



GAA Club Substance Use Policy

1. Aims and Objectives

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all GAA members are kept safe from substance-related harm when involved in club activities.

Our objectives are:

- To promote the health and wellbeing of all club members.
- To develop a consistent approach to drug-related issues to be adopted by all club members.
- To develop procedures and protocols that address drug-related issues in the club.
- To establish clear procedures for managing specific incidents of suspected drug misuse.
- To provide onward referral to specialist services for members presenting with substance related issues.

2. Scope & Limitations

Cumann Lúthchleas Gael is committed to discouraging the use of drugs and tobacco and the misuse of alcohol on the basis that such activity is incompatible with a healthy approach to sporting activity. It understands that such behaviours can have detrimental social and health consequences on the individuals involved, and on those to whom they are connected.

Birr GAA believe that we need to work towards creating a safe, healthy club environment where we can develop the skills and attitudes necessary to enjoy our health to the fullest.

All club members, officials, coaches and volunteers as part of this club shall follow the law when it comes to illegal substances, tobacco and alcohol and shall display leadership and good example, particularly when dealing with underage members. This policy applies to all members as well as all users of the club's buildings and grounds.

For practical purposes this policy has been kept as succinct as possible. It has been developed from a template provided by the GAA's Community & Health department (see www.gaa.ie/community for more information on the topic of substance use). Representatives of both the Local and Regional Drug & Alcohol Task Forces in the ROI and the Drug & Alcohol Community Teams (DACTs) in NI were consulted in the development of this policy, and contact details for the local agency is found at the back end of this policy.

3. Definition of Drugs

For the purpose of this policy the term 'substance' shall be used to cover any chemical which alters how the body works, or how the person behaves or feels and may include all mood-altering substances, both legal and illegal. Examples include:

- Alcohol and Tobacco
- 'Over the counter' medicines that may be misused such as those containing codeine (e.g. Solpadeine), co-codomal, paracodal, cough medicines, antihistamines, laxatives, and paracetamol.
- Volatile substances such as aerosols, glues, petrol, cigarette lighter fuels etc.
- Mood-altering illegal and legal substances sold online such as New Psychoactive Substances (NPS) such as Mephedrone, Spice, Nitrous Oxide Cannisters (Balloons) and Alkyl Nitrates (Poppers)
- Controlled drugs such as cannabis, ecstasy, amphetamines, magic mushrooms, cocaine, etc.
- Performance enhancing sports related drugs as outlined by the World Anti-Doping Agency, and covered under Rule 1.16 of the Official Guide Book (for more information, see <https://www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/players/anti-doping>).

4. List of Actions

The Chairperson and Executive of the club shall adopt and discharge actions from the following list in line with available resources and supports.

Birr GAA shall take the following actions:

- Adhere to GAA Rules 1.18 (l) (i) & (ii) prohibiting the sponsorship of teams catering exclusively for young players under 18 years of age by alcohol companies, including the branding of any gear and equipment. *(See GAA Official Guide for full wording).*
- Club members, officials, coaches and volunteers shall not present themselves at official club activities while under the influence of alcohol or any other substances (unless previously declared and prescribed by a medical professional). Where alcohol is being served at an official club function it must be consumed responsibly.
- No alcoholic drinks promotions (two-for-the price-of-one, promotional giveaways, reduced prices during matches etc) will take place in the clubhouse bar at any time. *(This is only relevant to clubs with licenced premises and is in line with recommendations issued by Coiste Bainistí in 2012.)*
- Coaches and Club Officials shall not smoke/vape, drink alcohol, or use any other substances (unless previously declared and prescribed by a medical professional) while representing their club at matches or training sessions.
- All efforts shall be made to ensure Under 18 players/members are not brought to licensed premises following matches, outings, or training sessions.
- Alcohol shall not be served at functions exclusively for players aged under 18 years of age.

