

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR YOUNG PLAYERS.

Young Players can benefit greatly from sports in terms of personal development and enjoyment. Our players are encouraged to realise that as a result of their participation in Gaelic Football that they also have a responsibility to treat other players and officials with fairness and respect. With rights there will always be responsibilities.

The term young players also refers to children i.e. any person who is under 18 years of age, regardless of what team or age group they play with.

Young Players, and those who work with them in our Associations are required to 'sign up' and abide by this Code of Behaviour and to any other policies or codes in our Clubs or Associations.

YOUNG PLAYERS SHOULD BE ENTITLED TO:

- Be safe and feel safe.
- Have fun and experience a sense of enjoyment and fulfilment.
- Be treated with respect, dignity and sensitivity.
- Comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner.
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality.
- Participate in games and competitions at levels with which they feel comfortable.
- Be afforded adequate and meaningful playing time to assist in the development of their playing skills, within their own age group and in accordance with Rule.
- Make their concerns known and have them dealt with in an appropriate manner.
- Be protected from abuse.
- Be listened to.

YOUNG PLAYERS SHOULD ALWAYS:

- Play fairly, do their best and enjoy themselves.
- Respect fellow team members regardless of ability, cultural or ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation or religion beliefs.
- Support fellow team members regardless of whether they do well or not.
- Represent their team, their Club and their family with pride and dignity.
- Respect all Coaches, Officials and their opponents.
- Be gracious in defeat and modest in victory.
- Shake hands before and after a game as part of the Give Respect Get Respect initiative, irrespective of the result. This will only be done when it is safe to do so, in line with best practice re Covid.
- Inform their Coach/Mentor/Manager in advance if they are unavailable for training and games.
- Take due care of Club equipment and help with coaches in gathering up equipment after training sessions. Where managers have placed equipment on pitches for use of the team, players will not interfere, move or damage the equipment.
- Know that it is acceptable to talk to the Club Children's Officer with any concerns or questions they may have.
- Adhere to acceptable standards of behaviour and their Club's Code of Discipline.
- Tell somebody else if they or others have been harmed in any way.

YOUNG PLAYERS SHOULD ENGAGE IN GOOD PRACTICE:

- Never cheat – always play by the rules.
- Never shout at or argue with a game's official, with their Coach, their team mates or opponents and should never use violence.
- Accept the decisions of referees and other officials.
- Never use unfair or Bullying tactics to gain advantage or isolate other players.
- Never spread rumours.
- Never tell lies about adults or other young people.
- Never play or train if they feel unwell or are injured.
- Never use unacceptable language or racial and/or sectarian references to an opponent, a fellow player or official by words, deeds or gesture.
- Never consume non-prescribed drugs or performance enhancing supplements.
- Never use social media to discuss team mates, opponents, coaches, match officials or other individuals.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR COACHES, MENTORS AND TRAINERS.

All Coaches, Mentors and Trainers (referred to hereafter as Coaches) should ensure that young people and children benefit significantly from our games by promoting a positive, healthy and participatory approach in our work with underage players. In developing the skills levels of every player, Coaches should always encourage enjoyment and fun while ensuring meaningful participation in our games and activities. Coaches should always remember that they are role models for the players in their care.

RECRUITMENT OF 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. All persons working or volunteering for such roles are required to:

- Undertake agreed vetting and background Police checks within the jurisdiction(s) in which they operate
- Attend relevant Gaelic Games child safeguarding training
- Possess a coaching qualification relevant to their role as recognised by the GAA.

Coaches of adult teams, which includes any player under 18 years of age, must also undertake the vetting, child safeguarding training and coaching requirements as outlined above.

COACHES SHOULD MAINTAIN A CHILD CENTRED APPROACH

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person.
- Treat each person equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.
- 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.
- 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 will have priority over competition when working with underage players.
- 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.
- Develop an understanding of relevant coaching methods and ensure that they have the appropriate level of coaching accreditation.
- 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

- Never use foul language or provocative language/gestures to a player, opponent or match official.
- Only enter the field of play with the Referee's permission.
- Do not question a Referee's decisions or integrity.
- Encourage players to respect and accept the judgement of match officials.
- Promote Fair Play and encourage all players and fellow officials to always play by the rules of the game.
- Do not encourage or threaten a player by deed or gesture to act in any unacceptable manner towards an opponent, fellow player or official.
- Promote the RESPECT campaign amongst your players, fellow coaches, parents and supporters.
- Do not smoke while working with underage players.
- Do not consume alcohol or non-prescribed drugs immediately prior to or while underage players are in your care.
- Encourage parents to become involved in your team and Club activities wherever possible.

CONDUCT OF COACHES WHEN WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

- Develop an appropriate working relationship with children based on mutual trust and respect.
- 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.
- Don't shout at or lecture players or reprimand/ridicule them when they make a mistake. Children learn best through trial and error. Children and young people should not be afraid to risk error so as to learn.
- 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.
- Avoid incidents of horse play or role play or telling jokes etc. that could be misinterpreted.
- Never undertake any form of therapy or hypnosis, in the training of children.
- Never encourage players to consume non-prescribed drugs or take performance enhancing supplements.
- 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;

- Avoid taking coaching sessions on your own.
- Only deliver one to one coaching, if deemed necessary, within a group setting.
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with an underage player and never engage in inappropriate touching of a player.
- 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.

