

Naomh Mearnóg GAA Games and Coaching Policy

WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT?

This document is designed to make the lives of Naomh Mearnóg GAA Coaches and Mentors easier. Every season similar issues are debated and take up valuable energy of our club volunteers. This document aims to provide specific guidance on these recurring issues.

All Coaches and Mentors in Naomh Mearnóg GAA should have a clear understanding of 'How We Do Things Around Here', so that all their energy can be spent on the thing they love doing – coaching and supporting players.

NAOMH MEARNÓG COACHING VALUES

Values inform everything we do. Without articulated values we are playing a game without knowing where the goal posts are.... that would be pointless!

WHAT ARE OUR GOAL POSTS?

INCLUSIVE:

We provide a place where anyone with an interest can get involved in Gaelic Games. We look for opportunities to proactively include groups and individuals who may experience barriers (real or imagined) to getting involved in our community club. We welcome anyone who wants to play regardless of ability or previous experience. Every individual Coach and Player is given the opportunity to enjoy a development journey to their full potential.

COLLABORATIVE:

We work together, acknowledging that as individuals we serve the collective of the club and every club member has something to offer. No coach owns any team and we all work together to support the players in the best way possible.

COMPETITIVE:

We are a sports club and sport is competitive. We are ambitious to get our adult teams competing in the highest divisions. This ambition also applies to the provision of the appropriate level of competition for all playing members. Every player should have the opportunity to play competitive sport at a level that suits them.

PROGRESSIVE:

We are a forward-thinking club which is not afraid to try new approaches and use the most up to date coaching, sports science and club development information available. We recognise that the GAA Club is traditionally a mirror of Irish communities. As our community changes over time we recognise that our club will change in order to stay relevant.

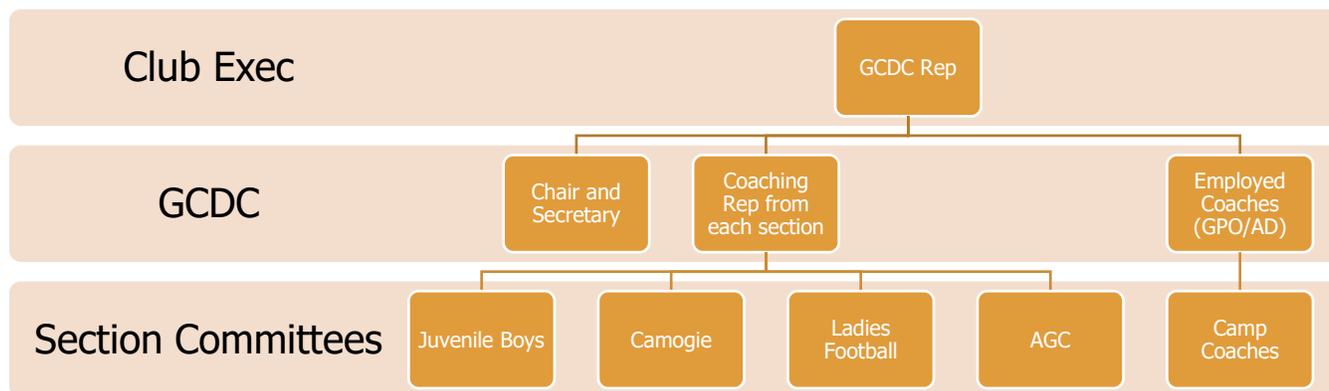
THE REMIT OF THE GAMES AND COACHING DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE (GCDC)

What is the role and remit of the Games and Coaching Development Committee?

The Games and Coaching Development Committee was formed by the Club Executive in order to give more support to club coaches. It was felt that coaching and games activity can get lost in general club meetings and a targeted group that had no other focus would be very effective.

What is the structure of the Committee?

The Committee reports to the Club Executive. Each section in the club is asked to have a coaching representative on this Committee. This person should have a good understanding of coaching issues in their section. This person should also relay all information from the GCDC to their section.



