



**Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Na Fianna**

**CLUB CODE OF ETHICS &  
GUIDELINES FOR THE  
PROTECTION OF CHILDREN**

**as adopted at the AGM of October 2002**

## **Mission Statement / Policy Statement**

Na Fianna is fully committed to safeguarding the well being of its members. Every individual in the Club should, at all times, show respect and understanding for the rights, safety and welfare of other Club members and Officials. They should conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of Na Fianna and shows good example to others.

## **Appointment of Children's Officers**

The appointment of Children's Officers in governing bodies and sports clubs is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere in sports clubs. They act as a resource for all members of sports clubs with regard to children's issues. They ensure that the children have a voice in the running of **their Club** and can talk freely about their experiences in their sports activity. The Child Officers should have access to the Club Executive Committee.

## **Sport and young people**

We value the voluntary work of adults who take responsibility for our Juveniles. Many leaders/coaches become involved in sport for young people for a variety of different reasons, mainly because they are parents who start with our nursery sessions on a Saturday. We want to protect our children and make the Club a safe place for them to come.

## **Our Philosophy**

We ask our mentors to uphold the principles of fair play. We should on all occasions treat opponents and officials with respect and insist on our players doing likewise. We all must be vigilant of situations where our children are put at risk in any way, either by physical, sexual, emotional or mental abuse. Loyalty to the team and Club is to be encouraged at all levels, and inappropriate behaviour, inappropriate language and swearing are prohibited.

## **Disciplinary Procedures**

The Club's procedures for dealing with disciplinary matters should be available to all members. Children's parent/guardian must be invited to be present at any disciplinary hearing /procedure. In the absence of one of the above the Children's Officer should represent the child's welfare.

## Club Rules

1. Every team to have a Manager and Co-manager.
2. Team personnel should never place themselves in a vulnerable position (i.e. alone with a child).
3.
  - a. On trips involving overnight stays, two parents or appropriate adults named by the Club Chairman, to accompany team and mentors. Lists of adults who are accompanying should be provided to the Juvenile Chairman and available to the Executive Committee.
  - b. There will be no overnight stays for under 11 and younger and on overnights for under 12's there would have to be at least 2 children per house (Hosting or Travelling).
4. In the event of injury, one other adult should accompany mentor while attending to the child on or off the pitch.
5. In the case of the child having to attend Doctor/Hospital the same procedure should apply.
6. The Parent/Guardian of the injured child should be notified as soon as possible.
7. All Mentors must be willing to submit themselves for vetting by the Relevant Authorities.

# **GAA Guidelines for the investigation and management of allegations of Child Abuse**

## **Definitions of abuse**

### ***Physical Abuse***

Physical injury to a child where it is known or suspected the injury was deliberately inflicted.

This excludes injury resultant from participation in the Association's sports activities, which are essentially physical contact activities.

### ***Emotional Abuse***

The adverse effect on the behaviour and emotional development of a child caused by persistent or severe emotional ill treatment.

### ***Sexual Abuse***

Sexual offences against minors are defined under statute in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. However, neither legislators nor the courts have adopted an all-encompassing definition of child sexual abuse. The definition of child sexual abuse adopted by the Law Reform Commission is set forth below. The definition, while not inclusive of all sexual offences, clearly outlines the behaviour with which this document is concerned.

- i. Intentional touching of the body of a child for the purpose of the sexual arousal or sexual gratification of the child or the person;
- ii. Intentional masturbation in the presence of a child;
- iii. Intentional exposure of the sexual organs of a person or any other sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification of the older person or as an expression of aggression, threat or intimidation towards the child; and
- iv. Sexual exploitation which includes permitting, encouraging or requiring a child to solicit for or to engage in prostitution or other sexual acts as referred to above with the accused or any other persons, animal or thing or engaging in the recording (on video tape, film, audio tape or other temporary or permanent material) posing, modelling or performing of any act involving the exhibition of a child's body for the purpose of sexual gratification of an audience or for the purpose of any other sexual act referred to in sub paragraph (i) and (iii) above.

While the criminal code contains specific offences at varying ages of childhood, it is recommended that for the purposes of these guidelines, a child be defined as a person under the age of eighteen years.

### **Recommended reporting policy**

In all instances where an allegation of abuse has been made against a member/employee/volunteer of the Association, allegedly perpetrated during the course of the person's duties on behalf of the Association, it will be investigated immediately by the Association's Designated Person. This process will commence not later than 24 hours after the allegation has been made.

The individual against whom the allegations are made will be immediately acquainted with the allegations.

