

10 Recruitment and Selection of persons working with children and young people in the GAA

The GAA, as Ireland's leading sporting organisation, is steeped in the tradition of voluntarism and this is most apparent by the manner in which parents, former players and other adults give their time freely so as to encourage and assist our younger players who wish to participate in our Games and other related activities.

Adult-child sporting relationship

From their early years to their late teens young people can gain from the knowledge, experience and skills that adults bring to coaching sessions and games. The philosophy that the GAA has adopted in promoting and developing our Games (See Section 4) states that the greater the sense of achievement, fun and fair play experienced by young players, the more they enjoy their involvement and the greater the effort they themselves will make to excel.

For more than 125 years, since the foundation of the GAA, adults have promoted our Gaelic Games among our younger population in a well motivated



and committed manner. This is still the case and in these changing times the GAA has a responsibility to young people and to their parents and guardians to ensure that those that work with children and young people, on behalf of the GAA, are selected in a careful, sensible and effective manner.

This unique bond in sport is based on a trusting and mutually respectful relationship and can be enhanced by the recruitment, selection and up-skilling of adults who are suitable to such roles. The role of the adult may vary from team to team and from age group to age group. It is however essential that regardless of their role that adults are fully aware at the outset as to what is expected of them, what supports they will receive and the levels of responsibility, that they themselves have on behalf of the Association and on behalf of their team, the club, the parents and the young people in their care.

This we can achieve by adopting good practice procedures when recruiting our managers, coaches and other personnel who work with children and young people in the GAA.

The GAA relies on the time commitment of adults to our youth structures and is greatly indebted to those that give freely of their time on behalf of the Association. The following recruitment and selection guidelines are put in place to ensure that these adult roles are seen as a positive contribution to the development of young players, regardless of age, and that the GAA adheres to the best possible standards when recruiting persons to work with young people on our behalf at Club, County, Provincial and National level.

GAA personnel who work with children, young people or vulnerable adults should have appropriate child awareness training and be vetted through the

Garda Vetting Unit which is co-ordinated by County Boards via the National Children's Office in Croke Park. Similarly Ulster GAA co-ordinate the vetting for AccessNI applicants.

Recruitment of adults to work with children/young people in the GAA

It is essential that all adults taking responsibility for young people, whether in a paid or unpaid capacity, in the Club or elsewhere in the Association should undergo a recruitment and selection process. The recruitment of adults to work with under age teams should be co-ordinated by a senior and experienced member of the club and should be done in a confidential manner.

The following procedures will assist clubs when choosing to place coaches and other personnel in the position to which they are best suited.

Role clarification

The role envisaged e.g. manager, coach, etc. should be clearly stated. The responsibilities relating to the role and the level of experience or qualifications required should be clarified at the outset.

Role assistance

The various supports available via the club, e.g. Foundation Level Coaching that would be of assistance to the adult should be made known and if deemed appropriate should be offered to the adult as they are recruited.

Application form

Applicants should complete an application form prior to commencing their role in the GAA (see Appendix 5).

References

As part of the recruitment process references should be sought from applicants. These may refer to the person's character and if applicable to the applicants previous background in sports and in Gaelic Games. All references should be verified by the club.

Vetting and AccessNI checks

All applicants will be required to complete Garda Vetting and/or AccessNI checks, as appropriate, prior to the commencement of their role(s) with young people in the Association.

Meet the applicant

A senior representative of the club should meet with each applicant to ensure that they are aware of the role(s) allocated to them and they may use the occasion to clarify any issues that may arise and identify any coaching or up-skilling needs as appropriate.

GAA Code of Behaviour for all Persons Working with Young People

All persons who work with young people in the GAA will be required to sign the GAA Code of Behaviour. This declaration should be retained by the club in respect of everybody working with under age personnel, regardless of their role.

Support and Review

Continuous supports should be made available to all coaches etc so as to enable them fulfil their roles as requested. The role of the Club 'Coiste na nÓg' and of the Club Children's Officer may be invaluable in identifying such supports. The Club should review the role of all under age personnel on an annual basis.

Garda Vetting and AccessNI checks

The GAA administers the Garda Vetting and AccessNI checks of all persons who on behalf of the Association work in any capacity with children, young people and vulnerable adults. This service is but one part of the overall recommended GAA recruitment and selection procedures for those who on our behalf work in areas of responsibility with children and young people, or who may do at a later stage.

Garda vetting, which is the pre-checking of an applicant's background for criminal convictions or prosecutions is recommended by the Irish Sports

Council, by Sports NI in Northern Ireland and as part of Children First - the National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

The GAA and Garda Vetting

It is no longer possible or permissible for an individual to have a vetting application processed for themselves. Vetting applications will only be accepted from organisations that have been so recognised by the Garda Central Vetting Unit (GCVU). The GAA is an organisation recognised by the GCVU to process vetting on behalf of our members and a number of Authorised Signatories have been selected by the GAA to fulfil this role.