What is the remit of the Games and Coaching Development Committee?

As directed by the Club Executive the Games and Coaching Development Committee (GCDC) has the following remit:

1. develop Games and Coaching Development plans for agreement by the Executive;
2. work on defining, adopting and implementing player pathways with each of the respective sections;
3. oversee the implementation of a range of coach education and specialist skills courses;
4. oversee the development of Athletic Development programs (AD) for all ages and codes;
5. coordinate the workload of the Games Promotion Officer (GPO); and
6. carry out any other relevant functions assigned to it by the Executive.

The GCDC aims to serve each section by managing the following practical elements of supporting club coaches:

1. Day to day support of GPO and coordinating their workload.
2. Outlining the desired culture of coaching in the Club and providing a coordinated approach to Club Development across all 4 codes.
3. Ensuring that we are abiding by the GAA Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport and any other relevant GAA Guidelines that must be adopted.
4. Setting minimum standards and clear expectations of behaviour for club coaches.
5. Providing specific actionable support for each section in any areas that they are having difficulties with.
6. Supporting sections in the recruitment of new coaches.
7. Ensuring players are getting a balanced games programme and all players are getting an opportunity to play and participate.
8. Ensuring that up to date sports science and coaching knowledge is being utilised so that all players are being exposed to the correct type of training and coaching for their age group.
9. Developing and supporting the implementation of a transition to adult games pathway for all codes.
10. Allocating a yearly budget to spend on coach development activities for all 4 codes, including guest coaches and speakers.

“HOW WE DO THINGS AROUND HERE”

This section deals with the most common coaching issues. Club Coaching Policy is outlined so that every section knows 'How we do things around here' and why.

Coach and Mentor Requirements:

Every coach and/or mentor is required to complete the following as a minimum:

- Up to date Garda Vetting (within the last 5 years).
- Up to date GAA Specific Child Protection Course.
- Foundation GAA Coaching Course or Camogie, LGFA equivalent.
- From U8 onwards at least 1 mentor or coach from each team should have a level 1 coaching qualification.

Coach and Mentor Expectations:

Every coach and mentor must embody the expectations outlined in the GAA documents listed below.

[GAA/CAMOGIE/LGFA CODE OF BEHAVIOUR](#)

[GAA/CAMOGIE/LGFA MAINTAINING APPROPRIATE LEVELS OF BEHAVIOUR WHEN WORKING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE](#)

[GAA/CAMOGIE/LGFA CLUB CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT](#)

[CHILDREN FIRST - NATIONAL GUIDELINES](#)

Management Team Structure:

Managing and coaching a team can be time-consuming. The *Coaching Team Structure* that is attached at the end of this document is recommended for the following reasons:

- A team does not become over reliant on one individual and volunteers do not get burnt out.
- Volunteers have clear roles and get to develop specific skill sets for themselves.

How is a Management Team decided upon?

The GCDC has the remit of ensuring that all teams have appropriate management teams in place. While each section has the responsibility to organise their own management teams, it is the responsibility of the GCDC to ensure that:

- Minimum standards, behaviours and roles, as outlined in this document, are being met.
- Teams have people with a blend of skills and are not over reliant on one individual.
- Players are being exposed to the correct type of coaching for their age group.
- Management teams with any difficulties are receiving support from the club.
- Coaches who want to upskill are supported.

The GCDC has the responsibility to intervene if minimum standards are not being met in any section.

Rotation of Coaches

There can be an expectation that once a management team takes a team at u8 they will continue with that group until the team reaches adult level. While this has been the tradition, it should not be automatic. In order to ensure that our juvenile players receive well rounded coaching the club will adopt the following policies:

1. We will develop expert coaches in each development bracket. These coaches will act as a sounding board for other coaches in that age bracket. They will support coaches in implementing best practice coaching principles as outlined in the Naomh Mearnóg Coaching Handbook.
2. Between u8 and Minor each team will experience a minimum of 2 different lead coaches. Changing the lead coach does not mean that other members of the management team cannot continue involvement with any given team.