BEST PRACTICE

- Ensure that all of your players are suitably and safely attired to play their chosen sport. e.g. gum shields (Football).
- As a coach always be punctual and properly attired.
- Be accompanied by at least one other adult at coaching sessions, games and in underage team dressing rooms.
- Abide by supervision ratios that recommend a ratio of one adult for 8 children under 12 years of age teams and a ratio of 1:10 for children over 12 years of age. While abiding by such ratios a coach must always be accompanied by at least one other suitably qualified adult at all times.
- Set realistic – stretching but achievable – performance goals for your players and teams.
- Keep a record of attendance at training and at games by both players and coaches.
- Rotate the team captaincy and the method used for selecting teams so that the same children are not always selected to the exclusion of others.
- Afford meaningful playing time to young players so as to assist in the development of their playing skills, within their own age groups.
- 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.
- Make adequate provision for First Aid services.
- Do not encourage or permit players to play while injured.
- Always inform parents/guardians if their child has been injured or becomes unwell at games or training.
- 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.
- 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.
- Do not administer medication or medical aid unless you are willing to do so and have received the necessary training to administer such aid.
- 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.
- Do not communicate individually by text, email or via social network sites and or apps with underage players.
- Do not engage in communications with underage players via social network sites.
- Encourage parents/guardians to play an active role in organising and assisting various activities for your teams and your Club.

- 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.
- With the exception of their own child a coach should not transport a child alone, except in emergency or exceptional circumstances.
- Ensure that all dressing rooms and the general areas that are occupied by your players and other Club personnel, prior to, during or immediately following the completion of any match are kept clean and are not damaged in any way.
- 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.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Parents/Guardians have an influential role to play in assisting and encouraging their children to fully participate in Gaelic Football, whether by playing our games or attending training or coaching sessions. Our Associations constantly seek the active participation of all parents and guardians, particularly at Club level, where the ethos of volunteerism forms the basis of our community led Club. In common with Coaches and Club personnel the Parents/Guardians of underage players should act as role models for their children as they participate in Gaelic Football.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS SHOULD ENCOURAGE THEIR CHILD TO:

- Always play by the rules.
- Improve their skills levels.
- Appreciate everybody on their team, regardless of ability.
- Maintain a balanced and healthy lifestyle with regard to exercise, food, rest and play. Advice may be sought if necessary from Club officials on this issue.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS SHOULD LEAD BY EXAMPLE:

- Adopt a positive attitude to their children's participation in our games.
- Respect officials' decisions and encourage children to do likewise.
- Do not exert undue pressure on your child.
- Never admonish your own child or any other child for their standard of play.
- Be realistic in their expectations.
- Show approval for effort, not just results.
- Avoid asking a child or young person, 'How much did you score today' or 'What did you win by' or 'What did you lose by.' Ask them 'Did they enjoy themselves.'
- Never embarrass a child or use sarcastic remarks towards a player.
- Applaud good play from all teams.

- Do not criticise playing performances. Identify how improvements may be made.
- Do not seek to unfairly affect a game or player.
- Do not enter the field of play unless specifically invited to do so by an official in charge.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS SHOULD:

- Complete and return the annual registration/permission and medical consent forms for their child's participation in the Club.
- Inform the Coaches, and any other relevant Club personnel, of any changes in their child's medical or dietary requirements prior to coaching sessions, games or other activities.
- Ensure that their child punctually attends coaching sessions/games or other activities.
- Provide their child with adequate clothing and equipment as may be required for the playing of our games including for example helmets, shin guards, gum shields etc.
- Ensure that the nutrition/hydration and hygiene needs of their child are met.
- Never encourage your child(ren) to consume non-prescribed drugs or take performance enhancing supplements.
- Listen to what their child may have to say.
- Show approval whether the team wins, loses or draws a game.
- Never attempt to meet their own needs and aspirations for success and achievement through their children's participation in games.
- If a parent has any issues to raise regarding their child's participation or performance in a team they may raise this with the team coach(es) but should do so in a constructive and non-confrontational manner and not in the company or vicinity of young players or other parents.
- Complaints about the conduct or practice of a coach should be brought to the attention of the Club Children's Officer.
- Support your Club by becoming an active member and by participating in Club activities.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS SHOULD ASSIST THEIR CLUB BY:

- Showing appreciation to volunteers, coaches and Club officials.
- Attending training and games on a regular basis. When attending, parents must stay outside the fence surrounding the playing area and not enter the field of play.
- Assisting in the organising of Club activities and events as requested.
- Respecting the rights, dignity and worth of every person and by treating each one equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.
- Not entering team dressing rooms unless deemed necessary by the team coach(es) so as to protect the privacy of other underage players.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS HAVE THE RIGHT TO:

- Know their child is safe and to make a complaint if they believe that their child's safety is in any way compromised.
- Be informed of problems/concerns relating to their child.
- Be informed if their child gets injured or becomes unwell.
- Complain to the relevant persons if they have concerns about the standard of coaching.
- Have, as a member, a say in relation to decisions being made within the Club.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR FOR SUPPORTERS.

