

# **Cumann Luthchleas Gael Cealltrach**

## **Code of Best Practice for all Juvenile Players, Their Parents, Mentors and Coaches**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Cumann Luthchleas Gael Cealltrach values all young players and strives to ensure that they are always treated with the highest level of respect. Their personal dignity and physical integrity are paramount and participation in our club should enable them to have fun, make friends and become better players.

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Cealltrach believes that a youth centred approach should be adopted by everyone involved in the promotion and development of Gaelic games at underage level. The GAA Coaching resources and activity programmes are firmly rooted in this philosophy and highlight the importance of participation, enjoyment and equality. These are also structured to assist young people to value discipline and to strive to achieve their full potential as they mature and develop.

### **PUTTING “FAIR PLAY” INTO PERSPECTIVE**

**FAIR PLAY** – ‘fir fer / cothrom na feinne’ has long been associated with the Celts. It is defined as a way of thinking, not just of behaving. It incorporates issues such as:

- elimination of cheating e.g. not playing overage players/making biased decisions when officiating
- gamesmanship e.g. playing for frees/time wasting etc.
- intimidation/ foul play (both physical & verbal)
- exploitation e.g. making decisions based on personal glory or reward
- unequal opportunities e.g. catering for better players only
- drugs misuse/substance abuse
- learning from mistakes and being prepared to adapt to change
- creating and maintaining respect
- endeavouring to do one’s best and striving to be part of a cohesive team unit
- acknowledging good play or superior performance by opponents

The following Principles of **FAIR PLAY** have been designed to ensure that youth sport is conducted in a positive/ empowering environment.

- **YOUNG PLAYERS SHOULD PLAY FOR THE “FUN OF IT”**
- **ALL YOUNG PLAYERS SHOULD BE TREATED EQUALLY**
- **PARTICIPATION SHOULD BE USED TO HELP YOUNG PLAYERS TO DEVELOP:**
  - **PHYSICALLY** – by acquiring basic playing techniques, improving physical fitness and developing lifetime health habits.
  - **PSYCHOLOGICALLY** – by learning to control emotions and develop a sense of confidence in their own ability – technical, tactical, physical
  - **SOCIALLY AND MORALLY** – by learning to combine with teammates, play by the rules and respect team mentors and match officials.

It is important that all young players are valued and always treated with the highest level of respect. Their personal dignity and physical integrity are paramount and participation in sport should enable them to have fun, make friends and become better players.

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### **PLAYERS FIRST - WINNING SECOND**

Competition should be used as a basis to encourage young people to develop their full potential. Winning or striving to win is essential for enjoyable competition but must not be seen as an end in itself. Players will be motivated by a range of internal and external factors e.g. prove to themselves or significant others – parents, coaches, teachers, etc. – that they have the required level of ability. The more they feel they have to do it – as distinct from wanting to do it – the more they will succumb to the stresses/ anxieties which result from the fear of losing. They will also find it harder to learn from defeat in that they will more likely transfer blame (scapegoating) as distinct from identifying areas where greater effort is required.

### **ROLE OF THE COACH/TEAM MENTOR**

Team Coaches and Mentors of Cumann Luthchleas Gael Cealltrach ensure that sport has a beneficial impact by adhering to the following guidelines:

- Respecting the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treating each one equally regardless of age, gender or ability.
- Ensuring that nobody involved with the team acts towards or speaks to another person in a manner or engages in any other conduct which threatens, disparages, vilifies or insults another person on the basis of that person's race, religion, colour, descent, national, ethnic or socio-economic background.
- Being positive during coaching sessions so that participants always leave with a sense of achievement and an increased level of self-esteem.
- Recognising the development needs of young players (avoiding excessive training or competition) and ensuring that they are matched on an individual or team basis.
- Rotating the team captain and the method used for selecting teams so that the same children are not always last to be selected.
- By being punctual, properly attired, leading by example, avoid smoking or the consumption of alcohol in the presence of young people.
- Planning and preparing appropriately for each session and ensuring proper levels of supervision.
- Developing an understanding of the OTú Coaching Model and ensuring that they have the appropriate level of Coaching accreditation.
- Ensuring games, activities and playing equipment are customised to suit the needs of those involved in terms of age, ability, experience and maturity.
- Avoiding overcoaching i.e, insisting upon set (stereotyped) playing patterns where individual decision-making and creativity are stifled or where young people are confined to playing in set positions on a continuous basis.
- Not shouting at or lecturing players or reprimanding/ridiculing them when they make a mistake. (The Club understands that children learn best through trial and error. They should not be afraid to risk error to learn).

