



C.L.G. Gael Leitir Ceanainn

**Child Protection Policy and
Procedures
2011-2015**

LETTERKENNY GAELS GAA CLUB
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY AND CODE OF CONDUCT

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For the purpose of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players, Managers/Trainers/Mentors/Volunteers will be referred to as “Coaches” in this document.

LETTERKENNY GAELS FAIR PLAY CHARTER

We respect our team mates and we will treat them as we would like them to treat us .

We promise to respect our opponents and ask them to enjoy the game as much as we do. We will shake hands before and after games irrespective of the result.

We thank the referees for giving their time. We promise to respect the referee's decision. We ask others do the same.

We promise to cooperate with our coaches. We realise that without them there would be no game.

We promise to try our best to improve our skills that we have learnt, to help team mates and to obey the rules of the game.

We enjoy having people watch us play. We ask them to applaud rather than criticise our efforts and the efforts of our opponents. Remember we are learning to play a game that will give us a lifetime of enjoyment. We may have to risk making errors in order to learn. Please give us a chance.

We promise to be gracious in defeat and modest in victory.

1. Child Protection Policy Statement

Children are the most important members in our Club.

“Letterkenny Gaels GAA Club is committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all young people who wish to participate in our Gaelic Games and activities. We shall take all practicable steps to protect them from discernable forms of abuse, from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment and shall respect their rights, wishes and feelings”.

The greater the sense of achievement, fun and fair play that young people experience when participating in Gaelic games, the more they will enjoy their involvement and strive to develop their True Potential”

We at Letterkenny Gaels GAA Club aim to promote the participation of children in our Club by creating a culture of safety and fun.

We do this by:

- Recognising that all children have the right to be protected from harm.
- Ensuring that all our coaches and volunteers are carefully recruited and selected and that they accept responsibility for ensuring the wellbeing of children in their care.
- Responding swiftly and appropriately to protect the welfare of children who participate in our games and related activities.
- Providing parents and children with the opportunity to voice any concerns they may have.
- Appointing Children’s Officer(s) in our Club.
- Appointing a Designated Person in our Club who will liaise with the statutory authorities as appropriate.
- Ensuring that all allegations of abuse of young people are confidentially dealt with in accordance the Associations Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse (Fourth Edition 2009) and with statutory guidelines and relevant legislation.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of our Child Protection procedures and policies on an ongoing basis.
- Ensuring that members, coaches, team mentors, administrators, parents/guardians and spectators sign up to and adhere to our Code of Behaviour.

2. Dignity and Rights of Young People

It is important that all young players are valued and treated with the highest level of respect throughout these important years of their personal, physical and social development. The personal dignity and physical integrity of a young person is of paramount importance and their participation in sport should provide them with a period in their life that enables them to have fun, make friends and present them with an opportunity to improve their levels of skill, regardless of what sport they choose.

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael (GAA) believes that a child and youth centred approach should be adopted by everyone involved in the promotion and development of Gaelic Games at underage level.

We recognise that we have a responsibility to:

- Safeguard and promote the interests and well being of those under 18 years of age who are involved in our games and activities.
- Take all reasonable steps to protect young people from harm, discrimination or degrading treatment.
- Respect the rights that young people have including their wishes and feelings.
- Maintain the professionalism, standards and reputation of the GAA.
- Protect the Association's young members, employees and governing bodies.

The following principles govern the development and implementation of this Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport:

- The welfare of the child and young person is paramount.
- All children, whatever their age have a right to protection from harm.
- All suspicions and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously, will be responded to swiftly and in an appropriate manner.

This Code of Best Practice will, insofar as is possible, have equal application to vulnerable adults who are defined as having special needs or where vulnerability is defined as 'a person aged 18 years or over who is, or may be, in need of community care services or is resident in a continuing care facility by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness or who is, or may be, unable to take care of him or herself or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation.

3. Working/Playing Practices

Letterkenny Gaels GAA Club will ensure:

- Promotion of a healthy lifestyle by practice and example
- Proper supervision of children within the club with adequate numerical and gender, coach child ratio.
- Use of safe recommended equipment including: Goals, Cones, Flags, Balls, First Aid kits, Buses, Hurdles
- Supervision of equipment used.
- A clearly defined, fenced play area that is safe from vehicular traffic
- Public Liability insurance covering all members of the club
- Only children of similar age will train/play together, no children training/competing with children two or more age groups older than their own age group
- First aid assistance and first aid equipment is available in case of accident, with accident/incident books documented where necessary N.B. All accidents will be reported to parents/guardians
- Where Transport is provided, it will be in the form of Buses or supervised by volunteers in possession of driving licences and roadworthy vehicles only. Prior parental permission is essential as per registration form
- A safe environment for members
- Ongoing training and information for Leaders
- Implementation of policy and procedures in line with guidance from *Our Duty to Care* and *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport*
- Facilitation of open discussion on member protection issues
- Support to members who report allegations of abuse
- Suspected abuse information is treated confidentially
- Appropriate action is taken if members breach standards of reasonable behaviour
- The establishment and maintenance of a coaching register
- The setting of standards of good practice
- The Designated Officer has knowledge of child protection procedures and responsibility in reporting concerns
- That parents/guardians are kept informed and have access to the club's policy guidelines for away trips/overnight stays and use of photography/videos
- The implementation of good and safe working practice is developed to the mutual benefit of the member, local area and community

Letterkenny Gaels GAA Club has the right to:

- Expect coaches to comply with its Code of Conduct
- Expect all children to maintain standards of reasonable behaviour
- Take appropriate action if members breach the Code of Conduct or Child Protection Policy
- Expect all members to undertake appropriate training when advised to
- Expect coaches will not abuse children physically, emotionally or sexually

- Take appropriate action in the event of accusations
- Maintain records on individuals in line with advice from data protection agency, i.e. only hold records on individuals that they have justifiable reason for holding
- Adhere to An Cumann Lúthchleas Gael's *Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse* (3rd Edition - April 2005) and An Cumann Lúthchleas Gael's *Code of Best Practice for Youth Sport* (December 2002)

Coaches/Team Mentors are expected to:

- Enjoy their GAA activity
- Be positive during coaching sessions so that participants always leave with a sense of achievement and an increased level of self-esteem.
- Plan and prepare appropriately for each session and ensure proper levels of supervision.
- Be punctual, properly attired, lead by example; avoid smoking or the consumption of alcohol in the presence of young people.
- Don't shout at or lecture players or reprimand /ridicule them when they make a mistake. (Children learn best through trial and error. They should not be afraid to risk error to learn).
- Set realistic – stretching but achievable – performance goals. Praise and reinforce effort/commitment and provide positive feedback.
- Recognise the development needs of young players (avoid excessive training or competition) and ensure that they are matched on individual or team basis.
- Rotate the team captain and the method used for selecting teams so that the same children are not always last to be selected.
- Ensure games, activities and playing equipment is customised to suit the needs of those involved in terms of age, ability, experience and maturity.
- Avoid over coaching i.e., insisting upon set (stereotyped) playing patterns where individual decision-making and creativity are stifled or where young people are confined to playing in set positions on a continuous basis.
- Don't equate losing with failure and do not develop a preoccupation with medals and trophies. (The level of improvement made by young players is the best indicator of Coaching Effectiveness).
- Encourage parents/guardians to play an active role in organizing activities and to draft a Code of Discipline for everyone involved.
- Never use any form of corporal punishment or physical force.
- Never use foul language or provocative language/gestures to a player, opponent or match official. (The Coach should only enter the field with the referee's permission and should not question their decisions or integrity).
- It's important to recognise that certain situations e.g. horse play/role play/telling jokes etc –could be misinterpreted and lead to allegations of serious misconduct or impropriety.
- Avoid any inappropriate touching when assisting players to perform a technique or when First Aid is being administered.
- Do not take coaching sessions on your own.

4. Codes of Conduct for Coaches/Team Mentors/Trainers

All Coaches, Mentors and Trainers (referred to hereafter as Coaches) should ensure that young people and children benefit significantly from our games by providing a positive, healthy and encouraging ethos for all. In developing the skills levels of every player you should always encourage enjoyment, fun and participation in our games and activities. Coaches should always remember that they are role models for the players in their care.

Recruitment of Coaches

As a Coach working with young people and children you are required to be suitable for your chosen role(s). Appropriate training and supports will be provided so as to ensure that Coaches are suitable, comfortable and qualified to fulfil their roles.

All persons working or volunteering for such roles will also participate in agreed recruitment and selection procedures as outlined in the policies and procedures of each National Governing Body.

Maintaining a child centred approach:

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treat each one equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.
- Be positive during coaching sessions, games and other activities so that participants always leave with a sense of achievement and an increased level of self-esteem.
- Recognise the development needs and capacity of all young players, regardless of their ability, by emphasising participation for all while avoiding excessive training and competition. Skills development and personal satisfaction should have priority over competition.
- Develop an understanding of relevant coaching methods and ensure that you have the appropriate level of coaching accreditation.
- Don't equate losing with failure and do not develop a preoccupation with medals and trophies. The level of improvement made by young players is the best indicator of effective coaching.

Coaches should lead by example

- Avoid smoking while working with young players.
- Do not consume alcohol or non prescribed drugs immediately prior to or while young players are in your care.
- 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 and should not question a referee's decisions or integrity.
- Encourage players to respect and accept the judgement of match officials.

- Promote Fair Play.
- Encourage parents to become involved in our activities wherever possible.
- Conduct of Coaches when working with young people
- 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.
- Never use any form of corporal punishment or physical force.
- Avoid incidents of horse play or role play or telling jokes etc that could be misinterpreted.
- Ensure that all physical contact is appropriate and has the permission or understanding of the young person.
- Never undertake any form of therapy – hypnosis etc, in the training of children.
- 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, mentor, parent or guardian. Avoid compromising your role as a Coach.
- Avoid a situation where you are alone in a car or dressing room with a player.
- Avoid taking coaching sessions on your own.
- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with a player or away from others.
- Avoid taking young players to your home.

Best practice

- Ensure that all players are suitably and safely attired to play their chosen sport.
- Keep a record of attendance at training and at games by both players and coaches.
- Be punctual and properly attired.
- 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.
- Set realistic – stretching but achievable – performance goals.
- Encourage parents/guardians to play an active role in organising and assisting various activities for your teams and your club.
- Use mobile phones, if deemed appropriate, only via a group texts system for communicating with the parents/guardians of players and receive such permission at the commencement of each season.
- Do not communicate individually by text with under age players.
- Keep a record of each injury and action taken. Ensure that another official referee/team mentor is present when a player is being attended to and can corroborate the relevant details.
- 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.

- 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.
- Make adequate provision for First Aid services.
- Do not encourage or permit players to play while injured.

I HAVE READ THE LETTERKENNY GAELS GAA CLUB CODE OF CONDUCT ABOVE AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE GUIDELINES AS SET OUT IN THE CODE.

