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Policy Statement

The Camogie Association is fully committed to safeguarding the well being of its members. Every individual in the association should at all times, show respect and understanding for members' rights, safety and welfare and conduct themselves in a way that reflects the principles of the Association and the guidelines contained in the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Sport for Young People.

In the Camogie Association our first priority is the welfare of the young people and we are committed to providing an environment which will allow participants to perform to the best of their ability, free from bullying and intimidation.

As part of our commitment we have adopted a code to protect our underage players (all players under 18 years of age), all leaders and members off the Camogie Association.

We shall ensure that the code of ethics and good practice for sport for young people in Camogie is adopted, agreed to, implemented and signed up to by all its members.

Core Values

The work of the Camogie Association is based on the following principles that will guide the development of our sport for young people. Young People's experience of sport should be guided by what is best for the young person. The stages of development and the ability of the young person should guide the types of activity provided within the association. Adults will need to have a basic understanding of the needs of young people, including physical, emotional and personal.

Integrity in relationships:

Adults interacting with young people in sport should do so with integrity and respect for the child. There is a danger that sporting contexts can be used to exploit or undermine children. All adult actions in sport should be guided by what is best for the child and in the context of quality, open working relationships. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind is unacceptable within Camogie.

Quality atmosphere and ethos:

Sport for young people should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. A child-centered ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.

Equality:

All children should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, sex, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. Children with disability should be involved in sports activities in an integrated way, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children.

Fair Play:

Fair play is the guiding principle of the Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young People in the Camogie Association. All children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. Ireland has contributed and is committed to the European Code of Sports Ethics, which defines fair play as: "much more than playing within the rules". It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing with the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption. (European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics, Council of Europe, 1993).

Competition:

A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of young people, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. However, often competitive demands are placed on children too early, which results in excessive levels of pressure on them. This can contribute to a high level of drop out from sport. Leaders should aim to put the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second. A child-centered approach will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.

Children's Officers

The appointment of Children's Officers is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere. They act as a resource with regard to children's issues.

Children's Officers should review current policies in relation to young people, check that all activities are safe and fun, and inform adults of how to deal with any concerns that may arise in relation to the protection of young people.

Each Club and County Board must appoint a Children's Officer. The Children's Officer is a full officer with voting rights.

All Children's Officers must be cleared by Garda Vetting / Access NI

Children's Officers should be child centered in focus and have as the primary aim the establishment of a child centered ethos within An Cumann Camógaíochta. She/he is the link between the children and the adults in the organization. She/he takes responsibility for implementing all aspects of An Cumann Camógaíochta's Code of Ethics and Best Practice for Children. She/he is the Designated Person responsible for reporting to the Statutory Authorities.

The Club Children's Officer should:

- Promote awareness of the Code of Ethics and Best Practice for Children within the club, among young members and their parents/guardians.
- Distribute copies of The Joint Code of Behaviour When Working with Young Players at club level.
- Identify the need for relevant Child Protection and Welfare training within the Club and any other appropriate training.
- Facilitate training in response to needs.
- Undertake the Garda Vetting process and Access NI checks within the club.
- Influence policy and practice within the club in order to prioritise children's and 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 can take to express concerns about their sports activities / experiences.
- Develop good practice procedures in the recruitment and selection of persons working with young people in the club.
- Monitor, in association with team coaches, any significant drop out rates, lack of attendance or club transfers of under age players and report accordingly to the Club Executive.
- Conduct an audit of best practice in child protection and welfare within the club and report accordingly.
- Ensure each member signs an annual membership form that includes signing up to the code of behaviour.
- Encourage the appropriate involvement of parents/guardians in the club activities.
- Facilitate parents' information sessions at the start of the season.
- Maintain on-going contact with the County Board Children's Officer and with other Club Children's Officers.
- Report regularly to the Club Executive.
- Deal with breaches of the code as per relevant guidelines

The County Children's Officer should:

- Be familiar with Children First and Our Duty to Care.
- Be committed to attend appropriate training as required in order to act as a resource to members in relation to children's needs.
- Facilitate An Cumann Camógaíochta's Garda Vetting process and Access NI checks within the county.
- Ensure that each club within the county appoints a Children's Officer.
- Liaise on a regular basis with Club Children's Officers.
- Ensure that all County Teams have adopted the Code of Ethics and Best Practice for Children.
- Ensure that all County Teams are aware of and have signed Travel Permission Forms and Overnight Permission Forms where relevant
- Ensure that all complaints or suspected child abuse cases are dealt with in accordance with The Code of Ethics and Best Practice for Children.
- Co-ordinate Irish Sports Council Basic Awareness and Children's Officer Courses within the county.
- Report regularly to the County Board Executive.

