



O'Dwyers GAA Club

Social Media and Communications Policy

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Taking photographs of players, using web sites to publicise activities, contacting parents and guardians about training and games for underage teams the use of Facebook and other social media networks in addition to the videoing of events, games, training and coaching sessions are normal daily activities within most clubs. The Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport does not seek in any way to eliminate or curtail these activities but proposes certain safeguards so as to ensure that we minimise the risk or threats that inappropriate use of photographs or the recording of images may pose, particularly for young people.

Communicating with underage players and teams

Coaches and mentors should never place themselves in a compromising position by texting or communicating via social media sites with underage players. All such communications regarding GAA activities should be sent via the parents or guardians of the underage player, unless otherwise agreed with the parents/guardians, in writing. In general, the following should apply when communicating with underage players:

- Use mobile phones, if deemed appropriate, only via a group text or email system for communicating with the parents/guardians of players.
- Do not communicate individually by text/email sites with underage players.
- Do not engage in communications with underage players via social network sites.
- See Appendix 1 for further guidelines on contacting underage players.

Guidelines for Photographic/Recorded Images

It should be noted that having photographic and filming guidelines is not about preventing parents and guardians from taking pictures, but rather to ensure that only those who have a right to take photographs do so.

These safeguards should still permit and facilitate the recording of relevant and suitable materials, should allow us to photograph the enjoyment gained by participating in our games, should enable coaches to use the latest technology in the delivery of training skills and should also enable clubs to promote their activities in a safe and non-threatening manner. A common-sense approach is required when deciding on what may or may not be appropriate as we do not wish to prohibit the recording of games, coaching sessions or celebrations at club level through the use of photography or by recording on video equipment.

The key concerns regarding the use of images and photographs of children/young people relate to:

- The possible identification of children when a photograph is accompanied by personal information and its inappropriate use thereafter.
- The inappropriate use, adaptation or copying of images for use in child pornography or illegal website
- The taking of inappropriate photographs or recorded images of children

It should be noted that we have little or no influence on what photographs may be taken and published in local or national newspapers as such photography is covered by a different set of guidelines. Should we ever be unhappy with the publication of such photographs or images we can address this matter with the individual newspaper or the Press Council of Ireland and the Office of the Press Ombudsman.

Photography and the recording of images in a public place do not generally require explicit or prior consent. However, if an event e.g. a game or training session is taking place, involving underage players, in a public, private or local authority park, and if you are in charge of such an event you are entitled to request a person to resist from taking photos if you feel that such action or photography may be inappropriate.

In general, individual children should not be identified with the exception being when they are being publicly acknowledged (e.g. an award or achievement), for which prior consent has been given. Children and young people have a right to privacy and therefore their consent should be sought in relation to the use of personal data including images. Parental consent should also be sought and all clubs should receive signed permission from the player's parents or guardians for the recording of photographic and recorded images etc. as part of the player's registration process. (See Photograph Consent Form—Appendix 2). Information should also be provided as to how and for what purpose images will be used.

Be aware that refusal of consent should not in any way limit children or young people's participation in activities.

- Ask for the player's and parental permission to use their image. This consent will be included in the annual registration form.
- All children/young people featured in recordings must be appropriately dressed.
- The photograph or recording should focus on the activity rather than a particular young person.
- In general, no personal details relating to the young person should be revealed as accompanying materials to the photograph or recorded image, with the exception being where they are being publicly acknowledged (e.g. an award or personal achievement), for which consent has been given.
- Group and team photographs may be taken but it is not necessary to match a player's name with the position in which they may be standing or seated in the team photograph. This is a precautionary recommendation based on previous examples of misuse of photographs by those who sought to exploit the gathering of young people together in an enjoyable and fun environment.
- Clubs, coaches and volunteers should be permitted to use video equipment as a legitimate coaching aid and as a means of recording special occasions; however, care should be taken in the dissemination, storage and use of such material.

Facebook/social media platforms

- O'Dwyers GAA Club has one official Facebook page and one official twitter account that are moderated by the club PRO. We do not use any other form of social media.
- Individuals are not permitted to set up any social media pages or groups (team pages and fundraising pages included).
- If a coach wishes to have a team page, a written application must be made to O'Dwyers Executive Committee. This group will be created by the club PRO as part of our official Facebook page and will be moderated by one team coach and the club PRO.
- All existing Facebook team pages must be deleted.
- Social Media groups are to be used solely for communicating with parents regarding training and matches. Photos and match reports may be added once photograph consent forms are filled in.
- All communication on social media pages/groups should be done so in a positive manner.
- No other social media platforms (e.g. Instagram, Snapchat etc.) are permitted to be used under the name of Dwyer's GAA Club.

Appendix 1

Contacting Underage Players

What is the GAA policy re texting/emailing information to underage players?

The GAA policy states that when we pass on information regarding games, training or other activities for the attention of our underage players that we do so via group texts and that these group texts should be sent to the parents/guardians of underage players. The same good practice guidance applies when using emails or social media sites. The team Coach, Club Registrar or the Club Rúnaí should obtain these relevant contact numbers/emails when an underage player is being registered on an annual basis. This recommendation only applies to underage players i.e. under 18 years 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 underage player. A parental/guardian request to have such information sent directly to their child may be refused by the club in the interest of good practice.

The GAA would regard the individual texting of an underage player by their coach or mentor as being inappropriate and unacceptable and a breach of the above code.

How do we interpret an underage player?

An underage player is a person who is eligible to play in a game or event for persons under 18 years of age or a player who is under 18 years of age and playing above his age group. 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 years of age.

(We use the terms child and young person frequently when we refer to underage 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 underage players, you may avail of this option.

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.

Appendix 2

O Dwyer's GAA Club



Photograph Consent Form

Information:

From time to time players representing O Dwyer's GAA club may be involved in various activities that might be photographed or recorded in some way. On occasion these images may be used by the club. Photographs may be published on the club website & the Official O Dwyer's Facebook page to promote activities within the club. Before any images are used we would like to obtain your permission for doing so.

Photographic/Media Consent Form:

I hereby consent to the use of my child 'personal images by photography or video recording. I acknowledge these may be used on the club website and the official O Dwyer's Facebook page. I further acknowledge that my child's image may be used by the club to promote the club in the future. I understand that no personal information, such as names, will be used in any publications unless express consent is given. I also understand that my consent can be withdrawn at any time in writing to the Chairperson, O Dwyer's, GAA Club, Balbriggan.

Players Name: _____

Parent/Guardian's Signature: _____

Date: _____