Young Players are eager to enjoy and benefit from the support they receive from supporters parents, guardians, friends and other members of the Club who attend our games. Active, loyal and well behaved, supporters are always welcome to attend and support our games but should be aware that their conduct will reflect upon the team, players and Clubs that they support and represent. Fellow supporters have a responsibility to ensure that all spectators conduct themselves in an acceptable and well behaved, manner at all times, when attending our games and competitions. Unacceptable conduct by supporters should be reported to stewards or officials in charge (if appropriate) or at Club level to the Children's Officer. Supporters should realise and consider that Young Players are encouraged to participate in Gaelic Games so that they may enjoy themselves while also improving their skills levels.

SUPPORTERS ADD TO THE ENJOYMENT OF OUR GAMES BY:

- Applauding good performance and efforts from your Club's players and from your opponents, regardless of the result.
- Condemning the use of violence in any form, be it by fellow spectators, coaches, officials or players.
- Demonstrating appropriate behaviour by not using foul language or harassing players, opposition supporters, coaches or officials.
- Not entering the field of play, before, during or after a game.
- Respecting the decisions of all officials.
- Never ridiculing or scolding a player for making a mistake during games or competitions.
- Showing respect to your Club's opponents. Without them there would be no games or competitions.
- Upholding the principles of FAIR PLAY and RESPECT for all.

CODE OF BEHAVIOUR REGARDING REFEREES

Throughout this Code of Behaviour emphasis has been placed on the need to co-operate with and facilitate those that organise and deliver our games and activities. Referees are key people in the delivery of our games and should be respected and assisted in their roles. Referees are conscious of the fact that they are instrumental in ensuring our games are played in a sporting manner in accordance with the rules of the game. Players, Coaches, Mentors, Parents/Guardians and other Club personnel have a key role to play in the delivery of this aspect of our Gaelic Games particularly when working with underage players. The manner in which we accept the role, authority and decisions of a Referee will naturally be scrutinised very closely by our underage players.

IN THEIR CAPACITY AS REFEREES OF UNDERAGE GAMES WE EXPECT OUR REFEREES TO:

- Apply the playing rules on an impartial and consistent basis.
- Act with integrity and objectivity in all games.
- Communicate decisions to players and team officials in an effective and constructive manner in consideration of the age groups playing our games.
- Deal with dissent firmly and fairly.
- Work as a team with other match officials.
- Maintain composure regardless of the circumstances.
- Avail of assessments and supports to improve performance.
- Uphold and implement the Give Respect – Get Respect initiative at all levels.
- 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.
- Undertake agreed vetting and background Police checks within the jurisdiction in which they work and attend relevant child safeguarding training.

Players, Coaches, Supporters, Parents/Guardians and other Club personnel should recognise the pivotal role that Referees play in our underage games and should support them at all times when fulfilling their roles.

GIVE RESPECT – GET RESPECT

Give Respect – Get Respect is an awareness campaign that seeks to ensure that Gaelic Games are promoted and played in a positive, fair and enjoyable manner and where Players, Coaches, Spectators and Referees Give Respect– Get Respect from each other.

The RESPECT campaign applies at all levels and amongst all players regardless of age, competition or ability. The key participants in the Give Respect – Get Respect campaign are not just the Players themselves but Coaches, Clubs, Parents, Referees and Supporters.

The Give Respect – Get Respect initiative is supported by the GAA, Ladies Gaelic Football Association, the Camogie Association, GAA Handball Ireland and the Rounders Council of Ireland.

THE RESPECT CAMPAIGN HIGHLIGHTS THE FOLLOWING GOOD PRACTICES:

- All players and coaches shake hands with their opponents and the referee before and after each game, when health conditions allow.
- Mark out a designated spectators’ area around the playing area.
- At relevant underage categories teams should strive to achieve the maximum participation of all players in accordance with agreed playing models.
- The host Club should welcome referees and opposing team to all games.
- A merit award, based on sporting endeavour and fair play, shall be awarded to players and teams who have upheld the RESPECT principles.
- Adopt and implement the Code of Behaviour when working with underage players as the minimum level of agreement between the Club and Players, Coaches, Parents, Guardians and Supporters at underage level.

- Organise half time exhibition games, where practicable, during Club and inter County League and Championship Games that promote the principles of the RESPECT campaign in association with schools, other Clubs and Cumann na mBunscol.
- Clubs should ensure that the coaches of underage teams are aware of and also implement the Give Respect– Get Respect initiative.

RESPECT

- Responsible
- Encouraging
- Supportive
- Positive
- Enabling
- Considerate
- Tolerant