Where the GAA has reason to suspect/believe that any person, (i.e. employee, official, member, volunteer) is/may be under investigation in relation to abuse outside of his/her involvement with the Association, it (the GAA) following a risk assessment, shall take whatever steps are necessary to ensure that no person is put a risk. The risk assessment will involve the Association satisfying itself that the person who may be concerned is/will not be a danger to the well-being and safety of any person who may be involved with the Association. This assessment should also satisfy the Association that the continued involvement of the person will not adversely impact on the good image of the GAA.

The Association will also ensure insofar as is practicable that the person under suspicion will not be put in a position where he/she may be compromised.

Complaints from adults (or representatives of the adult) of abuse during his childhood are included in this recommended policy.

If the Association's investigation indicates that there are reasonable grounds for the allegations the matter will be immediately reported to the Senior Ranking Police Officer for the area in which the abuse is alleged to have occurred. If the alleged victim is presently under eighteen years of age, the Director of Community Care within the relevant Health Board shall also be informed to make arrangements for the Board to conduct its investigation. In circumstances where the alleged victim is over eighteen years of age, the Director of Community Care within the relevant Health Board shall be informed and arrangements agreed for an investigation to be carried out.

The Association will advise the civil authorities that it will co-operate fully with their investigation, including making available the content and outcome of the Association's investigation.

## **Recommended Procedures**

If a member of the Association is made aware of allegations of abuse (including child sexual abuse) against another member or employee of the Association allegedly perpetrated during the course of the person's duties on behalf of the Association, the following procedural steps will be adhered to:

### ***Step 1***

The member receiving the allegations will advise the complainant of the Association's procedures (outlined hereunder) for dealing with such complaints. In particular, the complainant will be advised that the Club Chairperson, the County Chairperson and senior Croke Park officials will be informed of the complaint(s) and the basis for this procedure will be explained.

The member/employee receiving the complaint(s) must OFFER NO OPINION and IMMEDIATELY MAKE AN ACCURATE WRITTEN RECORD of the complaint(s).

### ***Step 2***

The member/ employee who has received the complaint(s) will immediately inform the Club Chairperson.

The Club Chairperson will immediately inform the County Chairperson (i.e. the Designated Person) who, in turn, will advise the relevant senior Croke Park officials. A Preliminary Review of the available facts will be carried out (preferably within 24 hours) by the Club/County/Province in conjunction with Croke Park. The purpose of the Preliminary Review is to establish if there is a factual basis (date, time, location, witnesses etc.) to the complaint and whether there are reasonable grounds that a child may have been abused, is being abused, or is at risk of abuse.

This Preliminary Review is NOT an investigation; this is the responsibility of the Garda Síochána and Health Board.

If there is no basis to the complaint(s) the Chairperson of the County Board (i.e. the Designated Person), in conjunction with Croke Park will:

- a) Advise the complainant and parent/guardians.
- b) Advise the person against whom the complaint(s) was made.
- c) Advise the person who initially received the complaint(s).

The Chairperson should be accompanied by another official of the Association at these meetings. An accurate written record of these meetings should be kept.

If the Preliminary Review establishes that there is reasonable validity to the complaint(s) the County Chairperson will advise Croke Park.

If the alleged victim is under eighteen years of age the Club will, in conjunction with the County Board and Croke Park, advise the parent/guardian of the nature of the complaint(s) and the Association's procedures for dealing with such complaints. The parent/guardians will be advised that they should report the complaint to the Garda Síochána.

The member/employee advising the parents/guardians/ will be accompanied by another member/employee. NO OPINION will be offered regarding the complaint(s) and an ACCURATE WRITTEN RECORD of the meeting will be kept.

### ***Step 3***

The Chairperson of the county in which the alleged abuse may have occurred (i.e. the Designated Person) will, in conjunction with Croke Park, advise the Health Board and/or Garda Síochána.

### ***Step 4***

In conjunction with the County Board and Croke Park, the Senior Club/County officials will inform the person against whom the complaint(s) have been made giving details of:

- a) The nature of the complaint(s).
- b) The Association's procedures for dealing with such complaint(s) including reporting to the Garda Síochána/Health Board.

The person against whom the complaint has been made should be informed by the Club/County Chairperson that the Association is obliged to take immediate action to protect the well-being of members under eighteen years of age and that he /she is being debarred from all activities in the Association pending the outcome of the investigations by the statutory authorities of the outstanding complaint(s).

The person should also be informed that there should be no contact with the complainant and his family and that he must make sure that his position is not compromised.

NO OPINION will be offered and an ACCURATE WRITTEN RECORD of the meeting will be kept.

### ***Step 5***

The Health Board will be informed by the Designated Person for the relevant county/province, as agreed in Step 3. The standard reporting form will be completed and given to the Health Board and a copy retained for local records and another copy forwarded to Croke Park. This form is available from the Health Board.

An ACCURATE WRITTEN RECORD of these meetings with the Health Board will be kept.