These policies are adopted so that:

- Coaches are supported in their desire to deliver quality age appropriate coaching.
- Teams do not become over reliant on one individual.
- Players are exposed to a variety of coaching styles.
- Coaches are encouraged to gain experience in a variety of roles.

Playing Journey through Naomh Mearnóg GAA Club

In the organisation of management teams, the journey from nursery to adult games will be divided up into six periods. During each period all four quadrants of player development will be addressed.



The specifics of how these 4 quadrants are addressed for each age bracket is outlined in the *Naomh Mearnóg Coaching Handbook*.

1: NURSERY. Connection to the Club

The primary aim of the nursery is to establish positive connections between Naomh Mearnóg and *new players and new coaches*. New members should get a distinct sense of the ethos of the club. All children should be welcomed and supported while being exposed to the full breadth of age appropriate fundamental athletic skills along with the basic skills of gaelic games. The effort put into developing new players should be equivalent to the effort that is put into getting to know new parents, families and recruiting new coaches and mentors. **While on occasion players may move groups within the nursery - all players must move from nursery to the next phase in their own age group.**

2: U 8 – U 12. Participation and Confidence

Within this age group the primary aim is to maintain participation and build confidence. Each player should be able to see themselves as a GAA Player in the future. In order to give players this confidence we must build good relationships within the team and ensure no player is feeling left out. We must also show players how their skills of the game have improved even though they may not be perfect. They should feel confident and competent on the pitch and not worried about not being good enough.

3: U13 – U14 (Féile). Introduction to Competition

As Go Games is non-competitive, from u13 a healthy perspective on competition within our teams will be developed. We will teach players the direct relationship between training and improving. Players will also be encouraged to turn up on match day and give their best effort regardless of opposition or outcome. We will teach players how to learn when things do not go well. Great sportspeople have the ability to take positives and lessons from defeats and mistakes. We can start teaching these lessons at a young age. It is vital that everything is not focused on winning, but rather turning up and continuing to improve.

4: U15 – U16: Laying the ground work for transitioning to Adult Games

Retention of players and continuous individual development will be a key priority at this age group. All four quadrants (as outlined above) of the game will be continuously developed for the group at large. From 16 upwards there will be specific focus on the transition to adult games. At 15 and 16 however we begin to work on the skills that they need for this transition. During these age groups we will begin to encourage players to take responsibility for themselves. We will give them the opportunity to start identifying things they want to improve and support them in doing so.

5: MINOR: Beginning the Transition to Adult Games*

The minor age group should be targeted as a really enjoyable year for players. The reality is that many players discontinue their involvement in the club when they finish secondary school. This year can be very challenging due to the clash with academic targets. Coaches will have to accept that during this year players often won't prioritise gaelic games. During this period players should be given a taste of some of the supports and expectations of adult games. Each section should try to provide games for anyone interested in participating. Numbers are often a key issue so serious consideration needs to be given to whether we enter 1 or 2 teams.

*Camogie do not have the same focus on the minor age grade. Therefore their pathway to adult games will look slightly different. Everything continues the same until u16. At that point however, the club should be providing a development adult team and Division 1/2 Adult team. The same focus is applied in that every effort should be made to make participation in gaelic games at the end of secondary school as enjoyable as possible so that when players transition to work or college they maintain a positive connection with Naomh Mearnóg.

6: ADULT PATHWAY: Continuous Development and Finding Your Level

Once players cross into adult games individual development must continue. Ideally each section should be working towards having a minimum of two functioning adult teams. The long-term aim for each

code should be to provide Division 1 competition through the first team. At least 1 other team should provide an opportunity to meet both developmental and participation for all players. For Division 1 players (or those aspiring to reach that level) there will be a clear outline of 'the ideal adult player' across the 4 quadrants of the game. This will allow players and coaches to complete a needs analysis and work towards specific areas of individual development.

Using these six general time periods and their key priorities as guidelines, the Games and Coaching Development Committee aims to support each code in ensuring that each coaching team has the right mix of people to meet the needs of the team in question.

