



CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

KANTURK GAA CLUB



2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Vision of the GAA	1
Mission of the GAA	2
Values of the GAA	3
Introduction	4
Policy Statement	5
Dignity and Rights of Young People	6
Recognising Child Abuse	6
Indicators of Concern	7
Responding to a Young Person Disclosing Abuse	8
Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse	9
Dealing with an Allegation against GAA Personnel	10
Categories of Abuse	10
Introduction	10
Child Neglect	11
Emotional Abuse	11
Physical Abuse	11
Sexual Abuse	12
Signs of Child Abuse	12
Some Facts about Abuse	13
References	13



VISION OF THE GAA

Our vision is that everybody has the opportunity to be welcomed to take part in our games and culture, to participate fully, to grow and develop and to be inspired to keep a lifelong engagement with our Association.

MISSION OF THE GAA

The GAA is a community based volunteer organisation promoting Gaelic games, culture and lifelong participation.

The GAA is a volunteer organisation. We develop and promote Gaelic games at the core of Irish identity and culture.

We are dedicated to ensuring that our family of games, and values we live, enrich the lives of our members, families and the communities we serve.

We are committed to active lifelong participation for all and to providing the best facilities.

We reach out to and include all members of our society. We promote individual development and well-being and strive to enable all our members achieve their full potential in their chosen roles.

VALUES OF THE GAA

VALUE	What this means
Community Identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community is at the heart of our Association. Everything we do helps to enrich the communities we serve. • We foster a clear sense of identity and place.
Amateur Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are a volunteer led organisation. • All our members play and engage in our games as amateurs. • We provide a games programme at all levels to meet the needs of all our players.
Inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We welcome everybody to be part of our Association.
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We respect each other on and off the playing fields.
Player Welfare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We provide the best playing experience for all our players.
Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective teamwork on and off the field is the cornerstone of our Association. • Ní neart go cur le chéile (There is no strength without working together).

INTRODUCTION

This Policy has a particular focus on the issue of child abuse. A sports club, like any other club that includes young people among its members, is vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse.

With regard to this issue, Kanturk GAA Club is determined to provide the safest environment possible for all the children in its care and involved in its activities. Also, that parents can be assured that the Club is proactive in this regard.

An environment in which awareness of what constitutes abusive behaviour and a willingness to tackle the issue head on is most likely to achieve effective implementation of child protection measures. It is only by discussing and agreeing procedures and best practice that the Club can be assured that they are providing the safest and most enjoyable experiences for sport for young people and for themselves.

Child welfare and the protection of young people is the concern of all adults at all times, irrespective of their role within the organisation. Each club and organisation must accept this as part of their responsibility and duty of care for young people. Research has shown that most abuse in childhood takes place at home and that sporting organisations are not less likely or more likely to cause or harbour abuse than any other aspect of society; but abuse of children is not specific to any one organisation or location, so adults need to be aware of its existence.

The prevention and detection of child abuse depends on the collaborative effort of everyone concerned. The following factors are central to effective child protection in sport:

- Acceptance by all involved with young people that abuse, whether physical, psychological or sexual is wrong, severely damages children and must be confronted.
- Awareness of the behavioural and physical indicators of various forms of abuse.
- Knowledge of the appropriate response and action to be taken where abuse is revealed or suspected.
- Vigilance and avoidance of all situations conducive to risk.
- Open, trusting and co-operative relationships within the club/organisation and with parents/guardians and others concerned with children's progress or welfare.
- Willingness to co-operate with Statutory Authorities (Tusla, the child and family agency, Gardaí, Health Service Executive or Social Services), in relation to sharing information about child protection concerns at any time.

POLICY STATEMENT

The Gaelic Athletic Association and Kanturk GAA Club are 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.

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 a Children's Officer in our Club. The clubs childrens' officer is Pat Bradley.
- Appointing a Designated liaison person and deputy Designated Liaison person who deal with issues of abuse raised within then club. The clubs designated Liaison person is Pat Bradley and the clubs deputy designated liaison person is John Healy.
- Ensuring that all allegations of abuse of young people are confidentially dealt with in accordance with the Association's Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse and with statutory guidelines and relevant legislation.
- Reviewing the effectiveness of our Child Protection Procedures and Policies on an on-going basis.
- Volunteers involved with Kanturk GAA Club are obliged to undergo Garda Vetting prior to any involvement at juvenile level within the Club.

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 Lúthleass Gael (GAA) and Kanturk GAA Club 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 wellbeing 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 Policy in our activities:

- 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.

Kanturk GAA Club 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'.

Recognising Child Abuse

The ability to recognise child abuse depends as much on a person's willingness to accept the possibility of its existence as it does on knowledge and information. It is important to note that child abuse is not always readily visible and may not be clearly observable. It is also important to avoid either a situation where volunteers/employees are constantly wary and on the lookout for abuse or one where complacency exists. Essentially, we should consider, in a measured way, the possibility of child abuse if:

- a young person appears to have suffered a suspicious injury for which no reasonable explanation can be offered.
- a young person seems distressed without obvious reason or displays persistent or new behavioural problems.
- a young person shows unusual or fearful responses to an adult who is responsible for their care at any particular time.

