

Child Safeguarding Information Seminar

FAQs submitted by Tutors and Children's Officers

Safeguarding Training

Child Safeguarding Training is highlighted in Children First as being **mandatory** and is required for whatever the level of child safeguarding engagement one has in the Association. While we previously maintained this level of training as part of our good practice standards, and included it as part of basic coaching qualification requirements, safeguarding training is now mandatory in law. Three levels of Child Safeguarding Training (see below) are now in place in the Gaelic Games Associations. Attendance at any of the workshops obviously depends on the role an individual has in any of our Associations. All training is delivered in workshop format and all workshops are of three hours duration.

The Gaelic Games Associations' child safeguarding training is based on the Sport Ireland equivalent training programmes.

Who should attend the Safeguarding 1 Workshop?

Safeguarding 1 - Child Protection in Sport Awareness Workshops relevant to coaches and others who work in a regulated role with children in the Association. Coaches, parents, underage committees, referees and the Club Children's Officer and the DLP are required to attend the Safeguarding 1 training.

Who should attend the Safeguarding 2 workshop?

Safeguarding 2 - Club Children's Officer Training is for Club and County Children's Officers who must have completed Safeguarding 1 before they attend Safeguarding 2.

Who should attend the Safeguarding 3 workshop?

Safeguarding 3 – Designated Liaison Person Training (DLPS) at Club and County level. The Club Children's Officer may also wish to attend but this is not a mandatory requirement of their role. The DLP must have completed Safeguarding 1 before they attend Safeguarding 3.

Is the Safeguarding 1 workshop for referees?

The National Child Safeguarding Training Committee along with the Referees Development Committee are working together to develop a Child Safeguarding workshop specifically for referees. We expect this workshop will be agreed in early 2019 and will be delivered shortly thereafter. Until this workshop is made available referees are obliged to attend the current Safeguarding 1 workshop.

Does the Gaelic Games Associations have an online refresher Safeguarding 1 workshop?

The Training Committee are currently developing an online refresher workshop. It is expected that the online refresher will be available in September 2019. It is important to

note that it will not replace the current 3 hour workshop. People will still be required to attend the face to face 3 hour workshop and when an agreed period of time has lapsed they can then undertake the online refresher workshop. The renewal period will be agreed prior to the launch of the on – line refresher programme.

How long does the Safeguarding 1 workshop last for, are coaches expect to repeat it after a number of years?

Currently the National Child Safeguarding Training Committee are working on a Training Policy which will stipulate as to when a coach, mentor etc. will be required to renew their child safeguarding training via the online refresher workshop. The views of Tutors will be welcomed in this regard.

Will I be notified when I need to do the training again? No, the Club Children’s Officer should keep a list of those who have completed the safeguarding training.

Why do I need to do a Safeguarding course as I’m only working with adult teams in my club?

Adult teams may still have a player who is 17 years old on the team. The coach is responsible for the 17 year old players at training and at matches and our workshops cater for those who work with anybody under 18 yrs. of age.

What age has a person to be to do the workshop?

A person must be 16 years of old to attend the Safeguarding 1 Workshop and parental consent must be provided by the parent/guardian for the participant by completing the Gaelic Games Parental Consent Form.

I attended the Local Sports Partnership Safeguarding 1 workshop will this suffice to satisfy the safeguarding coaching requirements in the Gaelic Games Associations? When we set about agreeing the content of our safeguarding training workshops we had to be cognisant of how the content reflected the core values and context of safeguarding in our Associations and it presented us with the opportunity to also references safeguarding polices, practices, structures as well as our Codes. It also enabled us to include (real) Gaelic Games based scenarios or situations and gave the participants an opportunity to identify and learn the most appropriate responses within our structures. As our workshops developed we also included the roles and relevance of Children’s Officer and of the DLP in our three Associations and we looked at internal and external reporting procedures and other Gaelic Games practices and procedures. Furthermore, and this is extremely important, our training workshops reflect how we jointly deal with breaches of the Code. The finished product, which can be amended as time requires, is an improved resource that it then becomes an agreed training programme for the GAA, LGFA and Camogie.