- Every effort will be made to ensure juvenile medal ceremonies and other juvenile events are not held in licensed premises.
- Cups shall not be filled with alcohol during celebrations.
- Cigarettes/E-Cigarettes shall not be sold in the clubhouse. (A separate GAA smoke-free policy is available for clubs that wish to become smoke-free campuses – see www.gaa.ie/community for more info.)
- Illegal substances, tobacco and alcohol will not be permitted in changing rooms or at pitch-sides.

All persons associated with our club can help prevent substance-related harm from occurring during club activities.

5. Recommended roles within club

5.1 Club Members

- Will be aware of the details of and adhere to Birr GAA Substance Use Policy

5.2 Parents and Guardians

- Will support the club in the development and implementation of this policy including procedures for handling incidents of suspected substance use.

5.3 Healthy Club Officer

- Is responsible for overseeing the development, implementation, and evaluation of this policy in conjunction with the Club Chairperson and Executive.
- Shall have good knowledge of the local alcohol, substance, and health promotion services to assist in harm prevention and education activities and appropriate responses to incidents should such needs arise.

5.4 Coaches

- Will be aware of the possibility of substance use among players and work with the Healthy Club Officer, Club Chairperson, and Executives with the aim of preventing harm.

5.5 Club Chairperson and Executive

All relevant information pertaining to a potential breach of this policy should be brought to the attention of the Club Chairperson who shall consult with the necessary parties, and, informed by this policy, decide on the appropriate action, if any. In the event of the Chairperson not being available to discharge these duties this responsibility will then fall to the Vice Chairperson or Secretary.

6. Education programme about drugs and alcohol

- The Healthy Club Officer in conjunction with the Club Chairperson and Executive shall make arrangements with local drug, alcohol, youth or health promotion services to provide drug education for interested youths and adults associated with the club. More information can be found at www.gaa.ie/community
- It is the policy of the GAA that health information on alcohol and other drugs must be independent from any influence of the alcohol industry, including any campaigns, programmes or initiatives funded, or co-funded by the alcohol industry, including Drinkaware.

7. Protocol for dealing with incidents:

Birr GAA shall endeavour to respond to all substance-related incidents in a firm but fair manner, with due respect for the safety and welfare of individuals involved, other members of the club and the wider community and shall also fulfil any legal obligations that might apply. The points below offer guidance to the club in handling incidents involving illicit drugs both during club activities and relating to members in a wider societal context.

- 7.1** The use of illicit drugs is viewed as unacceptable by Birr GAA and may be dealt with by way of warnings, suspensions and expulsions as deemed appropriate by decision of the Club Executive, on a case by case basis, with proportionality considered. It is also unacceptable for members or officials to present themselves for club duties while under the influence of a drug. (Suspension, if issued, will mean that the member involved cannot represent the club in any way during their term of suspension.) Considerations may be made for incidents involving members that occur outside official club activities or events.
- 7.2** In a case where a club becomes aware that a member has been charged with the illegal supply of drugs the Club Executive will ask this individual to stand aside from club activities until the matter has been dealt with in the court of law, notwithstanding the individual's right of a presumption of innocence until proven guilty. (Where it is known that a club member is being charged with the illegal supply of drugs the matter must be brought to the attention the Community & Health Department in Croke Park, who can give guidance on the appropriate response on a case by case basis.)
- 7.3** Members of the Club Executive should arrange to meet with those involved in an incident with which this policy is concerned. Details recorded in critical incident forms should be discussed and appropriate support should be offered to those involved. The same members of the executive should also consider a separate meeting with the club member who has negatively impacted the club in relation to drug, alcohol or tobacco use. Consideration should be given to the health and wellbeing of the person, with signposting to appropriate drug, alcohol and psychological supports. It should be made clear to all parties involved that media requests should be handled by Croke Park Head Quarters.

8. Appeal and Review process

A suspended member will have the right of appeal to the Hearings Committee of the County Executive where a member of the Club Executive and the suspended member will have the right to be heard. Normal Standing orders will apply to such a meeting.

9. Reporting of Incidents

Alleged or confirmed incidents in breach of this policy shall be referred to the Club Chairperson and Healthy Club Officer. Matters relating to the supply of drugs **MUST** also be brought to the attention of the chair of the County Health & Wellbeing Committee, who can give guidance on the appropriate response on a case by case basis.