## **Step 6**

1 If the investigation by the Garda Síochána/Health Board substantiate the complaint(s) the Association will take a decision, having due regard to the outcome of these investigations. Such decision will be made by the Central Review Committee in accordance with the terms of reference outlined above.

2 In the event of an inconclusive outcome of the investigation by the Garda Síochána/Health Board the Association will take a decision having due regard to the inconclusive outcome of the investigation of the Statutory Authorities. Such decision will be made by the Central Review Committee in accordance with the terms of reference outlined above.

3 If the investigations by the Garda Síochána/Health Board conclusively establish that there is no substance to the complaint(s) the Chairperson of the Club/County Board, in consultation with Croke Park, will:

- a) Advise the person against whom the complaint(s) was made.
- b) Advise the person who initially received the complaint(s).
- c) Advise the complainant and parent/guardians (if appropriate).

The Chairperson should be accompanied by another official of the Association at these meetings. An ACCURATE WRITTEN RECORD of these meetings should be kept.

### Note 1

*It must be emphasised that all those who by reason of their position within the Association have access to any information concerning any complaint/allegation will be obliged to maintain absolute confidentiality.*

### Note 2

*Given the very specialised nature of the area of abuse, the Designated Person should be suitably qualified and have relevant experience.*

### Note 3

*It may be necessary to advise that counselling would be beneficial for the person who made the unsubstantiated allegations as well as the alleged perpetrator.*

*Throughout these guidelines the use of the masculine pronouns connotes feminine genders unless the contrary intention appears.*

## **Health Boards**

The local Area Child Care Managers/Health Boards are at:

Rathdown Road  
Dublin 7

Phone 8680444

Aras Daibhin  
Jones' Road  
Dublin 3

Phone 8552000

The Regional Directors  
Child Care and Family Support Services  
Dr Stephen's Hospital  
Dublin 8

Phone 6790700

## GAA Code of Ethics

Fair play involves honesty, respect for teammates, opponents, referees, umpires and officials.

### ***Coach's Code of Ethics:***

1. Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being.
  - *Within the context of activity, treat everyone equally regardless of sex, disability, ethnic origin or religion.*
2. Ensure the player's time spent with you is a positive experience.
  - *All players are deserving of equal attention and opportunities.*
  - *The scheduling and length of training times and competitions should take into consideration the maturity level of the players.*
3. Treat each player as an individual who has unique needs.
  - *Respect the talent, developmental stage and goals of each athlete.*
  - *Help each athlete reach their potential.*
  - *Avoid over-working the talented athletes. The "just-average" athletes need, and deserve, equal opportunities.*
4. Be fair, considerate and honest with players.
5. Be professional and accept responsibility for your actions.
  - *Display high standards in your language, manner, punctuality, preparation and presentation.*
  - *Display control, respect, dignity and professionalism to all involved – this includes opponents, coaches, officials, administrators, the media, parents and spectators.*
  - *Encourage your players to demonstrate the same qualities.*
  - *Develop respect for the ability of opponents as well as for the judgement of officials and opposing coaches.*
6. Make a commitment to providing a quality service to your players.
  - *Maintain or improve your current GAA coaching accreditation level.*
  - *Seek continual improvement through performance appraisal and ongoing coach education.*
  - *Provide a training programme, which is planned and sequential.*
  - *Maintain appropriate records.*
7. Operate within the rules and spirit of the GAA.
  - *Coaches should become familiar with the GAA rulebook, constitution, by-laws, relevant policies, e.g. anti-doping policy etc.*
  - *Coaches should encourage awareness in their players such as the use of recreational drugs and performance enhancement substances.*

8. Any physical contact with players should be:
  - *Appropriate to the situation.*
  - *Necessary for the player's skill development.*
9. Refrain from any form of personal abuse towards your players.
  - *This includes verbal, physical and emotional abuse.*
  - *Be alert to any forms of abuse directed towards your players from other sources while they are in your care.*
  - *Report any inappropriate behaviour to the official in charge.*
10. Refrain from any form of harassment towards your players.
  - *This includes sexual and racial harassment, racial vilification and harassment on the grounds of disability.*
11. Provide a safe environment for training and competition.
  - *Ensure equipment and facilities meet safety standards.*
  - *Ensure equipment, rules, training and the environments are appropriate for the age and ability of the players.*
12. Show concern and caution towards sick and injured players.
  - *Provide a modified training programme where appropriate.*
  - *Allow further participation in training and competition only when appropriate.*
  - *Encourage athletes to seek medical advice when required.*
  - *Maintain the same interest and support towards sick and injured athletes.*
13. Be reasonable in your demands on young players' time, energy and enthusiasm.
  - *Make a personal commitment to keep yourself informed of sound coaching principles and the principles of growth and development of children. Remember that juveniles play for fun and enjoyment and that winning is only part of their motivation.*
  - *Whenever possible, group athletes according to age, height, skills and physical maturity.*
  - *Adopt the principle – particularly with young players – of player first, winning second.*
14. Teach your players that rules of competition are mutual agreements that no one should evade or break.
15. Be a positive role model for your sport and players.