The Gaelic Games Associations recognise the Local Sports Partnership Safeguarding 1 workshop as it is what can be termed ‘generic’ training or non-organisational specific training and while it does not satisfy all of our needs it provides a basis and would not necessarily confuse people as to the general safeguarding needs in a Club.

If a member of any of the Gaelic Games Associations presents a certificate of attendance from a Local Sports Partnership workshop we accept such confirmation as a bona fide initial recognition of their legal requirements.

However recognising that the member will not have received information on our own safeguarding policies or practices, or our reporting procedures or Code structures or the role of Gaelic Games Children's Officers and DLPs in our three Associations, we will require that the member in question be obliged to attend the Gaelic Games Safeguarding 1 Workshop within an agreed period of time and this will be agreed with the person's Club.

If a member presents a safeguarding certificate of attendance from another organisation's on-line training programme or proof of attendance at another organisation's specific child safeguarding training programme that has been developed or modified (as we have done) will this be accepted? No, we cannot accept such training as meeting our requirements and any person presenting such training attendance certification would be required to attend the Gaelic Games Safeguarding training in advance of taking up a role of responsibility with children in our Associations in accordance with the requirements of Children First.

The rationale for this is that in order to safeguard the children and young people we work with and the coaches who work with them, and for us to fulfil our legislative and governance requirements, we must ensure as far as is reasonably practicable, that all members are clear as to their responsibilities, conduct, reporting procedures etc. as per our (Gaelic Games Associations) Codes. Unfortunately a 'one size fits all model' does not work in this situation. Regrettably, we would be misleading and misinforming our members, and doing our children a disservice, were we to fail to provide coaches with the relevant guidance to enable them to operate in a safe and responsible environment not to mention that we would also be in breach of our governance and legislative responsibilities as well.

Such certificates cannot be accepted and the applicant must attend the Gaelic Games safeguarding training in advance of taking up a role with us.

Cúl Camp Assistant Safeguarding Training

Cúl Camps and Clubs Camps are organised by most Clubs not just during the summer but invariably during school holidays. We are aware of the restrictions placed on people under 16 yrs. of age from being vetted, attending child safeguarding training or completing a coaching qualification course. It is these same restrictions that deem a person under 16 yrs. of age as being ineligible to be a coach. It is for that reason that we designed a specific Cúl Camp and Club Camp Assistants' Workshop for Cúl Camp and Club Camp Assistants who shall NOT have a coaching role but may be allocated other general tasks on Camps that cater for children. This workshop outlines the roles and responsibilities of Camp Assistants, elementary safeguarding and child welfare requirements, the Code of Behaviour and what a person should do if a child welfare issue arise?

Will we be issuing certs for those who attend the DLP workshops? Yes, once the Safeguarding 3 Workshop for Designated Liaison Persons is mainstreamed certificates of attendance will be issued to all who attend including those who attended the pilot phase workshops. The names of attendees will be retained on our Training Data Base.

Vetting: In accordance with vetting legislation, also referred to in the Children First Guidance, all persons who have a regulated role with children, (i.e. coaches, referees, Bord na nÓg members, parents who regularly assist in the Gaelic Games Associations must be vetted by us before they take up their role. There are no exceptions to this directive. If a person, who has not been vetted, continues to act in any of the above roles they will be breaking the law as may their Club for offering or facilitating such a role. Vetting regulations stipulate that a vetting applicant must be at least 16 yrs. of age when submitting their application. The Gaelic Games Associations Vetting Policy states that once vetted an applicant shall be re-vetted within a five year period. Please note that the Gaelic Games Associations are all vetted through the online E-Vetting system.

Can you start coaching teams if you are waiting for your Garda vetting acceptance letter? No, a person must be vetted before they take up the coaching role.

How long does Vetting last for within the Gaelic Games Association? The Vetting Policy states that once vetted an applicant shall be re-vetted within a five year period.

I was vetted through the LGFA and also coach in the GAA do I need to be vetted again? No, there is an agreement between the Gaelic Games Associations (Handball, Rounders, Camogie, LGFA and GAA) that we each recognise each other's vetting. Therefore if you were vetted through the LGFA your vetting will suffice for the GAA and vice a versa.

