



Owen Roe O'Neill's SAC  
Leckpatrick



## **OIFIGEACH ÓIGE / CHILDREN'S OFFICER** **(& DESIGNATED PERSON)**

The role of Children's Officer is stipulated in Association rule, it is vital that all Clubs have a Children's Officer and Designated Person who command the trust and respect of the entire Club membership to assume the roles of the Children's Officer and Designated Person, as stipulated in the GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport and the GAA Code of Behaviour for all Persons Working with Young People. Both Officers should sit as members of the Club management committee and be vetted through the Garda or Access NI.

### **Required Skills**

- Approachable with friendly manner.
- Good listener
- Well organised
- Motivated
- Prepared to pass on concerns to the Provincial Council/Central Council and professional agencies if necessary.

### **Main Duties**

- Ensure that the child protection procedures are understood and adhered to by all members.
- Establish and maintain the complaints procedures.
- Attend the GAA workshop 'Good Practice & Child Protection' renewable every three years.
- Be familiar with current child protection legislation and The Children Act 1989.
- Understand the GAA Code of Ethics, child protection procedures, rules and regulations.
- In the event of a complaint being made ensure that the complaints procedures are met and see the procedures through to the final decision.
- Attend meetings of Club Youth Committee as appropriate.
- Attend meetings of the County Youth Board as appropriate.

In an ideal situation each Club would also have a deputy Children's Officer. If the Children's Officer is male it would be good practice to have a female deputy





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## OIFIGEACH ÓIGE/CHILDREN'S OFFICER (& DESIGNATED PERSON)

Children's Officer. This could be the Club Chairperson, Secretary or another Club Management Committee member.

### **In brief the Children's Officer:**

- Ensures the Club has in place all appropriate Child Protection policies and procedures.
- Contributes at County level as appropriate.

We will aim to appoint a Children's Officer of a different gender to the Designated Person.

The following people are the club Children's Officer and Designated Officer for 2012, and they commit to following the best practice model as detailed above.

### **Children's Officer**

Name: Tracy Harper

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Designated Person**

Name: Anne Mc Nulty

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



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## **The Club's Children's Officer**

The appointment of a Children's Officers at Club level is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere and establishing a child and youth centered ethos at both Club level.

All of the Gaelic Games' Associations are committed to creating and maintaining the safest possible environment for all young people\* who participate in our Gaelic Games and activities. In our work with young people and with adults a number of national policy documents act as a resource to us and govern these commitments:

- A Code of Behaviour - when working with underage players - jointly published by the Gaelic Athletic Association, Camogie Association, Ladies Football Association, Rounders Council of Ireland and the Irish Handball Council
- GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport
- GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse
- Camogie Association's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players
- Ladies Football Association's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young Players

The appointment of a Children's Officer at Club level is not just essential but is also a mandatory requirement.

This policy, promoted by the Gaelic Athletic Association, Camogie Association, Ladies Football Association, Rounders Council of Ireland and the Irish Handball Council, outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Children's Officer so as to be of assistance to those who undertake such roles.

The Club Children's Officer shall assist in promoting a child and youth centered ethos in the Club. In their work they shall be the link between the children/young people and the adults within the Club.



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## The Club's Children's Officer

In their role the Club Children's Officer should:

- Have good communication skills, be approachable and open minded
- Have good knowledge and be familiar with their Child Welfare and Protection Codes and Guidelines
- Have an understanding of relevant child welfare/protection legislation
- Have undertaken a Garda Vetting/Access NI/CRB check relevant to their jurisdiction
- Have attended the relevant awareness training on child welfare and protection and availed of Children's Officer training

### **Key role**

The key role of the Club Children's Officer is to ensure the implementation and promotion of the relevant Child Welfare Codes and Guidelines for good practice in their Club so as to ensure that young people can participate, enjoy and benefit from our Gaelic Games in safe and enjoyable surroundings.

### **Key tasks**

- Promote awareness of the relevant Codes of Behaviour and Best Practice within the Club
- Distribute copies of the Joint Code of Behaviour - when working with underage players at Club level
- Identify the need and facilitate the delivery of Child Protection in Sport Awareness Workshops and other relevant Child Protection and Welfare training within the Club
- Ensure in so far as possible, that all Players, Coaches, Team Mentors, Parents, Guardians, Officials and Spectators adhere to the Joint Code of Behaviour - when working with underage players





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## The Club's Children's Officer

- Ensure that each under age member signs and submits an annual membership form
- Support the implementation of the **RESPECT** initiative at Club level in cooperation with team personnel, underage members, referees, spectators, parents and guardians
- Influence policy and practice in the Club in order to prioritise young people's needs
- Promote greater consultation with under age players and participation by them in Club activities and planning
- Ensure that there are steps young people may take to express concerns about their sports activities / experiences within the Club
- Encourage the involvement of parents/ guardians in organising Club activities
- Develop good practice procedures in the recruitment and selection of persons working with young people in the Club
- Oversee the implementation of Garda Vetting/Access NI/CRB checks, as appropriate, within the Club
- Monitor, in association with team coaches, any significant trends or developments relating to the participation of young people in Gaelic Games and report accordingly to the Club Executive or Management Committee
- Maintain on-going contact with the County Board Children's Officer and with other Club Children's Officers
- Report regularly to the Club Executive as required
- Deal with breaches of the code as per relevant guidelines





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## **The Club's Children's Officer**

- Make referrals of alleged allegations of abuse to the Club Designated Person
- Conduct an annual audit of best practice in child protection and welfare within the Club and report accordingly





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## **The Club's Designated Person**

The Club shall appoint a Designated Person who on behalf of the Club shall be responsible at an initial stage for dealing with any concerns relating to the possible abuse of children as reported or made known to them.

