

Hi to everybody,

This is a general email on behalf of the National Child Safeguarding Committee to our Children's Officers at County level, to many at club level as well and to Child Safeguarding Tutors in addition to other safeguarding personnel.

I wish to update you in relation to our on-going work during these unprecedented times and to assure you that Croke Park, our provincial and county offices and our National Children's Office continues to provide vital services to our members and to our Clubs as indeed do our colleagues in LGFA and in the Camogie Association..

I can assure you that telephone calls, queries, vetting applications, follow up supports and dealing with sensitive cases are all dealt with regardless of the current difficulties.

Club Operations – continued postponement

The latest communication from the GAA this week confirms that the cessation of activities will now continue until 19 April 2020 and that further communication will issue again before that date. This decision, in relation to GAA activity, also extends to the delivery of our Child Safeguarding Training Workshops. We ask all our members to respect this decision and to fully abide by it.

GAA statement: <https://www.gaa.ie/news-archive/news/latest-gaa-update-on-covid-19/>

Child Safeguarding Training

As per above all Child Safeguarding workshops remain postponed until after 19 April but will resume when we recommence our activities. This is unfortunate but understandable given current circumstances.

We would remind Club personnel that those that are eligible to undertake the Safeguarding 1 online refresher programme may do at any time by accessing <https://learning.gaa.ie/safeguarding> To be eligible to undertake this online refresher one must have attended a Gaelic Games face to face workshop (Safeguarding 1) within the last three years or have attended an LSP or other Sports organisations' delivery of child safeguarding 1 workshop in that period.

To assist us when planning the resumption of training we are asking all Tutors to send a list of any workshops that you have postponed due to the Covid 19 emergency to Michelle at michelle.harte@gaa.ie . This will enable us to log these workshops and if need be plan for other Tutors to assist you when we resume.

In case these postponements continue for longer than anticipated we are exploring how we may either deliver recorded safeguarding workshops online or how we may video live an in-house workshop and have it delivered online for participants.

In case people enquire of you we should be clear that our current policy is that a person must attend (in person) a Gaelic Games Safeguarding 1, 2 or 3 workshop and the only online refresher on offer is the Safeguarding 1 Gaelic Games Refresher and only for those eligible to undertake it. No other online refresher or online programme can be used to replace the Gaelic Games version.

Please be assured if we feel the need to proceed with any plans to deliver any of our workshops (in full) online, you will be informed.

Child Safeguarding Information Seminar - 25th April postponed

We had pencilled in Saturday 25th April in Croke Park for our next Child Safeguarding Information Seminar which we now must postpone. The seminar was to include upskilling for safeguarding tutors and a special information session for Children's Officers. However, once we are clear as to when we can reconvene in large groups, we hope to re-arrange this Information seminar for October or November. Two further Child Safeguarding Information Seminars will also be scheduled for Cork and Cavan in early 2021.

Code of Behaviour (Underage) Hearings

With the current travel and congregation restrictions in place we are strongly recommending that no Code of Behaviour Hearings at Club or County level should take place. This recommendation remains until the Association lifts its postponement of general club operations.

Any participant to a proposed hearing who seeks a postponement of the hearings must be granted that postponement.

Féile 2020 cancelled

Those of you from Féile hosting counties will be aware that both Féile na nGael and Féile Peile na nÓg have been cancelled and will not take place in 2020. Those that have been vetted as host family members remain vetted for that purpose only and following agreement with Féile organisers and the Vetting Bureau we will not process any new vetting applications forms that relate to Féile 2020.

Any coach of a Féile age group team, who may still wish or need to be vetted, should now apply to be vetted as a coach, if they have not already done so.

Check out the vetting and training in your club

Twice yearly we distribute a list of vetted personnel on a club by club basis. While we had envisaged reducing the circulation of these list to one per year, we will, due to the current circumstances, release an up to date list on a Club by Club basis in the next week or so. This list will go to each County Children's Officer and to County Secretaries. Where possible, a list will also now go directly to Club Children's Officers who have availed of their new children's officers email address. Now is the ideal time to check if all relevant personnel working with children are vetted, have attended child safeguarding training and have a coaching qualification.

We are also availing of the falloff in training to examine how we may compile a list of those who have attended Safeguarding Training and to make this list available soon.

When issuing the list we will advise all Club Children's Officers to use this period of Club inactivity to check and double check that all persons appointed by their Club to work with children this year have fulfilled the safeguarding criteria of vetting, child safeguarding training and a coaching qualification.

Similarly, County Children's Officer should check in on our County Development Squads and ensure that any person with a role of responsibility working with children should be vetted, should have attended child safeguarding training and have a coaching qualification.

Amendments to E-Vetting system

For some time we have been in negotiations with the Garda National Vetting Bureau to agree the contents of a vetting drop box. This vetting drop contains a list of specified roles and it is proposed that the vetting applicant ticks the role title that closely identifies with their own role at club or county level. This will avoid applicants creating role titles that could be rejected as not being eligible for vetting, under the provisions of the Act.

In consultation with the GNVB, LGFA and Camogie we have agreed 14 role titles to be included in the vetting drop box. The roles are listed below, and while we accept that not every role can fully describe what a person may be doing, we will ask applicants to choose the role that best or closely describes their role at Club or County level. The 14 agreed role titles are:

- Coach or Manager with players 18 years and under
- Cúl Camp Coach Coaching children 18 and under
- Artane Band Tutor working with under 18s
- Caretaker in care and supervision of children
- Chaperone working with children
- First aider providing treatment to children and vulnerable adults
- Host Family Child Accommodation
- Match Official in care and supervision of children
- Mentoring players 18 years and under
- Physiotherapist providing treatment to children and vulnerable adults
- Scór tutor working with under 18s
- Supervisor working with children or vulnerable persons
- Club or County Children's Officer
- Photographer of childrens games

The list will be box format. This change to the vetting system will take place next Thursday, 2nd April 2020, resulting in a one-day closure of our vetting website.

One additional temporary role title may be added to the above to cater for members who are assisting in Covid 19 community initiatives. This role title, '*Assistant GAA Covid 19 community initiative*' if added, will remain in the drop box until the Covid 19 community initiatives have finished.

Please note that we currently do not have permission to add the role of Designated Liaison Person (DLP) to the drop box but we are negotiating with the GNVB to have this role title added in a later stage. As an interim measure if any of your DLPs apply to be vetted and they have no other role with children they could tick the role of Children's Officer.

In conclusion can we all in acknowledging the current situation also accept that it will pass and when it does and when the advice from medical and government personnel is that we may re-commence our activities we can look forward to the recommencement of club, county and national activities in our Associations and to ensuring that children and young people continue to enjoy our activities in an enjoyable and safe environment.

Keep safe and healthy and let's be positive. If we can assist in any way just let us know.

Gearóid Ó Maoilmhichil
GAA Child Safeguarding Manager
28 Márta 2020