

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR (UNDERAGE)

The publication by the Gaelic Athletic Association, Ladies Gaelic Football Association, the Camogie Association, GAA Handball Ireland and the Rounders Council of Ireland of this joint Code of Behaviour (Underage) is a milestone for our Associations, replacing as it does the previous Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport.

This new Code brings together the collective good practice experiences of our Associations and marks a momentous occasion as we seek, through the implementation of an agreed and joint policy document, that while promoting our games amongst young people we also seek to provide a safe environment in which we can develop children, under 18 years of age, in a caring and respectful environment within our respective Associations. This Code applies to all persons under 18 yrs. of age who participate in our games or other activities and to those who work with them and assist them in any capacity on our behalf.

The value of providing a joint Code for our members enables us to jointly promote the legislative, organisational and statutory guidance that governs our work with young people and children. This will assist and direct our members and units in our work and provide a platform and support for those working with young people and children at all levels in our Associations.

Our Associations, in common with others who work with young people and children, will continue to abide by and integrate child welfare legislation and statutory guidance into our work, regardless of the jurisdiction in which we operate. In upholding this principle, the welfare of the child shall always be our paramount consideration, whether it is on the playing fields, in the training of our underage players, the recruitment of our coaches, the active involvement of parents in our work or the many other developmental and social opportunities that we offer our underage players on a daily and weekly basis.

If the local community is a bedrock of our Association so also are our underage players, many of whom will play our games from childhood to adulthood and will hopefully progress in later years to coaching and mentoring roles, more often than not in the same Club.

Young people will spend some of the most enjoyable days of their lives playing our games and socialising with their friends in each of our Associations. Whether attending or playing GAA matches, playing Ladies Football or Camogie, or participating in Rounders or Handball activities, they will do so during some of the most important developmental years of their lives. Our role and our responsibility is to ensure that they benefit from and participate in our Gaelic Games in a safe and enjoyable environment where our Games are conducted in a spirit of fair play with everyone who works on our behalf emphasising respect, equality, safety and non-discrimination in all aspects of our work with children and young people. Each member of our Associations has a responsibility to accept and implement this Code as it directs us in such work. Breaches of the Code may be enquired into and if required sanctions may be applied in accordance with other provisions of the Code.

For the purpose of ease of access, this Code will be distributed amongst our various units and will form part of our joint Safeguarding Training. In the interest of clarity and accuracy, any amendments to the Code shall appear in the Code of Behaviour (Underage) available on each of our Associations' websites. Mol an Óige agus tiocfaidh sí.



On an annual basis each of our Associations are obliged to adopt and put on display what is termed a Child Safeguarding Statement. This is a legislative requirement in many jurisdictions and as it is now enshrined in the Code of Behaviour (Underage) it automatically applies to all Clubs and to our County Boards and Provincial Councils.

Prior to agreeing a Child Safeguarding Statement each 'unit' is required to carry out a risk assessment, i.e. a risk assessment as to the risk of harm that could come to a child in their care, following which they can then put their Child Safeguarding Statement on display.

By putting the Child Safeguarding Statement on display, for example in a Clubhouse or Club hall, it draws positive attention to the procedures, policies and practices we have in place to safeguard children, as far as practicable, from risk when they are attending our games or other Association activities. It identifies that as a basic right we recognise that all children have the right to be protected from harm.

Previous experiences show that discussions on the risk of harm to children in our care inevitably leads to a greater awareness of the child safeguarding measures we undertake in our day-to-day work within our Gaelic Games Associations. Such discussions also draw attention to our child safeguarding policies, the activities we provide and the legislation that is in place to assist us in our roles. Each unit e.g. Club, is required to complete this procedure at Club Executive level and must record, sign and date when this took place and furnish a copy of the completed document to their County Children's Officer.

Where possible and in accordance with the local Club structures one overall risk assessment procedure and the displaying of one agreed Child Safeguarding Statement shall suffice.

This section of the Code of Behaviour (Underage) contains a draft Child Safeguarding Statement which may be adopted in full or amended and subsequently put on display by Clubs, County Boards and Provincial Councils, following the completion of the risk assessment process.

Our Associations are committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all young people who 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 and the Risk Assessment and Child Safeguarding process contributes to this aim.

2018 Child Safeguarding Statement



The Gaelic Athletics Associations (GAA, LGFA, Camogie, Rounders, and Handball) in accordance with our Code of Behaviour (Underage) 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 Games 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 in our Associations as we seek to create a safe environment for young people to grow and develop.

We have completed an 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; Use of Facilities; Recruitment; Communications and a further heading of General Risk of Harm.

In addition to our Risk Assessment document described above, the following procedures support our intention to safeguard children availing of our services:

- Code of Behaviour (Underage) which includes
 - Recruitment policy for those working with children
 - Child safeguarding training requirements
 - Anti-Bullying statement
 - Social Media policy
- Guidance for Dealing and Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse by staff or volunteers
- Appointing Designated Liaison Persons at Club, County and national levels
- Appointing Children's Officers at Club, County and national levels who shall be the Association's relevant persons or first point of contact in respect of this statement

The GAA appointed Mandated Person, who has a legal obligation to report harm of children as per legislation is Gearóid Ó Maoilmhichíl. Contact: mandatedperson@gaa.ie.

We are committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and the procedures contained therein that outline our intentions to keep children safe from harm.

Our Child Safeguarding Statement has been prepared in accordance with the legislature requirements contained in the Children First Act 2015 and the Children (NI) Order 1995 and as required by our Association rules and will be reviewed in January 2019.



Club Children's Officer