It is important to remember that many signs of child abuse are non-specific and that alternative explanations for indicators should always be considered.

Indicators of Concern

Young people will sometimes, though not always, disclose that they are being physically or sexually abused and are less likely to disclose emotional abuse or neglect. It is possible that volunteers/employees will become concerned because of a young person's behaviour or because of something that is reported by another person. The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern and should be reported to the Club's Designated Person in the first instance:

- disclosures of abuse by a young person
- age-inappropriate or abnormal sexual play or knowledge
- specific injuries or patterns of injuries
- signs of injury for which there is no explanation or which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in any other way
- absconding from home
- attempted suicide
- under-age pregnancy or sexually transmitted disease
- someone else (a parent, friend) may disclose that a young person has told them they are being abused or may have witnessed the abuse themselves
- a young person's behaviour may raise concerns
- a volunteer/employee may personally witness abuse taking place
- there may be consistent indication, over a period of time, that a young person is suffering from emotional or physical neglect
- signs in one or more of the above categories at any one time

A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indicator of abuse or neglect would not constitute a reasonable suspicion or be reasonable grounds for concern.

Under no circumstances should any individual member of the Club attempt to confront an alleged abuser. Proper procedures should be followed at all times as outlined in the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegation of Abuse. It is the statutory authorities in whatever jurisdiction in which an allegation or report has been made who ultimately will determine how far and in what manner an investigation should be conducted.

Responding to a Young Person Disclosing Abuse

When a child or young person discloses information of actual or suspected abuse you should, where possible, involve the Club's Designated Person immediately in any form of response:

- (a) Deal with any allegation of abuse in a sensitive and competent way through listening to and facilitating the child to tell about the problem, rather than interviewing the child about details of what happened.
- (b) Stay calm and do not show any extreme reaction to what the child is saying. Listen compassionately and take what the child is saying seriously.
- (c) Understand that the child has decided to tell something very important and has taken a risk to do so. The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation.
- (d) Be honest with the child and tell them that it is not possible to keep information a secret.
- (e) Make no judgmental statements against the person whom the allegation is made.
- (f) Do not question the child unless the nature of what s/he is saying is unclear. Leading questions should be avoided. Open, non-specific questions should be used such as "Can you explain to me what you meant by that".
- (g) Check out the concerns with the parents/guardians before making a report unless doing so would endanger the child or compromise an investigation (advice from Tusla, the child and family agency can be sought by the Designated Person in relation to this).
- (h) Give the child some indication of what will happen next, such as informing parents/guardians, Tusla or other relevant agencies. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.
- (i) Carefully record the details.
- (j) Pass on this information to your Designated Person (Pat Bradley).
- (k) Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.

Further information on Responding to a Disclosure of Abuse may be obtained in the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse.

Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse

The following steps should be taken in reporting child abuse to statutory authorities:

- (a) Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred, allegation made, report made or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.
- (b) Report the matter as soon as possible to the Designated liaison Person (Pat Bradley) with responsibility for reporting abuse.
- (c) If the Designated Person has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, s/he will make a report to Tusla or Gardai, that have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse.
- (d) The Designated Person shall also, in accordance with the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse, report such matters to the County Designated Person and The GAA's Mandated person.
- (e) In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Designated Person is unable to contact the relevant person in Tusla, the Gardaí should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the statutory authorities.
- (f) If the Designated Person is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist, s/he can informally consult with Tusla. He will be advised whether or not the matter requires a formal report. This report may be made on a standard Reporting Form.
- (g) If the Designated Person, having consulted with the statutory authorities, decides not to make a formal report to the statutory authorities, they are obliged to facilitate the person that may have made the allegation or report and in facilitating them should inform them as to how they may, if they so wish, make a report themselves.
- (h) The Designated Person is obliged to keep a record of all actions and decisions taken during the reporting process.

The Designated Person reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the statutory authorities will first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation (advice from should be sought in relation to this).

In the Republic of Ireland, The Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998 provides immunity from civil liability to persons who report child abuse ‘reasonably and in good faith’ to the relevant person and agency. The Act also covers the offence of ‘false reporting’.

The main provisions of the Act are:

1. The provision of immunity from civil liability to any person who reports child abuse ‘reasonably and in good faith’ to designated officers of Health Service Executive or any member of An Garda Síochána.
2. The provision of significant protections for employees who report child abuse. These protections cover all employees and all forms of discrimination up to and including dismissal.
3. The creation of an offence of false reporting of child abuse where a person makes a report of child abuse to the appropriate authorities “knowing that statement to be false”. This is a criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

Dealing with an Allegation against GAA Personnel

If the Designated Person has reasonable grounds for believing that a child has been or may be in danger of abuse they are obliged to report this matter to the statutory authorities and also to the GAA, through their County Designated Person or as deemed appropriate to the GAA’s mandated person in Croke Park. Should an allegation that merits reporting to the statutory authorities involve a person acting on behalf of the Association or a person associated with the GAA, this person shall be requested or instructed to step aside from their role(s) pending an investigation of the allegation. Failure to step aside may result in the removal of that person from their role(s) pending the outcome of the investigation by the statutory authorities or consideration of the matter by the GAA Child Welfare and Protection Committee.

