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The texting of under age players in the GAA by their Club or Club representative

Much publicity has arisen of late and many enquires have been made following media attention focussing on the GAA good practice recommendations regarding the use of text messages when passing on information for under age players.

What the GAA has proposed is contained in our Code of Best Practice, launched in April 2009, at our Annual Congress in Cork. The relevant information is also highlighted as part of our Child Protection Awareness workshops nationwide. The fact that media attention is now drawn to the Code is but a side attraction and if we can benefit from availing of media attention to project our message of good practice, so be it.

What is the GAA proposing re texting information for underage players etc?

The GAA strongly recommends that when we pass on information regarding games, training or other activities for our under age players that we do so via group texts and that these group texts should preferably be sent to the parents of under age players. Coaches and /or the Club Rúnaí should obtain these relevant contact numbers when an under age player is being registered. This recommendation only applies to underage players i.e. under 18 year of age.

Are there any exceptions to the proposal on texting?

If, for whatever reason, a parent/guardian insists or requests that the information is sent directly by the club to their child and gives this request in writing the club may, if they so wish, accede to this request. However, if the club accedes to the request the information can only be sent as part of a group text and cannot be communicated individually to the under age player.

The GAA would regard the individual texting of an under age player by their coach or mentor as being inappropriate and unnecessary. We do not wish to compromise the role of the coach and its best not to communicate by mobile in such instances where the coach would have the personal mobile telephone number of a child and the child or young person could equally have access to the coaches' telephone number as well.

How do we interpret an underage player?

An under age player is a person who is eligible to play in a game or event for persons under 18 years of age. Legislation in Ireland also defines a child as any person under 18 years of age and parents/guardians therefore have a particular level of responsibility for their child's welfare while they remain under 18 yrs of age. We use the terms child and young person frequently when we refer to under age players.

Can we text county underage development squads and minor squads?

The recommended group text mechanism is still preferred but if you have parental/guardian permission to group text under age players you may avail of this option.

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**What if an underage player is on the club's senior panel?**

The same recommendation applies and parental/guardian permission must be sought if you wish to directly communicate with the young person as part of a group text scheme.

Gearóid Ó Maoilmhichíl

Oifigeach Náisiúnta Leanaí CLG

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