

Contacting Underage Players – Guidance from the GAA

Many enquires have been made regarding the GAA good practice recommendations on the use of text messages or emails when passing on information for the attention of under age players.

What the GAA has proposed is contained in our Code of Best Practice, launched in April 2009, at our Annual Congress in Cork and in our Joint Code of Behaviour. * The relevant information is also highlighted as part of the delivery of our Child Protection Awareness workshops nationwide.

What is the GAA proposing re texting/emailing information to underage players?

The GAA policy states that when we pass on information regarding games, training or other activities for the attention of our under age players that we do so via group texts and that these group texts should be sent to the parents of under age players. The same good practice guidance applies when using emails. The team Coach, Club Registrar or the Club Rúnaí should obtain these relevant contact numbers/emails when an under age player is being registered on an annual basis. This recommendation only applies to underage players i.e. under 18 year of age.

Are there any exceptions to the proposal on texting?

If, for whatever reason, a parent/guardian insists or requests that the information is sent directly by the club to their child and gives this request in writing the club may, if they so wish, accede to this request. However, if the club accedes to the request the information can only be sent as part of a group text and cannot be communicated individually to the under age player. A parental or guardian request to have such information sent directly to their child may be refused by the Club in the interest of good practice.

The GAA would regard the individual texting of an under age player by their coach or mentor as being inappropriate and unacceptable.

How do we interpret an underage player?

An under age player is a person who is eligible to play in a game or event for persons under 18 years of age. Legislation in Ireland also defines a child as any person under 18 years of age and parents/guardians therefore have a particular level of responsibility for their child's welfare while they remain under 18 yrs of age. (We use the terms child and young person frequently when we refer to under age players.)

Can we text county underage development squads and minor squads?

The recommended group text mechanism is still preferred but if you have parental/guardian permission to group text under age players you may avail of this option.

What if an underage player is on the club's senior panel?

The same recommendation applies and parental/guardian permission must be sought if you wish to directly communicate with the young person as part of a group text scheme.

Gearóid Ó Maoilmhichíl

Oifigeach Náisiúnta Leanaí CLG

* Joint Code of Behaviour as agreed by the GAA, Ladies Football, Camogie Association, Irish Handball Council and The Rounders Council of Ireland.