Why do I the coach have to be vetted by the GAA as I was already vetted through another organisation? Vetting is not transferable from one organisation to another for example the GAA cannot share your vetting information with Athletics Ireland nor can the Irish Nurses Association share your vetting information with the GAA. It is not permitted in law.

How long does vetting take and how will my Club know if I am vetted? Depending on the length of time it takes the applicant to complete the National Vetting Bureau Form it should in most circumstances take approx. two weeks.

The e-vetting system devised by the Gaelic Games Associations provides for the Club Secretary to receive notification of when a person applies for Vetting, they then also receive a notification of when the person vetting is completed and a copy of the person's acceptance letter

How can a Club access a list of all those vetted? Gaelic Games Associations' vetting lists are sent twice a year by the National Children Office to County Secretaries and County Children's Officer who in turn send the information to the individual Clubs. The E-Vetting system was built to ensure that we can extract such information, in accordance with our legal obligations, and share it on a need to know basis with our Clubs. This does not breach

any data regulations as we are obliged to ensure that Clubs are aware if a person appointed to work with children has fulfilled their legal vetting obligations.

The Role of the Children's Officer

The Club AGM or the County Annual Convention shall appoint a Children's Officer. The person appointed shall be nominated by the outgoing Committee.

The role of the Club Children's Officers shall be to assist in promoting a child and youth centered ethos in the Club. In their work the Club Children's Officer shall be the link between the children/young people and the adults within the Club. They shall promote the Code of Behaviour (Underage) and assist in ensuring that breaches of the code are dealt with the provisions of the Code. They shall promote the Give Respect-Get Respect initiative, shall oversee the Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment and Child Safeguarding Statement process at club level and ensure that all underage members complete annual membership forms. They must also ensure that coaches are vetted, that Safeguarding 1 workshops are completed and that all coaches working with children must have a minimum recognised coaching qualification and keep up-to-date records of the same. The Children's Officer is obliged to report to/attend the Club Executive Committee and to report to AGM

The Role of the Designated Liaison Person

The Club or County Chairperson automatically assumes the role of DLP unless another person is chosen and ratified to undertake this role. The DLP should have a knowledge of categories and indicators of abuse, attend the DLP training workshop, and be familiar as required with the reporting procedures agreed by the Gaelic Games Associations. The DLP should record all concerns brought to their attention and the actions taken thereafter. The DLP should be ratified on an annual basis by their Club or County and must avail of the Association's DLP training.

The appointed Club and County Designated Liaison Person (DLP) shall act as a resource, and is responsible for ensuring that reporting procedures within the Club/County are followed so that child welfare and protection concerns are referred promptly to the relevant statutory authority and to their own Association's Mandated Person. They will naturally liaise with the Association's Mandated Person as required on allegations of abuse.

The Role of the Mandated Person

The Children First Act imposes a statutory obligations on the Gaelic Games Associations, and others, to appoint a Mandated Person whose role shall be to report child protection concerns over a defined threshold to Tusla and to assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.

Other sectors also have Mandated Persons and these include social workers, medical practitioners, teachers, members of an Garda Síochána, youth workers and many more. The Mandated Person shall by the nature of their role, liaise regularly and as required with Association DLPs.

Clubs do not appoint a Mandated Person and DLPs are not Mandated Persons within the meaning of the Act.

What is Mandated Reporting?

Mandated persons are required to fulfil their obligations as per their roles and to be aware as to the legal obligations that are placed upon them to report mandated concerns. This is not the specific role of a DLP. The Mandated Person's role shall be to report child protection concerns over a defined threshold to Tusla and to assist Tusla, if requested, in assessing a concern which has been the subject of a mandated report.

Remember, notwithstanding the legal role of a Mandated Person, that anybody can in a private capacity submit a report or concern of abuse to the relevant statutory authority be it to the Gardaí, to Tusla, to the relevant Gateway Team or the PSNI.

Who are the Mandated Person's appointed by each of our Associations?