Mobile Phone

Mobile phones are often given to young people for security, enabling parents to keep in touch and make sure they are safe. Young people value their phones highly as it offers them a sense of independence. In addition mobile phones allow quick and easy contact, which can make a safe and efficient way to carry out club business. However such technology has also allowed an increase in direct personal contact with young people, in some cases used to cross personal boundaries and cause harm to young people. Within clubs there is a need to encourage responsible and secure use of mobile phones by adults and young people. With this in mind the following guidelines for the use of mobile phones has been put in place.

As a young person remember:

- If you receive an offensive photo, email or message, do not reply, save it, make a note of times and dates and tell a parent or children's officer within the club.
- Be careful about who you give your phone number to and don't respond to unfamiliar numbers.
- Change your phone number in cases of bullying or harassment.
- Don't use the phone in certain locations, e.g. changing rooms; inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person.
- Treat your phone as you would any other valuable item so that you guard against theft.

As a Coach / Mentor remember:

- All mobile phone and email communication with underage members must be sent to their parents only.
- All mobile phone / email communication with members over 16 and under 18 must be sent to parents, unless otherwise indicated by parent/guardian in writing to club.
- It is not appropriate to have constant communication with individual players.
- Coaches / mentors should never engage with underage players via social networking sites.
- Don't use the phone in certain locations, e.g. changing rooms; inappropriate use of your camera phone may cause upset or offence to another person.

Photographic Guidelines

An Cumann Camógaíochta has adopted a policy in relation to the use of images of players on their websites and in other publications as there have been concerns about the risks posed directly and indirectly to children and young people through the use of photographs on sports websites and other publications. Remember having photographic and filming guidelines is not about preventing parents from taking pictures, it is to ensure that only those who have a right to take photographs do so. The purpose is to reduce the risk of inappropriate, unsolicited attention from people within and outside the sport. Group photographs where the club is identified rather than individuals are good for publicity without creating a risk to those in the photographs.

Rules to guide use of photography:

- Ask for the player's and parental permission to use their image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport.
- Try to avoid the use of the first name and surname of individuals in a photograph.
- Only use images of players in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child
- Where possible try to use models or illustrations when promoting an activity
- The inappropriate use of images of players should be reported to reduce the risks to players. Follow the child protection procedures, ensuring either the Children's Officer or, if necessary, the statutory authorities are informed.
- Photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek accreditation from the children's officer and / or leader at session. Where possible their professional identification should be sought and a record made.
- When commissioning professional photographers or inviting the press to a game or session ensure that they are clear about our expectations of them in relation to child protection.

Video as a coaching aid: Video equipment can be used as a legitimate coaching aid. However, permission should first be obtained from the player and the player's parent/guardian

Anyone concerned about any photography taking place at events or training sessions can contact the children's officer in relation to the matter.

Transport Guidelines:

Adequate and safe transport arrangements have always been a central element of trips taken by all teams and particularly by underage teams. These safe travel arrangements apply regardless of the length of journey or indeed the mode of transport availed of, whether it is public, private or personal transport and is a matter of key good practice for Clubs, parents and for young people themselves. While it may be preferential to avail of private bus or coach transport it is also recognised that in many instances this may not be feasible and certain teams or clubs could not operate without the goodwill of volunteers and parents who personally ensure that children are transported to an event or match and are returned safely.

We recognise that private cars are used by many Clubs and teams when transporting children to away games which take place as part of a County fixtures' schedule or as part of inter club blitzes or challenge matches. It is however advisable not to use members' cars when travelling on away trips of great distances. In such circumstances Clubs are advised if possible to avail of bus or coach transport and it is essential therefore that all aspects of the transport arrangements are checked out and agreed in advance. The safety and welfare of children should be considered a priority at all times, regardless of cost.