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- Setting realistic – stretching but achievable – performance goals
- Praising and reinforcing effort/commitment and provide positive feedback
- By not equating losing with failure and by not developing a preoccupation with medals and trophies. (The level of improvement made by young players is the best indicator of Coaching effectiveness).
- Encouraging parents/guardians to play an active role in organising activities and to draft a Code of Discipline for everyone involved.
- Never using any form of corporal punishment or physical force.
- Never using foul language or provocative language/gestures to a player, opponent or match official. (The Coach should only enter the field with the referee's permission and should not question their decisions or integrity).
- By avoid sending messages – voice/ text/ e-mail – to players. (All messages/circulars etc. should be in writing and directed to the young person's parents/ guardians).
- On occasions when the team travels away, separate sleeping facilities will be provided for all adults. If both males and females are in the group coaches will be present.
- By recognising that certain situations e.g. staying over at the Coach's residence or friendly actions – e.g. horse play/role play/telling jokes etc -could be misinterpreted and lead to allegations of serious misconduct or impropriety.
- By not allowing situations to arise where they are alone in a car or dressing-room with a player.
- By not take coaching sessions on your own.
- By avoid any inappropriate touching when assisting players to perform a technique or when First Aid is being administered.
- Making adequate provision for First Aid and by not encouraging or allowing players to play while injured. (Mentors will keep an adequate record of each injury and ensure that another official - referee/ team mentor – is present when a player is being attended to and can corroborate the relevant details).
- Ensuring players are safely attired and that proper insurance arrangements are in place.
- Ensuring that each player observes a high standard of personal hygiene.
- Ensuring that all dressing rooms and areas occupied by the Team, prior to during or immediately following the completion of any match are kept clean and are not damaged in any way
- Ensuring that unrestricted access to the internet is not provided on the Club premises.

THE CLUB WILL ENSURE THAT THE GREATEST POSSIBLE NUMBER OF YOUNG PLAYERS MAINTAIN AN ONGOING INVOLVEMENT AND THAT THEY EXPERIENCE THE FEELING OF SUCCESS THAT COMES FROM SOMEONE SAYING “WELL DONE” OR “YOU TRIED AS HARD AS YOU COULD” OR “YOU GAVE AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO THE TEAM”.

### **ROLE OF PARENTS / GUARDIANS**

Parents/ guardians have an influential role to play in assisting their children to adopt positive attitudes and encouraging them to maintain an involvement in Gaelic Games. Parents will not attempt to meet their own needs for success and achievement through their children's participation in Gaelic games. Cumann Lúthchleas Gael requires all parents to adopt the following guidelines:

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### **DO'S**

DO SHOW APPROVAL FOR EFFORT, NOT JUST RESULTS  
DO TRY TO MAKE WORDS AND ACTIONS MATCH  
DO ATTEND GAMES ON A REGULAR BASIS AND ASSIST IN THE ORGANISATION OF CLUB ACTIVITIES  
DO GIVE ADVICE ON THE IMPORTANCE OF MAINTAINING A BALANCED LIFESTYLE  
DO LISTEN TO WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE TO SAY  
DO TRY TO APPRECIATE THE STRENGTH OF A YOUNG PERSON'S EMOTIONS - POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE  
DO REALISE THE POWER OF EXAMPLE

### **DON'T'S**

DON'T EXERT UNDUE PRESSURE ON YOUNG PEOPLE  
DON'T SAY ONE THING AND DO ANOTHER  
DON'T MAKE PROMISES YOU CANNOT KEEP  
  
DON'T ASK "HOW MUCH DID YOU SCORE/WIN OR LOSE BY"  
  
DON'T JUST SHOW APPROVAL WHEN THE TEAM WINS  
DON'T CRITICISE PLAYING PERFORMANCE – SEEK TO IDENTIFY AREAS WHERE IMPROVEMENTS CAN BE MADE

### **ROLE OF PLAYERS**

Cumann Luthchleas Gael Cealltrach expect that all players will be encouraged to realise that they also have responsibilities to treat others with fairness and respect.

