



Mungret St. Pauls GAA Club

Child Welfare Document

The guidelines in this document are based on the national guidelines as outlined in the following documents.

Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport, Irish Sports Council, Revised 2005.

Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, Department. of Health & Children 2008.

Our Duty to Care, Dept. of Health & Children 2002

CLG Guidelines for dealing with allegations of abuse, April 2005. Appendix I

For the purpose of this document we accept that a child is any person under the age of 18 years.

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1. Mungret St. Paul's GAA Club mission statement and guiding principles

The club's mission statement is to provide the opportunity and encouragement for each child to enjoy gaelic games in a safe positive learning environment, with the promotion of the values of fairness, mutual respect, courtesy and tolerance of others. Special effort will be provided to foster self discipline, enjoyment, physical fitness and high standards of hurling and gaelic football.

The work of **Mungret St. Paul's (MSP) GAA club** is based on the following principles that will guide the development of sport for young people in this club. Children's experience of gaelic games should be guided by what is best for the children. The stages of development and the ability of the child should guide the types of activity provided within the club. Adults should have a basic understanding of the needs of children, including physical, emotional and personal.

Guiding Principles

Integrity in relationships:

Adults interacting with young people in hurling and gaelic football should do so with integrity and respect for the child. All adult actions in MSP should be guided by what is best for the child and in the context of quality, open working relationships. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind is unacceptable within MSP GAA club.

Quality atmosphere and competition

Gaelic hurling and football for children will be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of young people, while at the same time providing fun, enjoyment and satisfaction. Coaches/managers/mentors must put the welfare of the children first and competitive standards second. A child-centred approach will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.

Equality

All children should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, sex, sexual orientation, religion, social and ethnic diversity or political persuasion. Children with disabilities should be involved in sports activities in an integrated way, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children.

Fair Play:

Fair play is the guiding principle of the Irish Sports Council's Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport.

It states that "all children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play". Ireland has contributed and is committed to the European Code of Sports Ethics, which defines fair play as: "much more than playing within the rules".

It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing with the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just behaving.

2. Mungret St. Paul's GAA Club Child Welfare Statement

MSP GAA club is committed to ensuring that all necessary steps will be taken to protect and safeguard the welfare of children who participate in GAA related sports. This Policy document clearly demonstrates the importance placed by MSP on the welfare and safety of children who participate.

All children who participate in gaelic games should be able to do so in a safe and enjoyable environment. While doing so they should be protected from any form of abuse, be it physical, emotional, sexual, neglect or bullying. The responsibility for protecting children lies with all

adults involved in this club.

MSP recognises and accepts its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and by protecting them from physical, emotional or sexual harm and from neglect or bullying.

These clear policies, practices and procedures in addition to relevant training programmes will ensure that everybody in MSP knows exactly what is expected of them in relation to protecting children and young people within the activities of the club.

It is vital that children who participate in MSP activities are able to do so in a safe, enjoyable and quality environment. In pursuit of this MSP will:

- Advise all members of MSP (coaches, players, parents and spectators) of their responsibilities in relation to the welfare of children who participate in club activities.
- Operate within the recommended Sports Council of Ireland/GAA codes best practice guidelines for youth sport.
- Appoint a Club Children's Officer in line with Sports Council of Ireland requirements.

3. MSP GAA CLUB CHILD WELFARE POLICY

The aims are:

- To provide appropriate guidance, procedures and advice to all club members (players, coaches, volunteers, spectators and parents) in all matters concerning child welfare and protection.
- To demonstrate best practice in the area of child welfare and protection.
- To promote ethics and best practice standards throughout the club membership. The key principles underpinning this Policy are that:
- The welfare of the child is the first and paramount consideration.
- All children have a right to be protected from abuse of any kind regardless of their age, gender, disability, culture, language, racial origin, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.
- It is essential that we work in partnership with children and their parents/guardians. The HSE has a statutory responsibility to safeguard and protect the welfare of children and MSP is committed to cooperating fully with the HSE in accordance with procedures as outlined in "Children First" National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.
- MSP will cooperate fully with the GAA National Liaison Officer, Gardai and the HSE in any investigation of child abuse in gaelic athletic activities.
- All allegations of child abuse will be dealt with as per CLG Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse, last revised April 2005, a copy of which can be found on the GAA website

4. PERSONNEL RECRUITMENT POLICY

MSP will take all reasonable steps to ensure that coaches, managers and volunteers are suitable to work with children.