The following should be considered:

- All vehicles should be well-maintained and roadworthy and should be properly taxed and insured.
- Transport should be fully accessible for people with disabilities whether they are members of the group or for others who may accompany them.
- Alternative access to transport should be available in case of emergency.
- Vehicles should be equipped with a First Aid kit and a fire extinguisher and leaders of the group should be familiar with how to use them.
- When hiring a vehicle information should be sought as to the company's reputation and reliability.

During the trip

- Ensure that passengers remain safely seated at all times.
- Seat belts must be worn at all times.
- It is essential that at least one individual with first aid qualifications be part of your organising group and that this individual be present or available throughout the trip.
- Young people must be adequately supervised throughout the trip as per our recommended ratios of adults to young people. This ratio may differ depending on the age group of participants, the activities to be undertaken, whether there is an overnight stay, if the trip is abroad etc.
- A generally acceptable ratio of 1:8, i.e. one adult per eight young people, is deemed in most instances to be a normal sports activity ratio.*
- Organisers of club trips should always be mindful of ensuring that additional adults accompany their group in case of emergencies or unforeseen circumstances.*
- There must be at least two adults with any group, one of which must be a female leader.*
- Adults are required to be familiar with the agreed rules on smoking and on the consumption of alcohol during the trip, as outlined in the Joint Code of Behaviour. As a basic minimum, adults are required to avoid smoking while working with young players and must not consume alcohol or non prescribed drugs while young players are in their care.

**Refer to Supervision Guidelines for more detailed advice.*

Guidelines for Supervision of Camogie Teams.

- Make sure there is an adequate adult: child ratio. This will depend on the nature of the activity, the age of the participants and any special needs of the group. A minimum ratio of 1:8 for under 12 years of age and 1:10 for participants over 12 years of age would be recommended. This is only a guide and will change depending on the circumstances, e.g. players with special needs, very young players or on away trips.
- Avoid being alone with one player, if you need to talk to an individual do so in an open environment, in view of others.
- Every team must have at least one adult female leader present during all activities. Therefore when travelling to matches or on away trips there must be at least two adult female leaders travelling with each group in case of emergencies or unforeseen circumstances.
- In changing rooms, where possible ask parents to take responsibility and supervise in pairs of appropriate gender.
- Clearly state time for start and end of training sessions or competitions, leaders should remain in pairs until all players have been collected.
- Keep attendance records and record any incidents / injuries that arise.

Recruitment Procedure

- An Cumann Camógaíochta will take all reasonable steps to ensure that leaders working with young people are suitable and appropriately qualified.
- Leaders will be expected to go through appropriate recruitment and selection procedures that apply to all persons with substantial access to young people, whether paid or unpaid.
- The responsibilities of the role and the level of experience/qualifications required should be drawn up and clearly stated beforehand.
- New Leaders should fill in an application form, giving names of two referees that can be contacted. Where possible all new leaders should be interviewed.
- New Leaders must be checked by An Cumann Camógaíochta's Garda Vetting Service.
- A probationary period is advisable, during which the leader is always supervised.
- There will be a "sign-up" procedure, whereby the appointed / reappointed leader, agrees to abide by the *Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Young People in An Cumann Camógaíochta* (see relevant section for sample forms).
- No exception should be made in relation to appropriate recruitment procedures.
- Every effort should be made to manage and support appointed Leaders. Adequate supervision should always be provided; a leader should not have to work alone.
- A decision to appoint a Leader is the responsibility of the relevant unit and not of any one individual within it. The unit committee should ratify all recommendations for appointment.
- All forms should be filed as a matter of record by the relevant unit.

Complaints and Appeals Procedure*

- Complaints relating to alleged breaches of the Code of Ethics and Best Practice should be lodged with relevant Children's Officer.
- The complaint should outline all relevant details.
- If the complaint involves a Child Protection Concern or a criminal offence refer to Child Protection Section of the Code of Ethics and Best Practice for procedure.
- Minor breaches of the Code of Ethics and Best Practice may be dealt with by the relevant Children's Officer.
- For more serious breaches of The Code of Ethics and Best Practice the complaint should be brought to the attention of the cathaoirleach of the relevant body who will convene a disciplinary committee, which should comprise a senior officer, the children's officer and one other ordinary member.
- The disciplinary committee should hear the case of all parties involved.
- If the complaint involves an alleged breach of An Treoraí Oifigiúil it must be referred to the appropriate committee in charge.
- For breaches pertaining to The Code of Ethics and Best Practice the disciplinary committee should determine the appropriate sanction, if any.
- They should, in writing, inform those involved of the sanctions to be imposed. Written notification should be given to parents/guardians if the complaint involves a child.
- Written records of all complaints, procedures and outcomes should be safely and confidentially kept by the Children's Officer.
- If any party does not agree with the disciplinary committee they can appeal the decision in writing within 10 days of the date on written outcome.
- The appeals committee is convened, whose cathaoirleach should be taken from the relevant executive committee and those who have not been on the original disciplinary committee.
- The appeals committee may confirm or set aside or change any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee.
- If any party is not satisfied with the outcome the matter may be referred to Ardcomhairle. However efforts to resolve the issue at local level should be exhausted before Ardcomhairle is engaged in attempts to resolve the matter.