### **PLAYERS SHOULD UNDERTAKE TO :**

- play fairly, do their best and enjoy themselves
- represent their family and Club with pride and dignity
- shake hands before and after the game irrespective of the result
- respect officials and accept their decisions gracefully
- respect fellow team members giving them support when they do well or not so well
- respect their opponents
- accept apologies from opponents when they are offered
- be modest in victory and gracious in defeat
- set high standards of fair play for others to follow
- adhere to proper standards of behaviour and the Club Code of Discipline
- let the Coach know when they are unavailable for training and competition
- approach the Club's Liaison Officer with any questions or concerns they may have

### **PLAYERS SHOULD NOT**

- cheat – always play by the rules
- bully or take unfair advantage
- shout at or argue with an official
- tell lies about adults or other children
- spread rumours

### **PLAYERS ARE ENTITLED TO:**

- be safe

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- be happy, have fun and experience a sense of enjoyment and fulfilment (There is little or no joy in being a substitute or being continually taken off the team).
- be treated with respect
- comment and make suggestions in a constructive manner
- be afforded appropriate confidentiality
- be listened to
- be believed

### **EXAMPLES OF BEST & BAD PRACTICE**

Should a Coach admonish young players for forgetting some of their playing attire?  
*No, the Coach should reiterate the importance of all players being properly attired and should not allow players to participate without adequate safety equipment e.g. helmet with facial protection when playing hurling.*

During the winter months a young player wants to play in tracksuit bottoms, the Coach jokes about him being a “cissy” in front of other boys.  
*Not appropriate to call a young person names whether in front of peers or not.*

Ensure that all players are always addressed by their Christian names.  
During a summer camp a twelve-year-old regularly turns up without a packed lunch that parents/ guardians were meant to provide.  
*Refer the matter to the Club’s Youth Liaison Officer to discuss with parents/guardians.*

A ten year old boy/girl is sick on the bus travelling home from an away game after eating a lot of sweets. The coach gives out to him or her for the mess he/she has made.  
*Not appropriate to take issue with a young person when vulnerable. Inform the child’s parents/guardians on return.*

A coach expresses his/her delight after a win by slapping one of the children on the bum.  
*Not appropriate. Clubs should not have a culture where it is perceived as acceptable to slap a child’s bum in a playful manner. The matter should be brought to the attention of the Youth Liaison Officer.*

You are coaching an after school team in January and finish at 5 p.m. One eight year old has not been collected by his parents/guardians and lives some distance away.  
*Arrangements should be made in advance to ensure that all youngsters are collected at the appropriate time. (This highlights the importance of punctuality). Provision should also be made in advance to deal with any contingencies that might arise i.e. young player to travel home with neighbour who has a son/daughter participating. Under these circumstances, the parents/guardians should be contacted and the matter brought to the attention of the Club’s Youth Liaison Officer.*

A team mentor claims that the concept of self-esteem does not make sense.  
*Not appropriate. It should be explained to the person concerned that self-esteem is another name for the level of self-worth experienced by a person. It can be enhanced when young people are within an environment where their needs are catered for.*

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Some parents are inclined to jeer opponents when they are on the sideline at games.  
*Not appropriate. It should be emphasised to all concerned that they should cheer not jeer.*

### **The YOUTH LIAISON OFFICER**

What is the Role of the Youth Liaison Officer?

To develop and maintain a youth centred ethos within the club by promoting awareness of the **“Code of Best Practice for All Under 16 Players, Parents, Mentors and Coaches ”**.

- To encourage the involvement of parents/guardians in organising activities and to co-operate with parents in ensuring that every young person enjoys his/her involvement with the club.
- To establish a link between the Underage and Adult sections of the Club.
- To establish good links with local schools involved in the promotion of Gaelic games.
- To ensure that the rules regarding eligibility for competitions are adhered to.
- To ensure that PLAYERS, PARENTS/GUARDIANS, COACHES, MENTORS, OFFICIALS & SPECTATORS understand and apply the principles of FAIR PLAY
- It is important to note that the Club Youth Liaison Officer does not have the responsibility of assessing, investigating or validating protection concerns, involving underage players. It is possible that these concerns will be brought to the attention of the Youth Liaison Officer. If the Youth Liaison Officer receives a disclosure he/ she will follow the reporting procedures set out in the booklet “Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse” copies of which are available from Croke Park.

Further information on Child Protection and Good Practice is available on the following website, [www.irishsportsCouncil.ie](http://www.irishsportsCouncil.ie)

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### **DRUG MISUSE/SUBSTANCE ABUSE EDUCATION PROGRAMME**

#### **Introduction:**

When the effects of drug misuse or substance abuse are considered, the absolute necessity of directing responses at prevention becomes apparent. Cumann Luthchleas gael Cealltrach will work towards creating safe, healthy environments where young people develop the skills and attitudes necessary to cope with a more drug orientated society. In this context, the club understands that the importance of having sound educational programmes cannot be underestimated.