There are three stages for new coaches:

- Application and declaration form to be completed by applicant (Garda Vetting Form)
- Must complete courses as stipulated by the club during year of application

All coaches, managers and volunteers are required to complete Garda vetting clearance. All appointments are subject to approval and ratification by the committee of MSP

All coaches, managers and volunteers will be subject to a sign up procedure in which they

undertake to abide by MSP club rules and GAA codes of conduct and good practice. (Appropriate confidentiality will be maintained in regard to all application and reference forms). Once recruited, MSP will make all efforts to support coaches, managers and volunteers ensuring that no person is expected to work alone with children. Any person involved in coaching a team must have at least Foundation Level coaching or equivalent experience.

MSP Coach, Manager, Volunteer Education & Support Policy

The Committee of MSP are indebted to our volunteers who give freely of their valuable time in providing a stimulating, challenging, safe, supportive and fun experience to children in the club engaged in all aspects of hurling and gaelic football.

The Committee will endeavour to support these coaches, managers and volunteers in their work by providing an environment where all activities are carried out safely, and in a manner which ensures the spirit of “Fair Play” is adhered to at all times.

MSP will make all efforts to assist new volunteers, managers, coaches in whatever way they can. MSP will provide an induction programme to all new volunteers/coaches, which will familiarise them with club rules, policies and procedures and expected codes of behaviour for children, coaches and parents/spectators.

The Committee of MSP recognise the value of having appropriately qualified personnel in the club, and therefore will support as required in the coach education process.

At no time will any coach, manager, volunteer be expected to work or deal with any problem alone and they will be assured of committee assistance and support at all times. Also, coaches, managers and volunteers are encouraged to share ideas, expertise and support other club personnel in any way they can.

4.1 MSP Coach/Mentor Code of Conduct

All coaches/managers in MSP have a responsibility to ensure the safety of the players with whom they work, as far as possible within the limits of their control.

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treat each equally regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race or ability.
- Children should be taught the rules of the games and encouraged to abide by the rules, keeping in mind they are there for safety of them and others.
- Be conscious of the development of young players and ensure that they are matched on an individual or team basis.
- Be punctual, properly attired and lead by examples during all matches and training sessions. Parents/Guardians should be informed of the starting and finishing times of all training sessions/matches.
- First aid should only be administered by certified personnel. Guardians should be notified of injuries/illness which their children incur while participating in any MSP activity.
- Adequate supervision must be maintained at all times to ensure no mentor/coach works alone with children. Best Practice advice would advocate a minimum of two leaders to each group.
- Ensure adequate preparation for each session and that the necessary equipment is available for all training sessions
- Don't ridicule players for making a mistake, provide positive reinforcement at all times. Praise and reinforce effort and commitment.
- Set realistic goals for each individual player based upon their abilities.
- All trips and away matches must be approved by committee of MSP before notification to players.
- Participation is important for children and one should, as a coach, not be pre-occupied with winning.

- Records of attendance at training & matches must be maintained by the coach.
- Corporal punishment/physical force should never be used.
- Improper language and provocative gestures should never be used to a player or coach on an opposing team.
- All notification/communication should be directed to the player's parents/guardians, and not directly to the player.
- The code of behaviour for players involved in club activities should be promoted, encouraged and maintained by all coaches.
- Respect the privacy of all children.
- Being alone with a player is not appropriate practice. Should circumstances arise where this is unavoidable, immediately inform another responsible adult, by telephone if necessary. Make a note that the meeting with the player took place including the reason for it.
- As a coach do not engage in or tolerate any behaviour be it verbal, psychological or physical which could be construed as bullying. Refer to MSP bullying policy, which all coaches must be aware of.
- All coaches/managers must be familiar with and abide by the safety policies of the club. Portable goals must be pegged down adequately before use.
- Coaches/mentors/managers shall promote fair competition through the development of sound training practice and should actively discourage the use of any substance that is perceived to offer short cuts to improved performance.
- Ensure only registered club members represent MSP in any match.
- Players must not be asked to play more than 3 years above their age group e.g. an U11 can play U12, U13 & U14 but not u15.

Sanctions and rules drawn out should always be fair, consistent and applied evenly, and in the case of a persistent offence, should be progressively applied.

