

In association with



Code of Behaviour

when working with underage players

www.gaa.ie

GAA



Cumann Lúthchleas Gael

(The Gaelic Athletic Association)

Páirc an Chrócaigh/Croke Park, Dublin 3

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Cumann Camógaíochta

(Camogie Association)

Páirc an Chrócaigh/Croke Park, Dublin 3

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Cumann Peil Gael na mBan

(Ladies Gaelic Football Association)

Páirc an Chrócaigh/Croke Park, Dublin 3

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Comhairle Liathróid Láimhe na hÉireann

(Irish Handball Council)

Páirc an Chrócaigh/Croke Park, Dublin 3

Tel: 01-8192385 Email: nationalmanager.handball@gaa.ie

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Comhairle Cluiche Corr na hÉireann

(The Rounders Council of Ireland)

Bóthar Díseart Diarmuida

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Tel: + 353 (0)857 240 831 Email: secretary.rounders@gaa.ie

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Code of Behaviour WHEN WORKING WITH UNDER AGE PLAYERS



This Code of Behaviour addresses the minimum levels of behaviour, practice and conduct required from our young players, coaches, mentors, supporters, parents, guardians, referees and clubs.

The Code of Behaviour is promoted by the following National Governing Bodies so as to assist those who promote and deliver our Gaelic Games as we comply with the highest possible standards in our work with children and young people.

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael	(The Gaelic Athletic Association)
Cumann Camógaíochta	(Camogie Association)
Cumann Peil Gael na mBan	(Ladies Gaelic Football Association)
Comhairle Liathróid Láimhe na hÉireann	(Irish Handball Council)
Comhairle Cluiche Corr na hÉireann	(The Rounders Council of Ireland)

Everyone involved in our sports and activities should accept the roles and responsibilities that they undertake as we commit ourselves to maintaining an enjoyable and safe environment for all. The safeguarding of our members will always be a key priority as we recognise that the welfare of the child is of paramount importance in our work.

It is recommended to use this Code in tandem with each National Governing Bodies own Codes of Best Practice or Codes of Ethics where roles and responsibilities are outlined in greater detail.

We wish to see this Code developed, promoted and implemented as an initiative that encourages fair play, respect, equality, safety and no discrimination in all aspects of our work with children and young people.



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YOUNG PLAYERS

Young players can benefit greatly from sport in terms of enjoyment, personal development and learning new skills. As part of their development our players must be encouraged to realise that due to their participation they also have a responsibility to treat others with fairness and respect. With rights there will always be responsibilities.

Young players shall 'sign-up' to this Code and agree to abide by the contents of the **Code of Behaviour** and to any other policies or codes in your Club and National Governing Body.

YOUNG PLAYERS should be entitled to:

- Be safe and feel safe.
- Have fun and experience a sense of enjoyment and fulfilment.
- Be treated with respect, dignity and sensitivity.
- Comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner.
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality.
- Participate in games and competitions at levels with which they feel comfortable.
- Make their concerns known and have them dealt with in an appropriate manner.
- Be protected from abuse.
- Be listened to.

YOUNG PLAYERS should always:

- Play fairly, do their best and enjoy themselves.
- Respect fellow team members regardless of ability, ethnic origin, 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 to 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 never:

- Cheat – always play by the rules.
- Shout at or argue with a game's official, with their coach, their team mates or opponents and should never 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.

COACHES, MENTORS AND TRAINERS

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

Recruitment of Coaches

All Coaches working with young people and children are required to be suitable for their chosen role(s), and should be appropriately trained, qualified and supported to fulfil such roles. All persons working or volunteering for such roles will participate in agreed recruitment and selection procedures and shall attend coaching and training courses relevant to their roles.

Coaches should maintain a child centred approach:

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person.
- Treat each person equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.
- Be positive during coaching sessions, games and other activities so that young players 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 they have the appropriate level of coaching accreditation.

- Do not equate losing with failure and do not develop a preoccupation with medals and trophies. The level of improvement made by young players is the best indicator of effective coaching.

Coaches should lead by example

- Never use foul language or provocative language/gestures to a player, opponent or match official.
- Only enter the field of play with the referee's permission
- Do not question a referee's decisions or integrity.
- Encourage players to respect and accept the judgement of match officials.
- Promote Fair Play.
- Promote the RESPECT initiative



- 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.
- Encourage parents to become involved in your team and club activities wherever possible.

