighted that those expressions and actions of a racist nature are not acceptable and will not be tolerated. Incidents of alleged racism can now be dealt with at Club, County or National level by select Code of Behaviour Committees appointed and trained for that purpose.

YOUNG PLAYERS ON ADULT TEAMS While it is not unusual for players under 18 yrs. of age to be part of adult club teams their participation requires additional attention as they still legally hold recognition as a child which their parents, fellow players, their Club and mentors and their Association must recognise and uphold. This may require their fellow team members being spoken to by the team mentors so as to address the legal status of the under 18 yr. olds and to emphasise that adults must always conduct themselves in an appropriate manner and an assurance that the adults will not encourage or facilitate the under 18 yr. olds to participate in adult related socialising or activity. Mentors of adult teams that include underage players must be vetted, must have attended child safeguarding training and must have a minimum coaching qualification.

ALLEGED BREACHES OF THE CODE OF BEHAVIOUR (UNDERAGE)

Unfortunately, breaches of the Code of Behaviour (Underage) may occur from time to time, some of which may be minor breaches and some of which may be major breaches. Breaches may happen for a number of reasons including, but not limited to, carelessness, poor practice, and a lack of understanding or there may be, in some instances, deliberate or calculated breaches of the Code of Behaviour (Underage). Detailed instruction and directives in relation to reporting are contained within the “Guidance for Dealing with and Reporting Allegations and Concerns of Abuse”, which can be accessed using the link at No 10 below.

List of Resources with links provided:

1. [Children First Act 2015](#)
2. [Children First National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017](#)
3. [Code of Behaviour Booklet](#)
4. [Maintaining Good Practice & Behaviour \(May 2021\)](#)
5. [Dealing with Alleged Breaches of the Code of Behaviour \(Underage\)](#)
6. [Guidance for Online Coaching of Children](#)
7. [Skills Challenges Protocol](#)
8. [Children First Information & Guidance Leaflet](#)
9. [Tusla Child Protection and Welfare Report Form \(CPWRF\)](#)
10. [Guidance for Dealing and Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse](#)
11. [GAA-Social Media Guide Short Digital.pdf](#) Social Media Policy and Guidelines