Signature of Coach : _____

Print Name : _____

Date: _____

5. Code of Conduct for Young Players

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 a level at which they feel comfortable.
- Be listened to.
- Make their concerns known and have them dealt with in an appropriate manner.
- Be protected from abuse.

YOUNG PLAYERS should always:

- Play fairly, do their best and enjoy themselves.
- Respect fellow team members regardless of ability, ethnic origin, and cultural background or religion.
- Support fellow team members whether they do well or not so well.
- Represent their team, their club and their family with pride and dignity.
- Respect all coaches, mentors, officials and their opponents.
- Be gracious in defeat and modest in victory.
- Shake hands before and after the game irrespective of the result.
- Inform their coach/mentor/manager when they are unavailable for training and games.
- 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.
- Take due care of club equipment.

YOUNG PLAYERS should not:

- Cheat – always play by the rules.
- Shout at or argue with an official, team mates or opponents or use violence. Use unfair or bullying tactics to gain advantage or isolate other players.
- Spread rumours.
- Tell lies about adults or other young people.
- Play or train if they feel unwell or are injured.
- Use unacceptable language or racial and/or sectarian references.

I have read the LETTERKENNY GAELS GAA CLUB Code of Conduct above and agree to abide by the guidelines as set out in the code.

Signature of Player _____

Print Name _____

Signature of Parent/ Guardian* _____

Print Name _____

Date _____

*Please note that the person signing the parent/guardian section must ensure they have parental responsibility for the child.

6. Codes of Conduct for Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians have an influential role to play in assisting and encouraging their children to adopt a positive attitude and in encouraging them to maintain an involvement in sport. They should always be a good role model for their children.

Parents/Guardians should encourage their child to:

- 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. Seek advice if necessary from club officials on this issue

Parents/Guardians should lead by example:

- 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.
- Never embarrass a child or use sarcastic remarks towards a player.
- Applaud good play from all teams.
- Don't 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 or play area unless invited to do so by an official in charge.

Parents/Guardians should:

- Complete and return the registration/permission and medical consent forms for their child's participation in the club.
- Inform the coaches of any change 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 proper clothing and equipment.
- Ensure that the nutrition/hydration and hygiene needs of their child are met.
- 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'.
- Listen to what young people 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.

Parents/Guardians should assist their club by:

- Showing appreciation to volunteers, coaches and club officials.
- Attending training and games on a regular basis.
- Assisting in the organising of club activities and events as requested.
- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treat each one equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.

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.
- Complain if they have concerns about the standard of coaching.
- Have a say in relation to decisions being made within the club.

I HAVE READ THE LETTERKENNY GAELS GAA CLUB CODE OF CONDUCT ABOVE AND AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE GUIDELINES AS SET OUT IN THE CODE.

Name of player/s _____

Signature of Parent/ Guardian* _____

Print Name _____

Date _____

7. Guidelines on the use of photographic images and maintaining web sites in the club

Taking photographs of players, using web sites to publicise GAA activities and the videoing of events, games, training and coaching sessions are normal daily activities within most GAA clubs. The GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport does not seek in any way to eliminate or curtail these activities but proposes certain safeguards so as to ensure that we minimise the risk or threats that inappropriate use of photographs or the recording of images may pose, particularly for young people.

These safeguards should still permit and facilitate the recording of relevant and suitable materials, should allow us to photograph the enjoyment gained by participating in our games, should enable coaches to use the latest technology in the delivery of training skills and should also enable clubs to promote their activities in a safe and non threatening manner. This we can do whether it is through the printing of photographs or displaying suitable materials on club or other GAA web sites.

The key concerns regarding the use of images and photographs of children/young people relate to:

- The possible identification of children when a photograph is accompanied by personal information and its inappropriate use thereafter.
- The inappropriate use, adaptation or copying of images for use in child pornography or illegal website.
- The taking of inappropriate photographs or recorded images of children.

A common sense approach is required when deciding on what may or may not be appropriate as we do not wish to prohibit the recording of games, coaching or celebrations at club level through the use of photography or by recording on video equipment.

Outlining the Club's photography and recording policy at the outset will clarify matters for all concerned. It may also be useful to request players and their parents to give the club signed permission for the recording of photographic and recorded images etc as part of the player's registration process.

It should be noted that we have little or no influence on what photographs may be taken and published in local or national newspapers as such photography is covered by a different set of guidelines. Should we ever be unhappy with the publication of such photographs or images we can address this matter with the individual newspaper or the Press Council of Ireland and the Office of the Press Ombudsman.

Photography and the recording of images in a public place do not generally require explicit or prior consent. However if an event e.g. a game or training session is taking place, involving under age players, in a public, private or local authority park, and if you are in charge of such an event you are entitled to request a person to resist from taking photos if you feel that such action or photography may be inappropriate.

Guidelines for Photographic/Recorded Images

- First and foremost ensure parents/guardians and the young people themselves have granted their consent for the taking and publication of photographic images. This permission may be sought by the club when the player registers on an annual basis.
- All children/young people featured in recordings must be appropriately dressed.
- The photograph or recording should focus on the activity rather than a particular young person.
- No personal details relating to the young person should be revealed as accompanying materials to the photograph or recorded image.
- Clubs, coaches and volunteers should be permitted to use video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid and as a means of recording special occasions; however, care should be taken in the dissemination, storage and use of such material.
- Parents and spectators taking photographs/ recordings should seek permission in advance from the Club and should also be prepared to identify themselves if requested and state the purpose for their photography/filming. If Club personnel are unhappy about any matter relating to such photography the permission granted should be withdrawn immediately.
- Group and team photographs may be taken but it is not necessary to match a player's name with the position in which they may be standing or seated in the team photograph. I.e. The photograph may appear with the player's name recorded underneath but need not be in the order in which they appear in the photograph.