The GAA/Rounders/Handball Mandated Person is Gearóid Ó Maoilmhichíl mandatedperson@gaa.ie

The Camogie Mandated person is Roberta Farrell mandatedperson@camogie.ie

The Ladies Gaelic Football Association Mandated Person is Paula Prunty mandatedperson@lgfa.ie

Code of Behaviour (Underage)

- **What to do when a parent or coach from the opposing team breaches the code during a game? What will happen if I report it?** The Code allows for alleged breaches to be addressed in an informal manner, by agreement between all parties, in the first instance knowing that if the informal process is unsuccessful that the matter may then be addressed formally. If pursuing the informal approach it would be useful to ask the Children's Officers in both clubs to liaise and see if they can address the issues between them and ensure that any breach is appropriately addressed.
If the informal approach is not successful or is inappropriate then the matter should be forwarded to the County code Determining committee who shall address it in accordance with an alleged breach of the code as a new complaint.
- **What if a Club doesn't adhere to a situation where a Coach is in breach of the Code of Behaviour? What can be done?** If a coach within a Club is allegedly in breach of the Code of Behaviour and the Club is refusing to address the matter the complainant should contact their County Children's Officer and seek their assistance in addressing the complaint. The County Children's Officer has the authority to intervene and seek that the complaint is addressed appropriately in the first instance at Club level and if this is not dealt with satisfactorily the complaint may then be referred to the County Code Determining Committee for their consideration.
- **How do you deal with a coach or a spectator who is verbally abusive of underage players from the sideline? Is it through rule or Code?** It's important not to let this pattern of behaviour go unchallenged whether it involves children's matches or adult grade matches or indeed training.

Such behaviour should be addressed by approaching the individual, if it's safe to do so, and telling them that their actions are unacceptable. If it persists then it should be reported to the Club Children's Officer or to another Officer of the Club to be dealt with at that level.

The referee also has a role to play during a game where such behaviour becomes obvious in that it is within the power of the referee to approach the coach instructing them that this behaviour must cease immediately and the referee may also include the conduct of the coach and of the spectator in their match report.

We should never lose sight of the fact that the Club appointed this coach to work on behalf of the Club with children. If the conduct of the coach is unacceptable and cannot improve them remove him/her from their role.

Verbal abuse by a coach or by a spectator can be dealt with under 'playing rules' or under the Code of Behaviour. Verbal abuse is also a serious breach of the Give Respect – Get Respect initiative and Clubs should live up to their responsibilities and deal with such behaviour the first time it comes to their attention.

- **Should a Club base their own code of Behaviour on the joint Code of Behaviour (Underage)?** There is no need to write your own Club Code of Behaviour or re-write the Code. You can put your logo on the Code but no need to amend the contents. The agreed Code of Behaviour (Underage) is the document referred to in Rule as agreed between the Gaelic Games Associations. Many difficulties have arisen and confusion caused by the issuing of Club Codes which at times have contradicted or even failed to reach the same standards of the agreed Code of Behaviour (Underage). It is worth noting that the guidance on Dealing with Breaches of the Code of Behaviour (Underage) does not apply to private or individual Codes devised at Club level nor are we obliged to hear any appeals that emerge as a result of a decision taken under such private Codes or modified versions of the Code of Behaviour (Underage).

If a coach of an U12s team goes on to the pitch and physically interferes with a child from the opposing team should that be dealt with under Rule or Code? This is an example of an adult possibly being accused of assault. As a coach or even as a spectator this should be dealt with as a playing rule infringement as it happened during a game and even were it to happen after the game it can still be dealt with under rule.

Clarification on texting of underage players via phone and social media sites? The Association has directed that we use text (group) or email when communicating with members or communicating with the parents/guardians of players. It's safer, it's traceable, and it can be controlled and can be issued officially by a named person via a number that has been approved by the Club.

We do not permit any circumstances whereby an individual underage member receives any communication except following written parental permission. Even then it must be part of a group message system, from an authorised person on behalf of the Club, and not an individual communication to the underage member.

We do not support a Facebook page for underage players or Facebook messenger nor should such a concept be facilitated by the Club under any circumstances nor do we support WhatsApp due to lack of monitoring and GDPR compliance.