- Rules should be clearly stated and agreed between mentors and players.
- A warning should be given if a rule is broken.
- A time-out should be given to the offender if the rule is broken a second time.
- If a rule is broken three or more times, the child should be spoken to and the parent/guardian involved if necessary.
- Sanctions should only be used in a corrective way that is intended to help children improve both now and in the future. Sanctions should not be used to make the coach/manager/volunteer feel more powerful.
- When violations of the team rules or other misbehaviours occur, sanctions should always be applied in an impartial and fair manner
- Sanctions should never be used as threats. If a rule is broken, the appropriate sanction/s should be implemented consistently, fairly and firmly.
- Sanctions should not be applied if the coach/manager/volunteer is not comfortable with them. If an appropriate action cannot be devised immediately, the child should be told that the matter will be dealt with later, at a specified time and as soon as is possible
- Once a sanction/s has been imposed, it is important to make the child feel s/he is a valued member of the team again
- A child should be helped, to understand if necessary why sanction/s are imposed
- A child should not be sanctioned for making errors whilst playing gaelic games.
- Physical activity (e.g. running laps or doing push ups) should not be used as a sanction as to do so may cause a child to resent physical activity which is something that s/he should learn to enjoy throughout his/her life. Remember hurling and gaelic football has to be fun if participants are to continue playing
- Sanctions should be used sparingly. Constant criticism and sanctioning can cause participants to turn away from gaelic games.

Adapted from the Irish Sports Councils Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's Sport (Reviewed 2005)

5. MSP AWAY TRIPS POLICY

Attention to the following will help to promote safety:

- All away trips must be approved and sanctioned by the juvenile committee of MSP
- Written permission of parents/guardians shall be obtained for all overnight trips.
- The roles and responsibilities of adults participating in away trips shall be clearly defined.
- MSP will appoint a Team Manager/Head of Delegation for all away trips. He/She will have overall responsibility for the children's well being, behaviour and sleeping arrangements. He/She will be appointed as an official of MSP for the duration of the trip. All coaches/volunteers are accountable to the Team Manager/Head of Delegation.
- Children will be informed at the outset of who they can report any concerns they might have to. They shall be clearly encouraged to tell anybody if they have a concern.
- Where there are mixed teams there shall be at least one female in the management/coaching structure
- The Team Manager/Head of Delegation shall submit a verbal report to the MSP juvenile committee as soon as possible after the trip.
- As a norm adults should not share a room with children. Where the presence of an adult is required there should be more than one adult in the room with the children. If children are sharing, it should be with those of the same age and sex.
- Coaches/volunteers are advised to avoid being alone with one child. If talking separately do so in an open environment, in view of others.
- Adequate child ratios should always be maintained (This can depend on the ages of the children and the nature of the activity involved) in line with common standards of practice.
- Adequate supervision shall be maintained at all times. On all away trips parents are encouraged to attend.
- MSP shall ensure that there is adequate insurance cover for the trip.
- When driving, coaches/volunteers are required to ensure adequate insurance and do not carry more than the permitted number of passengers. Ensure the use of seat belts, only busses with seat belts should be used to carry children on away trips.
- Coaches/Volunteers are discouraged from travelling alone in their cars with one child.

6. MSP Club Children's Officer/s

The appointment of Club Children's Officers is an essential element in the creation of a quality atmosphere in any club. He/She acts as a resource to members with regard to children's issues and also ensures that children have a voice in the running of the club and can freely talk of their experiences.

Government guidelines advise that a children's officer should be appointed by all clubs and this should be done in accordance with recommended selection and recruitment procedures. The appointment of this person should be; carried out in consultation with juvenile members and their parent/guardians, and ratified at each annual AGM.

MSP's Children's Officer will have the following functions:

- To promote the Irish Sport's Council Code of Ethics & Good Practice for Children's sport.
- To influence policy and practice and to prioritise children's needs.
- To ensure that children know how and whom they can report their concerns to within the club. Information disclosed by a child should be dealt with in accordance with the Department of Health and Children's Guidelines "Children First"
- To encourage the participation of parents/guardians in club activities.
- To co-operate with parents to ensure that each child enjoys his/her participation in gaelic games.

- To act as a resource with regard to best practice in children's sport.
- To report regularly to the Juvenile Club Committee.

