

# Lucan Sarsfields GAA Club



## Guidelines on Child Protection Procedures

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### Document Review History

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### **Disclaimer:**

Each situation must be judged on its own merits and it is unreasonable for readers to follow instruction in the procedure without proper assessment of individual circumstances. The information contained within the procedure is accurate and up to date, at date of approval.

## **1.0 Purpose of Guidelines**

- 1.1** These guidelines have been developed to provide information and promote good practice for those involved in working with/supporting juvenile members of Lucan Sarsfields GAA club.
- 1.2** The guidelines are to ensure that members/parents/guardians will be aware of what to do in a situation where the safety, welfare and or protection of a juvenile may be at risk.

## **2. Context of the Guidelines**

### **2.1 The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the UN in 1989 and ratified by Ireland in 1992. The National Children's Strategy is based on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and as such, sets out the vision for children in Ireland over a ten-year period. We believe that all work with children and young people should, by its very nature, recognise, implement and promote the fundamental tenets of the Convention.

### **2.2 Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children 1999 & 2011**

The Children First Guidelines were issued by the Department of Health and Children in 1999 and outline procedures, which all organisations dealing with children and young people should put in place. They state that all such organisations should put in place a child protection policy tailored to their specific needs. This policy should outline the procedures and arrangements in place to protect children in line with "Children First". In July 2011 Children First was revised and republished.

## **3. Applies to:**

These guidelines apply to all members of Lucan Sarsfields GAA club.

## **4.0 Definitions:**

**4.1 Designated Person:** The Designated Person is responsible for receiving allegations of child abuse as they relate to GAA personnel and activities and with reporting such allegations to the GAA County Designated Person in accordance with GAA guidelines on dealing with allegations of abuse.

**4.2 Club Children's Officer:** Ensures the implementation and promotion of the relevant Child Welfare Codes and Guidelines for good practice in the club so

as to ensure that young people can participate, enjoy, and benefit from our games in safe and enjoyable surroundings.

**4.3 Juvenile members:** The Child Care Act, 1991 defines a child as someone under 18 years of age who is not married. The UN Convention defines a child as someone under 18 years of age and the National Children's Strategy in Ireland, similarly defines a child as someone less than 18 years of age, who is not married.

**4.5 Code of Behaviour:** The Code of Practice in Youth Sport is a publication by the GAA Headquarters that addresses the appropriate level of behaviour, practice and conduct required from young players, officials, coaches, trainers, mentors, supporters, parents/guardians and clubs.

**4.6 Abuse:** Child Abuse has generally been defined into four main categories:

- Neglect
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

Please refer to the GAA Code of Best Practice in youth sport for further information on the definitions of Abuse.

**4.7 Garda Vetting:** Garda Vetting is the pre-checking of an applicant's background for criminal convictions or prosecutions and 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.

**4.8 Self Declaration:** No longer applicable.

**4.9 References:** A character reference, also known as a personal reference, is a reference provided by someone who knows you and can attest to your character and abilities. Character references can be provided by neighbours, business acquaintances, family friends, teachers, and clients.

**4.10 Tusla:** The Child and Family Agency (called Tusla) is a statutory organisation, established in January 2014 under the [Child and Family Agency Act 2013](#). Under Section 8 of the Act, it is required to:

Support and promote the development, welfare and protection of children, and  
Support and encourage the effective functioning of families

## **5.0 Responsibilities**

- 5.1** The Executive of Lucan Sarsfields GAA club have overall responsibility for child protection within the club. The Children's Officer is a member of the Executive.
- 5.2** The Executive have appointed a child protection committee with responsibility for ensuring that all mentors & coaches working with juvenile members are aware of and adhere to the child protection guidelines. The Children's Officer is the Chairperson of the Child Protection Committee.
- 5.3** All parents of juvenile members will be informed of the child protection guidelines.
- 5.4** The club have a children's officer Mrs. Colette Condon([086-3799270](tel:086-3799270))
- 5.5** The club have a designated person Mr. Shane Gately, with Con McDonagh as his deputy.

## **6. Procedural Steps**

- 6.1** All coaches and mentors will be expected to comply with the standard vetting process for all volunteers who work with children i.e.
  - Complete a GAA Garda vetting form online
- 6.2.** All new mentors/coaches must complete the vetting process prior to working with a team.
- 6.3** Each year in January when teams are being re-registered a form will be sent to the designated manager at each age level across all codes. On the form the manager will be asked to provide a list of names all mentors/helpers for that team and to ensure that each person has read the child protection guidelines.
- 6.4** Each designated manager will return the completed form to the Children's Officer on or before the 30<sup>th</sup> January of each year.
- 6.5** The child protection committee will check all forms to ensure that all listed mentors, coaches & helpers have completed the club vetting process.
- 6.6** Members of the child protection committee will organise and deliver a series of information sessions to coaches/mentors/ team helpers of juvenile members and their parents on the club's child protection guidelines. At the information sessions the GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport will also be distributed. All players, managers, mentors and parents/guardians must agree to adhere to this code.
- 6.7** All mentors/coaches & team helpers of juvenile players must attend a two hour training session on child protection delivered by trainers from GAA head office.