This is a precautionary recommendation based on previous examples of misuse of photographs by those who sought to exploit the gathering of young people together in an enjoyable and fun environment.

It is recognised that on certain occasions individual young people may receive recognition and may be presented with an award. When this happens in the case of an underage player certain levels of sensitivity and indeed of common sense are required and a balance should be drawn between the publication of a photograph of an individual, who may or may not be named, and the safety aspects of publication. Any such photography or recording of events that involves individual presentations should be discussed in advance of the event and agreement reached with all parties, including the club, parents and the young person themselves, as to what is and what is not permitted.

Create recognised procedures for reporting the use of inappropriate images to reduce the risks to under age players. Any instances of the use of inappropriate images should be reported to the Club's Children's Officer and/or Designated Person and also to the relevant statutory

Web site usage

Many if not most of our GAA Clubs have well established web sites that enable them publicise their club activities, improve their means of communication with members and the general public and are also used as a general publicity forum for local, national and possible international use.

The Internet is an exciting and user friendly communication outlet for young people and it is therefore important that we attempt to engage with our young players in an equally user friendly manner and publicise GAA activities as being modern, presentable, popular and relevant to their needs and interests.

The most successful and newsworthy of GAA web sites are regularly used by our under age or younger members. It is important that while not wishing in any way to restrict the use of and accessibility to such sites that we recognise our responsibility in maintaining web sites that are purposeful, educational, newsworthy, attractive in design and use and above all else are safe.

The Guidelines for use of photography and filming, as previously outlined elsewhere in Section 7, also apply to those that maintain a Club web site. These guidelines are particularly applicable when photographs and images of underage players, teams and individuals are uploaded to the club web site.

Web site guidance

- Agree a club web site policy also known as an Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) following discussions at your Club Management or Executive Committee and with members, including the under age members of the Club.
- This AUP will promote your strategy on the safe use of the Internet and also outlines the parameters of behaviour and specifies the consequences of breaching those parameters.
- Decide at the outset what purpose your web site serves.
- Appoint a web master to manage your web site on behalf of the club.
- Ensure that the web master is answerable to a member of the Club's Management Committee e.g. Chairperson, Secretary, PRO, etc.

- The Club Management Committee should agree at the outset the style, design and content policy of the web site with the appointed web master, prior to going on-line.
- Agree if you will have a specific youth section and if so also agree the extent and the limitations on its content etc.
- Decisions on the appropriate use of photographic images and other similar content should be in accordance with the Guidelines for Photographic/Recorded Images as outlined elsewhere in this section.
- Consider the age of children and young people when deciding on the web site policy.
- Consult with the Club's Children's Officer when designing the web site and agreeing the usage policy and content material.
- Agree to review the overall maintenance and upkeep of the web site at regular intervals.
- Agree a procedure in the club for dealing with any complaints or concerns that may be raised about the content of your web site.

8. Policy on Bullying

Bullying

Letterkenny Gaels GAA Club aims to create a supportive environment where any form of bullying is unacceptable. We adopt a whole organisational approach to addressing bullying and are committed to implementing structures and relevant training to deal with allegations of bullying. Incidents of bullying are regarded as serious breaches of our Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport. We are committed to achieving an ethos of respect so as to maximise the potential of all our members when playing or participating in our Gaelic games.

What is Bullying?

We define Bullying as 'repeated aggression be it verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others.

Bullying can take many forms:

- Verbal: threatening consequences spreading rumours, name calling, teasing, making sexual/racist/sectarian remarks, highlighting physical appearances or sporting ability.
- Physical: kicking, punching, hitting, spitting, biting, tripping, theft or destruction of property and kit
- Emotional: ignoring, excluding, getting people into trouble, leaving them out of the game, talking behind their backs, writing unpleasant notes/letters/graffiti, writing letters/text messages/emails or comments on a social network sites

In our games and at our activities different people may be involved in bullying incidences. These may include players/coaches/members/parents/spectators/bystanders.

Bullying can happen from

- Young Person to Young Person
- Young Person to Adult
- Adult to Young Person
- Adult to Adult

If you have a concern or if you believe that you or somebody else may be this target, recipient or victim of Bullying within the Club you should contact the Club Children's Officer who will deal with your concern.

Preventing Bullying

It is the responsibility of everybody in the club to prevent or if need to deal with incidents of bullying if ever they occur. Our approach is to create a supportive environment where it is not acceptable to bully and where the ethos of the Association is that it is 'ok to tell' if you know about incidents of bullying.

Letterkenny Gaels GAA players, coaches, spectators and clubs should:

- Respect every person's right to play and participate in an environment which is safe and secure and also offers praise and recognition
- Ensure that every person is treated with respect, dignity and sensitivity
- Recognise that everyone is important and that our differences make each us special
- Challenge all forms of prejudice and promote equality
- Model fair play, respectful behaviour and leadership
- Discourage people from colluding with bullying

The Children's officer(s) in each Club has a responsibility to promote to anti bullying ethos and ensure that the club adheres to the GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport.

Dealing with Bullying

How do you know if it's Bullying? Ask yourself the following questions:

Targeted

Is the behaviour targeted at a group or individual?

Duration

Has this behaviour been happening over a period of time?

Frequency

How frequent is the behaviour and is there a pattern occurring?

Intention

Is the intention of the behaviour to cause pain/harm/distress to an individual or group?