**See also section of Code of Behaviour dealing with Alleged Breaches of the Code for more detailed guidelines*

Child Welfare and Protection

An Cumann Camógaíochta accepts that organizations, which include young people among its members, are vulnerable to the occurrence of child abuse. Below are the procedures for dealing with any welfare or protection issue that may arise. Child welfare and the protection of young people are the concern of all adults at all times, irrespective of their role within the organization.

If there are grounds for concern about the safety or welfare of a young person you must react to the concern.

The following examples would constitute reasonable grounds for concern:

- (i) specific indication from the child that (s)he was abused;
- (ii) an account by a person who saw the child being abused;
- (iii) evidence, such as an injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused another way;
- (iv) an injury or behaviour which is consistent both with abuse and with an innocent explanation but where there are corroborative indicators supporting the concern that it may be a case of abuse. An example of this would be a pattern of injuries, an implausible explanation, other indications of abuse, dysfunctional behaviour;
- (v) consistent indication, over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect.

Any child welfare concern or allegation of abuse should be passed on to the person in club/county designated to report to Statutory Authorities who may or may not be the Children's Officer. He/she should in turn pass the concern to the local Statutory Authorities with responsibility for Child Welfare and Protection. He/she may if unsure seek advice from the local HSE/Social Services or the County Children's Officer.

It is not the responsibility of anyone working within An Cumann Camógaíochta, in a paid or voluntary capacity, or those working in affiliated organisations, to take responsibility or decide whether or not child abuse is taking place. That is the job of the local statutory authorities. However, there is a responsibility to protect children by assisting the appropriate agencies so that they can then make enquiries and take any necessary action to protect the young person.

Everyone should follow Cumann Camógaíochta's reporting procedures as outlined. These include the procedure for responding to a child in distress, secondly the procedure for reporting the concern and the procedure to follow in the case of an internal allegation of abuse.

Response to a Disclosure or Allegation of Abuse

- (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 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.
- (d) The experience of telling should be a positive one so that the child will not mind talking to those involved in the investigation.
- (e) Be honest with the child and tell them that it is not possible to keep the information a secret.
- (f) Make no judgmental statements against the person whom the allegation is made.
- (g) 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 mean by that".
- (h) Check out the concerns with the parents/guardians before making a report unless doing so would endanger the child.
- (i) Give the child some indication of what would happen next, such as informing parents/guardians, HSE or social services. It should be kept in mind that the child may have been threatened and may feel vulnerable at this stage.
- (j) Carefully record the details.
- (k) Pass on this information to the relevant Children's Officer.
- (l) Reassure the child that they have done the right thing in telling you.

Reporting Procedures

The following steps should be taken in reporting a concern or an alleged incident of child abuse to the statutory authorities:

- (a) Observe and note dates, times, locations and contexts in which the incident occurred or suspicion was aroused, together with any other relevant information.
- (b) Report the matter as soon as possible to the Designated Person with responsibility for reporting abuse eg the Children's Officer. If the Children's Officer has reasonable grounds for believing that the child has been abused or is at risk of abuse, s/he will make a report to the health service executive/social services or Gardai/PSNI who have statutory responsibility to investigate and assess suspected or actual child abuse.
- (c) In cases of emergency, where a child appears to be at immediate and serious risk and the Children's Officer is unable to contact a duty social worker, the Garda Síochána/PSNI should be contacted. Under no circumstances should a child be left in a dangerous situation pending intervention by the Statutory Authorities.
- (d) If the Club Children's Officer is unsure whether reasonable grounds for concern exist she/he can informally consult with the local hse/social services or the County Children's Officer.
- (e) If the Children's Officer, having consulted with the statutory authorities decides not to make a formal report s/he should inform the person making the original report of the decision.
- (f) The Children's Officer should keep a record of all actions, decisions taken during the process.
- (g) A Children's Officer reporting suspected or actual child abuse to the Statutory Authorities should first inform the family of their intention to make such a report, unless doing so would endanger the child or undermine an investigation.

