

Child Safeguarding - Guidelines on Safe Return to Gaelic Games

The Guidelines on Safe Return to Gaelic Games, issued by the GAA, LGF and Camogie Associations, contains many implications for the safeguarding, welfare and general safety of children and young people in our Associations.

While many may concentrate on the roadmap towards playing and training there are many existing and indeed new practices that must be adhered to as we gradually return to training and the eventual playing of our games.

The following headings below, and the attachments therein, are all relevant for our underage activities and compliment the overall Guidelines on Safe Return to Gaelic Games.

- **Adult to child ratios – return to play**
- **Vetting – return to play**
- **Vetting Underage Coaches and Underage Supervisors**
- **Code of Behaviour (Underage)**
- **Maintaining appropriate levels of behaviour in our work with Children & young people**
- **Child Safeguarding Training online**
- **Online Safeguarding Refresher Programme**
- **Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse**

Depending on a person's individual roles it is important that each one of us familiarises ourselves as to what is required of us and also what, if any, new procedures are in place when working with underage players and teams as a result of the new Guidelines on Safe Return to Gaelic Games.

Adult to child supervision ratios

The Code of Behaviour (Underage) contains strict child safeguarding adult to child ratios which have been agreed by the Gaelic Games Associations, and are enshrined in our Rules. They are in place to ensure the safety of children coupled with realistic coaching numbers as follows:

- 1:8 for children under 12 yr. olds plus one other adult
- 1:10 for children over 12 yrs. of age plus one other adult

The one other adult may be a Coach or a Supervisor (non-coaching) and may for convenience purposes act in that capacity for more than one team at a time.

The Guidelines on Safe Return to Gaelic Games reference reduced numbers at training with a maximum of ten permitted in a group. However, when working with children and young people the ratios contained in the Code of Behaviour must be adhered to resulting in less than ten for groups involving children under 12 yrs. of age.

Clubs are reminded where girls are participating in training or for girls only training a minimum of one female liaison officer is required to be present for the duration of the training session.

Vetting

The Guidelines on Safe Return to Gaelic Games also proposes the role of a Covid 19 Team Supervisor which applies to each and every underage team. You may be asked if it is necessary for the newly appointed underage team Covid Supervisor required to be vetted?

Vetting of those who work with children is carried out in accordance with the requirements of vetting legislation and with the cooperation of the Garda National Vetting Bureau and AccessNI. It is strictly implemented and for example no coach, manager or mentor of an underage team may commence their work until they have been vetted, have attended Child Safeguarding training, and have a coaching qualification.

The underage team Covid Supervisor is however a specialist Covid administrative role and would not necessarily fall under the same vetting requirements that apply to an underage Coach/Mentor or underage Supervisor.

It is not therefore deemed a requirement that we vet the underage team Covid supervisor. We do however, and where possible, recommend that this role should be allocated to an existing underage team Coach, Mentor or underage Supervisor as they will be familiar with their own players and aware perhaps of any special medical needs that may previously have been made known to them by the child's parents. Equally so, the child will also be familiar with the Coach, Mentor, or underage Supervisor.

Vetting Underage Coaches and Underage Supervisors

It is a legal requirement for Club coaches/mentors who work with children or supervisors (not to be confused with Covid Supervisors) to be vetted in their jurisdiction prior to commencing this work in their club or county. Breaches of this law will leave the individual liable as well as the Club or County that has appointed them to their role. If during this return to play protocol or perhaps when a Cúl Camp or Club Camp commences a person is chosen to work with children as a coach or supervisor and has not fulfilled their legal recruitment requirements our insurance underwriters reserve the right to refuse to insure any activities involving these people.

This is an ideal time for Clubs to double check that all persons appointed by their Club to work with children this year have fulfilled the criteria of vetting.

You can commence the vetting process through the Garda National Vetting Bureau services at [GAA Vetting](#) or for [AccessNI vetting applications](#)

Code of Behaviour (Underage)



The Code of Behaviour (Underage) will play a huge part in this return to safe play strategy and we should be aware that this Code directs us in much of our on-field and off-field work with children and young people under the age of 18 yrs. of age.

The Code of Behaviour (Underage) outlines the minimum levels of behaviour that we accept when we work with children and young people including the responsibilities that are placed on each participant.

