



# Cuala GAA | Minor Boys Protocol

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## *Definition of common terms:*

- *‘Club player’ = player at club level (inter-county policy is set by County Board)*
- *‘Adult’ = any player or team composed of individuals aged 19 and above (including Under 19 / 20 / 21 age teams)*
- *‘Year 1 Minor’ = under 17 age group (in 2023, if born in 2006)*
- *‘Year 2 Minor’ = under 18 age group (in 2023, if born in 2005)*
- *‘Minor mentor’ = lead coach for player’s primary team in either code*
- *‘Minor rep’ = contact for Minor Section and secondary contact for dual code players*

Cuala GAA Coaching Games & Development

<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Changes</b>	<b>Approved By</b>
1.0	14/07/2023	Policy sign-off	Coiste
1.1	03/11/2023	Addition of 'Adult' in definition of common terms	Coiste

## Dublin Co. Board (DCB) directive on Minor player “decoupling”

### Overview | Taskforce Summary

Background on GAA policy review, undertaken by age taskforce (2019 – 2023) focused on player burnout and overtraining; appropriate age-grade for club development and inter-county; medical and welfare; and retention of players aged 17 – 19

#### *GAA agreed reasons for decoupling:*

1. To reduce the number of teams/managers a player is answerable to (one age grade between developmental and adult at inter-county)
2. Remove 18 as a key age grade - lessen responsibility on senior cycle exam players (Data shows senior cycle exam pupils evenly spread between U18s and U19s now)
3. Fixture planning – by decoupling U17's from adult games programme - U17 inter-county competitions do not affect the adult games programme and vice versa
4. Addressed the demands of being available to multiple teams on players at that age – and by extension overtraining/overuse injuries
5. Reduced fixture clashes (players being made to choose between one game/team and another); or worse opting to play both in a short period of time.

#### *GAA underage taskforce findings:*

- The importance of “De-Coupling” (i.e., at what age youth players can play adult club competition)
- Fixture planning/reduces teams' players are available for, managers answerable to etc.
- Inter County and Club must be considered as two separate questions
  - different imperatives and priorities for both
- Inter county should be around
  - The protection & appropriate development of our talented players over 17 – Senior.
  - Debate is relevant to a small number of players
- Club should be around:
  - Player retention & whether age grades can play a positive role in maximising the number of players who transition to adult.
  - The provision of regular and meaningful games
  - Impact on adult games programme
  - Debate involves the vast majority of players

## Cuala GAA Coaching Games & Development

### *Summary age grades at club level*

- Decoupling is at the heart of our ability to provide games, and to minimize the negative impact on the adult games programme.
- It is acknowledged in the context of the above that there are considerably different needs in different counties.
- Numbers of players in each age category may differ significantly between Counties (Club sizes – e.g. Leitrim one club per 1,300 players; Mayo one club per 2,000 as opposed to Meath/Kildare – 1 club per c. 3,500 etc)
- Players in some counties accommodated post U17 in Adult teams (2nd or 3rd teams); not so in others
- Rural and urban divide (within counties)
- A “one size fits all” model may not therefore be the best approach.
- It may be that this is something best left to each individual County to assess based on their own needs\*
- In this context, there are several options available to the GAA to adopt as National Policy, while still allowing for flexibility in terms of Age Grades in each County.
- Decoupling MUST be a part of any option to avoid the problems of the past (overtraining / overuse / fixture planning etc)

*\*Directive received from DCB in May 2023 to clubs ...make local level assessment based on player and team needs taking above into account*

## Cuala GAA Club-level Protocol for Minor players

Any situation where an underage (under 18 years) player is involved with club activity - **ALL** coaches, mentors, volunteers MUST be Garda Vetted and Safeguarded in line with the [GAA Code of Behaviour \(Underage\)](#) by which we are governed.

- Vetting applications can be made online via the Foireann app
- Safeguarding can be accessed by registering with [Ken Fitzgerald](#), Club GPO
- Online Refresher course available for those who previously attended Safeguarding 1. Visit [GAA Safeguarding Refresh](#) to complete.

*Refer to: [Code of Behaviour \(Underage\)](#)*

### Minor Boys “Playing up” to Adult Squads Policy | Hurling and Football

#### Priority Squad

- Year 1 (U17)
  - Minor team will remain as player’s main priority and team throughout their full season
- Year 2 (U18)
  - Minor team will remain as player’s main priority and team up until competition has concluded for that year

#### Adult “playing up” Eligibility

- Year 1 (U17)
  - No player will be eligible to play adult games / training in their first Minor year and will not be considered for adult “playing up” purposes
- Year 2 (U18)
  - ALL players are eligible to play adult games / training in their second Minor year and provided with equal opportunity and consideration for adult “playing up” purposes.
    - The GAA Directive under the Code of Behaviour (Underage) is clear and aims to provide all eligible players with an opportunity to participate in their age-appropriate teams and if certain players have demonstrated the skills and capabilities to compete at an adult level before turning 18, it would be unfair to

exclude them based solely on their turning 18 in a later month, of the same year as their team members.