## **7. Record Keeping**

**7.1** Lucan Sarsfield's GAA Club holds records in accordance with the National Archives Act 1986. This means that no records can be destroyed without the permission of the National Archives. The club will discuss with National GAA Headquarters the appropriate length of time to hold the above records and this policy will be updated accordingly once agreement has been reached.

**7.2** The club acknowledges that Irish Data Protection legislation safeguards the privacy rights of individuals in relation to the processing of their personal data. The Data Protection Act 1988 and the Data Protection (Amendment) Act 2003 confer rights on individuals as well as responsibilities on those persons or organisations processing personal data. Please refer to the club's data protection guidelines 2011 for further information.

**7.3** The Children's Officer and the Club Secretary are responsible for keeping the following records related to Child Protection in a locked filing cabinet:

- Any complaints about the safety and welfare of children/young people while participating in the club activities.
- Any disclosures, concerns or allegations of child abuse
- The follow up to any complaints, disclosure, concerns or allegations, including informal advice from Tusla/ the HSE, reports to Tusla/ the HSE and informing parents/guardians;
- All Self Declaration Forms.
- All References.

**7.4** The Children's Officer, and the club secretary are the only officers who have access to these records:

*Note:*

1. *A record of Garda Vetting is kept by GAA headquarters and cannot be seen by the club. The children's officer is contacted by GAA headquarters in the event that a issue arises from a garda vetting form.*

## **8.0 References**

Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2011). Child Protection Policy and Code of Behaviour for working with children/young people

Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children (1999 & 2011) Government Publications

Data Protection Act (1988) & Data Protection Amendments Act( 2003) Government Publication

GAA National Children's Office (2009) GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sports.

National Archives Act (1986) Government Publication.

United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (1989 & 1992)

# Appendix 1

## Recognising Child Abuse

### Definition and Possible Physical and Behavioural Indicators of Child Abuse

#### Neglect

Neglect can be defined in terms of an omission, where the child suffers significant harm or impairment of development by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, attachment to and affection from adults, medical care. Neglect generally becomes apparent in different ways over a period of time rather than at one specific point.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Frequent minor or serious injuries
- Untreated illness
- Hunger, lack of nutrition
- Tiredness
- Inadequate and inappropriate clothing
- Lack of supervision
- Low self esteem
- Lack of peer relationships

#### Emotional

Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship between a care-giver and a child rather than in a specific event or pattern of events. It occurs when a child's need for affection, approval, consistency and security are not met. Unless other forms of abuse are present, it is rarely manifested in terms of physical signs or symptoms.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Unreasonable mood and/or behavioural changes
- Aggression, withdrawal or an 'I don't care attitude'
- Lack of attachment
- Low self esteem
- Attention seeking
- Depression or suicide attempts
- Persistent nightmares, disturbed sleep, bedwetting, reluctance to go to bed
- A fear of adults or particular individuals e.g. family member, baby-sitter or indeed excessive clinginess to parents/carers
- Panic attacks

#### Physical

Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect a child.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Frequent bruising, fractures, cuts, burns and other injuries
- Torn clothing
- Bite marks burns or welts
- Bruises in places difficult to mark e.g. behind ears, groin
- Undue or unnecessary fear
- Aggressiveness or withdrawn
- Absconding frequently from home

### **Sexual**

Sexual abuse occurs when a child is used by another person for his or her gratification or sexual arousal or for that of others.

Possible indicators of this type of abuse are:

- Over affectionate or inappropriate sexual behaviour
- Age inappropriate sexual knowledge given the child's age, which is often demonstrated in language, play or drawings
- Fondling or exposure of genital areas
- Hints about sexual activity
- Unusual reluctance to join in normal activities which involve undressing, e.g. games/
- swimming

### **Indicators of Abuse are Not Facts**

It is important to stress that no one indicator should be seen as conclusive in itself of abuse; it may indeed indicate conditions other than child abuse. A cluster or pattern of signs is likely to be more indicative of abuse. Signs must also be considered in the child's social and family context as child abuse is not restricted to any socio economic group, gender or culture. It is important to always be open to alternative explanations for possible physical or behavioural signs of abuse.

### **Reasonable Grounds for Concern**

The statutory authorities should always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been abused, or is being abused, or is at risk of abuse. A suspicion that is not supported by any objective indicator of abuse or neglect would not constitute reasonable grounds of for 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 the person who saw the child being abused;
- iii. evidence such as injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse and unlikely to be caused in any other 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.

A suspicion, not supported by any objective indication of abuse or neglect, does not constitute a reasonable suspicion or reasonable grounds for concern.

*(Children First 1999, 4.3.2 and 4.3.3)*