

*Erin Go Bragh GAA Club Code of Conduct and Best
Practice*



Version 2.0

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Introduction

Erin Go Bragh GAA Club is fully committed to safeguarding the well being of its members and players. Every individual in the club should, at all times, show respect and understanding for their rights, safety and welfare, and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the club and the guidelines contained in the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in Ireland. *(This document can be accessed through The Sports Council of Ireland website)*

Sport provides an excellent opportunity for children to learn new skills, become more confident and maximise their own unique potential. These benefits will increase through a positive and progressive approach to the involvement of children in sport that places the needs of the child first and winning and competition second. Winning and losing are an important part of sport but they must be kept in a healthy perspective.

Fair Play

The principles of fair play should always be emphasised, and mentors should give clear guidelines regarding acceptable standards of behaviour. The importance of participation for each child, best effort and enjoyment rather than winning should be stressed. Children should be encouraged to win in an open and fair way. Behaviour which constitutes cheating in any form should be discouraged. The trust implicit in adult-child relationships in sport places a duty of care on all adults, voluntary or professional, to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the child while engaged in their sporting activity. Adults must contribute to the creation of a positive sporting environment for young people.

Best Practice

To ensure that best practice is being followed, Erin Go Bragh GAA Club will:

- Adopt and implement the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in Ireland as an integral part of its policy on children in the club.
- Ensure that the Club Management Committee is elected or endorsed by registered club members at each AGM.
- Appoint a Children's Officer.
- Ensure best practice throughout the club by disseminating its code of conduct, including the disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures in operation within the

club to all its members. The club's code of conduct should also be posted in all facilities used by the club.

- Develop effective procedures for responding to and recording accidents
- Ensure that all club members are given adequate notice of AGMs and other meetings.
- Ensure that all minutes of all meetings (AGM's/EGM's/Committee) are recorded and safely filed.

Safety

The club will adopt the following practices in order to promote safety while participating in club activities:

- Activities being undertaken should be suitable for the ability, age, and experience of the participants.
- Equipment and facilities should meet the highest possible standards and be appropriate to the maturity of the participants.
- Where protective equipment is deemed necessary it should be used.
- First Aid should be available for all training sessions and events. There should be a proper First Aid Kit.
- First Aid should be a basic element of a coaching leadership course.
- Parents/guardians should be notified by the relevant coach of injuries/illness which their children incur while participating in a sporting activity.
- Umpires and referees should ensure that the conduct of the games conform to the standards set.
- Children should be taught the rules of the game and be encouraged to abide by them, keeping in mind that many rules are there for safety.
- Parents/guardians should know the starting and finishing times of sessions and events.

Discipline, Complaints and Appeals

Discipline in sport should always be positive in focus, providing the structure and rules that allow participants to learn to set their own goals and strive for them. It should encourage young people to become more responsible for themselves and therefore more independent.

The main form of discipline should be positive reinforcement for effort. It should encourage the development of emotional and social skills as well as skills in sport. Children should be helped to become responsible about the decisions and choices they make within sport, particularly when they are likely to make a difference between playing fairly and unfairly. There should be no place for fighting, over-aggressive or

dangerous behaviour in sport. Participants should treat others in a respectful manner. They should not interfere with, bully or take unfair advantage of others

Club Children's Officer

The appointment of a Children's Officer is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere within Erin Go Bragh Juvenile GAA Club. S/he will act as a resource for all members of the club with regard to children's issues. S/he will ensure that the children have a voice in the running of their club and can talk freely about their experiences in their sports activities. The Children's Officer will have access to the Club Executive Committee. S/he will have as her primary aim the establishment of a child centred ethos within the club. The Children's Officer will have the following functions:

- To promote awareness of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in Ireland within the club and particularly among the children and their parents/guardians. This could be achieved by the production of information leaflets, the establishment of children's/age-group specific notice boards and by regular information meetings for the children and their parents/guardians.
- To influence policy and practice within the club in order to prioritise children's needs.
- To provide an accessible resource to children.
- To see that children know how to make concerns known to appropriate adults or agencies. Information disclosed by a child to the Children's Officer or any other adult within the club should be dealt with in accordance with the Department of Health and Children's Guidelines Children First and the Department of Health and Social Services.
- To encourage the involvement of parents/guardians in the club activities and co-operate with parents/guardians in ensuring that each child enjoys his/her involvement in sport.
- To act as an advisory resource to Mentors' on best practice in children's sport.
- To report regularly to the Club Executive Committee
- To monitor changes in membership and follow up any unusual dropout, absenteeism or club transfers by children or mentors.