Club Children's Officers do not have the responsibility of investigating or validating child protection concerns within the club and have no counselling or therapeutic role. This responsibility lies with the Health Service Executive and Gardai.

MSP have appointed **TRISH BARRY** as our Children's Officer and she/he can be contacted at **087-2033474**

Club Designated Person (Chairperson)

The Club designated person shall be the Chairperson who will be responsible for dealing with any concerns about the protection of children. The designated person is responsible for reporting allegations or suspicions of child abuse to Health Services Executive and/or An Garda Síochána.

7 Policy on the Use of Photographic and Filming Equipment

In line with the recommendation in MSP's Code of Conduct, any person wishing to engage in any video, zoom or close range photography should register their details with the organisers. Children and young people should only be photographed or filmed with their permission and/or the permission of their parents/guardian.

For Club Publications

- If a child's photograph on their own is published, avoid naming the player.
- Ask for parental permission to use a child's image. This ensures that they are aware of the way the image is to be used to represent the sport.
- Only use images of players in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. The content of the photograph should focus on the activity not on a particular child.

General Policy

- No photography is allowed in the changing room/dressing areas. This includes the use of Camera phones.

Photographers/film/video operators wishing to record an event or practice session should seek permission/accreditation with the children's officer, team manager/coach and/or event organiser of session. The club will:

- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour
- Issue the photographer with identification which must be worn at all times
- Keep a record of accreditations
- Inform players and parents that a photographer will be in attendance at an event and ensure they consent to both the taking and publication of films or photographs
- Not allow unsupervised access to players or one to one photo sessions at events
- Not approve/allow photo sessions outside the events or at a child's home.

Videoing as a coaching aid: Video equipment can be used as a legitimate coaching aid. However, permission should first be obtained from the player and the player's parent/guardian.

Anyone concerned about any photography taking place at events/matches or training sessions should bring their concerns to the attention of the committee/team manager/coach children's officer.

8. Parents as Spectators and Code of Conduct

- Don't place excessive pressure on children to perform to unrealistically high expectations. Children play gaelic games to develop their skills, to have fun and enjoy the game.
- Be on your best behaviour and lead by example. The behaviour of a team's supporters will often be remembered long after the result of the game. Let it be remembered for the right reasons.
- Applaud good play, sportsmanship and best effort by the visiting team as well as your own team.
- Welcome and respect all your team's opponents. Without them there would be no match.
- Condemn the use of violence in all forms at every opportunity.
- Verbal abuse of players, match officials or opposing supporters cannot be accepted in any shape or form. Players or match officials should never be regarded as fair targets for ignorant or abusive behaviour.
- Encourage your child to give their best effort, so that the result of each game is accepted without disappointment.
- Don't emphasise winning at all costs. At matches/training parents/guardians are asked to encourage and support the team, and criticism of players is to be avoided.
- If a child is to play, he/she will do so in time through your encouragement. Don't force and unwilling child to participate. Help your child to work towards skill improvement.
- As a spectator do not use profane language or harass referees, coaches or players.
- Do not criticise a young player's performance, that's not your role.
- Recognise the value and importance of volunteer referees and coaches. Support and respect the coach/mentor in relation to decisions made on the pitch during games and practice sessions.
- Ensure that the young person is on time for training/matches wherever possible and arrives properly equipped.
- Always arrive to collect your child before training/match is scheduled to finish, but we would encourage you to remain for the match/training session where possible.
- Children will not be permitted to train/play hurling without a helmet.
- Ensure that the young player is a registered member of the club. Only registered members can play matches/train with MSP club.
- The club is not responsible for loss of any items or breakages of any equipment
- Each child should come prepared for the weather conditions of the day with all gear required.
- During the season the various teams will be travelling to different competitions and blitzes and parents/guardians are asked to assist in transporting the children to these games.

9. Players Code of Conduct

Children in MSP are entitled to:

- Be safe
- Be treated with dignity, sensitivity and respect
- Participate in hurling and gaelic football on an equal basis, appropriate to their ability and stage of development.
- Be happy, have fun and enjoy gaelic games
- Make a complaint in an appropriate way and have it dealt with through a proper and effective complaints procedure
- Be afforded appropriate confidentiality
- Be listened to and to be believed
- Have a voice in the running of the club

Children should also be encouraged to realise that they also have responsibilities to treat other children, fellow players, coaches and volunteers with the same degree of fairness and respect.

