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## **23ú Aibreán 2021**

### **Re: Return to Play**

A chara,

Monday, 26<sup>th</sup> April is a significant date for the GAA as our clubs continue the resumption of activity. It is the date when activity finally resumes in clubs all over Ireland.

This will be a particularly special day for our young people and their supportive coaches in clubs in the 26 Counties who have missed out on so much fun and the opportunity to play our games, and who will now get to follow the return being enjoyed by members in the Six Counties since earlier this month.

To help the return to play we have developed the attached resources to support players, coaches, and clubs.

The opportunity to play was limited by factors outside of our control. But what we can control over the next number of months as we return to training and playing games is the quality of the experience that we can provide our players.

In this regard I would strongly encourage our clubs, coaches, games development officers and those responsible for planning and organising fixtures to ensure everyone benefits from a multitude of playing opportunities. Let us all work towards providing as many games opportunities as possible; including leagues, blitzes and creative festival-type competitions, over a longer season, consider allowing more substitutions – or even unlimited - and provide alternative formats to provide a playing environment that creates the best possible experience for all our young players.

The GAA Kellogg's Cúl Camps will begin in July and I am pleased to announce we will be holding the John West Féile na Gael and Féile Peil na nÓg festivals to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the tournament on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> August respectively.

Earlier this year the GAA, LGFA and Camogie Association launched a new ***Gaelic Games Player Pathway, which can be accessed [HERE](#).***

Its purpose is to develop players holistically (as players and people) by providing them with The Right Support at The Right Time. The right support, at this time, is to provide meaningful games opportunities to re-engage all our players.

Those of us with a responsibility for nurturing the development of our next generation of players should be mindful of the fact that the benefit of lifelong participation in Gaelic games is not something that we should measure in terms of cups or medals or competitions won. The GAA is about People. It should be about friendships, positive experience and feeling a valued part of something that belongs to all of us.

This vision aligns with the Player Pathway, an important mission statement for coaching and games development. The Pathway is underpinned by six key principles and they should guide and influence our decision making over the next few months. The principles are:

1. **'Club is Core'** - Club is central to nurturing a love and passion for our games and sustaining communities and lifelong participation
2. **'Player Centred'** – We develop the player and the person
3. **'Quality Coaching Experiences'**–Our coaches create an enjoyable coaching environment to meet needs and welfare of the player
4. **'As Many as Possible for as Long as Possible'** - Our Pathway prioritises long-term development with a games programme that supports recruitment, development and retention of players
5. **'Connection'**- Our Pathway promotes Connection through relationship-building opportunities, communication and teamwork
6. **'Inclusive'** – Gaelic Games are for All, regardless of abilities, background, beliefs or identities

Our return to activity has been made possible by the massive national effort which has taken place to thwart the spread of the virus.

On behalf of the Association, I pay tribute to the significant work done by so many clubs and volunteers in this regard and urge all to continue to play our part and abide by all of the advice and guidelines from health authorities and by completing the GAA's Return to Play Health Questionnaire before every session.

We hope that a full return for all club activity through the resumption of outdoor sport for adults in the 26 Counties will happen in the near future.

Life since March 2020 has taught us many things. It has made us appreciate what we have, including an appreciation of what our games and our clubs and our friends and communities mean to us.

From Monday, more clubs get the chance to take the first step into what will ultimately be a post Covid world.

It is a glorious opportunity to continue to bring health and happiness and fun back to young people through our games. Let us all work to ensure that we seize this opportunity.

Is mise, le meas,



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Labhrás Mac Carthaigh  
Uachtarán CLG