Conduct of Coaches when working with under age players

- Don't shout at or lecture players or reprimand/ridicule them when they make a mistake. Young players learn best through trial and 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 and understanding of the young person.
- Never undertake any form of therapy or hypnosis, 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, coach, parent/guardian, spectator or match official.

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.



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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 aware of any special medical or dietary requirements of players as indicated on the medical consent/registration forms or as informed by parents/guardians
- Be 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 text or email system for communicating with the parents/guardians of players. Any exception to this form of group texting can only occur following permission from parents/guardians.
- Do not communicate individually by text/email with under age players.
- Do not engage in communications with under age players via social network sites.
- Keep a record of any injuries and action subsequently 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 or unwell.



Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians have an influential role to play in assisting and encouraging their children to fully participate in Gaelic Games, whether by playing our games or attending training or coaching sessions.

In common with coaches and club personnel the parents/guardians of under age players should act as role models for their children as they participate in Gaelic Games.

Parents/Guardians should encourage their child to:

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

Parents/Guardians should lead by example:

- Adopt a positive attitude to their children's participation in our games.
- Respect officials' decisions and encourage children to do likewise.
- Do not exert undue pressure on your child.
- Never admonish your own child or any other child for their standard of play.
- Be realistic in their expectations.
- Show approval for effort, not just results.
- Avoid asking a child or young person, 'How much did you score today or what did you win by or what did you lose by.' Ask them 'did they enjoy themselves.'
- Never embarrass a child or use sarcastic remarks towards a player.
- Applaud good play from all teams.
- Do not criticise playing performances. Identify how improvements may be made.
- Do not seek to unfairly affect a game or player.
- Do not enter the field of play unless specifically invited to do so by an official in charge.

Parents/Guardians should:

- Complete and return the registration/permission and medical consent forms for their child's participation in the club.
- Inform the coaches, and any other relevant club personnel, of any changes in their child's medical or dietary requirements prior to coaching sessions, games or other activities.
- Ensure that their child punctually attends coaching sessions/games or other activities.
- Provide their child with adequate clothing and equipment as may be required for the playing of our games including for example helmets, shin guards, gum shields etc
- Ensure that the nutrition/hydration and hygiene needs of their child are met.

- Listen to what their child may have to say.
- Show approval whether the team wins, loses or draws a game.
- Never attempt to meet their own needs and aspirations for success and achievement through their children's participation in games.

Parents/Guardians should assist their club by:

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

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.



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SUPPORTERS

Young players are eager to enjoy and benefit from the support they receive from parents, guardians, friends and other members of the club who attend our games as spectators. Active, loyal and well behaved supporters are always welcome to attend and support our games but should be aware that their conduct will reflect upon the team, players and clubs that they support.

Fellow supporters have a responsibility to ensure that all spectators conduct themselves in an acceptable and well behaved manner at all times, when attending under age games and competitions.

Supporters should realise that young players are encouraged to participate in Gaelic Games so that they may enjoy themselves while also improving their skills levels.

Supporters add to the enjoyment of our games by:

- Applauding good performance and efforts from your club's players and from your opponents, regardless of the result.
- Condemning the use of violence in any form, be it by fellow spectators, coaches, officials or players.
- Encouraging players to participate according to the rules and the referees' decisions.
- Demonstrating appropriate social behaviour by not using foul language or harassing players, mentors or officials.
- Respecting the decisions of all officials.
- Never ridiculing or scolding a player for making a mistake during training, games or competitions
- Showing respect to your Club's opponents. Without them there would be no games or competitions.
- Upholding the principles of FAIR PLAY and RESPECT for all.

REFEREES

Throughout this Code of Behaviour emphasis has been placed on the need to co-operate with and facilitate those that organise and deliver our games and activities. Referees are key people in the delivery of our games and should be respected and assisted in their roles.

Referees should always remember that they are instrumental in ensuring our games are played fairly and that all participants are treated with respect. In common with all others who participate and play our games Referees also have a responsibility to implement this Code of Behaviour.