Children's Officers do not have the responsibility of investigating or validating child protection concerns within the club and have no counselling or therapeutic role. It is, however, possible that child protection concerns will be brought to the attention of the Children's Officer.

Code of Conduct – Players

- Always do your best, play fairly and have fun.
- Always shake hands before and after a match.
- Respect officials/referees and accept their decisions..
- Do not shout at or argue with the referee, officials, team mates or opponents.
- Bullying is totally unacceptable.
- Avoid using foul or abusive language.
- Always remember that football/hurling is a team game and encourage your fellow players.
- Respect your club and its property.

Code of Conduct – Mentors

- Avoid physical or verbal abuse to either players or referees’.
- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time with children away from others.
- Avoid taking children to your home or taking children on journeys alone in your car.
- Coach by example and encourage sportsmanship and fair play on the field of play among juvenile players.
- Ensure that sufficient time and attention is given to less talented players.
- Try to ensure that training is an enjoyable experience for the players.
- Do not put too much emphasis on results.
- Avoid verbal exchanges with referees or opposing mentors / players.
- Avoid taking sessions alone.
- Do not rebuke a child for making a mistake, always encourage.

Code of Conduct – Parents

- Always encourage and support your child in their sport.
- Be familiar with those mentors who are coaching your child.
- Behave responsibly on the sideline.
- Bring children to and from training on time.
- Encourage your child to play by the rules.
- Ensure your child has the proper training/playing gear and water.
- Support the coaches and help out wherever necessary.
- Ensure that your child is registered and paid-up .
- Respect the coaches’ decisions and encourage your children to do the same.

- Show your support for your child/team by attending matches on a regular basis and assisting in the organisation of club activities.

Discipline Levels

The use of sanctions is an important element in the maintenance of discipline. Coaches have the authority to apply sanctions where deemed necessary, however, coaches should have a clear understanding of where and when particular sanctions are appropriate. The age and developmental stage of the child should be taken into consideration when using sanctions. The following steps are suggested:

Minor Offences

- a warning should be given if a rule is broken, eg poor conduct.
- a sanction (for example, use of time out) should be applied if a rule is broken for a second time.
- if a rule is broken three or more times, the child should be spoken to, and if necessary, the parents/guardians should be informed.
- If the offences continue the coach can request that the player be suspended from training & matches for a defined period

Serious Offences

Serious offences can be defined as:

- Continuous breaches of discipline.
- Refusal to carry out the instructions of the coach.
- Wilful damage to club property or that of visiting teams, or
- Bringing the club into disrepute through the player's actions during a training session, match or any event organised by the club.

In the event of such incidents occurring, the coach can ask the parent/guardian to collect their child from the training/match and suspend the player from playing or training for a defined period. The coach may also report the incident to the executive committee of Erin Go Bragh GAA Club if s/he deems it necessary. On receipt of any such complaint the executive committee or a sub-committee thereof will investigate the incident and recommend any further punishment deemed proportionate to the offence involved.

Clubs shall ensure that Officials in charge of Youth, Adult and Ladies teams foster and encourage a high level of sportsmanship among all their players.

- Team Officials must encourage respect for Match Officials and this can best be done by their own behaviour towards such Officials.
- During competitive games, Team Officials must operate along the sideline area. Coaching from the end-line is strictly prohibited, as is encroachment onto the playing area.
- Bad, foul or abusive language shall not be tolerated from Team Officials and such Officials shall ensure that Youth in their charge also observe a strict code of practice in this regard.
- Team Officials shall ascertain (in so far as possible) any incidents of medical history of Youth under their care. This would be beneficial in the event of accidents.
- Clubs shall be advised not to use players of 3 years younger than the age grade of any competition, except in exceptional circumstances.