The GAA has agreed to the implementation of vetting of all persons who on behalf of the Association work in any capacity with children, young people and vulnerable adults in the delivery of our games or activities. In effect this means that any person working on behalf of the Association or on behalf of any of our clubs with people under the age of 18 years of age will be required to be vetted. Vetting via the Garda Vetting Unit is outlined below while vetting via AccessNI and for Ulster GAA is outlined on page 34.

How can a member of the GAA avail of Garda vetting?

- Step 1:** A vetting applicant, i.e. an under age coach, mentor, manager etc. will receive a GAA Vetting Application Form from the Club's Children's Officer or from a nominated person in their club. This form has to be completed in full by the applicant and collected locally (in the club) or forwarded directly to a nominated person who will collate these forms at County level.
- Step 2:** Forms are forwarded to the County Board nominated Garda Vetting Co-Ordinator who will only check forms for accuracy and will return incorrectly forms to applicants. The County Board nominated person will

also record the name and address of each applicant on a 'batch form' and send this electronically to the National Children's Officer in Croke Park.

- Step 3:** All forms are sent by secure post to the National Children's Officer, GAA, Croke Park, Dublin 3. All forms must be sent to the National Children's Officer (NCO) in Croke Park for processing and not to An Garda Síochána.

The National Children's Officer will then process all correctly completed forms with the GCVU. Processed forms will on their return contain a statement that there are no convictions recorded against the individual in the Republic of Ireland or elsewhere, or a statement of all convictions and/or prosecutions, successful or not, pending or completed, in the State or elsewhere as the case may be.

In most instances it is convictions and/or prosecutions of a most serious nature and particularly against children/minors that MAY deem a person unsuitable to work with children in the GAA.

Please note that a stated conviction or unsuccessful prosecution MAY have NO bearing whatsoever on the acceptance of an individual in the Association and it is recommend that all cases be treated individually and confidentially and that they be assessed as per the requirements of the post/role and the work that it entails.

- Step 4:** Following the processing of the vetting form it is the GAA National Children's Officer who will inform each applicant individually by letter if their application is or is not being recommended for acceptance.
- Step 5:** If the recommendation is positive the applicant will receive a letter confirming this and requesting them to furnish their club with the letter of acceptance.

Step 6: If the recommendation is negative and if the applicant is not being recommended for acceptance a letter informing them of this decision will be sent to them by the GAA National Children's Officer. The applicant will be afforded an opportunity to appeal this decision within 14 days and the process of appeal will be outlined to the applicant. A specially appointed Appeals Group will hear this appeal and will issue their findings directly to the applicant.

Step 7: If the Appeals Committee recommends acceptance of the vetting application Step 5 comes into operation.

Step 8: If the Appeals Committee upholds the recommendation of rejection the applicant and their club will be duly informed. Over a period of time all persons who on behalf of the GAA work in any capacity with children and young people will have furnished their club with a Garda Vetting letter of acceptance. The absence of such a letter will deem a person ineligible to work in such a capacity.

The GAA central data base will retain the vetting application outcomes. Clubs will be

issued with a list of persons who receive the Garda Vetting 'letter of acceptance' from the National Children's Officer.