Allegations Internal to An Cumann Camógaíochta

An Cumann Camógaíochta has agreed procedures to be followed in cases of alleged child abuse against Camogie Personnel. If such an allegation is made against a coach/mentor working within the club, or any member of a club two procedures must be followed.

1. The reporting procedure in respect of a concern or an alleged incident of child abuse, as undertaken by the Children's officer.
 2. The procedure for dealing with the coach/mentor/member outlined below.
- The safety of the child making the allegation should be considered and the safety of any other children who may be at risk.
 - The club/county should take any steps necessary to protect children in its care.
 - The issue of confidentiality is important. Information is on a need to know basis and the /member should be treated with respect and fairness.

Internal Procedure

If after consultation with the Statutory Authorities or County Children's Officer the Club Children's Officer feels there are no grounds for concern the details must be recorded, decision passed to person making original complaint and to the National Children's Officer. The situation should continue to be monitored.

If having assessed the situation the Children's Officer believes that reasonable grounds exist the Children's Officer makes the report to the Statutory Authorities, and having received advice from the Statutory Authority shall with the cathaoirleach of the club, (a senior officer, or a person not already involved with the child protection concern), deal with the member in question.

- The cathaoirleach should inform the member that;
 - (a) an allegation has been made against him/her and
 - (b) the nature of the allegation.
- He/she should be afforded an opportunity to respond.
- His/her response should be noted and passed on to the Statutory Authorities.
- The member should be asked to step aside pending the outcome of the investigation. When a person is asked to step aside it should be made clear that it is only a precautionary measure and will not prejudice any later disciplinary proceedings.
- The Ardstiúrthóir and/or the National Children's Officer should be informed by the local Children's Officer that the leader has been asked to stand aside.

An Cumann Camógaíochta can consider disciplinary action on the member but should ensure that this does not interfere with the investigation of the Statutory Authorities. It is important that they consider the outcome of the investigation and any implications it might have. The fact that the alleged abuser has not been prosecuted or been found guilty does not mean that they are appropriate to work with young people in the future.

Protection for Persons Reporting

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 Health Board or the Gardai. 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 Boards 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 a new 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 new criminal offence designed to protect innocent persons from malicious reports.

This law does not exist in Northern Ireland, but an individual who reports concerns in 'good faith' is not deliberately attempting to slander another person's name. In Northern Ireland there is legislation, the Criminal Law Act (NI) 1967 which places the responsibility on everyone to report offences or to forward information to the police by emphasizing the, 'duty of every other person, who knows or believes,

- (a) that the offence or some other arrestable offences has been committed: and
- (b) that he has information which is likely to secure, or to be material assistance in securing, the apprehension, prosecution or conviction of any person for that offence'

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be maintained in respect of all issues and people involved in cases of abuse, welfare or bad practice. It is important that the rights of both the child and the person about whom the complaint has been made are protected.

The following points should be kept in mind:

- A guarantee of confidentiality or undertakings regarding secrecy cannot be given, as the welfare of the child will supersede all other considerations.
- All information should be treated in a careful and sensitive manner and should be discussed only with those who need to know.
- Information should be conveyed to the parents / guardians of the child in a sensitive way.
- Giving information to others on a 'need to know' basis for the protection of a child is not a breach of confidentiality. Reporting a concern or an allegation to the Children's Officer in line with these procedures is not a breach of confidentiality.
- All persons involved in a child protection process (the child, his/her parents/guardians, the alleged offender, his/her family, Leaders) 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 to designated people.
- Breach of confidentiality is a serious matter and shall be dealt with accordingly.

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/children is paramount. Any such complaints relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Children's Officer. The information should be checked out and handled in a confidential manner.

Rumours

Rumours should not be allowed to hang in the air. Any rumours relating to inappropriate behaviour should be brought to the attention of the Children's Officer, and checked out without delay