

## 4 Young People and the Playing of our Games



This section of the Code of Best Practice is core to the basic principles of ensuring that those that play and participate in our Gaelic Games do so in a meaningful, participative and developmental manner. This aim applies to all of our members, none more so than our under age players, regardless of their age or ability.

### Mission Statement

The GAA is committed to implementing an integrated Games Development Strategy with a view to maximising participation, optimising playing standards and ensuring that Players' needs are catered for in a balanced and holistic way. The Grassroots to National Programme outlines a series of Games Opportunities and Skill Development Activities which are primed to ensure that young people Play and Stay with the GAA.

### Our Philosophy

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 will make to excel.

### Respect

Respect is an integral part of the Grassroots to National Programme. It is an essential element in

terms of recruiting and retaining young players in Gaelic Games with specific regard to the Young Player's right to participation and fair play etc. Young Players also have responsibilities, both to their Coaches, Rules and to Referees and to Match Officials.

We believe that Respect is about Rights, Recruitment, Retainment, Rules, Referees and Responsibilities.

The following underpins our philosophy about Playing our Games with our under age players.

### Play and Stay with the GAA



**Rights**

Every Child has the right to an environment that supports and promotes learning and enjoyment. An environment that is conducive to the recruitment and retention of players will by implication be inclusive, safe and supportive.

**Recruitment**

The GAA is committed to providing an inclusive environment within which all young players may participate and enjoy Gaelic Games.

As an Association that seeks to fulfil our obligations relating to the welfare of all of our members we are committed to recruiting volunteer coaches, administrators and referees that respect the rights of all Young Players. (See Section 10 Recruitment and Selection of persons working with children and young people in the GAA).

**Retain**

Through specific and targeted training and support services the GAA will assist our coaches, administrators and referees as they promote the playing of our Games and the co-ordinating of skills development, particularly among young players. This in turn will support the retention of all players.

**Rules**

The Rules are there to explain how the games of hurling and football are played and to perpetuate the following underlying principles of fair play.

- Rules should ensure that the games are played in a spirit of true sportsmanship and with total respect for match officials.
- Rules enhance the prevailing level of skill and reward players who make the ball the focal point of their attention.
- Rules make provision for physical contact while minimising the potential for injury and cynicism.
- Rules ensure that all players take responsibility for their own behaviour and that sanctions are imposed on a proportionate and transparent basis.

**Referees**

The standard of our games depends on the quality of our referees. The essential roles, responsibilities and privileges of a Referee are:

- To apply the rules impartially and consistently in order to create the conditions for our Games to be played well.

**Proper application of the rules enables our Referees to:**

- Fulfil their responsibilities and in doing so to protect, preserve and promote our Games.
- Creates the conditions for hurlers and footballers to play with confidence.
- Be constructive, positive and caring.
- Oversee the conditions whereby our Games can be played with skill, courage, commitment, genius, flair, strength and legitimate aggression.

**Responsibilities**

With rights there come responsibilities. Respect requires the acceptance and fulfilment of all of our responsibilities as Players, Coaches, Administrators, Referees and Parents.

**Pathways**

The GAA Grassroots to National Programme (GNP) is informed by an understanding of the stages of development of all players. The GNP outlines games and skill development activities that are appropriate to each particular stage of development and gives practical and true expression to the Code of Best Practice.

In this regard we have particular regard for the differences in the physical, emotional, and social capacities of children, youths and adults.

**Go Games**

The Go Games programme gives practical expression to the motivational forces that drive participation and derive from it a Fun Do, Can Do, Want To, Will Do, We

Do experience for young people and in doing so will ensure that participants “Play and Stay with the GAA”.