#### **Rationale:**

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael and the Irish Sports Council are committed, as part of their overall philosophy, to: “Discourage the use of drugs, alcohol and tobacco on the basis that they are incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity”.

#### **Scope of Policy:**

This policy is in force at all times at GAA facilities and during all activities conducted under the aegis of Cumann Lúthchleas Gael.

#### **Definition of Drugs:**

For the purpose of this policy the term drug will be defined as all mood-altering substances, both legal and illegal, and involves substances such as tobacco, solvents and alcohol.

It is important that all Club members, officials, staff and mentors follow the law when it comes to illegal drugs and the use of alcohol and tobacco and display leadership and good example particularly when dealing with underage members.

#### **Drug Education**

##### **Aim:**

The aim of the drug education programme is to ensure that young people maintain a healthy lifestyle and a positive involvement in sport.

##### **Best way of delivering the Programme:**

All drug education programmes will be structured in an age appropriate way and tailored to meet the needs of mentors, players and parents. Back-up support will be sought from existing statutory bodies as appropriate.

#### **CODE FOR DEALING WITH DRUGS MISUSE/SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Cealltrach will endeavour to deal with any alcohol or illicit drug incident in a firm but fair manner, with due regard for the safety and welfare of the individuals involved, other members of the Association, the wider community, and to fulfil any legal obligations that might apply.

##### **Outline of Restrictions:**

The possession, use, supply or presenting under the influence of, alcohol or illicit drugs (improper or illegal use of solvents, magic mushrooms, medications) are viewed as unacceptable by Cumann Lúthchleas Gael.

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### **Reporting of Incidents:**

Suspected, alleged or confirmed incidents in breach of this policy must be referred to the Chairman of the Club or the County Chairman. He/she, in turn, will inform the Executive. The Executive will decide on the appropriate response (refer sanctions, page 10).

### **Recording of Information:**

Information regarding suspected, alleged or confirmed incidents in breach of this policy received by the Executive will be minuted in the usual way. Only in confirmed cases will names of individuals be recorded. The recording of factual information only is preferable, opinions must be stated as such. Responses of the Executive to cases will also be recorded in this way.

### **Confidentiality:**

While every effort will be made to respect confidentiality, it may not always be possible to guarantee confidentiality in relation to alcohol or illicit drug incidents.

### **Involving Parents/Guardians:**

It will be standard practice to inform parents/guardians if their son/daughter is involved in an alcohol or illicit drug incident. Their involvement and support is seen as essential in the resolution of these difficulties. Parents/guardians will be invited to discuss what has happened and will be informed of the course of action to be taken.

### **Involving An Garda Síochána:**

In suspected or alleged incidents involving the supply of illegal drugs, it is policy to inform the relevant police authority. Police advice may also be sought on a case-by-case basis. The decision in this regard will rest with the Club Executive. Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Cealltrach also asserts its right to inform An Garda Síochána of any “outside” drug activity affecting the welfare of the Club and its members.

### **Sanctions:**

In the event of suspected/confirmed breaches of this code, the following sanctions may apply:

- No action taken
- Referral to an appropriate support agency
- Contact with parents/guardians of the individual/individuals involved (refer page 9).
- Appropriate disciplinary action to be taken by the GAA unit concerned
- Notifying the relevant Police authority (refer page 9).

### **Search:**

The Club retains the right to search any part of its property if there is reasonable cause to believe a substance in breach of this policy may be contained therein. Two officials/mentors of the club will be present during any form of search. Where there is reasonable cause to believe a player (or others using the facilities) has on their person or in their possession a substance in breach of the policy, they will be asked to volunteer the substance. If they refuse, An Garda Síochána may be called in to conduct the search.

### **Disposing of (Suspected) Illegal Drugs:**



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If an illegal drug (or suspected illegal drug) is found on property or during related activity, it should be brought to the attention of the Chairman of the Club. It will be stored securely by club officials/mentors while An Garda Siochana are called to come and collect it. Two officials/mentors will be present during any procedures involving handling of illegal substances.

**Health and Safety:**

First Aid and Emergency Procedures:

The normal medical/emergency procedures apply in relation to this programme.

**Availability, use and Storage of Solvents:**

All solvent/gas-based materials will be stored securely.

**Doping/ Use of Performance Enhancing Substances/ Methods**

In the interests of maintaining fair play it is important that players adhere to the guidelines set out in the GAA Anti-Doping Code.

**Keeping Updated**

Regular updates to information can be obtained from the following website [www.irishsports-council.ie](http://www.irishsports-council.ie) Queries can also be directed to the Irish Sports Council by telephone, if urgent, phone 01-2407700.