



# **An Cumann Camógaíochta**

## **Guidelines for Children's Officers**

### **Content:**

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## 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 centred in focus and have as the primary aim the establishment of a child centred 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.

### Guidelines for the Club Children's Officer

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



### **Guidelines for the County Children's Officer.**

The Children's Officer should:

- Be familiar with Child Welfare and Protection Codes and Guidelines and with relevant child welfare/protection legislation.
- 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.
- Co-ordinate Irish Sports Council Basic Awareness and Children's Officer courses within the county.
- Liaise on a regular basis with Club Children's Officers.
- Ensure that all underage county development squads and county teams' activities are compliant with the Code of Behaviour and the Code of Ethics and Best Practice.
- Ensure that county development squads and/or county under age players, their parents and mentors are compliant with the Code of Behaviour and the Code of Ethics and Best Practice.
- As require, liaise and advise the County Coaching and Games Development structures on strengthening a child centred ethos in their programmes and activities.
- Advise on good practice in the recruitment and selection of persons working with young people by all clubs.
- Promote greater consultation with under age players and participation by them in club and county activities.
- Deal with breaches of the Code as per relevant guidelines
- Ensure that all complaints or suspected child abuse cases are dealt with in accordance with The Code of Ethics and Best Practice for Children.
- Monitor and report to the County Board and relevant Committees on any significant trends or developments relating to the participation of young people in Camogie.
- Review and report to the County Board Executive on the extent and nature of implementation of the relevant Codes within the county and by clubs.
- Provide an Annual Report to each Annual County Board Convention.
- Maintain regular communication and liaisons with the National Children's Officer and provide reports as required.



### **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.*



## **Reporting Procedures.**

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.

(taken from Children First)

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 An 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.



## **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.



## 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 Gardaí/Police 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 and 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 exists 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.



## 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.

## National contacts for the Child Welfare and Protection Services of the HSE

Also listed on HSE website ([www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)) and from HSE LoCall Tel. 1850 24 1850

HSE Area	Address	Telephone No.
<b>DUBLIN NORTH</b>	Health Centre, Cromcastle, Coolock, Dublin 5 Social Work Office, 22 Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1 Social Work Office, Ballymun Health Centre, Dublin 11	(01) 816 4200 (01) 816 244 (01) 855 6871 (01) 842 0011
<b>DUBLIN NORTH WEST</b>	Health Centre, Wellmount Park, Finglas, Dublin 11 Health Centre, Rathdown Road, Dublin 7	(01) 856 7704 (01) 882 5000
<b>DUBLIN SOUTH EAST</b>	Vergemount Hall, Clonskeagh, Dublin 6	(01) 268 0320
<b>DUBLIN SOUTH CITY</b>	Duty Social Work Carnegie Centre, 21-25 Lord Edward Street, Dublin 2 Public Health Nursing, 2 1-25 Lord Edward Street, Dublin 2 Family Support Service, Church House, 78B Donore Avenue, Dublin 8	(01) 648 6555 (01) 648 6500 (01) 416 4441
<b>DUBLIN SOUTH WEST</b>	Milbrook Lawn, Tallaght, Dublin 24	(01) 452 0666
<b>DUBLIN WEST</b>	Social Work Department, Cherry Orchard Hospital, Ballyfermot, Dublin 10	(01) 620 6387
<b>DUN LAOGHAIRE</b>	Tivoli Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin 102 Patrick Street, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin	(01) 284 3579 (01) 236 5120
<b>CARLOW</b>	Carlow Social Work Office, Ground Floor, St. Dymphna's Hospital, Athy Road, Co. Carlow	(059) 913 6587
<b>CAVAN</b>	HSE Community Child and Family Services, Drumalee Cross, Co. Cavan	(049) 437 7305/06
<b>CLARE</b>	Rover House, Gort Road, Ennis, Co. Clare	(065) 686 3907
<b>CORK</b>	Georges Quay, Cork City, Co. Cork North Lee Child Protection Services, Blackpool (adjacent to Blackpool Shopping Centre), Co. Cork South Lee Social Work Department, St. Finbarr's Hospital, Co. Cork West Cork Child Protection Services, Social Work Department Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, Co. Cork	(021) 496 5511 (021) 492 7000 (021) 492 3001 (028) 40447