Féile Year – Our Specific Approach

The Féile year provides a unique opportunity for a team to learn lessons in relation to commitment and competition. It is the job of the management team to ensure that those lessons are positive and productive. Each year will have specific guidelines in relation to fundraising and gear. **In relation to team selection, players of the Féile age group will always get priority over younger players.**

Our Approach to Streaming/Blending.

Streaming/Blending teams means grouping players in relation to our perception of their ability. Players' ability changes rapidly as they develop and maintaining long term streaming inhibits the development of both the 'better' and 'weaker' players. From u 8 – u12 teams either self-grade or enter a 1/2/3 team league. At u13 level (in the juvenile boys) teams must complete a set of grading matches to assess their appropriate division for the league. The following are guidelines as to how we approach this process in Naomh Mearnóg:

1. It is our responsibility to develop all players in all four quadrants of the game.
2. At u8 level teams should be blended – that means a mix of all abilities playing on all teams. These children are just out of nursery and imposing a 'pecking order' or them is entirely inappropriate.
3. When teams are asked to self-grade if numbers allow for multiple teams, coaches should aim to have a division 1/2 team along with a division 3/4/5 team. This provides a variety in competition level.
4. When teams have to complete a series of grading matches to assess their league division it is appropriate for coaches to organise their teams in such a way that they would achieve an

outcome of having a variation in competition options that will suit the development of all players, for example a Division 1/2 team and a Division 3/4/5 team.

5. Once divisional status is attained the critical point is that players and coaches rotate on a maximum of a 2 week basis. We adopt this policy in Naomh Mearnóg in order to develop well rounded players based on the following principles:

- Being able to 'play 'up' with perceived stronger players gives players the opportunity to develop confidence and an attitude of 'just giving it a go'. Helping players to overcome self-consciousness about their ability levels and just get out and play with their peers is an important part of player development, especially when it comes to player retention.
- Better players are usually thought to be better just based on their skill – if we want to develop well rounded players, they need to develop all quadrants. Young Naomh Mearnóg players need to be able to play with less able players.
- A weaker player on the division 1 team, will benefit from being a central player on the division 4 team and also playing up with more skilled players.
- No player should feel they 'have a right' to be on any team just because they happen to have better skills without putting in an effort.
- Players who work hard and put in a good effort even when things are difficult should be rewarded.
- All players need to learn how to be a sub – even our highly skilled players.

If we develop a culture of equality in the juvenile sections of the club we will develop well rounded players – those who reach their potential in terms of fitness and skill levels but most importantly are good team players.

Team selection

For all juvenile teams in all codes:

Players of the age group in question **always gets game time priority over a younger player who is playing up, presuming that the player in question is attending training regularly.**

Dual Players and Individual Player Loading/Burnout

Naomh Mearnóg is a dual club, it is the responsibility of Coaches to make being a dual player as easy as possible. A player should never be placed in the middle of arguments and have to pick between codes regardless of their age. When there are 2 separate management teams for hurling/football, camogie/football a liaison person should be nominated to co-ordinate the activity of a dual player.

Please note:

The World Health organisation states that children should experience a minimum of 60 mins of moderate to vigorous activity per day. [WORLD HEALTH ORG PHYSICAL ACTIVITY GUIDELINES](#)

Young players can experience burnout. Burnout is a negative psychological and physical state in which young athletes feel tired, less able to perform well, and are less interested in playing their sports.

Three symptoms characterise burnout:

- Physical and emotional exhaustion. This is not just being tired after a training session but more a general exhaustion and not having energy to engage in activities outside sport.
- Reduced sport accomplishment. This can be unusually inconsistent performances or more specifically based on the perception of the player, i.e. they feel like they are not playing well or not improving.
- Devaluation of Sport. This is usually reflected when a player loses interest in their sport. They are not interested in training or playing anymore and a usual question is 'why am I doing this?'