- Year 2 (U18) Player is eligible and may be provided to support adult teams to field for competitive action in
  - League
  - Championship
  - Challenge games

Overall, it is important to adhere to the guidelines and policies outlined by the governing body and this will remain the Club's position to allow ALL U18 (year 2) players to be eligible to "play up" to adult. The need for foundation coaching and the mandatory safeguarding and vetting to be undertaken by adult mentors and volunteers (not adult players) remains a requirement where a player has yet to turn 18.

### Adult “playing up” Requests

The decision to involve underage players in adult competition should be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration their abilities, maturity, and safeguarding measures.

- Minor Lead Coach and their mentor group to determine player’s readiness for progression from underage to adult teams
- Minor player to be made aware of any implications regarding ‘cup-tied’ game-time and potential regrading in the following season when they move up as an adult player (i.e., if “playing up” for any amount of time with a first adult team in competitive games, they need to be aware that they cannot “play up” with an adult team of a lower division and will need to wait for regrade in the following season)
- Requests to “play up” are for Minors to be used as support, or surplus to existing adult team members when available numbers require it.
- “Playing up” by a minor who already has a main priority squad, should not negatively impact existing adult team players

#### *Requests where player has NOT yet turned 18:*

- Mentors of adult teams (i.e., coaches; physio; S&C; first aid, volunteers etc.) that include underage players in their teams, ALL must be vetted, must have attended child safeguarding training and must have a minimum coaching qualification.
- Confirmation for all mentors of adult team will be required for Garda vetting and completion of safeguarding training. Details to be provided to the [Club’s Children’s Officer](#).

Further detail on under 18 rules and guidelines are covered in the GAA Code of Behaviour (Underage), refer to [Section 3: Maintaining Good Practice and Behaviour](#) – see example below:

**“YOUNG PLAYERS ON ADULT TEAMS**

*The progression of a player from underage grades to adult teams is always welcomed and may come sooner for some rather than others. While it is not unusual for players under 18 yrs. of age to be part of adult club teams their participation requires additional attention as they still legally hold recognition as a child which their parents, fellow players, their Club and mentors and their Association must recognise and uphold.*

*This may require their fellow team members being spoken to by the team mentors so as to address the legal status of the under 18 yr. olds and to emphasise that adults must always conduct themselves in an appropriate manner and an assurance that the adults will not encourage or facilitate the under 18 yr. olds to participate in adult related socialising or activity.*

***Mentors of adult teams that include underage players must be vetted, must have attended child safeguarding training and must have a minimum coaching qualification”***

### Contact arrangements

No direct contact with player / parent to be made without lead coach knowledge by adult mentors, or an adult player on behalf of adult mentors.

- For each adult game where a minor player is needed, it will require its own request
- First point of contact for request MUST be submitted as below for:
  - Single code player to **Minor Lead Coach** (e.g. adult football mentor contacts minor football lead coach directly)
  - Dual-code player to **Minor Lead Coach AND Minor Rep** (e.g. adult football mentor contacts minor football coach directly and copies Minor rep)
- Second point of contact (only to be made when approved by main minor team management) will be with:
  - Player, if already turned 18, OR
  - Parent for player is under 18

Player welfare\*

- No impact to be made on existing minor player's activities or return from injury plans
- Minor players will not "play up" in the week of their own Minor game
- When available, Minor Lead Coach (single code) and Minor Lead Coaches and/or Minor Rep (dual code) to provide season schedule availability at earliest possible opportunity to allow for adequate planning for adult squads
- Player load to be monitored by both adult and minor mentors, and where possible activity recorded and available to player's main Minor mentor
- Refer to [Section 9: Organising Club Activities](#) for social / non-playing activities where Year 2, U18 players have not yet turned 18

\*Further review needed on player welfare area – there is a requirement to set-up and agree what monitoring is necessary; who will be responsible and where this will be held. Proposal to include any CCC directive also



## Appendix

### Underage Code of Behaviour

Section 1 | Code of Behaviour and Child Safeguarding Policy Statement

Section 2 | Child Safeguarding Risk Assessment

Section 3 | Maintain Good Practice and Behaviour

#### **YOUNG PLAYERS ON ADULT TEAMS**

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Section 4 | Dealing with breaches of the Code of Behaviour

Section 5 | Recruitment and Selection

Section 6 | Player Injury Funds and Insurance

Section 7 | Club and County Children's Officer

Section 8 | Designated Liaison Person

Section 9 | Organising Club Activities

Section 11 | Dealing with allegations or concerns of abuse

Section 12 | Tackling bullying in your club

Code of behaviour appendices