This action does not conflict with the reporting of such concerns to the statutory authorities nor does it in any way impinge on a person’s individual rights as a member of the GAA.

Further information on **Reporting Suspected or Disclosed Child Abuse** may be obtained in the GAA Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse.

Categories of Abuse

Introduction

All Sports Leaders should be familiar with signs and behaviours that may be indicative of child abuse. Though a child may be subjected to more than one type of harm, abuse is normally categorised into four different types: neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse and sexual abuse. For detailed definitions of abuse, refer to *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (Department of Health and Children). The categories of abuse may be summarised as follows.

Child Neglect

Neglect is normally defined in terms of omission, where a child suffers significant harm of impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults or medical care. It may also include neglect of a child's basic emotional needs.

Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point. For instance, a child who suffers a series of minor injuries is not having his or her needs for supervision and safety met. The threshold of significant harm is reached when the child's needs are neglected to the extent that his or her wellbeing and/or development is severely affected.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between an adult and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. It is rarely manifested in terms of physical symptoms. For children with disabilities, it may include over protection or conversely failure to recognise or understand a child's disability.

Examples of emotional abuse include:

- (a) Persistent criticism, sarcasm, hostility or blaming
- (b) Where the level of care is conditional on his or her behaviour
- (c) Unresponsiveness, inconsistent or unrealistic expectations of a child
- (d) Premature imposition of responsibility on the child
- (e) Over and under protection of the child
- (f) Failure to provide opportunities for the child's education and development
- (g) Use of unrealistic or over-harsh disciplinary measures
- (h) Exposure to domestic violence; adult mental health problems and parental substance misuse may expose children to emotional abuse

Children show signs of emotional abuse by their behaviour, for example, excessive clinginess to or avoidance of the parent/guardian, their emotional state (low self-esteem, unhappiness) or their development (non-organic failure to thrive). The threshold of significant harm is reached when abusive interactions dominate and become typical of the relationship between the child and the parent/guardian.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury that causes significant harm to a child, including:

- (a) Shaking, hitting or throwing.
- (b) Use of excessive force in handling.
- (c) Deliberate poisoning.
- (d) Suffocation or drowning.
- (e) Munchausen's Syndrome by proxy (where parents/guardians fabricate stories of illness about their child or cause physical signs of illness).

- (f) Allowing or creating a substantial risk of significant harm to a child.
- (g) For children with disabilities, it may include confinement to a room or cot or incorrectly given drugs to control behaviour.
- (h) Burning or scalding.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

For example:

- (a) Exposure of the sexual organs or any sexual act intentionally performed in the presence of a child.
- (b) Intentional touching or molesting of the body of a child, whether by a person or object for the purpose of sexual arousal or gratification.
- (c) Masturbation in the presence of a child or involvement of the child in the act of masturbation.
- (d) Sexual intercourse with the child, whether oral, vaginal or anal.
- (e) Sexual exploitation of a child.

It may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at pornographic material or watching sexual activities or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Signs of Child Abuse

Signs of abuse can be physical, behavioural or developmental. A cluster or pattern of signs is the most reliable indicator of abuse. The following indicators should be noted. It is important, however, to realise that all of these indicators can occur in other situations where abuse has not been a factor and that the list is not exhaustive.

Physical Indicators

Unexplained bruising in soft tissue areas
 Repeated injury
 Black eye(s)

 Injuries to mouth
 Torn or bloodstained clothing
 Burns and scalds Bites
 Fractures
 Marks from implements
 Inconsistent stories, excuses relating to injuries

Behavioural Indicators

Unexplained changes in behaviour
 - becoming withdrawn or aggressive
 Regressive behaviour
 Difficulty in making friends
 Distrustful of adults or excessive attachment to adults
 Sudden drop in performance
 Change in attendance pattern
 Inappropriate sexual awareness, behaviour or language
 Unusual reluctance to remove clothing
 Reluctance to go home

Some facts about Abuse

- Abuse occurs across all social classes, education, professions and ethnic groups.
- Children and young people mostly know and trust their abuser.
- A child will rarely be moved from the home, it's usual to remove the abuser from the situation.
- Both boys and girls are abused.
- Disabled children are more vulnerable to abuse, less able to speak about it and more dependent on adults for their care.
- Both men and women abuse children and young people.
- Most cases of abuse do not go forward for criminal prosecution.

REFERENCES:

- GAA Code of behaviour underage
- Maintaining appropriate levels of behaviour in our work with children and young people
- GAA guidance for dealing with and reporting allegations or concerns of abuse (2020)
- Children first –National guidance for the protection and welfare of children (2017)
- Children first act 2105