**Coaches should:**

- *Be treated with courtesy and respect.*
  - *Have access to self – improvement opportunities.*
  - *Be matched with coaching opportunities appropriate to their level of competence.*
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### ***Players' Code of Behaviour:***

1. Compete for the “fun of it” and not just to please parents and coaches.
  2. Work equally hard for yourself and your Club. Your Club’s performance will benefit, so will you!
  3. Play by the rules.
  4. Never argue with an official. If you disagree, have your Team Manager approach the official during a break or after the event.
  5. Control your temper. Verbal abuse of officials or other players, deliberately provoking an opponent, feigning a foul or an injury or throwing equipment is not acceptable or permitted in this or any other sport.
  6. Be a good sport. Cheer all good performances, whether they are by your Club member or another club’s player.
  7. Treat all players, as you would like to be treated. Do not interfere with, bully or take unfair advantage of another player.
  8. Co-operate with your coach, Club members and opponents. Without them there would be no competition. Avoid negative social behaviours associated with cliques etc.
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### ***Administrators' Code of Behaviour:***

1. Involve players in planning, leadership, evaluation and decision making related to the activity.
2. Ensure that equal opportunities for participation in sports are made available to all individuals, regardless of ability, size, shape, sex age, and disability or ethnic origin.
3. Equipment and facilities must be safe and appropriate to the ability level of participating players.
4. Rules, equipment, lengths of events and training schedules should take into consideration the age, ability, fitness and maturity level of participating players.
5. Ensure that qualified and competent coaches and officials who are capable of developing appropriate sports behaviour and developing the facets of performance, technical proficiency, tactical prowess, team play, physical fitness, psychological focus and objective analysis of the playing facts – provide adequate supervision.

6. Remember that as juveniles participate for enjoyment; downplay the importance of rewards and winning.
  7. Provide clinics aimed at improving the standards of coaching and officiating.
  8. Ensure that parents, coaches, sponsors, administrators, officials, Physicians and participants understand their responsibilities regarding fair play in sport.
  9. Distribute a code of behaviour sheet to officials, parents, coaches, players and the media.
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***Officials' Code of Behaviour:***

1. Modify rules and regulations to match the skill level of children and their needs.
  2. Complement all players on their efforts.
  3. Be consistent, objective and courteous in calling all rule infringements.
  4. Condemn deliberate misconduct as being unsportsmanlike, and promote fair play and appropriate sports behaviour.
  5. Use common sense to ensure that overcalling violations does not lose the "spirit of the competition" for juveniles.
  6. Publicly encourage rule changes, which will reinforce the principles of participation for fun and enjoyment.
  7. Actions speak louder than words. Ensure that both on and off the field your behaviour is consistent with the principles of good sportsmanship.
  8. Make a personal commitment to keep yourself informed of sound officiating principles and the principles of growth and development of children.
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***Parents' Code of Behaviour:***

1. If children are interested, encourage them to play Gaelic Games. However, if a child is not willing to play, do not force him or her.
2. Focus upon the child's efforts and performance rather than the overall outcome of the event. This assists the child in setting realistic goals related to his/her ability by reducing the emphasis on winning.
3. Teach children that an honest effort is as important as victory, so that the result of each event is accepted without undue disappointment.

4. Encourage children to always participate according to the rules.
  5. Never ridicule or yell at a child for making a mistake or losing an event.
  6. Remember that children learn best from example. Applaud good performances by all players, even if from other clubs.
  7. If you disagree with an official, raise the issue through the appropriate channels rather than question the official's judgement and honesty in public. Remember that most officials give their time and effort for your child's involvement.
  8. Support all efforts to remove verbal and physical abuse from sporting activities.
  9. Recognise the value and importance of volunteer coaches. They give of their time and resources to provide recreational activities for the players and deserve your support.
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***Spectators' Code of Behaviour:***

1. Young players participate in organised sports for fun. They are not miniature professionals.
  2. Applaud good performance and efforts by your Club and the opponents. Congratulate all players and clubs upon their performance regardless of the competition's outcome.
  3. Respect the official's decision. If there is a disagreement, follow the appropriate procedure in order to question the decision and teach children to do likewise.
  4. Never ridicule or scold a player for making a mistake during a competition. Positive comments are motivational.
  5. Condemn the use of violence in any form, be it spectators, coaches, officials or players.
  6. Show respect for your Club's opponents. Without them there would be no competition.
  7. Encourage players to participate according the rules and the officials' decisions.
  8. Demonstrate appropriate social behaviour by not using foul language, harassing participants, coaches or officials.
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