Code of Conduct for Mentors in charge of Ladies Football

- Mentors must act as a role model and promote the positive aspects of Ladies Gaelic Football and maintain the highest standards of personal conduct - your behaviour to players, other officials, and opponents will have an effect on the players in your care.
- Mentors should respect the rights, dignity and worth of every player and treat each player equally, regardless of ethnic origin, religion or ability.
- Encourage the development of respect for opponents, officials, selectors and other coaches and avoid criticism of mentors and officials.
- Avoid working alone at all times. Ensure there is adequate supervision for all activities. It is important to realise that certain situations or friendly actions could be misinterpreted by the participant or by outsiders.

- The use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco must be actively discouraged as being incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity. Mentors should avoid the use of alcohol, before coaching, during events and on trips with young players
- When travel/overnight stays are involved, the mentors traveling with child must sign a separate agreement. Parents and players will also be asked to sign permission forms in these instances

Dealing with female players

- Be generous with praise and never ridicule or shout at players for making mistakes or for losing a game
- Remember that young players play for fun and enjoyment and that skill development and personal satisfaction have priority over highly structured competition. Never make winning the only objective - see Player Pathway
- Set realistic goals for the players and do not pressurize young players
- Be careful to avoid the "star system". Each player deserves equal time and attention
- Care must be taken not to expose a player intentionally or unintentionally to embarrassment or disparagement by use of sarcastic or flippant remarks about the player or her family
- Physical punishment or physical force must never be used. Never punish a mistake - by verbal means, physical means, or exclusion
- Insist that players in your care respect the rules of the game. Insist on fair play and ensure players are aware you will not tolerate cheating or bullying behaviour
- All mentors should keep an attendance record of all training sessions and matches
- All mentors should ensure that parents are aware of training start and finishing times
- All parents should be encouraged to assist with training or to assist in dressing rooms
- All mentors should keep a brief record of injury(s) and action taken both during a training session and during a game. For convenience it is recommended that an injury report form is kept in the first aid bag at all times
- When young players are invited into adult groups/squads, it is advisable to get agreement from a parent/ carer. Boundaries of behaviour in adult groups are normally different from the boundaries that apply to junior groups/squads
- Mentors should communicate and co-operate with medical and ancillary practitioners in the diagnosis, treatment and management of their players'

medical or related problems. Avoid giving advice of a personal or medical nature if you are not qualified to do so. Any information of a personal or medical nature must be kept strictly confidential unless the welfare of the player requires the passing on of this information

- Keep a brief record of problem/ action/ outcomes if behavioural problems arise

Relationship with female players

- Mentors are responsible for setting and monitoring the boundaries between a working relationship and friendship with players. It is advisable for coaches not to involve young players in their personal life i.e. visits to coaches home or overnight stays
- When approached to take on a new player, ensure that any previous coach-student relationship has been ended by the student/others in a professional manner
- Mentors who become aware of a conflict between their obligation to their players and their obligation to the governing body must make explicit the nature of the conflict and the loyalties and responsibilities involved to all parties concerned
- The nature of the relationship between mentor and a player can often mean that a mentor will learn confidential information about a player or player's family. This information must be regarded as confidential and except where abuse is suspected, must not be divulged to a third party without the permission of the player/family
- Parents should always be informed when problems arise except in situations where informing parents may put the player at risk

Consequences of Improper Behaviour

Team officials should realise the responsible role they assume within the club. Senior Officials of the club must ensure that such officials are aware of their responsibilities and what the consequences must be for improper behaviour. (Ref. R. 139 T.O.)

There is a clear need to establish a set of procedures for dealing with incidents of misbehaviour by Team Officials. These could occur as a result of a report from a Match Official, Parent/Guardian, Young Person or another member of the Club. All such incidents need to be fully investigated by the club and assistance should be sought, if necessary, from the Coiste Contae.

Mentor's Code of Conduct

1. I will respect the rules and procedures set down in the Ladies Gaelic Football Association's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players
2. I will act as a role model and promote the positive aspects of sport and of Ladies Gaelic Football
3. I will respect all players and treat all players equally
4. I will encourage fair play and praise effort as well as results
5. I will not use any form of punishment (verbal or physical) on a player
6. I will not exert undue influence over a participant in order to obtain personal benefit or reward
7. I will respect the officials and their authority during matches
8. I will never demonstrate threatening or abusive behaviour or use foul language

Name: _____

Name of Club: _____

Date: _____