<b>DONEGAL</b>	Donegal East Links Business Centre, Lisfannon, Buncrana, Euro House, Killybegs Road, Donegal West Millenium Court, Pearse Road, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal	(074) 932 0420 (074) 9723540  (074) 912 3672 / 3770
<b>GALWAY</b>	Galway City, Local Health Office, 25 Newcastle Road, Co. Galway Galway County, Tuam Social Work Department, Health Centre, Vicar Street, Tuam, Co. Galway Loughrea Social Work Department,Health Centre, Loughrea, Co. Galway Ballinasloe Social Work Department, Health Centre, Brackernagh, Ballinasloe,Co. Galway Oughterard Social Work Department,Health Centre, Oughterard, Co. Galway	(091) 546366  (091) 24492  (091) 847820  (090) 9646200  (091) 552200
<b>KERRY</b>	Tralee Social Work Department, 28 Moyderwell, Tralee, Killarney Social Work Department, St.Margaret's Road, Killarney, Co. Kerry	(066) 718 4500  (064) 50700
<b>KILDARE</b>	Social Work Team, Swan Centre, Fairgreen Street, Naas, Co. Kildare	(045) 882400
<b>KILKENNY</b>	Kilkenny Social Work Office, St. Canice's Hospital, Dublin Road, Co. Kilkenny	(056) 778 4782
<b>LIMERICK</b>	Social Work Department (Limerick East), Unit 3 , St. Camillus Hospital, Limerick Social Work Department (Limerick West), Unit 3 , St. Camillus Hospital, Limerick	(061) 483 711  (061) 483 996
<b>LAOIS</b>	Social Work Department, Child and Family Centre, Portlaoise, Co. Laois	(057) 865 2967
<b>LEITRIM</b>	Community Care Office, Leitrim Road, Carrick on Shannon, Co. Leitrim	(071) 965 0324
<b>LONGFORD</b>	Social Work Department, Tivoli House, Dublin Road, Co. Longford	(043) 50584
<b>LOUTH</b>	Social Work Department, Local Health Care Unit, Wilton House, Stapleton Place, Dundalk, Co. Louth	(042) 939 2200
<b>MAYO</b>	Ballina Social Work Team, Ballina Health Centre, Mercy Road, Ballina, Co. Mayo Castlebar Social Work Team, Castlebar Hill House, Mountain View, Castlebar,Co. Mayo Swinford Social Work Team, Swinford Health Centre, Aras Attracta, Swinford,Co. Mayo	(096) 21511  (094) 902 2283  (094) 905 0133
<b>MEATH</b>	Community Social Work Services,Enterprise Centre, Navan, Co. Meath Community Social Work Services, Child & Family Centre, Navan, Co. Meath Community Social Work Services, Dunshaughlin Health Care Unit,Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath	(046) 909 7800  (046) 907 8830  (01) 802 4102
<b>MONAGHAN</b>	Social Work Department, Local Health Care Unit,	

	Rooskey, Co. Monaghan	(047) 30426 / 7
<b>OFFALY</b>	Social Work Department, O'Carroll Street, Tullamore, Co. Offaly	(057) 932 2488
<b>ROSCOMMON</b>	Social Work Team, Abbeytown House, Abbey Street, Co. Roscommon	(090) 663 7014
	Social Work Team, Lanesboro Road, Co. Roscommon	(090) 663 7528
	Social Work Team, Health Centre, Boyle, Co. Roscommon	(071) 966 2087
	Social Work Team, Knockroe, Castlerea, Co. Roscommon	(090) 663 7843
<b>SLIGO</b>	Sligo Town and surrounding areas:	
	Markievicz House, Barrack Street, Co. Sligo	(071) 915 5133
	South County Sligo: One Stop Shop, Teach Laighne, Humbert Street, Tubercurry, Co. Sligo	(071) 912 0454
<b>TIPPERARY</b>	North Tipperary Child Protection Services: Social Work Department, Annbrook, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary	(067) 41934
	St Mary's Health Centre, Parnell Street, Thurles, Co. Tipperary	(0504) 23211
	South Tipperary Child Protection Services: Social Work Team, South Tipperary Community Care Services, Western Road, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary	(052) 77303
<b>WATERFORD</b>	Waterford: Social Work Service, Waterford Community Services, Cork Road, Waterford	(051) 842827
	Dungarvan and surrounding areas: Social Work Department, Dungarvan Community Services, St. Joseph's Hospital, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford	(058) 20918/20/21
<b>WESTMEATH</b>	Social Work Department, Athlone Health Centre, Coosan Road, Athlone, Co. Westmeath	(090) 648 3106
	Social Work Department, Child and Family Centre, St. Loman's, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath	(044) 938 4450
<b>WEXFORD</b>	Gorey Health Centre, Hospital Grounds, Gorey, Co. Wexford	(053) 943 4100
	Enniscorthy Health Centre, Millpark Road, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford	(053) 923 3465
	New Ross Health Centre, Hospital Grounds, New Ross, Co. Wexford	(051) 421445
	Social Work Department, Ely House, Ferrybank, Co. Wexford	(053) 912 3522 Ext. 201
<b>WICKLOW</b>	Wicklow Town: Social Work Department, Seafront, Wicklow Town, Co. Wicklow	(0404) 60800
	Bray: Social Work Department, The Civic Centre, Main Street, Bray, Co. Wicklow	(01) 274 4180 /00
	Delgany: Social Work Department, Delgany Health Centre, Delgany, Co. Wicklow	(01) 2871482
	Kildare/West Wicklow: Social Work Team, Swan Centre, Fairgreen Street, Naas, Co. Kildare	(045) 882400

## **Useful Reading**

Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport Irish Sports Council and Sport Northern Ireland, Irish Sports Council, West End Office Park, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15

Code of Ethics and Best Practise  
An Cumann Camógaíochta [www.camogie.ie](http://www.camogie.ie)

Code of Behaviour for all persons working with young people Cumann Lúthchleas Gael (GAA). Published in association with An Cumann Camógaíochta, Cumann Peil Gael na mBan, Comhairle Liathróid Láimhe na hÉireann and Comhairle Cluiche Corr na hÉireann, Páirc an Chrócaigh, Dublin 3

Children First, National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Department of Health and Children, Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2

Our Duty to Care (NI) Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People  
Volunteer Development Agency, 129 Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 1SH

Our Duty to Care (ROI) Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People  
Department of Health and Children, Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2