Players, coaches, mentors, parents/guardians and other club personnel also have a central role to play in the delivery of this aspect of our Gaelic Games particularly when working with under age players. The manner in which we accept the role, authority and decisions of a referee will naturally be scrutinised very closely by our under age players.

In their capacity as referees of under age games we expect our referees to:

- Apply the playing rules on an impartial and consistent basis.
- Act with integrity and objectivity in all games.
- Communicate decisions to players and team officials in an effective and constructive manner.
- Deal with dissent firmly and fairly.
- Work as a team with other match officials.
- Maintain composure regardless of the circumstances.
- Avail of assessment to improve performance and achieve excellence.

Players, coaches, mentors, supporters, parents/guardians and other club personnel should recognise the pivotal role that referees play in our under age games and should support them in their role.

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The Club

All clubs that cater for under age players must do so with a child centred approach and philosophy that recognises that the welfare of the child is paramount, thus ensuring that those chosen by them to work with children and young people are at all times competent and confident as to their roles and responsibilities.

Clubs must provide these people with the necessary supports and ensure in the best interests of the child and the adult that all those chosen to work on the club's behalf have been selected following thorough recruitment, selection, training and coaching procedures.

Clubs should promote quality participation by:

- Adopting this Code of Behaviour as a basic level of agreement between the club and their players, their mentors, parents/guardians and supporters.
- Leading by example and ensuring that a user friendly and child centred approach is adopted in our work with young people and that equal opportunities are available for all to participate in our games and activities, regardless of an individual's ability.
- Developing effective procedures for responding to and recording all attendances, incidents, accidents and injuries.
- Accessing relevant information on Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention Programmes and promoting relevant training in this area of health awareness for relevant club personnel.
- Distributing information on Anti Bullying strategies in our work with young people and by adopting and implementing an Ant Bullying Statement in the club.

Encourage the Participation of Club Members by:

- Communicating regularly with your mentors and clearly agree and define their roles.
- Ensuring that Child Protection in Sport Awareness Training is undertaken by all persons working in an official capacity with children and young people on behalf of the club.
- Adopting and implement clearly defined recruitment and selection procedures when choosing mentors to work with children and young people.

Clubs should encourage the participation of their members by:

- Agreeing the role of each and every coach or mentor working with young people.
- Adopting and implementing clearly defined recruitment and selection procedures when choosing mentors and other relevant personnel to work with young people.



Encourage the Participation of Young Players by:

- Ensuring that the types of programmes, rules, equipment, length of games and training schedules are structured to facilitate greater participation by all young players, are suitable to all age categories, and to the ability and maturity level of young players.
- Not imposing responsibilities or roles on young people that may be inappropriate to their age.
- Respecting the rights, dignity and worth of all players and treating them equally regardless of their age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion.
- Creating pathways for young people to participate in our games not just as players but by affording them other developmental opportunities including training to become referees, coaches etc.
- Ensuring that on the occasions when the team may travel away and stay overnight that separate sleeping facilities are provided for all adults and for young people. Similarly, for mixed groups separate sleeping quarters for males and females shall be required.
- When your group consists of both males and females you are required to have adequate adult to member ratios and male and female coaches/mentors present.

Encourage the Participation of Parents/Guardians by:

- Encouraging parents/guardians to become members of their club and to make themselves aware as to the running of juvenile games and activities and to the rules and codes that direct us in our work.
- Encouraging the participation of parents and guardians in all aspects of a club's activities and events and in the organising and delivery of our games.
- Welcoming all parents/guardians to attend the games and training sessions that relate to their children. Information relating to such events should be made known to them at all times.

- Informing parents/guardians as to the identity of their Children's Officer. This person should be available to assist with any concerns or enquiries that parents/guardians may have regarding the welfare and safety of children and young people in the club.