In this regard children in MSP should undertake to:

- Abide by all club rules
- Treat others on their team in a respectful manner
- Respect opponents, they are not the enemy, they are partners in a sporting event
- Shake hands after the match, whoever wins
- Give opponents a hand if they are injured
- Accept apologies from opponents when they are offered
- Respect fellow team members and support them both when they do well and when things go wrong
- Play fairly and by the rules
- Respect coaches, match officials and their decisions.
- Treat players from minority groups with the same respect you show other people
- Be modest in victory and be gracious in defeat- “Be A Sport”
- Approach the club Children’s Officer with any questions or concerns they might have.
Coaches and parents should encourage children to speak out and support them in doing so
- Respect our club and other club’s property and clubhouse.
- Be punctual for all training sessions and matches
- Let the coach know if you will be absent from training or matches
- Be attentive to the coaches during matches and training sessions

Children in MSP should not:

- Cheat or take unfair advantage of others
- Use abusive language, or argue with, the referee, officials, team mates or opponents
- Fight, bully or use violent or dangerous behaviour
- Tell lies about adults or other children
- Spread false rumours
- Take banned substances to improve performance
- Keep secrets about any person who may have caused them harm
- Behave in any manner that may bring the name of Mungret St. Paul’s GAA club into disrepute

In MSP we want children to have fun and develop skills in a safe and **Fair Play** environment where standards of behaviour are just as important as winning.

We recognise that competition and winning is an important goal, but winning at all costs does not meet the needs of young players.

Making sport fun.

In promoting “Sport for Fun” we in MSP will insist on:

- Encouraging participation
- Promoting the development of skills as opposed to winning at all costs
- Emphasising and praising effort
- Acting as good role models
- Insisting on Fair Play
- Being realistic with our expectations
- Ensuring all children get match time
- Teaching players that standards of behaviour are just as important as winning

10. Disciplinary complaints and appeals procedure

MSP encourages all club members to make every reasonable effort to address their concerns and

resolve their issues with another club member informally before filing a formal, written grievance. It is in the best interest of all involved with MSP if we can resolve differences without the need for a formal grievance. The issues would preferably be dealt with in private and not within the view or hearing of other club members, especially the children.

If you are unable to resolve your grievance informally and wish to have the intervention of MSP, then you must file a formal, written grievance.

If any MSP Bord na nOg club member has a complaint against another club member for a violation of a club rule or code of conduct, they may file such a complaint in writing to the Bord na nOg club secretary. Such complaints will be processed according to the procedure outlined below.

Your grievance should be submitted to the club secretary within 2 weeks of the event in question. The complaint will be brought to the attention of the Bord na nOg club chairperson. The Bord na nOg chairperson or a designee may speak to the club member raising the grievance and attempt to resolve the issue. If this is successful the secretary will notify the club committee at the next club meeting of the fact that a grievance had been dealt with, and may provide broad outlines but always maintaining the anonymity of all parties involved.

If the issue is not yet resolved, the chairperson will convene a grievance committee. Copies of the written grievance will be made available to all members whom the grievance addresses, and to the members of the grievance committee. The grievance committee will meet to determine whether a hearing is necessary. If the complaint involves a criminal offense the disciplinary committee will be disbanded and the statutory authorities informed.

If deemed necessary and appropriate, a grievance hearing date will be scheduled and all parties are required to appear in front of the grievance committee. Prior to the hearing, the members to whom the grievance addresses will be afforded an opportunity to respond in writing, and this will be provided to all members of the grievance committee as well as to the member who filled the grievance. The time interval for the written responses will be established at the time that the hearing date is scheduled.

If the grievance committee finds the accused member guilty of a violation, they may recommend a penalty for the misconduct to the club chairperson. Disciplinary action will be determined on a case by case basis.

MSP values its members and believes that immediate termination of membership is appropriate only in serious cases of misconduct. MSP's general policy is to correct misconduct before it rises to a level requiring discharge. Accordingly MSP has the option of using the following progressive discipline process:

Verbal warning

Written reprimand

Suspension and or termination of membership

Because some misconduct warrants skipping steps in the process, MSP reserves the right to immediately terminate a membership or skip any steps in the progressive discipline process.

The decision of MSP Bord na nOg Chairperson may be appealed to the Senior Club Chairperson, who's decision is final.