It is the responsibility of the club to ensure that:

- The target of the Bullying is made feel safe
- That the Bullying is stopped and the bully's behaviour is addressed
- Every person in membership of the Letterkenny Gaels GAA Club or attending our games or activities should be fully aware that Bullying is unacceptable in the GAA

9. POSITIVE DISCIPLINE

No two children are ever the same and there is no exact science as to how a child will respond to certain coaching styles or discipline. One thing that is clear is that negative put-downs, shouting or even physical punishment (such as extra laps of the track / push-ups for misbehaving) will not improve a child's belief in themselves or how they value the opinion of their coach. It may well increase the child's fear of the coach but it will not increase the child's desire to remain involved in the sport.

Letterkenny Gaels GAA Club encourages coaches and parents/guardians to be positive in their focus and encouraging young people to become more responsible for themselves and contributing to setting boundaries for behaviour.

The use of Sanctions

The use of sanctions is an important element in the maintenance of discipline. However coaches should have a clear understanding of where and when particular sanctions are appropriate. It should be remembered that effectively controlling organisations and successful coaches are characterised by the sparing use of sanctions. The age and developmental stage of the child should be taken into account when using sanctions.

Recommended use of Sanctions

Sanctions should be fair, consistent and in the case of persistent offence, should be progressively applied. The following steps are suggested:

- Rules should be stated clearly and agreed.
- A warning should be given if a rule is broken.
- 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 parent/guardian should be involved (the parent may need to be involved straight away if the issue is serious enough).
- Sanctions should not be applied if a coach is not comfortable with them. If an appropriate action cannot be devised right away, the child should be told that the matter will be dealt with later, at a specified time and as soon as possible.
- Once sanctions have been imposed, it is important to make the child feel s/he is a valued member of the group again.
- A child should be helped, if necessary, to understand why sanctions are imposed.
- A child should not be sanctioned for making errors when s/he is playing.
- Physical activity (e.g. running laps or doing push-ups) should not be used as a sanction. To do so only causes a child to resent physical activity, something that s/he should learn to enjoy throughout his/her life.
- Sanctions should be used sparingly. Constant sanctioning and criticism can cause a child to turn away from sport.

Positive Discipline

Works by:

- Creating a good relationship with the young people in your charge.
- Being a good role model – not swearing or being abusive to opponents.
- Positive reinforcement – emphasising behaviour such as being honest, accepting defeat, shaking hands.
- Listening to the view of child members and agreeing codes of conduct with them. Children like security and boundaries in which they know they are safe.
- Avoid harsh punishment.
- Having clear simple rules reducing the amount of ‘grey areas’ that children can manipulate the coach remaining calm and reasonable.
- Acknowledging the young person’s feelings that they may be or at least perceive themselves as being unfairly treated.
- Keep criticisms to a minimum.
- Criticising the behaviour not the child.

Do not become trapped in circular arguments which do nothing but reinforce the child’s frustration. Allow children opportunities to ‘escape’ from a debate about poor behaviour i.e. asking how else they could have dealt with the situation. Remember bad behaviour is not a personal attack on you or your coaching style but may be more a reflection of the child’s limited ability to obtain attention for positive behaviour.

Sanctions

As we mentioned these should be progressive, examples of these could be,

- Discuss the behaviour with the child. If necessary agree a response to compensate for actions (clearing up equipment, washing up).
- Discuss the behaviour with the child and their parent. If something has been broken or damaged financial reimbursement should be considered (even as only a token gesture).
- Agree to review the matter again with child & parent. Depending on the age of the child & seriousness of the incident agree to monitor their behaviour.
- Being dropped from the team for one game/match as a sanction should always be discussed with the parent as well as the child.
- Being suspended from the team should only be used in extreme circumstances and reasons for doing this should be given in writing to the parents and children (in plain English).

10. AWAY TRIPS AND HOSTING

AWAY TRIPS

Travelling to away fixtures is a regular event for many clubs. Trips may vary from short journeys across town to play another local team or involve more complicated arrangements involving overnight stays. But even what may appear as the most straightforward of trips will require some level of planning. The following will outline a number of issues that need to be considered when travelling with children.

Communication with:

- **Children** – they should be aware of the travel plans, venue and time for collection, time of return and any costs. Children should also have a clear understanding of what standard of behaviour is expected of them. Children must know what sports kit they need to bring with them.
- **Parents** – should be made aware of the above and must have completed a consent form detailing any medical issues that the team manager should be aware of. Parents should also have the name and contact details of the team manager in the event of an emergency.
- **Other Coaches**– need to be made aware of what their responsibilities are in advance of the trip. If the trip is a long journey, it is important that all coaches have an itinerary.

Transport

The following are some basic points to consider:

- Ensure the driver holds and is in possession of a valid driving licence
- Allow an appropriate length of time to complete the journey
- Consider the impact of traffic and weather conditions
- If using a mini-bus ensure that all seats are forward facing and they all have seat belts fitted if carrying children. Is the driver experienced in driving a mini-bus?
- Ensure leaders and children wear seat belts
- Check there is appropriate insurance for the journey
- Clarify supervision requirements with other coaches. The driver should not be considered as a supervisor during the journey
- Ensure that the vehicle is road worthy.

Ratio

Dependent on the sport the ratio of adult to child may vary but what ever is considered appropriate would generally need to be increased when travelling away from home.

Insurance

In addition to the mini-bus/ car insurance, the team manager needs to ensure that the Club's general Insurance covers travel to away events.

Emergencies

Ensure that the vehicle has breakdown and recovery cover. At least one of the coaches should be trained in first aid procedures and a first aid kit should be available.

The coaches should have access to a mobile phone and contact details for all the children.