- Go Games optimise enjoyment on the basis that the playing environment is child-centred, game-based, values-driven, achievement-oriented and volunteer-led.
- Go Games build competency levels by assisting and challenging players, up to the age of 12 yrs. of age to master the basic skills of Hurling & Football in game situations where they are not pressurised into thinking that they “have to win”.
- Go Games encourage children to achieve their full potential and in conjunction with the GAA Respect initiative are provided with unconditional support in pursuit of this objective.
- Players (representing a club, school or community based team) are deemed to participate in the Go Games Programme when they take part in a total of 5 blitzes a year.
- Go Games organise blitzes on a small-sided, recreational basis where all players get to play for the full duration of each game where no provision is made for league tables or finals etc.

### SuperTouch

Underpinned by a player-centred, game-based, values-driven, achievement-oriented and volunteer led approach, Super Touch aims to maximise competitive outlets – in hurling and football – for those between age 13 and 18 years of age.

- Super Touch optimises health and well being and provides space for teenagers to take on increased responsibility.
- Enhances their level of self-reliance/resilience and contributes to their growing sense of independence.
- Inspires them to excel and to value the importance of discipline, goal setting, collaboration and team work.
- Players (representing a club, school or community based team) are deemed to participate in the Super Touch Programme when they take part in a total of 5 blitzes a year.
- Blitzes are organised on a small-sided, competitive basis.
- Interchange system is used to maximise the level of player involvement.



### Cúl Camps

- Cúl Camps provides participants, between the ages of 7 and 13 years of age with an action-packed and fun-filled week of activity during the Summer holidays which revolves around maximising enjoyment and sustaining the future involvement of participants in Gaelic Games.
- Activities are game-based with a strong emphasis placed on skill acquisition and all Camps are organised in an age appropriate manner with a view to:
  - optimising learning and enjoyment
  - enhancing friendships
  - improving physical & psychological wellbeing
  - promoting school and club links

### U-Can Skill Awards

- Provide a basis for encouraging and motivating children to commit to mastering the basic skills of Hurling & Football.
- Skill challenges are set out in a sequential and developmental basis i.e. they become more difficult as children grow and mature.
- The 5 levels of award, with gold, silver & bronze status at each level, serve to reflect the extent to which players achieve bilateral coordination, i.e. are able to perform the underlying skills on the left and right hand side of the body.

### Schools of Excellence (U14/U15)

- The Schools of Excellence system provides talented players with 8 quality coaching sessions and the opportunity to represent their region/county as part of an overall GAA Coaching Academy.
- The Schools of Excellence may be organised on a regional/divisional or county basis depending on the size of the unit concerned and the relative strength of the game.

### Development Squads (U16/U17)

- This Development Squad system provides talented players with 8 quality coaching sessions

and the opportunity to represent their region/county as part of an overall GAA Academy.

- Players are selected on a more exclusive basis i.e. ability, commitment and/or improvement (late developers) etc
- Squads may be organised on a regional/divisional, county or cross-county basis depending on the size of the unit concerned and the relative strength of the game,

## Coaching

Coaching is informed by the OTú Coaching Model.

Our OTú Coaches build competence and cohesion by assisting/challenging players to deliver on their full potential - as espoused in the OTú Coaching Model.

### OTú

The term OTú – the O as in oxygen and Tú, the Irish for you – has its origins in the fact that the drive to excel is fuelled primarily from within and flourishes in a system where all elements are aligned and combined in terms of transforming key objectives into quality outcomes. “Ní neart go cur le chéile – There is no strength without working together”.

### GAA OTú Coaching Model

The GAA Céim Ar Aghaidh Resource Pack uses Gaelic Games as a medium to deliver an exciting range of learning activities to support the Primary School Curriculum at Senior (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> Classes), Middle Cycle (3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup> Classes) and Junior Cycle (1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Classes).

This Pack can also be used to support teaching in all subject areas and the exercises can be adapted to suit children of varying abilities through a variety of tasks.

The GAA Céim Ar Aghaidh/Step Ahead and Fun Do Learning Resource Packs combine to provide a comprehensive package in terms of the provision of total learning support for field and classroom based activities which also reflect best practice in terms of the educational principles set out in the Primary School Curriculum.