Whatsapp in any form is not permitted – not for official means of communication and not for the transfer of personal data (i.e. photographs). This is due to a number of different reasons - Firstly, if a Whatsapp group is set up (U-12 hurling for example) every parent in that group has their phone number and possibly profile photograph if they have one, shared with every other parent in the group without giving their consent for their personal data to be shared in this manner. Also, the lack of auditing ability the Club/County has over a Whatsapp group is an issue. This is an issue for a number of reasons outside of GDPR and data protection also. For instance, if a parent in a Whatsapp group were to post unsuitable material to the Whatsapp group, and then leave the group, the administrators of the group cannot remove such material. The lack of auditing ability also makes it difficult to comply with a Subject Access Request or request for deletion if one were received. Along with the above, there is an issue presently with Whatsapp as to the location of the storage of information within it. If personal data is transferred outside the EEA, the entity transferring it (the Club/County) will have to ensure additional safeguards are in place which is not possible when using Whatsapp. Therefore due to these reasons, the use of Whatsapp in an official capacity is not advisable.

If a player is injured can you the coach/first aider physically touch the player to check on them? A person trained in first aid should be in attendance at matches with an adequate first aid kit. A common sense approach should be taken if no first aider is on duty as it may be unwise to apply first aid if not adequately trained to do so while ignoring a child who may have been hit or injured by a hurley or a ball is also not recommended.

A trained first aider will always check in with the player first if the need to touch or check the injured area. Some extraordinary myths exist as to never touching an injured player but as a first aider will tell you if it's necessary to check an injury by touching the injured area the first aider will tell the player its necessary and tell them or ask them before doing it.

Are all clubs expected to have anti-bullying policy and where do we get a template? Yes, all Clubs are obliged to adhere to the Anti-Bullying Policy Statement that is contained in the Code of Behaviour (Underage) and should display the statement in a prominent place in their club house. The statement is also available on your Association's website

What can we do if bullying spills over to online social media platforms or onto Whats app – not directly related to club but could be? It should be addressed by the club if the alleged bully or victim is a member of the Club. The Club Children's Officer can talk to all underage players without naming anyone and explain that the club does not tolerate bullying and remind them of the Clubs Anti Bullying Statement.

Can you transport children to matches using your own car? In some cases a private arrangement is made by parents for a neighbour whose child is also playing and or family member to bring their child to training or matches. If it is necessary to transport a child/young person in your car, you should endeavour to 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

If a club is availing of cars, provided for example by parents, to ferry children to matches, they should make these arrangements crystal clear so that a parent knows what is happening and is agreeable to such proposals.

If a coach notices a child is left at the pitch and all other children are gone home can they bring the child home in their car? The coach should first of all contact the parent and explain the situation and if agreeable and if asked they can give the child a lift home. All effort should be made to have more than that child in the car with the coach. Whenever 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.

Why do coaches who have experience with playing the game need to have a coaching qualification? All coaches whether you were or are experienced players, and regardless of age or level of competitiveness, or have been involved in the club for years are still required to complete a coaching qualification. Children First National Guidance informs us that adequate and appropriate training as well as child welfare training is required for staff and volunteers working with children.

Clarification – can a 15 year old Coach with for example with an U12 team

No, the 'Vetting Act' and Children First Guidance 2017 have been closely examined and we note that it is compulsory for any person who is carrying out relevant work with children to obtain a vetting disclosure, to also attend child Safeguarding Training and have a Coaching qualification as well. Vetting regulations do NOT permit us to vet an individual unless they are at least 16 yrs. of age and the same age criteria applies to attendance at Safeguarding Training and undertaking a coaching qualification. Given these legal requirement it is not therefore permissible for a 15 yr. old to be a coach.

A 17 year old plays on the Junior football team, and the team travel by bus to a game and stop off in the pub on the way home. Who is responsible for the 17 year old? The 17 year olds parent should have been informed in advance that the team bus was stopping off in a pub on the way home. The coach/manager of the Junior team is responsible for the 17 year old and must ensure that all aspects of our legal responsibilities are adhered to on the journey and in the pub.