Develop Best Practice in Club Structures and Administration by:

- Ensuring that the Juvenile Section of the club is structured in accordance with good practice guidelines and that young people are afforded a role in decision making at an appropriate level.
- Ensuring that all club members are aware as to their responsibilities to all children and young people.
- Appointing a Children's Officer whose role shall include the monitoring of the child centred ethos of the club and compliance with the Code of Ethics and Good Practice (Irish Sports Council/SportsNI) and with any policies and guidelines as issued by the club, by their National Governing Bodies, or by statutory authorities and agencies.
- Appointing a Designated Person whose role shall include liaising with Statutory Authorities and the relevant Governing Body in relation to the reporting of allegations, concerns and/or suspicions of child abuse.
- Ensuring that all players are covered by their relevant Injury Scheme and that all premises etc in use by your club and players are equally covered for property/liability insurance as deemed necessary.
- Adopting procedures that facilitate the privacy and safety of all young people in the Club and that such procedures are maintained and regularly reviewed so as to ensure that young people feel safe and are safe in the Club.
- Seeking the agreement of parents/guardians when their sons/daughters under 18yrs of age are invited into adult squads. Boundaries of behaviour in adult groups are normally different from the boundaries that apply to under age teams and squads.



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How to Deal with Alleged Breaches of the Code of Behaviour

This Code of Behaviour outlines the minimum levels of behaviour that we require of those that are involved in under age games and activities. The Code applies equally to under age players, coaches and mentors, to parents and guardians and to our supporters, referees and club officials. While the promotion of the Code at club level may be seen as the responsibility of the Club's Children's Officer ultimately it is everybody's responsibility to ensure that the Code is fully implemented.

Breaches of our Code will unfortunately occur from time to time. This may happen as a result of carelessness, poor practice, lack of understanding or there may in some instances be deliberate or indeed calculated breaches of the Code.

When a minor breach of the Code is witnessed it may be opportune and appropriate to deal with such breaches as they occur. Therefore it may, depending on the level of breach, be deemed appropriate for a coach, mentor or other official to deal with such instances as they happen. However, repeated or non-trivial breaches of the Code would require levels of intervention as outlined in Steps 1-10.



Many breaches of our Code of Behaviour are in fact instances of poor or bad practice and with the co-operation of all concerned, may be rectified and may not occur again. Certain breaches, due to their nature, may best be dealt as breaches of rules or in more extreme circumstances may actually fall within a category of abuse and should be dealt with accordingly.

Therefore when the Code is breached or when people refuse to adhere to its contents, certain actions may be deemed necessary so as to protect the integrity of our work with children and young people and ensure that they receive the best possible care and attention while participating in our Games.

Dealing with an alleged breach of the Code

An alleged breach of the Code should be dealt with in a fair and impartial manner with the presumption of innocence maintained until otherwise proven. If at any stage the person against whom the breach is alleged is under 18 years of age no formal meetings should take place with that person without the presence or permission of a parent or guardian.

Any action(s) taken should at all times be seen to be proportionate to the alleged breach that may have taken place.

Should a false allegation be made regarding a breach of the Code and should the matter be subsequently deemed to be of a malicious nature the person making any such false allegation(s) may be subject to sanctions by the relevant Sports Governing Body and/or by the statutory authorities.

There is however a difference between a false allegation and an incorrect assumption or an allegations that may be unproven. Where a person may believe or observe that a breach of the Code has occurred they should report this matter to the person in the relevant Club who may deal with such matters. While it is always preferable that allegations or concerns are received in writing the Club is equally obliged to investigate any alleged breaches of the Code whether they are reported verbally, anonymously or in writing.

How is a breach of the Code processed?

If an alleged breach of the Code of Behaviour is reported or observed it is recommended that the Club Children's Officer initially oversees any enquiry into such an allegation. The following should be adhered to:

Step 1 Alleged breach of the Code is reported or observed

- Matter should be reported to the Club's Children's Officer.

Step 2 Confidentiality

- At all times the Children's Officer must maintain the highest degree of confidentiality in their work on behalf of the club and should only discuss the details of any alleged breach of the Code on a need to know basis with those that are required to be informed or consulted. The Club's Children's Officer shall record and retain a record of all discussions and actions taken.

Step 3 Initial assessments by the Club Children's Officer

- If possible, following assessment of the matter as reported or witnessed, the Club Children's Officer should identify if the alleged breach would constitute an example of poor practice or a more serious breach of the Code.

Step 4 Collate the information

- Carefully take account of what has been reported or alleged and retain a record of all actions taken on behalf of the Club. Such records may be required as part of any subsequent investigation or in the event of an appeal at a later stage.
- Check what has been reported for accuracy.
- Corroborate the facts if necessary with others who may have witnessed the alleged incident.