9.1 Recording of Information

Information regarding alleged or confirmed incidents in breach of this policy shall be recorded in writing. The recording of factual information only is recommended, and all opinions shall be stated as such. Responses to cases shall also be recorded in this way. Only in confirmed cases shall names of individuals be recorded.

9.2 Confidentiality

While it is not possible to guarantee, every effort shall be made to respect confidentiality.

9.3 Involving Parents/Guardians

Incidents involving any person under 18 years of age will require their parents/guardians to be informed. Parents/guardians shall be invited to discuss what has happened and shall be informed of any course of action to be taken by the club. The Club Chairperson shall nominate a person to inform parents/guardians in each case.

9.4 Garda Síochána Involvement

Incidents that involve the illegal supply of drugs shall require Garda Síochána involvement. In all other drug-related incidents, each case shall be considered on an individual basis and the decision shall rest with the Club Chairperson as to whether or not the Garda Síochána is involved.

9.5 Media guidelines

Any incident that attracts or has the potential to attract media interest or attention should be reported to Croke Park. The club should not engage in any discourse with the media, rather should signpost them to the Communications Department in Croke Park. Email: communications@gaa.ie

10. Search

The Club Chairperson retains the right to direct a search of any part of club property if there is reasonable cause to believe a substance in breach of this policy is contained therein. Two officials of the club shall conduct the search. **Club officials are not allowed to search an individual or their personal property.** Where there is reasonable cause to believe a person has in their possession a substance in breach of this policy, they shall be asked to volunteer the substance. If they refuse, the Garda Síochána/PSNI may be called in to conduct a search.

10.1 Disposing of suspected illegal substances

If a suspected illegal substance is found on club property it should be brought to the attention of the Club Chairperson. The substance should be stored securely, and the Chairperson shall contact Garda Síochána/PSNI to have it collected or to inform them who from the club will deliver it to them and when. Any movement of suspected illegal substances shall be recorded and witnessed by two club officials. At no time should a suspected illegal substance be removed from club property without the knowledge of the Garda Síochána/PSNI.

11. Dealing with drug litter/paraphernalia

Drug paraphernalia, when it is not disposed of properly, is known as drug litter. Drug paraphernalia is any equipment or material that is used for making, using or carrying drugs. Some such materials can pose considerable health risks (especially syringes). To find out more about the proper disposal of such materials see: <http://www.drugs.ie/resources/dealing-with-drug-litter/safe-disposal-of-drug-litter-and-paraphernalia/>

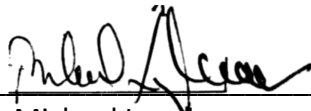
12. Availability, use and storage of solvents and gases

Many solvent-based products have the potential to be abused (e.g. deodorants, paints, thinners, cleaning fluids etc). All solvent based materials and gases shall be stored securely and safely away from public access.

13. Monitoring and Evaluation

This policy is in force at all times and during all activities conducted under the aegis of Cumann Lúthchleas Gael. This policy shall be evaluated annually and after every drug-related incident.

This policy shall come into effect on **21\05\2026** and shall be reviewed annually thereafter by the Healthy Club Officer in conjunction with the Club Chairperson and Executive.

Signed  Club Chairperson
Michael Loughnane

Date 21 \ 05 \ 2026

Signed  Healthy Club Officer
Anna Boch

Date 21 \ 05 \ 2026

Appendix

Insert the contact details of your local **drug and alcohol agency** here and review annually:

Service: Midland Regional Drug and Alcohol Task Force (MRDATE)

Contact name: Antoinette Kinsella

Number: 086 380 0517

Email: antoinette.kinsella1@hse.ie

Insert the contact details of your local **Garda Síochána** here and review annually:

Station: Birr Garda Station

Contact name: Grace Heffernan

Number: 057 916 9710

Email: Birr.Community@Garda.ie Birr.DistrictOffice@Garda.ie