The appointment forms an essential part of the GAA Child Welfare and Protection strategy to ensure that in so far as is practically possible we provide a safe environment for children, young people and also for the adults who assist our underage members at Gaelic Games and other Association activities.

The GAA is committed to taking appropriate action where allegations or suspicions of abuse are made known to us and to sharing such information with the relevant statutory authorities in accordance with legislation and relevant guidelines.

In our work with children and young people we are directed by appropriate legislation within the jurisdiction in which we operate. Within the GAA our Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse and our Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport act as further guidance in all such matters.

While the appointment of a Designated Person at Club level is a key and essential requirement when promoting and delivering good practice, such an appointment is also mandatory in accordance with GAA policy and practice.

This policy outlines the roles and responsibilities of GAA Designated Persons so as to be of assistance to those who undertake such key child welfare and protection roles in the Association.

Designated Persons must have the ability to approach child welfare and protection matters in a sensible, balanced, facilitative and non threatening manner and shall be required to have good communication skills, shall be approachable and open minded and shall have an in-depth knowledge of the Association's Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse and our Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport.

GAA Designated Persons are required to be fully aware of their responsibilities so as to enable them deal with any allegations of abuse or suspicions of abuse that



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## **The Club's Designated Person**

they may become aware of or are reported to them by members of the Association or by others.

When a Club appoints their Designated Person it is equally important to select a Deputy Designated Person who may in the absence of the Designated Person be called upon to fulfill this role.

Relevant training should also be made available to Deputy Designated Persons so as to ensure they are familiar with their roles and responsibilities

The Club Designated Person may, as circumstances dictate, be the initial conduit on behalf of the Association who receives allegations of abuse or is made aware of suspicions of abuse at Club level. The person chosen to fulfill this role shall as a prerequisite be knowledgeable as to relevant Legislation and Guidelines on the Reporting of Allegations of Abuse pertinent to the jurisdiction in which they operate and must be fully aware as to the GAA policy and procedures on all such matters.

The Club Designated Person shall have knowledge of:

- The GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse
- The GAA Code of Best Practice for Youth Sport and the Code of Behaviour
- The Code of Ethics Good Practice for Children's Sport (Irish Sports Council and SportNI) and the Standard for Safeguarding and Protecting Children in Sport (NS PCC UK)
- Protecting Children: A Guide for Sportspeople (Coachwise UK)
- Children First – National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (Dept of Health and Children)
- Our Duty to Care - The Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People (Dept of Health and Children)





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## The Club's Designated Person

- Our Duty to Care – Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People (Volunteer Development Agency)

### **Key Role**

The key role of the Club Designated Person is to ensure that all allegations of abuse or suspicions that merit reasonable concern are dealt with as a matter of priority in a sensitive, caring and confidential manner and that this work is carried out on behalf of the Club in association with the appointed County Designated Person.

The Club Designated Person is responsible for referring all allegations or suspicions of child abuse to the County Designated Person. It is however the County Designated Person, having consulted with their Club counterpart, and having established reasonable grounds for concern, who will duly report such concerns to the Health Service Executive (ROI) or relevant Health and Social Care Trusts and/or An Garda Síochána/Police Service of Northern Ireland or Police Services in other jurisdictions. It is the County Designated Person who shall on behalf of the Association issue debarment orders, following consultations with their Club counterparts and with the National Designated Person.

This process has been adopted as a means by which we may support those at club level who have agreed to take on the Designated Person role. The Designated Person at club level still retains the right, as does any member, to report directly to statutory authorities, e.g Health Service Executive/ Garda Síochána/Health and Social Care Trusts/Police, and should they choose to do so they must keep the County Designated Person and the GAA National Designated Person informed for further possible consideration and monitoring within the Association. In the absence of the County Designated Person it is most important that no delay should occur when liaising with the statutory authorities. Advice on how to proceed will be available in such circumstances from the GAA National Designated Person.

In accordance with GAA procedures all referrals from Club Designated Person to County Designated Persons, whether reported thereafter to the statutory



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## **The Club's Designated Person**

authorities or not, must be reported to the GAA National Designated Person for the purpose of further possible consideration within the Association.

### **Key tasks**

- Refer reports and allegations of abuse to their County Designated Person and may consult informally with statutory authorities and the Provincial/National Designated Persons if deemed necessary
- Make any such reports or referrals in line with GAA agreed procedures
- Have knowledge of statutory guidelines and relevant legislation as they relate to child protection and welfare of young people in their jurisdiction
- Have knowledge of definitions, categorisation and indicators of abuse
- Undertake, in accordance with the jurisdiction in which they operate, relevant Child Protection in Sport Awareness training (IS C/SportNI) or Safeguarding and Protecting Children (Sportscoach UK) training as promoted by the GAA and any other training deemed relevant to their role
- Be familiar with and be able to carry out reporting procedures as outlined in the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse
- Assist with and identify the need for Child Protection in Sport Awareness training within the Club and other appropriate training in consultation with their Club Children's Officer
- Be aware of local contacts and support services that may assist in developing and delivering their role
- Advise, as appropriate, Club administrators on issues of confidentiality, record keeping and data protection



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## **The Club's Designated Person**

- Ensure that all individual case records are maintained, that all actions taken are recorded and that such records are kept in a secure and confidential place
- Communicate with parents and external agencies as appropriate