Step 5 Inform the person accused of the alleged breach of the Code

- Inform the person against whom the alleged breach has been made as to the nature of the breach and how it may have contravened the Code.
- Seek a response from the person.
- Inform the person if any further action is deemed necessary or shall be recommended.

Step 6 If a breach of the Code is acknowledged

- If a breach of the Code is acknowledged and is not deemed to be of an extreme nature (e.g. poor practice as opposed to a deliberate breach), the Children's Officer should inform the person against whom the breach has been alleged how they may have breached the Code and that they must in future adhere to all aspects of the Code.
- If the breach is deemed to be of a more serious or a re-occurring nature it may then be subject to reporting within the Club. Such matters, on a case by case basis, shall be dealt with in accordance with the principles of natural justice and with club internal disciplinary structures, or in extreme circumstances may be categorised as abuse and would be dealt with accordingly. The Club Children's Officer may not make a decision to remove a person from their role(s) due to a breach of the Code of Behaviour. Such actions may only be taken by the relevant Club Committee but may be recommended by the Club Children's Officer, following an appraisal of the alleged breach.*
- Should any action be taken against a person deemed to have breached the Code the action taken will undoubtedly be proportionate to the level of breach that occurred. However, such action could include a verbal warning, a removal from their role for a specific period of time, a permanent removal from their role, a directive that they undertake a specified training programme, a request that the matter be dealt with as a disciplinary issue or a referral of the breach to the Designated Person dealing with allegations of abuse.
- All such action shall be taken by the relevant Club Committee having considered any recommendations that may be made to them.

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Step 7 If a breach of the code is denied

- If a breach of the code is denied the Children's Officer must make a determination and may seek the assistance of other Club officials as appropriate to the Club's structures.
- If the facts point to a breach of the Code due process must allow for a response from the person against whom the alleged breach has been made.
- If, following this procedure, it is deemed that a breach of the Code has occurred the Children's Officer may recommend a course of subsequent action. This matter must also be reported to the relevant Club Committee and also to the person against whom the allegation been made.
- The relevant Club Committee shall consider the recommendation and reach a conclusion on the matter.
- If the breach is deemed to be of a more serious or a re-occurring nature it may then be subject to reporting within the Club. Such matters, on a case by case basis, shall be dealt with in accordance with the principles of natural justice and with club internal disciplinary structures, or in extreme circumstances may be categorised as abuse and would be dealt with accordingly. The Club Children's Officer may not make a decision to remove a person from their role(s) due to a breach of the Code of Behaviour. Such actions may only be taken by the relevant Club Committee but may be recommended by the Club Children's Officer, following an appraisal of the alleged breach.*
- Should any action be taken against a person deemed to have breached the Code the action taken will undoubtedly be proportionate to the level of breach that occurred. However, such action could include a verbal warning, a removal from their role for a specific period of time, a permanent removal from their role, a directive that they undertake a specified training programme, a request that the matter be dealt with as a disciplinary issue or a referral of the breach to the Designated Person dealing with allegations of abuse.

Step 8 Appeal against decision

- If the person against whom an allegation has been made is unhappy with the outcome or decision(s) made a right of appeal should be afforded to them in accordance with Club and Governing Body structures.

Step 9 Informing the aggrieved party as to any decision reached following a breach of the Code