Coaches should be on the lookout for sustained examples of these symptoms. Burnout is not entirely based on the number of minutes spent training but also the environment the player is in.

Multiple games in a day:

Ideally a player should not be asked to play 2 games in a single day. If this is necessary the player should not play for the full duration of both games but rather a maximum of 90 mins total game time.

Use of Equipment and Club Facilities

As of Summer 2019 the club has issued a list of responsibilities for coaches and mentors in relation to club facilities and equipment. All Coaches are expected to respect these requests:

- Avoid undertaking heavy physical work on pitches and avoid goalmouths where possible.
- For go games try and avoid large groups of spectators on sidelines that are in the middle of actual full pitches.
- Goals should not be dragged – they should be carried or wheeled by at least 2 people
- Children should not be permitted to swing from any goal posts.
- Portable goals must be staked by at least 2 stakes or concrete weights. Referees are instructed not to commence play if goals are not secure and members of the executive can halt training sessions if goals are not secured.
- Stakes must be returned to container after use – they cause considerable damage to mowers if they are left in the grass.
- Nets and Flags for full size pitches are stored in individual bins that can be brought out to the pitch. Nets and flags should be taken down unless an agreement has been made with a team who are using that pitch later on the same day.
- Pitches are allocated based on knowledge of the full programme of events in all codes in the club. Teams allocated a pitch cannot change pitch unless they clear it with pitch allocator.
- When possible, especially in wet weather, and when an instruction has been issued warm up should take place off the pitches.
- No warm ups are permitted on the soccer pitch in Carrickhill.
- Dressing rooms should be cleaned after use. They must be locked and the shutter pulled down. You are responsible for dressing rooms used by your visiting team.
- A number of locks are used for containers and gates – if you have a key it is your responsibility to return lock when finished.
- Ensure rubbish is collected after matches.
- Dogs are not permitted, visiting teams should be told.
- Training times allocated are fixed. On the all-weather, teams should finish 5 mins before end time and starting teams must not enter all weather until their allocated start time.
- All Lights – dressing rooms and pitches must be turned off after use.
- All Weather lights must be off by 10pm.
- Containers should be kept tidy and organised.

Training Equipment is supplied by the club and is therefore owned by the club. Equipment or jerseys are shared or passed to other teams as requested by an appropriate committee.

Playing Membership.

Naomh Mearnóg operate a no pay no play policy. **Coaches cannot play any player who is not registered as they are not insured.**

Away Trips.

In order to build positive team dynamics and positive experiences each coaching team should organise one day trip each year. All away trips will be conducted in line with the guidelines in:

GAA/CAMOGIE/LGFA CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

Some key points to remember is that for children u18:

- A signed consent form should be collected before the trip along with relevant medical information.
- Any relevant medical information that a parent provides should be given to the coach who will be supervising that child.
- Guardians should be given a detailed itinerary for the day along with a contact number.
- Minimum supervision coach:child ratios are 1:8 for children under 12 and 1:10 for children over 12.
- Minimum of 2 adults of each gender should be with mixed groups

Communication

All communication with teams we will be in line with

GAA/CAMOGIE/LGFA CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

See the following introduction from the above document:

All coaches should make it known that our Associations' preferred option of communicating team information for underage teams is via the parental/guardian mobile phone of each players and not via the mobile phone of the child. If requested by a parent to send messages regarding games or training via the mobile phone of the child the coach/club should enquire as to the rationale of such requests and if in agreement must receive any such request in writing. Upon any agreement any messages sent to the child can only be as part of the team

group text that will also go to their parents and to all other members of that group text. Coaches are not permitted to communicate individually via social media with underage players.

Our Associations do not approve of Clubs or coaches engaging in or facilitating messaging apps in which players and coaches participate nor do we approve of the creation of Club messaging forums for underage players. Many such social media platforms have been shown to be most insecure, lack controls and are poorly managed and monitored in some instances. Such insecure usage should give cause for concern and by their nature may be susceptible to accessing or misuse by unscrupulous individuals quite often outside of our control. Experience has also shown that uncontrolled messaging apps, unfortunately have a greater chance of being used as a forum of exchanging inappropriate messages and images between children.