The above are only basic points of advice and are not comprehensive guidelines. For more detailed guidelines see Safe Sport Away.

Hosting

Being a host family or being hosted is an integral part of football and hurling and, if handled appropriately, can add to a child's enjoyment and experience at a competition. The whole area of hosting though can create a great deal of concern for parents, children and the hosts. It is in response to these concerns that we have drawn up the following guidelines.

Being a host can be a particularly challenging role, but also very rewarding. A host should be provided with as much information about the child/ children staying with them and details of the competition. They in turn should agree to provide references and be vetted.

When arranging for events/trips abroad, the club will be dependent on the ability of the host organisation to access vetting services and obtain appropriate references. It is still the responsibility of the trip organiser to provide the hosts.

11. Guidelines for Transporting Young People

The issue of transporting children has become very sensitive for coaches and parents. Many coaches argue that their Club could not operate without the goodwill of volunteers and parents ensuring that children are returned home or transported to events in a private car.

The guidance from the Sports Councils encourages coaches not to take children on journeys alone in their car.

This view has been taken as knowledge has grown of how those who want to harm children have developed. The vast majority of coaches and volunteers will help out through their genuine desire to see children or their particular sport develop. Unfortunately we must face the reality that a minority of others will join a sports club to gain access to children and create an air of acceptability about their role, justifying their close contact with children.

Best practice is clearly to avoid transporting a child alone, but we recognise that in some circumstances it is an essential part of a child's participation in training and competition.

If all alternatives have been exhausted and an adult has to transport a child there are a number of safety measures that the club would recommend should be put in place to minimise the risk:

- Your club should check out all those with access to young people (including drivers) using references, application forms and vetting as advised in this policy
- Parents should be informed of the person who will be transporting their child, the reasons why and how long the journey will take
- A person other than the planned driver should talk to the child about transport arrangements to check they are comfortable about the plans
- The driver must ensure that they have insurance to carry others
- The driver should attempt to have more than one child in the car
- When leaving children off after a match or training session coaches should alternate which child is dropped off last. Ideally two children would be left off at an agreed point i.e. one of their family homes
- The person who leaves children home should be alternated; this would reduce the risk of any one individual from always being alone with the child
- The driver should have a point of contact and mobile phone should they break down
- Ensure that children are aware of their rights and they have someone to turn to or report any concerns they may have. If a culture of safety is created within your club then the child is more likely to talk to another person if they are feeling uncomfortable about a situation

- Children should wear seatbelts at all times. The driver is legally responsible to ensure that a child under 14 in Northern Ireland and under 17 in the Republic of Ireland wears a seatbelt (i.e. the adult would have to pay any fine) but morally responsible to ensure all passengers wear seatbelts
- Late collections. These can present clubs and coaches with particular difficulties. Parents/guardians should be provided with guidelines addressing the issue and outlining their responsibility and the consequences of late collections. Clubs should have contact numbers for parents/guardians and if possible be provided with an alternative contact number. Parents/guardians should have a contact number for the club/coach to inform them of emergencies and possible late collections.

Like all advice these procedures will only reduce the risk and still the best advice is to avoid transporting children alone in a car.

12. Reporting Procedures Accidents/Incidents

Guidelines for Reporting Accidents

In the event of an accident, the following procedure will be carried out:-

- Fill in 2 copies of the Accident Form for ALL accidents
- Make contact with parents/ guardians
- One copy of form to incident book/ folder
- Forward 1 copy to Children's officer for record keeping/ action required
- Contact emergency services/ GP if required
- Record in detail all facts surrounding the accident, witnesses etc.

Guidelines for Reporting Allegations/ Incidents

- Record all incidents reported or observed on an Incident Form
- 1 copy to Children's officer
- Ensure confidentiality - only "need to know basis" (reference confidentiality clause)

The designated person will be responsible for storing any report in a safe and secure environment.

Guidelines for Responding To a Child Reporting an Incident

DOs

- Stay calm
- Listen & hear. Give the person time to say what they want
- Reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling and that it will be dealt with appropriately
- Record in writing what was said as soon as possible
- Report to someone else in the organisation - "the designated person."
- Record your report.

DON'Ts

- Panic
- Promise to keep secrets
- Enquire into the details of the abuse
- Make a child repeat the story unnecessarily.

13. Responding to Disclosures or Allegations of Abuse and Confidentiality

When responding to a disclosure or allegation of abuse it is important to observe the following:

- Be sensitive and listen carefully to what is being reported to you
- Take what is said to you seriously
- React calmly when responding, as over-reacting may alarm the young person and compound feelings of anxiety and guilt
- Emphasise that the discussion, while confidential, may have to be shared with others so as to pursue the allegation correctly
- Reassure the person that they have taken the correct action in making the disclosure
- Never make a judgmental statement about the allegation or the alleged abuser 18
- Do not make false promises, particularly regarding secrecy
- If asking any questions do so for the purpose of clarification only
- Explain and ensure that the young person understands the procedures which will follow
- Inform the relevant GAA Designated Person of the allegation received as per the procedures outlined in Section 6 of these Guidelines
- Treat all information received in a confidential manner

Recording disclosures or allegations of abuse

It is the relevant Designated Person acting on behalf of the GAA who shall record specific information as part of the reporting procedures, as outlined elsewhere in this section of these Guidelines. It will be necessary when making reports to complete the relevant Standard Reporting Form and GAA Reporting v Allegations of Abuse Forms. (See Appendix 4/5/6). In cases where the young person themselves may be reporting the disclosure or allegation to a GAA Designated Person please consider the following so as to ensure the accuracy of all information recorded and the welfare of the young person:

- Be accurate and factual in the recording of disclosures or allegations
- Record the conversation as soon as possible, and in as much detail as possible
- Listen carefully and attentively and take the young person seriously
- React calmly when recording, as over-reacting may alarm the young person and compound feelings of anxiety and guilt
- Do not ask specific or leading questions and don't ask the person to repeat their story unnecessarily
- Do not make false promises as to what may happen after you report the allegation
- Explain and ensure that the young person understands the procedures which will follow
- Reassure the young person that they have taken the correct action in making the disclosure
- Check with the young person to ensure that what has been heard and understood by you is accurate

- Do not express any opinions about the person(s) against whom the allegation(s) may be made
- If parents do not wish to have the allegation pursued it should be explained that for the purpose of protecting their own and other children that all allegations must be recorded and reported in line with GAA policy on this matter
- Where reasonable grounds for concern (as outlined in Section 6) have been established the matter shall be reported to the relevant authorities as a matter of urgency and to the relevant GAA Designated Person.
- In an emergency or in the event of the relevant or any Designated Persons being unavailable to assist all relevant reports and/or allegations of abuse may be made directly to An Garda Síochána or the Health Service Executive or to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) or Health and Social Care Trust by a member of the GAA or by any member of the public
- Treat the information confidentially, sharing it only with persons who have a right know
- Sign and date the record

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all allegations involving cases of alleged abuse. This however does not supersede the rights of the child to be kept safe from abuse or harm. Confidentiality is vital if the rights of both the child and the person against whom the allegations or complaint has been made are to be protected.

The following points should be considered so as to ensue that all parties acknowledge and adhere to the required levels of confidentiality at all times:

- All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed on a need to know basis only with those who need to know, as outlined elsewhere in this booklet
- The sharing of information on a 'need to know basis' is not deemed to be a breach of confidentiality
- Use and disclose the information collated only in ways compatible with the purposes for which it was initially given
- If a young person discloses information relating to possible child abuse it cannot be dealt with as a 'secret' between the young person and the person to whom they have reported their concerns
- Information should be conveyed to the parents of the child unless to do so may further endanger the child. The conveying of information should always be done in a sensitive manner and discussions with the statutory authorities should take place in advance of the sharing of information with all parties, so as to ensure that any such actions do not obstruct or hinder ongoing investigations that may be taking place
- All persons involved in a child protection and welfare process (the child, his/her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family, coaches) should be afforded appropriate respect, fairness, support and confidentiality at all stages of the procedure

- Information should be stored in a secure place, with limited access only by the relevant Designated Persons
- Breaches of confidentiality shall be deemed a serious matter and dealt with accordingly within the GAA
- The sharing of information or the passing on of information to relevant authorities is not deemed to be a breach of confidentiality.

Anonymous Complaints

Anonymous complaints can be difficult to deal with but should not be ignored. In all cases the safety and welfare of the child remains paramount and as such anonymous complaints should be followed up in a discreet manner. Any such complaints relating to possible abuse or other child protection concerns should be brought to the attention of the Designated Person.

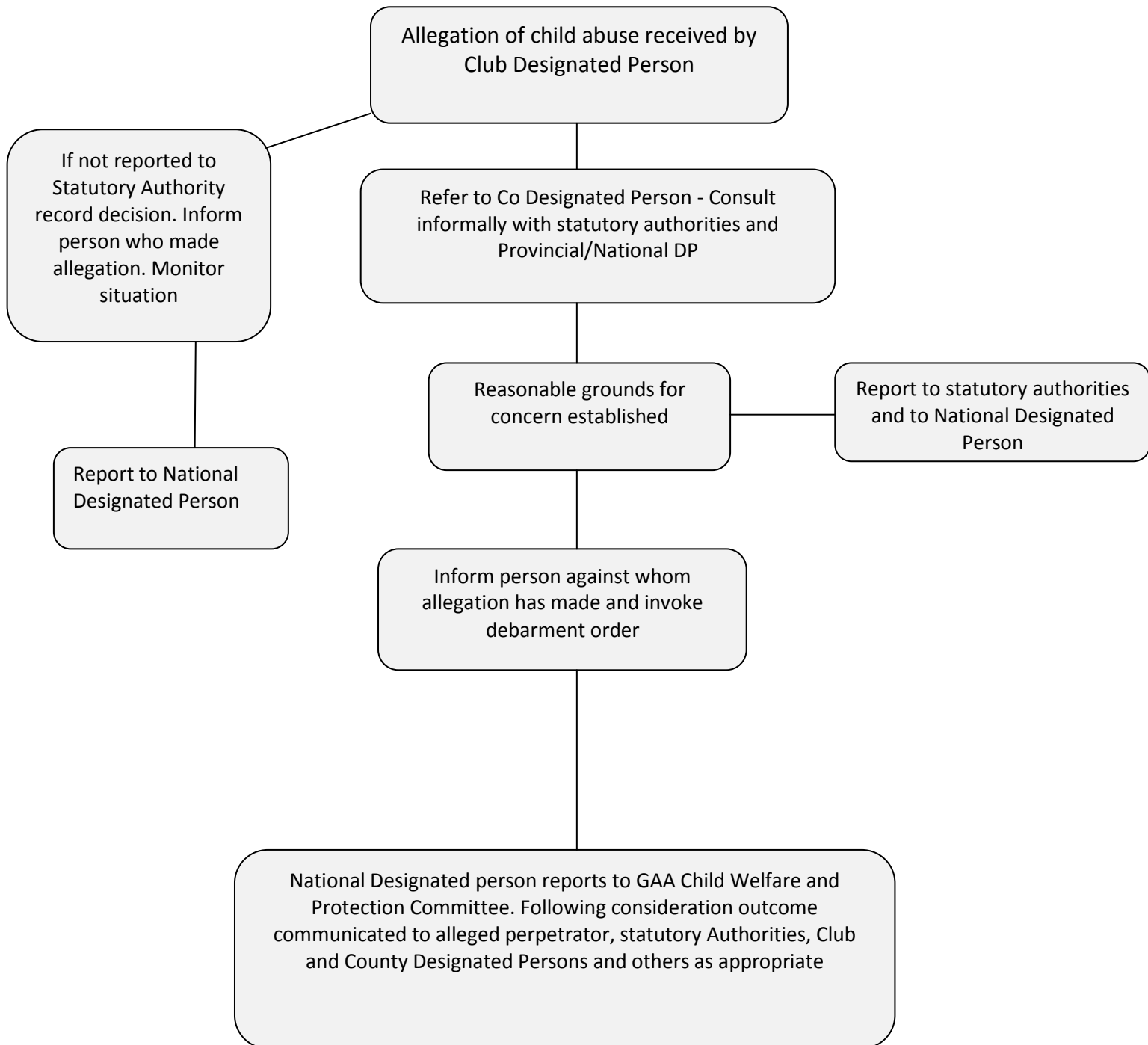
Note: It is not the role of a Designated Person or anybody else in the GAA to commence investigation surrounding the allegations of abuse or to interview the person against who an allegation has been made or interview others that may have been subject to the allegation. This role shall be carried out by the statutory authorities in the relevant jurisdiction in which the Association operates.