How to deal with racists comments made against a child by opposition if the ref hasn't heard it? The parent, supporter should bring it to the attention of their coach who can in turn bring it to the attention of the lineman/referee. They should ask that the issue be noted in the referee's report for the attention of the relevant County Committee.

Such incidents can be dealt with under general rule, under playing rules or as a breach of the Code. The manner in which we intervene is often age related but one thing is sure we must intervene and address such matters as soon as we become aware of any such unacceptable behaviour.

Who should inform the parents family if a report has been made by the DLP to Tusla? It is good practice to tell the parents that a report is being made to Tusla/Social Services and the reasons for that decision, unless:

- The child will be placed at further risk by telling the family/parents
- Unless you may be placed at risk of harm
- The family's knowledge of the report could impair a subsequent assessment

The DLP could consult with Tusla/Social Services when making the report if they are required to inform the parents or if Tusla/Social Services themselves wish to inform the parents first.

Clarification on young players needed to go to the toilet at nurseries or academies? This is addressed in our Cúl Camps and Club Camps training programme.

A child cannot go to the toilet unaccompanied and an adult cannot accompany the child on their own. No need for the adult to go into the toilet with the child. The ideal situation is that if a child wishes to go to the toilet the coach will ask the group if anybody else also needs to go. Either way more than one child must go and the coach accompanies the group to the toilet. There is no need for the coach to go into the toilet. The coach then brings the group back to camp.

Reporting a Concern or Allegation of Abuse

- **Do I have to give my name if I'm raising a concern regarding the safety or welfare of a child?** If you are making a report to Tusla you are required to provide your name on the Standard Report Form
- **What role do Tusla and the Gardaí play when a case is reported?**
Similar to the role that social services and Police play elsewhere the role of the Garda Síochána in cases of alleged abuse is to investigate if a crime has occurred while Tusla (who have many and varied child welfare and protection roles) will seek to promote the welfare of the child who may be at risk and may propose suitable supports and interventions

- **How quickly do Tusla respond to reports received from clubs/DLP?** Tusla operates through duty teams of social workers that receive child protection reports, assess and prioritise referrals and provide protective interventions to children and their families. Each case is initially assessed by Tusla and dealt with in accordance with the required prioritising nature and gravity of the allegations made. The time element regarding immediate intervention will vary as will the length of time that Tusla may be engaged with the family or the child.
- **How do Tusla and the Gardaí work together on a case?** Joint working between the Tusla and An Garda Síochána forms an integral part of the child protection and welfare service. A protocol is in place between the two agencies and specifically covers the formal communication required by the two agencies about notifications of child welfare or protection concerns. In many cases involving the Gaelic Games Associations the formal participation of Tusla in a referred case did not fully commence until the Gardaí had completed their investigations. This is in accordance with their joint protocols.
- **Do the statutory authorities work in tandem with the GAA on a case?** The relevant Association, e.g. the GAA, may or may not be consulted during such investigations and therefore we may be required to resort to our policies and guidelines and assess each case on its own merits and where grounds for concern exist we may exercise our own right to temporarily debar a person, pending the outcome of the statutory investigations, if we believe that this is merited.

Can you prevent a child who has made a disclosure to you from going home that night?

No, you cannot prevent a child from going home. A child **cannot** be withheld from their parents/guardians. If it is outside social work office times contact Gardaí/PSNI, who will advise you on the next steps and you should inform them if the child has concerns about returning home.

As neglect is a common form of abuse – how can we be sure that the child is suffering from neglect? It is not for us to make a determination if a child has endured any specific category of abuse. We can only report our concerns and the statutory authorities make a determination. The DLP, once informed, should record any signs of suspected neglect. If unsure, the DLP may consult Tusla/Social Services.

We have a County Management Committee which does not include me as the County Children’s Officer on it. Is this correct procedure? A County may in accordance with its bye laws have a Management Committee and the bye laws shall stipulate who is in membership of that Management Committee. It need not include the County Children’s Officer as this is a choice for the county to make. However, do not lose sight of the rule that states that every County Committee (County Board) must include a County Children’s Officer in its membership who shall be selected (not elected) as a member of that Committee.