The Code is perhaps the most comprehensive of general safeguarding documents available to us with 12 different sections that act not merely as a guidance but as a directive, given that the Code is also enshrined in Rule by each of the Gaelic Games Associations.

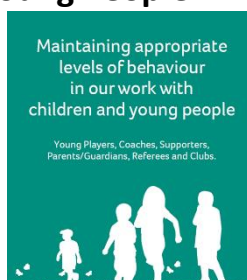
The Code also outlines how to deal with breaches of the Code, should this arise.

Sections of the Code include

- The Association's child Safeguarding Statement
- Recruitment and selection of Coaches and Mentors
- The Player injury scheme and insurance issues
- Guidance on away trips and hosting teams
- Communication and Social Media
- Use of social media
- Dealing with alleged breaches of the Code
- Guidance on liaising with young people and their parents and a comprehensive section in which we outline our expectations we have of players, coaches, parents, referees and our clubs

[Code of Behaviour \(Underage\)](#)

Maintaining appropriate levels of behaviour in our work with Children & Young People



As previously indicated children and young people, their parents and team coaches, referees, and supporters all play a central part in delivering our *Safe Return to Safe Play* strategy. The agreed Gaelic Games booklet titled *Maintaining appropriate levels of behaviour in our work with Children & young people* is distributed at our Child Safeguarding Training Workshop and is available online to participants of our current online virtual safeguarding workshop.

The booklet, which has been extracted from our Code of Behaviour (underage) contains detailed advice and direction for our Young Players, Coaches and Mentors, Parents and Guardians, Supporters, Referees, our clubs and much more. The booklet also outlines the key aspects of our Give Respect – Get Respect initiative.

[Maintaining Appropriate Levels of Behaviour in our work with Children & Young People](#)

Child Safeguarding Training now available online

If a club recruits a new Coach, they need to be vetted and attend Child Safeguarding Training. These roles should not be confused with the role of Covid 19 Supervisor. In the absence of face to face workshops, postponed as part of the Covid 19 restrictions, a new **Gaelic Games Child Protection in Sport Awareness Workshop is now available as a virtual online webinar**. Also known as the Safeguarding 1 workshop the online live and interactive version, endorsed by Sport Ireland, can be booked by Clubs by contacting their County Games Manager or County Children's Officer by contacting safeguardingonline@gaa.ie

This initiative will greatly facilitate new coaches at underage level who are required to attend Safeguarding Training while our vetting services and the Foundation level training programme are also available online.

Our aim is to provide this training on an All-Ireland basis, delivered where possible through a County by County series of training events. The Safeguarding 1 programme is now available for the 26 Counties and the equivalent programme for the 6 Counties will be made available in July.

While places may be allocated in accordance with requests received preference will be given to those who may be commencing their work with children or have a role of responsibility for children at our camps.

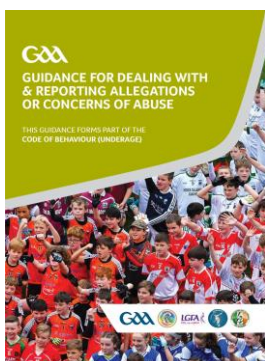
Online Safeguarding Refresher Programme

Our Safeguarding Training has a three-year recognition period after which a person may re-attend the Workshop (face to face or webinar) or they may complete our Refresher Programme also online. The Safeguarding Refresher Programme also has a three-year recognition period.

The online refresher may also be availed of by those who have attended relevant Safeguarding training by LSPs or other Sports NGB's safeguarding training and any person who has attended the Sport Northern Ireland Safeguarding 1 training but who has not attended the Gaelic Games Associations equivalent within the last 3 Years.

[Gaelic Games Online Safeguarding Workshop Refresher](#)

Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse



The Gaelic Games Associations have a shared publication titled 'Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse'. This is an All-Ireland publication and should an issue or concern of abuse arise the Guidance , outlines how to respond, record and report any concerns of abuse to the relevant statutory authority and to the Club or National Designated Liaison Person in each of our Gaelic Games Associations.

Given the legal requirement that is on us all to be vigilant and to report any concerns of abuse this booklet is perhaps one of the most important safeguarding publications we have distributed in recent years.

[Guidance for Dealing with & Reporting Allegations or Concerns of Abuse](#)