Any form of individual social media communication by a coach with an underage player shall be deemed a serious breach of the Code of Behaviour (Underage).

New Mentor Procedures

The club is required under law to have an induction process in place for all new mentors. It is required of the club to ensure that all new mentors understand that they must have the necessary qualifications and vetting completed and also understand fully the standards of behaviour that are expected from Naomh Mearnóg Coaches. Coaches should not begin coaching until this is completed.

NAOMH MEARNÓG COACH and MENTOR STANDARDS

ON THE SIDELINES:

1. We do not use abusive language towards ANYONE.
2. We do our very best to give as many players as much game time as we can so that they get an opportunity to develop their skills and to play their sport.
3. We allow players make decisions for themselves on the pitch and do not try to coach them through every play, all coaches should not be shouting in instructions to all players.
4. Coaches give clear instructions to players with no mixed messages.

IN TRAINING SESSIONS:

1. We prepare our training sessions to the best of our ability to be enjoyable and age appropriate. Session content should reflect the guidelines in Naomh Mearnóg Coaching booklet.
2. We strive to address all four quadrants of the demands of our games in each session.
3. We do not let a team become over reliant on one person. During the season all coaches are involved in training sessions. Lead coaches will delegate so all coaches get to coach.

OFF THE PITCH:

1. We are all Garda Vetted and have completed the required coach education and child protection courses.
2. We uphold the club facilities and equipment guidelines.
3. We value the knowledge and experience of other coaches and are open to collaboration between different teams.
4. We organise our management teams in a specific manner so that one team is not over reliant on a single individual and more people get an opportunity to develop coaching and managing skills.
5. We encourage our teams and their families to get involved in Naomh Mearnóg activities outside of our team activities.
6. We recognise that team fundraising is done through the structures of a fundraising committee rather than everyone doing their own thing every year.

What happens when we let standards slip?

It is under the remit of the Games and Coaching Development Committee (GCDC) to ensure that coaching standards in Naomh Mearnóg are upheld. If a coach is having a particular issue in an area, fellow coaches or the coaching representative within the code in question should be the first people to offer support. If there is a persistent issue, it is the role of the GCDC to provide guidance, support and potential solutions.

Any breaches to the GAA/Camogie/LGFA Code of Behaviour will be dealt with in accordance with the following guidelines:

GAA/CAMOGIE/LGFA DEALING WITH ALLEGED BREACHES OF THE CODE OF BEHAVIOUR

NOAMH MEANROG COACHING TEAM STRUCTURE



TEAM MANAGER: This person looks after all team logistics and communication:

- Organising Training schedules.
- Communicating with Players/Parents.
- Confirming and Tracking Attendance.
- Organisation of Team trips.
- Liaise with Fundraising committee within the club.

ASSISTANT COACH: These people assist the lead coach by:

- Actively Coaching during training sessions.
- Taking responsibility for specific aspects of training.
- Spot and Fixing when another coach is leading a section of training.

LEAD COACH: This person oversees the coaching practices within the team. This includes:

- Ensuring all 4 quadrants of game demands are being addressed.
- All players are developing at a rate that is appropriate to them.
- Assistant Coaches are getting opportunities to develop their coaching skills.
- Delegation of various coaching responsibilities.
- Outline structure of training session and delegate who is doing what.

IT IS NOT EFFECTIVE FOR THE LEAD COACH TO TRY AND DO EVERYTHING THEMSELVES.

SPECIFIC ROLES THAT SHOULD BE ASSIGNED:

- Being at a session early to get gear out and set up.
- Skills Coach for each code.
- Team Dynamics: paying attention to team dynamics, player retention, ensuring that no player is being left out, developing a connection with the club.
- First Aid.
- Final calls on match day.
- Who represents the team on relevant committee?
- Liaise with any fundraising efforts.
- Communication with players and parents.