Protocol on Vetting Application Outcomes

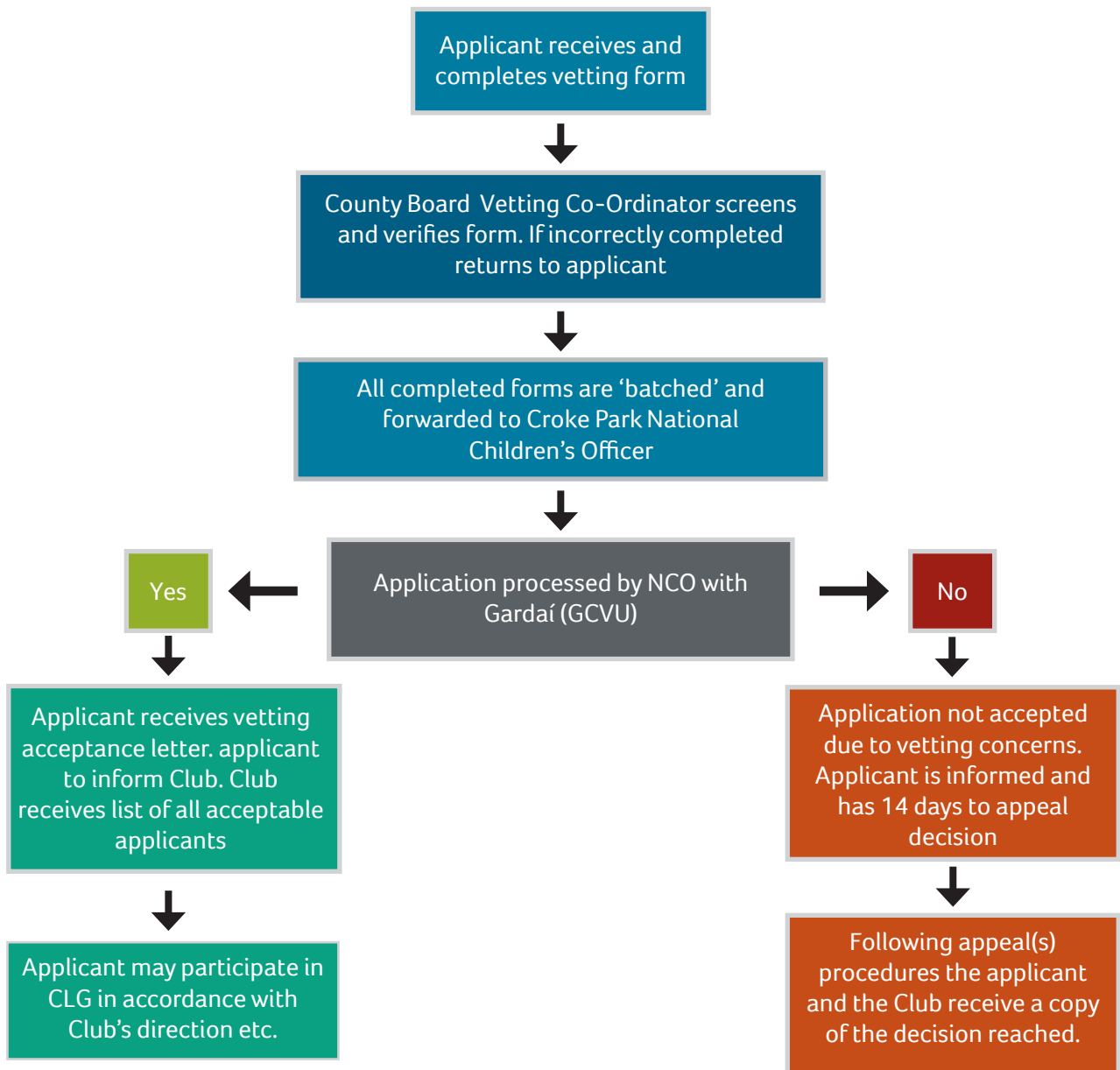
There are established procedures in place to conduct vetting of all persons who work in any capacity with children, young people and vulnerable adults in the delivery of our games and activities.

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael recognises that there is a standardised vetting system operated by Ladies Gaelic Football, Cumann Camógaíochta na nGael, Irish Handball Council and The Rounders Council of Ireland, which functions for the purpose of determining the suitability of personnel to deliver our games and activities in settings which may facilitate unsupervised access to children and/or vulnerable adults, within each of the above bodies.

The status and validity of decisions reached in each body in respect of the suitability of an individual for a position within it is acknowledged and accepted by each other body.



Outline of Garda Vetting in the Gaelic Athletic Association



How can a member of the GAA avail of vetting through Ulster GAA?

In the first instance the vetting applicant should contact their Club/County Secretary, Children's Officer as appropriate. The Club/County Secretary, Children's Officer should then make direct contact with the Ulster GAA Children's Officer who will advise the process for how they can take forward the vetting application either through Garda vetting or AccessNI.

The GAA is a registered body with the Garda Central Vetting Unit and as a result of such recognition the Association was allocated a number of Authorised Signatories to administer vetting within the Association. Ulster GAA has been allocated one of these Authorised Signatories and as such administers Garda vetting in Ulster.

Ulster GAA is also a registered Umbrella Body with AccessNI. to carry out similar vetting checks as part of the AccessNI service through a heads of agreement with, all County Boards, Clubs, Ulster Camogie and other affiliated bodies.

The GAA and AccessNI vetting

AccessNI is the statutory body established to carry out vetting checks on people who as part of their employment or volunteer involvement have access to a child.

An Umbrella Body is an organisation which has registered with AccessNI to make applications for vetting checks (Standard or Enhanced Disclosures) on behalf of other organisations or individuals.

As part of the GAA Code of Best Practice in relation to child protection and to comply with current child protection, all personnel working with children, young people or vulnerable adults within the Province must be vetted.

In order to comply with legislation under The Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order

2003, Ulster GAA has since 1st April 2004 ensured that relevant checks were carried out through the POCVA system. These checks are now carried out by AccessNI or the Garda Vetting Unit as appropriate so as to ensure that individuals who work in any capacity on behalf of the Association and who might pose a threat or risk to children and/or vulnerable adults are not being used as coaches, mentors or external tutors, team managers, assistants, or work in any other capacity on behalf of the Association.

These checks will inform us

- If the applicant has a criminal record;
- If their name is included on the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) Disqualification from Working with Children List
- If they are included on the Department of Education (DE) List and/or the DHSSPS Disqualified from Working with Vulnerable Adults List

Any information received will be treated confidentially and is subject to the Data Protection Act. Should it be necessary to meet or speak with the applicant regarding any information received this will be done without delay.

Outline of AccessNI Vetting in the Gaelic Athletic Association