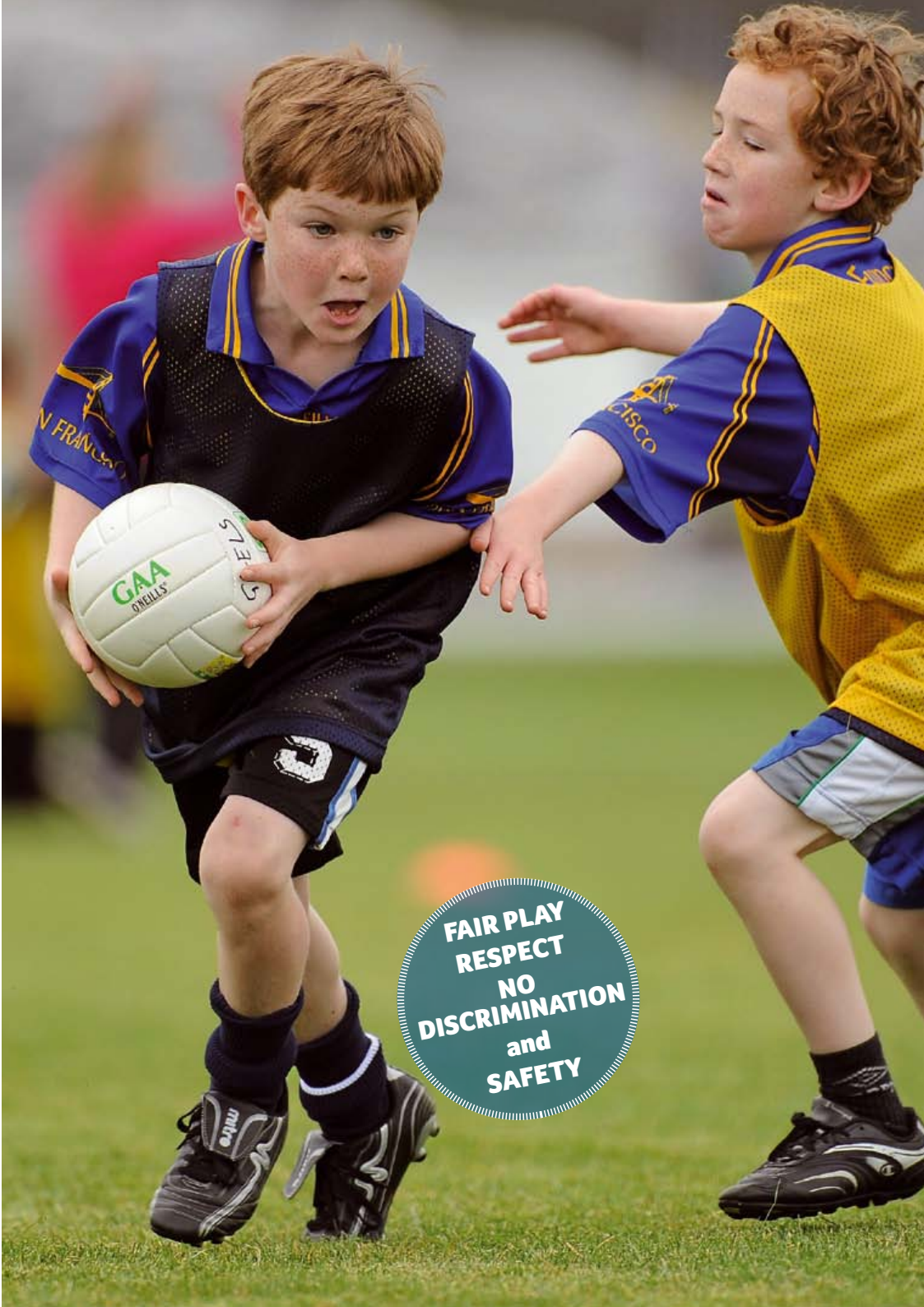
- Any person, who due to the actions of another may have experienced or have been the recipient of actions deemed to be in breach of the Code is entitled to know what outcomes and decisions have been reached following investigations into such matters. Such persons should be informed in a confidential manner as to what has been agreed but may not be part of the decision making process when determining an outcome.

Step 10 Review use of the Code in your Club

- On an on-going basis the Club's Children's Officer should review the implementation of the Code of Behaviour within the Club and where necessary appraise the Club's Executive Committee on how the Code may be promoted at all times.

* Reference has been made throughout this section to the use of 'club internal disciplinary structures'. Where such actions are required they must be processed in accordance with the procedures as adopted by either Cumann Lúthchleas Gael, Cumann Camógaíochta, Cumann Peil Gael na mBan, Comhairle Liathróid Láimhe na hÉireann or Comhairle Cluiche Corr na hÉireann.

It is recommended that you contact your relevant Governing Body for further information on appropriate disciplinary procedures.



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Produced by the
**GAA in association with Cumann Camógaíochta,
 Cumann Peil Gael na mBan, Comhairle Liathróid Láimhe na hÉireann
 and Comhairle Cluiche Corr na hÉireann**
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