Non availability of Designated Person or in case of emergency

In an emergency, or in the event of a Club or County Designated Persons (or Deputy Designated Person) being unavailable to assist, reports and/or allegations of abuse may be made directly to An Garda Síochána or the HSE or to the PSNI or Social Services by a member of the GAA or by any member of the public.

Reporting Allegations of Child Abuse in the GAA

Reporting



APPENDIX: A
C.L.G. Gaeil Leitir Ceanainn
Letterkenny Gaels G.A.A. Club

ACCIDENT FORM

COACH / VOLUNTEER IN ATTENDANCE	
INJURED PARTY	
Name	
Age/ DOB	
Address	
Accident Details	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date: • Time: • Exact Location • Injury • How happened 	
Severity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Minor <input type="radio"/> Considerate <input type="radio"/> Severe 	
FIRST AID INVOLVED	YES / NO
MEDICAL ATTENTION REQUIRED	YES / NO
PARENTS/ GUARDIAN INFORMED	YES / NO
PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE:	
BY WHOM	
FORM COMPLETED BY:	
REFERRED TO DESIGNATED PERSON	YES / NO
DESIGNATED PERSON SIGNATURE	

APPENDIX B
C.L.G.Gaeil Leitir Ceanainn
Letterkenny Gaels G.A.A.Club
INCIDENT FORM

COACH/ VOLUNTEER IN ATTENDANCE	
INJURED PARTY	
Name	
Age/ DOB	
Address	
Accident Details <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Date: • Time: • Exact Location • Injury • How Happened 	
Severity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="radio"/> Minor <input type="radio"/> Considerate <input type="radio"/> Severe 	
FIRST AID INVOLVED	YES / NO
MEDICAL ATTENTION REQUIRED	YES / NO
PARENTS /GUARDIAN INFORMED	YES / NO
PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE	
BY WHOM	
FORM COMPLETED BY:	
REFERRED TO DESIGNATED PERSON	YES / NO
DESIGNATED PERSON SIGNATURE	

APPENDIX C
C.L.G.Gaeil Leitir Ceanainn
Letterkenny Gaels G.A.A.Club

Parental Consent for away Trips and Medical Attention

I,, Parent/Guardian give permission for:.....
to go on away trips organised by Letterkenny Gaels GAA Club. My address and contact numbers will be as listed below if there is a need to contact me. I have read and accept the conditions and rules set down by Letterkenny Gaels GAA Club for young players travelling to matches and events.

Medical Consent

In the event of my son/daughter being taken ill while playing or training when representing the club at away competitions or matches, so that medical attention / treatment / surgical procedures becomes necessary, I hereby authorise the coach in charge (or their deputy) to sign on my behalf, any written form required provided that I am unavailable.

Signed: _____ Parent/Guardian

Please Print Name Here: _____

Parent/Guardian Address: _____

Contact No Home: _____

Mobile No: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D
C.L.G.Gaeil Leitir Ceanainn
Letterkenny Gaels G.A.A.Club

Permission Form for Travelling with Underage Players
Volunteer

EVENT: _____

VENUE: _____

DATES: _____

Travelling Volunteer

I hereby agree to abide by the guidelines and regulations contained in the Letterkenny Gaels Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players

Name: _____

Contact No: _____

Role: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX E
C.L.G.Gaeil Leitir Ceanainn
Letterkenny Gaels G.A.A.Club

Young Player

I have read and accept the conditions and rules set down by Letterkenny Gaels GAA Club for young players travelling to matches and events. I agree to abide by the rules of my Club and Association

Name: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX F

References

The Guidelines in this document are based on the National Guidelines as outlined in the following documents:

- GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport
- GAA Code of Behaviour for all Persons Working with Young People
- GAA Give Respect Get Respect Our Games, Our Choice
- Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sports-SCNI & ISC
- Encouraging Behaviour – NSPCC
- Safeguarding Children everybody's Business NSPCC 2000
- GAA guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse