



# The Sarsfields Way

## Youth Player Pathway



Planning for the future : Your Club - Your Community



# Introduction

Charlestown Sarsfields have a long and proud Gaelic football tradition and have enjoyed great success at both underage level and senior level since the inception of the club in 1888. The club has long been admired for the style of football played by teams in our club and this is a tradition we wish to maintain and develop with our future generations.

Our underage players will spend some of the most enjoyable days of their lives playing Gaelic games and socialising with their friends. Whether attending or playing GAA matches, they will do so during some of the most important developmental years of their lives.

Our role and our responsibility is to ensure that they enjoy and participate in our Gaelic Games in a safe and enjoyable environment and where our games are conducted in a spirit of fair play, where everyone working on our behalf emphasises respect, equality, safety and non discrimination in all aspects of our work with children and young people.

Charlestown Sarsfields Bord na nÓg have developed a new 'Youth Player Pathway Programme' - '**The Sarsfields Way**' which will lay out the clubs vision for our underage teams. Player Pathways are essentially, what clubs are all about. Starting at an early age, and helping players through the various age levels, providing learning, enriching experiences for our players, so that they are still playing GAA at the end of their youth careers and ready for the challenges they face as they progress to the adult ranks in our club.



# Club Values

Our club values are critical to developing the culture that we are trying to create in our underage system and are values that we aim to instil into all players from their very first experience with the club through to senior level so we can help develop the types of characters that can go on to become senior footballers. The core values of the Charlestown Sarsfields underage section are:

- 1.HONESTY** demonstrated by what we say and do
- 2.RESPECT** for ourselves, our club, coaches, teammates & everyone we encounter
- 3.DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON & THE PLAYER**  
recognise that its equally important to develop as people as well as players
- 4.ENJOYMENT** the reason we all play sports and join the GAA
- 5.TEAMWORK** we are all in it together, win or lose.



# The Sarsfields Way

## Development of a Player Pathway



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# Player Pathways

Players develop at varying rates, we must be aware of that, therefore the “Pathway” as laid out here are “reference points” only, and we understand and expect that coaches will use their own valuable experiences as they shape their own particular “team” for the season/s ahead.

We are now encouraging our youth coaches to sit down at the start of each new season, under the guidance of the Clubs new youth Coaching Committee, and decide upon 3/4/5 core skills the club would like each age level to develop for the year ahead. This is only one area of development, as we all realise there is more to improving as a Gaelic player than the skills of the game, amongst others, being Games Sense and Physical Developments etc. Follow up meetings will then take place during the season to see how coaches are finding the challenge.

If we put this structure in place from U-8 to U-12, the belief is that by U-14, each player coming through club will have been introduced to, and coached in, the basics skills of the game. Research has proven, the more competent a young player is at a particular “hobby”, the higher the chances of that player continuing with the “hobby”, in this case i.e. our game.

The aim here is to have clear goals with visible progression, through each age level, that is linked via joined up thinking within the club, and relevant to our teams needs for all coaches, and thereby our players during each season. It will assist us, if we all possess a clear vision or “Focus for all our Underage Activity” of what exactly we should be trying to achieve during a given season, to help give credence to our underage activity.



# The Sarsfields Way

The 'Sarsfields Way' is our club's vision to develop a player pathway from nursery age to Minor level and create an environment at all age levels that is both enjoyable for the participants and aids their overall development both as a player and as a person as they progress from childhood to adult level.

It is our intention that this pathway programme is used to help our team coaches, to not only teach our young GAA players new skills, but also to help assess the skills learned by players at each level, committing to ensuring that all our youth teams are as inclusive as possible.

Our aim is to provide a consistent framework that can be followed from U6 up to Minor level providing a fluid and seamless transition from one age group to the next with the intention of ensuring each player can reach their full potential throughout their underage careers and progress to represent the club at senior level.

By devising and developing our own 'Player Pathway Development Programme, 'The Sarsfields Way', we are creating the environment that all our young players "Play and Stay" with our club, not only for their playing careers but throughout their lives.

Throughout this process we will strive to ensure the longstanding values and traditions of Charlestown Sarsfields GAA club are at the core of our pathway.



# Our Philosophy

## Our Mission

Our mission at underage level is for our club to provide the children of our community a safe and enjoyable environment to meet friends and learn the skills of Gaelic Football

## Our Goal

To create a youth player pathway with the ultimate goal of bringing our players through to represent Charlestown Sarsfields at senior level whilst creating an environment where every individual child can reach their full potential and inspire them to have a lifelong involvement with the club

## Our Culture

Foster a culture and environment which is always enjoyable, developmentally appropriate and provides a holistic GAA experience where the individual persons long term development takes preference over player and teams short term success – ‘Playing time not sideline time’



# The Sarsfields Way – Core Pillars

The key focus of the Sarsfields Way Player Pathway, which will be reinforced with all our coaches and players across all age grades and feed into our core club values at underage level:

- **PARTICIPATION & INCLUSION**

Participation for all throughout the underage grades during training and games,

- **HUMILITY**

Losing isn't Failure. Recognise that player/personal development comes before winning and that players develop at different rates and abilities

- **PRAISE & ENCOURAGEMENT**

We praise and encourage our teammates and players at all times regardless of age or ability. Remember **every player is important to the team**

- **PLAYER RETENTION**

**'As Many as possible for as long as possible'** - Retaining our players right through from Nursery to Under 18 level and onto senior level is a core pillar of 'The Sarsfields Way' Player Pathway programme





# The Sarsfields Way

The Charlestown Sarsfields player pathway programme starts at Under 6 nursery level and progresses up to Under 18 level. The below table provides a breakdown of the key stages in our underage structures.

Stage	Child			Youth		
Age Group	Age 4-11			Age 12-18		
Phase	Nursery	Early Go Games	Late Go Games	Early Teenage	Mid Teenage	Late Teenage
Specific Age	4-6 Years	7-9 Years	10-11 Years	12-13 Years	14-15 Years	16-18 years



# The Sarsfields Way

From a coaching and player development perspective and to support the key principles which underpin the ‘Sarsfields Way’ philosophy - there are five key age groups / stages in the pathway which have detailed player characteristics and the practical elements that must be coached during these stages.

Stage	Approximate Age	Emphasis
Learning to master the ball	4 - 6 years	Should be about fun and participation with key emphasis on physical literacy and core movement skills with the ball
Learning to use the ball well	7 - 9 years	Major skills learning phase where all the basic skills in gaelic football are learned
Learning to play together	10 - 12 years	Emphasis on understanding how to play and work together as a team
Learning about positions	13 - 15 years	The principles of play and applying good game sense increases
Learning to perform	16 – 18 years	Combining all aspects of performance including – decision making, higher physical demands of the game and coping with competition



# The Sarsfields Way

## The Underage Coach



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# Our Coaches

Our vision as a club is to create a coaching system which produces and supports the development of coaches and players. The GAA has developed a model of Coach Education to take account of the different playing capacities that exist between children (up to 11 years), youths (age 12 – 17) and adults (age 18+), and the competencies that a coach is required to display when working with each of these playing populations. These streams have been identified to cater for the diverse needs of children, of youths and of adults. All coaches involved with underage coaching for Charlestown Sarsfields GAA Club will be required to comply with the following requirements.

To safeguard our players, all our coaches are required to:

- Abide by the GAA Code of Conduct  
<https://www.gaa.ie/api/pdfs/image/upload/ohl9oq3mbgtnoi6arn22.pdf>
- Complete the GAA/ISC Child Protection in Sport Awareness Workshop
- Vetted by An Garda Síochána  
<https://www.gaa.ie/api/pdfs/image/upload/uc9zbv4tfutt2mikzh2a.pdf>
- At a minimum complete the Foundation level coaching award (The club will provide details on how to complete this)  
<https://learning.gaa.ie/foundation>



# Our Coaching Philosophy

As a club our coaching philosophy is centred around the importance of the **person over player approach**. At the core of underage coaching there must be quality time given to fundamental movement skills. Significant research has clearly shown that if fundamental motor skill training is not developed by the age of 12 then skills cannot be successfully recaptured. Good fundamental movement skills must be developed before we can perfect the specific skills of Gaelic football.

Our underage coaching philosophy centres around our coaches creating an environment that cultivates curiosity so that the players feel comfortable making decisions. In that way, they can cope with responsibilities and they can begin to take ownership of their learning.

In doing so our hope is that we empower players through a holistic approach, encouraging young people not just to be footballers, but to develop outside interests. We believe coaching is all about trying to develop better people, not just better players. It's important to be passionate and focused but it's also vital to enjoy the whole experience and have fun.

This becomes even more important as they progress to u-16 and minor level with exam stresses and the challenges of being teenagers! The role of the coach is much more than us pushing them to be great footballers, but helping them develop as people by asking them about their day in school and exams but more importantly having fun with them and letting them express themselves.

Care is being bothered with, showing interest in, and paying attention to people. Players quickly work out if the coach can't be bothered because they start late, or are disorganised and unprepared. But out of all these things, showing interest in people is really important. The coach who takes time to get to know the players and what they do away from training and matches are in a stronger position to help them.

Furthermore, It's proven that coaches who ask open ended questions to players and let them figure things out for themselves instead of being just told to do something develop much better footballers. Our coaching philosophy as a club will be player led to allow them to make mistakes and learn and figure things out for themselves giving our players more responsibility in everything we do, from deciding what we do in training to problem solving in training and matches.

It is our belief that player retention will improve year in year if we adapt this approach.



# Key Principles of our Coaching

Our aim is to create a coaching environment which supports the development of the player and more importantly the individual:

- **FUN & ENJOYMENT** must be at the centre of our coaching sessions particularly at our younger age groups
- **PARTICIPATION** for all, regardless of ability. Up to U-15 level it is encouraged that children should play and participate for as much time as possible in matches. At this level, however it also recognised competition is an important ingredient for player development both within the group and on the field of play.
- **GAMES BASED APPROACH** to training sessions with key focus on small sided games at our youngest age groups – it's proven that small sided games maximise number of touches of the ball each child gets at training e.g. 2v2, 3v3, 4v4 compared to large sided games e.g. 7v7 9v9 etc
- **PLAYER & PERSON DEVELOPMENT** We recognise that player/personal development comes before winning and that players develop at different rates and abilities
- **PLAYER RETENTION** our aim is to keep as many children playing as possible throughout the underage system. Focus up to U-15 age group is on participation and not on winning
- **DEVELOPMENT OF CORE SKILLS** at all age groups using consistent coaching methods e.g. ability to kick with both feet and pass off both hands is a key coaching focus for 8-18 year olds to make them proficient by the time they reach senior level



As well as using our own pool of coaches, it is also our goal annually to provide our children with additional coaching activities over the course of the year, with coaches from Mayo GAA and our own senior team and other teams within the club, to provide training sessions, skills sessions and workshops throughout the course of the year to help improve the children's development.



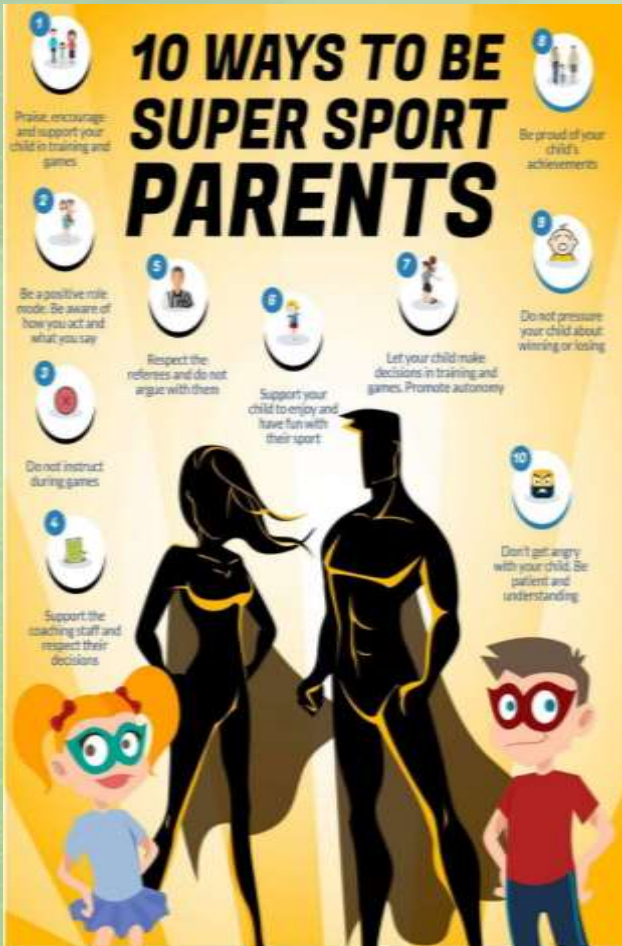
# How Parents Can Help

GAA parents play a pivotal role in encouraging and supporting their child's participation, success and fun when engaging in Gaelic Games and Activities and without their input our club would cease to function effectively.

Parents are key stakeholders in Charlestown Sarsfields GAA, the contribution they can make to our games and activities is invaluable, particularly at underage level and in the day to day running of the club from washing team kits through to helping with coaching, transporting players, assisting with teams, fundraising and beyond. As part of the Sarsfields Way, we embrace parental involvement in the club in a positive way and that channels of communication between the club, its volunteers and parents are working as effectively as possible from the very start.

Children and young people take greater enjoyment from participating in Gaelic Games if their parents are positively involved. They are also more likely to continue playing for longer and have more opportunities to reach their sporting potential. It is important that parents reflect on their own behaviour when their child is participating, ensuring that their support is having a positive impact on their child's progression, development and enjoyment. Discipline is something that the club would like to try and continuously improve. It involves everybody, players, coaches and parents. It is vitally important that Children get the support of their parents when the players are young, to avoid issues in later years.

As a club we will communicate this message to the parents towards the start of every season to remind them of their responsibilities. We will resend it periodically during the season. Charlestown Sarsfields welcome the support of everybody and hope you enjoy the activities. With that in mind, we ask you to take a few minutes to read the poster and do your best to follow it.





# Coaching Committee

A newly formed coaching committee in 2021 will aim to review coaching practices within the club in order to continuously improve our underage structures, with the objective of supporting the development of our players at underage.

The committee will provide support to all coaches, for the successful implementation of the Sarsfields Way Player Pathway, on an ongoing basis with regular reviews both during and at the end of season.

A new club 'coaching manual' will be issued to each coach involved with the underage club at the start of each season to outline their roles and responsibilities within the club and also provide guidance and resources to help them prepare training sessions for their teams.

The aim of the coaching manual is to provide consistency in our coaching methods for both existing coaches and new coaches every year.







# The Sarsfields Way

## Nursery 4- 6 year olds





# The Sarsfields Nursery

The main aim of our nursery is to introduce children aged 4 – 6 years of age to Gaelic Football in a fun, safe and relaxed environment. The ethos of the nursery is ‘to learn skills while having fun.’ This is the age where new friendships will be formed which will hopefully last a lifetime. Our core Sarsfields Way ‘focus pillars’ at this age grade are:

- Fun is the number one priority of our nursery programme
- Develop Fundamental Movement Skills (Agility, Balance, Co-ordination ) and Basic GAA Skills (hand pass, solo, catch, kick) through fun activities
- Small sided games are encouraged i.e. 3 v3 or 4 v 4 to maximise children’s involvement and participation in games
- Coaches should encourage players, acknowledge their effort and praise them regularly
- Children will be assigned a bib for their particular year. This is the colour they wear on arrival every Friday evening. Below is the years and colours assigned
  - Born in 2015 – Red
  - Born in 2016 – Green
  - Born in 2017 – Blue (Must be starting school in September)

**NOTE:** The following coaching activities as recommended by Connacht GAA will form the basis and structure which our coaches at this age group will use to develop both physical literacy and basic skills introduction

<https://connachtgaa.ie/coaching/nursery>

# PLAYER PATHWAY

PLAY TO STAY WITH THE GAA

## THE COACH

- Variation. Coach open to trial & error
- Well organised/planned sessions
- Maximise all coaching resources to increase knowledge
- Guide children. Don't tell them
- Be a role model
- Set Fun GAA activities to be played between sessions involving adults

# AGE 4-6 FOOTBALL

## ENVIRONMENT

- FUN is number one priority
- Coach to player ratio 1:6
- Every child has their own ball
- Discovery/Exploration
- Trial & Error
- Variation in Equipment using colours & different sizes

### TECHNICAL SKILLS

#### Kicking

Ground, Dribble, Stop, Bounce Kick, Kick from two hands.

#### Handling

Two hand catch, one hand catch, body catch, different sized balls, Two hand bounce, one hand bounce.

#### Pick Up

Hands Only, Hand & Toe in a stationary position, Striking, Rolling, Bowling, Throwing.

#### Movement

Use four steps, knee tap solo.

#### Decision Making

2v1 Piggy in the middle  
3v1 Piggy in the middle (roll ball to pass only)

#### Target Games

Aim into or at a target to improve technique e.g. Knock the tower.

### TACTICAL PROGRESS

### PSYCHOLOGICAL FOCUS COACHABILITY OF PLAYERS

Develop listening skills – Simon Says Game

**Running** Marching, running forwards, backwards & sideways shuffle.

#### Jumping/Landing

1 leg/both legs/variety of directions

**Agility** Chasing games, evasion games. Encourage sidestep & evasion. Balance Exercise – Stand on 1 leg, rope walks, 1 on 1 balance games.

#### Coordination

Hand Eye- cups and saucers  
Eye Foot-Dribble  
Eye Foot-Bean Bag Solo

### PHYSICAL FITNESS

#### Zones

Used in games for early development of positional sense.

Stops bunching

Small sided games only. 2v2, 4v4 Max.

Premium on all players getting touches, player development – Max 7v7

### TEAM PLAY

## THE PLAYER

- Only goes flat out – no sense of pace
- Is self-centred – will want their own ball
- Has little concern for team activities
- Physical & Physiological state of boys & girls is very similar
- Has limited sense of time & space
- Has a short attention span

### PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK!

Develop basic awareness of performance through outcomes e.g. Targets, scores,

## THE GAME

- Small sided games 2v2, 3v3, 4v4 MAX
- First touch soft football
- Each child has their own Water Bottle & Gum Shield
- Have a ball per child at all sessions.
- Child brings their own ball





# Key Success Outcomes

The ultimate aim of our nursery is that we create an environment which sees children enjoy themselves with their friends. The emphasis will always be on fun and involvement and then the skills. The club has been blessed with the many parents who come on board each year to help out and subsequently swell the number of mentors up through the ranks.

Our key measure of success at Nursery level we set out to achieve each year as the children move up to the next age grade are:

- ✓ Children develop an interest in the game
- ✓ Children look forward to coming to training every week and meeting their friends
- ✓ Developed the basic motor skills relevant to learning the technical skills of the Gaelic Football.
- ✓ Familiar with the use of basic equipment such as bean bags, various balls
- ✓ Developed a basic sense of game and movement concepts e.g. cooperative, small sided, invasion games
- ✓ Most importantly – Children have had fun!





# Help With Coaching

To ensure the continued success of our Nursery programme in particular it is essential that parents become involved and assist with the coaching of the children on a Friday evening, and the development of their children. Any resources that you may require will be provided without hesitation e.g. equipment, coaching material, advice etc.

Very often parents may be worried that they may not have enough knowledge or experience of Gaelic Games. This is not an issue as every year most of our coaches begin at the very same starting point, and with the abundance of GAA workshops being run and training courses within the club, there is plenty of opportunities for first time coaches to learn new skills.

Any assistance at all, whether it be putting boots on the children, setting up equipment, etc. would be greatly welcomed. Should parents not become involved, the future of the nursery is not guaranteed. Please talk to the team coach or any of the Bord Na Nog delegates about becoming involved or email [charlestownbordnanog@gmail.com](mailto:charlestownbordnanog@gmail.com)





# The Sarsfields Way

7- 9 year olds





# 7 to 9 Year Olds

After moving on from nursery our children will begin to be gradually introduced to organised matches and start to develop more advanced skills. The ethos at this age level is to continue 'to learn skills' while 'having fun' with the children starting to experience matches for the first time against teams from other towns. Our core Sarsfields Way 'focus pillars' at this age grade are:



- Fun continues to be number one priority
- Continue to develop Fundamental Movement Skills (Agility, Balance, Co-ordination) with an increased focus on developing the Basic GAA Skills (hand pass, catch, kick) through fun activities whilst moving slowly to more advanced skills (crouch lift, body catch, hook kick)
- Perform skills using right and left hand side of the body i.e. bilateral coordination
- Small sided groups and games during training sessions to maximise touches and participation i.e 4 v 4 & 5 v 5 – avoid large sided games and drills. Target of 500 ball contacts per child per training session
- Games based approach to training sessions
- Training & games should be enjoyable and inclusive of all players **'playing time, not sideline time'**. Teams should be mixed at all times and not based on 'ability'
- Children should play a minimum of two quarters in every game
- Players encouraged to practice the basic skills at home to aid their development
- Contribute to the development of the child's abilities by encouraging the child, reinforcing good behaviour and practise and providing feedback when appropriate

# PLAYER PATHWAY

PLAY TO STAY WITH THE GAA

## THE COACH

- Variation. Coach open to trial & error
- Well organised/planned sessions
- Maximise all coaching resources to increase knowledge
- Guide children. Don't tell them
- Be a role model
- Convey Enthusiasm

## AGE 7-9

## ENVIRONMENT

- FUN is number one priority
- Coach to player ratio 1:8
- Be sensitive to each players development needs
- Discovery/Exploration
- Actual game results are secondary

### TECHNICAL SKILLS

#### Kicking

Punt kick  
Right Hand to Right Foot  
Left Hand to Left Foot

#### Handling

Stationary Catch – Body/Low/High

#### Movement

Use Four Steps,  
One Handed Bounce  
Solo

#### Tackle

Near Hand Tackle

**Running** Speed Developed through  
Fun Games – i.e. Chasing Games

#### Jumping

Jump for distance & in all directions

#### Agility

Jump for distance & in all directions

#### Body Resistance Exercises

Fun Squat performed through  
"laying an Egg" game Balance &  
Strength improved through Fun  
Tug of War Games

### PHYSICAL FITNESS

## THE PLAYER

- Only goes flat out – no sense of pace
- Need approval from coach/parents
- Like to show off individual skills
- Small group activities are vital for improvement
- Imagine themselves as inter county players to improve skills

### PSYCHOLOGICAL FOCUS COACHABILITY OF PLAYERS

Ask players imagine themselves as role models to improve skills  
Use trigger words to develop concentration

### TACTICAL PROWESS

#### Decision Making

Players encouraged to move into space

Devise games that require players to look up

#### Zones

Use zones for basic positional understanding

Players play all positions to experience attack & defence

Small sided games crucial for individual learning

#### Basic Communication

Call for the ball

### TEAM PLAY

### PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK!

Develop basic awareness of performance through outcomes e.g. Target scores in a minute

## THE GAME

- Small sided games, 3v3, 4v4, 6v6, 7v7 MAX
- Zones can be used to stop bunching of players.
- Player fouled takes Free
- Players sample all positions.
- Every child has their own ball at home.
- Play against a wall, with a friend, with group of friends.







# Key Success Outcomes

The main aim at 7 to 9 year old age grade is that we continue to create an environment which sees children enjoy themselves with their friends. The emphasis will always be on fun and involvement and then the skills. At this age grade our focus on skills will increase as we look for children to continue to develop their ability mastering the basic skills of the game, whilst for the first time gaining experience playing matches against other teams.

**Our key measure of success at this age level we set out to achieve each year as the children move up to the next age grade are:**

- ✓ Children should be starting to be comfortable with the basic skills of the games i.e. solo, hand pass, bounce, punt kick
- ✓ Should be accustomed to playing with teammates and be comfortable in a team environment
- ✓ Begin to develop decision making when on and off the ball within open patterns of game play.
- ✓ Have a greater awareness of space and be encouraged to play with their 'heads up'
- ✓ Children should have gained experience playing in all positions on the field and have enjoyed plenty of game time during matches e.g. minimum of two quarters in every game

**REMEMBER:** We recognise as a club that its important that children are not pushed too hard too soon as drop outs can be common at this age grade as some children can be self conscious and feel they are not good enough or not enjoy the first introduction to physical contact with other teams. It is important as a club we strive to ensure children maintain their interest and continue to develop as players and people whilst enjoying the environment.



# The Sarsfields Way

10 - 12 year olds





# 10 to 12 Year Olds

At this age level children are starting to get stronger and begin to take instruction more. This is a key age where children start to become more self-conscious about their level of ability and in learning new skills. It's a critical time for coaches to ensure children of all ability levels are given due consideration during training and matches. The club ethos is to continue 'to learn skills' while encouraging children to learn more advanced skills and basic tactical elements of the game. Our core Sarsfields Way 'focus pillars' at this age grade is:



- Fun continues to be important and player and personal development takes priority over results
- Develop more advanced skills and put a greater emphasis on the use of both hands and both feet and to encourage children to play with their 'heads up' during game based activities
- Encourage players to practice their skills at home particularly on non dominant side
- Games based approach to training sessions and maximise number of ball contacts per child per session eg 500 ball touches per child per session
- Small sided games at training sessions continue to be encouraged
- Participation of all children in matches & training activities – **'Playing Time, not Sideline Time'**
- Praise and encouragement for Children at all times

# PLAYER PATHWAY

PLAY TO STAY WITH THE GAA

## THE COACH

- Get to know your players individually
- Well organised and planned sessions
- Games Based Coaching
- Set Individual skill Challenges to do away from the field

## THE PLAYER

- Begin to see relationship between effort & outcome
- Potential changes in maturation rates due to a change in school environment
- Become very self-conscious in front of group
- Lack of confidence may be a barrier to development

### TECHNICAL SKILLS

#### Kicking

Emphasis on accuracy. Kicking on the move & Kicking for distance. Free taking (hands & ground)

#### Handling

Low, Chest & High Catch in pressured situations

#### Movement

Dummy Kick/Solo, feint & Sidestep. Attack ball at full pace. Chip lift.

#### Tackling

Shadowing player in possession both on & off the ball

#### Body resistant exercise

Performed through FUN games incorporating Push, Pull, Squat, Lung movement patterns. E.g. Leap Frog

#### Evasion

Encourage use of side step & feint in possession of the ball

#### Running

Challenge players to stop suddenly to develop deceleration

### PHYSICAL FITNESS

#### Decision Making

Play conditioned games to create pressure on players decision making

Activities focus on building skills to gain & maintain possession of the ball under pressure

Learning to work in team environment, individual decisions now has more impact on team outcome.

#### Team Play

Encourage and support team mates vocally

Work on teams ability to create space when in possession

Work on teams ability to deny space when not in possession

### TACTICAL PROGRESS

### TEAM PLAY

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL FOCUS COACHABILITY OF PLAYERS

Players aware of how activities are used to improve specific skills. Look for feedback from players to question this.

#### PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK!

Using imagery ask players to mirror recent pieces of play by their hero's

## ENVIRONMENT

- FUN is number one priority
- Coach: Player Ratio = 1:10
- At least 1 ball for every 2 players
- Players development takes priority over results
- Fun & Enjoyment are a major theme of all sessions



## THE GAME

- Small sided games 5v5, 7v7, 9v9, 11v11 MAX
- Size 4 football
- Continue to allow players to explore all positions
- All players experience game time in matches
- Limit plays of the ball in coaching sessions to mirror that of match day rules.



# Key Success Outcomes

The main aim at 10 to 12 year old age grade is that we continue to create an environment which sees children enjoy themselves with their friends. At this age grade our focus on skills will increase as we look for children to continue to develop their ability mastering the basic skills of the game, whilst for the first time starting to play on bigger pitches and with increased numbers.

Our key measure of success at this age level we set out to achieve each year as the children move up to the next age grade are:

- ✓ Children should be able to master the basic skills of the game and begin to show signs of being comfortable using non-dominant side
- ✓ Start to be familiar with tactical instructions & positional sense during games
- ✓ Be able to take instructions from coach and give feedback
- ✓ Have a greater awareness during matches of space
- ✓ Children should have continued to gain experience playing in different positions and not be confined to one position or area
- ✓ Children should play a minimum of two quarters in every game
- ✓ Developed a respect for discipline and playing and training environments.
- ✓ Demonstrate respect for officials and decisions made by them
- ✓ Learned to deal with success, disappointment, mistakes and/or failures through continued positive involvement





# The Sarsfields Way

13 - 15 year olds





# 13 to 15 Year Olds

**At this level children are now starting to enter structured league and championship type matches on a fully competitive basis. The emphasis should continue to be on participation, player and personal development and ensuring we retain as much as much of our player base as possible.**

**Our core Sarsfields Way 'focus pillars' at this age grade are:**

- Participation continues to be important and player development should continue to be primary focus
- First introduction to strength and conditioning programmes
- Increase focus on developing the players non dominant side
- Games based approach to training sessions
- Understand the fundamental principles of attack and defence
- Develop communication and support play skills through pre defined patterns of play e.g. open play and set piece play
- Winning is becoming an integral part of their psyche. This competitive edge must not be blunted, but only encouraged in an age appropriate manner. However coaches must be aware that some player's are still there to enjoy the experience of participating with their friends, learning new skills etc.



# PLAYER PATHWAY

PLAY TO STAY WITH THE GAA

## THE COACH

- Well Organised/Planned Sessions
- Allow players to make their own decisions on the pitch
- Accept that mistakes are a big part of player learning & development
- Set example by showing respect to match officials & opponents at all times
- Use simple language

## ENVIRONMENT

- Coach to player ratio 1:10
- At least 1 ball for every 2 players
- Enjoyment and fun for players is still a key consideration when planning sessions.
- Match results are secondary to player development

### TECHNICAL SKILLS

#### Kicking

Continue development of kicking with increased emphasis on accuracy, movement, distance. Introduce free taking from ground & hand to all players.

#### Handling

Low/High/Body catch in pressured situations

#### Movement

Dummy kick/solo, Feint & Sidestep. Attack ball at full pace.

#### Tackle

Shadowing player in possession and off the ball. Near hand tackle

#### Flexibility

through static stretching and dynamic mobility activities

#### Speed

multidirectional, between 5M -25M with complete recovery in between. Built into warm up.

#### Strength

Improve core strength through own body weight exercise e.g. Plank

### PHYSICAL FITNESS

## THE PLAYER

- Popularity influences self esteem
- Tend to be self-critical, rely on the coach for positive reinforcement
- Huge difference in physical development between players.
- Players do not make connection between physical development and loss of form

### TACTICAL PROWESS

#### Decision Making

Understand the specific responsibilities of the various position through playing experience and minimal direction from coach. Small sided games 5v5 7v7 are crucial in players developing decision making

Appreciate the space of a full size GAA pitch i.e. Use of width & depth.

#### Attacking play

Implement principles of attack – possession & support play

#### Maintain possession

Moving the ball as a team.

#### Defending

Implement principles of defend – Delay, Deny, Dispossess, Deliver

### TEAM PLAY

### PSYCHOLOGICAL FOCUS COACHABILITY OF PLAYERS

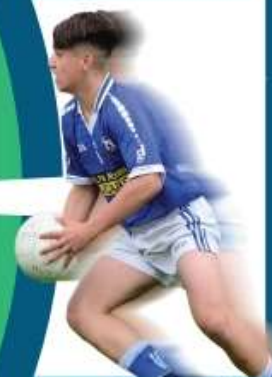
Players can fully recognise the improvements made through individual practise

### PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Question players individually on decisions made on and off the ball. Highlight recent examples of good play at senior level and question players on

## THE GAME

- Players beginning to become accustomed to specific position but must still be challenged to playing a variety of positions.
- All players experience game time in matches
- Aim to provide at least 16 games in a season for your team.
- Size 5 football







# Key Success Outcomes

The main aim at this age grade is that we continue to develop our players. Working on improved decision making and mastering the essential skills in pressure situations is an important focus at this age category combined with a continued emphasis on using both sides of the body. Our key measure of success at this age level we set out to achieve each year as the children move up to the next age grade are:



- ✓ Children are becoming even more comfortable using non dominant side
- ✓ Be able to develop relevant decision making in a variety of positions
- ✓ Understand positional awareness
- ✓ Demonstrate the ability to communicate with officials, players and management in a non-confrontational manner
- ✓ Start to understand & appreciate the correlation between playing Gaelic Games and a healthy life style
- ✓ Develop the skills to be able to integrate oneself and all members of a squad in all aspects of team activity
- ✓ Be able to react and adjust to appropriate patterns of play based on environmental situations e.g. how many players aside



# The Sarsfields Way

16 - 18 year olds





# 16 to 18 Year Olds

**At this age level children are now young adults and should be able to perform the skills of Gaelic Football to an autonomous level in an open environment incorporating team mates and/or opponents.**

**Our core Sarsfields Way ‘focus pillars’ at this age grade are:**

- Participation continues to be important and player development should continue to be primary focus
- Increased focus on developing the players non dominant side
- Games based approach to training sessions
- We recognise that players can be under exam pressure. Be aware that players can be facing life-changing events – college/socialising etc
- We watch for late developers. Here “late developers” can pass out the former “star”. Be aware of this, from both players perspective
- We encourage positive lifestyle choices for the players
- We recognise there should be a clear connect between the U-16/Minor team in terms of the development of a consistent style of play with the U20 and senior grades



# PLAYER PATHWAY

PLAY TO STAY WITH THE GAA

## THE COACH

- Well Organised/Planned Sessions
- Allow players to make their own decisions on the pitch
- Accept that mistakes are a big part of player learning & development
- Set example by showing respect to match officials & opponents at all times
- Use simple language

## THE PLAYER

- Strong connection with admired adult (role models)
- Ability to mix socially with all teammates & adults
- Commitment to individual practice away from coaching session/matches.
- Personally responsible for Hydration/Nutrition
- Manage rest and recovery e.g. Foam Rolling
- Manage time effectively between school & sport

## THE COACH

- Well Organised/Planned Sessions
- Allow players to make their own decisions on the pitch
- Accept that mistakes are a big part of player learning & development
- Set example by showing respect to match officials & opponents at all times
- Use simple language

### TECHNICAL SKILLS

#### Handling

Low/High/Body catch in pressured situations

#### Movement

Dummy kick/solo, Feint & Sidestep. Attack ball at full pace.

#### Tackle

Shadowing player in possession and off the ball. Near hand tackle

#### Flexibility

through static stretching and dynamic mobility activities

#### Speed

multidirectional, between 5M -25M with complete recovery in between. Built into warm up.

#### Strength

Improve core strength through own body weight exercise e.g. Plank

### PHYSICAL FITNESS

### PSYCHOLOGICAL FOCUS COACHABILITY OF PLAYERS

Players can fully recognise the improvements made through individual practise

### PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Question players individually on decisions made on and off the ball. Highlight recent examples of good play at senior level and question players on

## ENVIRONMENT

- Coach to player ratio 1:10
- At least 1 ball for every 2 players
- Have awareness of games schedule for others teams your players may be representing.
- Enjoyment & Fun for players still a key consideration when planning sessions.

### TACTICAL PROWESS

#### Decision Making

Using questioning, vary your coaching style to improve players decision making:

#### Guided Discovery

"show me when its best to solo ball or pass it long"

#### Trial & Error

"try to decide to support in front of the player or behind the player"

#### Observation & feedback

"let's watch this and then..."

Players are challenged to adapt to a number of team playing styles throughout the season.

Use questions to help players problem solve "in game" when playing against opposition with a particular playing style.

Reflect on these scenarios in the trainingsessions that follow using conditioned games.

### TEAM PLAY

## THE GAME

- Players beginning to become accustom to specific position but must still be challenged to playing a variety of positions.
- Aim to provide at least 16 games in a season for your team.
- Size 5 football





# Key Success Outcomes

The main aim at this age grade is that we continue to develop our players as we prepare them to move to senior level. During this phase, high intensity individual-event and position-specific training is provided to players/athletes year round. Players who are now proficient at performing both basic and sport-specific skills, learn to perform these skills under a variety of competitive conditions during training. Special emphasis is placed on optimum preparation by modelling training and competition. Our key measure of success at this age level we set out to achieve each year as they move up to senior level are:

- Players leaving these age grades should be able to monitor and evaluate an opponents decision making, style of play and technical ability and utilise this information to greater enable one's own decision making process.
- Should be capable of emerging as a role model and leader
- Utilise team and opposition playing facts to improve development and performance
- Be able to undertake self evaluation to maximize potential
- Develop an individually appropriate fuelling routine around training & competition
- Manage study, part time work, career and sport options to ensure a healthy life balance
- Player should be in position to take ownership of the need to work on individual practices to stay within the team structure or to get himself in a position to the move to the next level of the game. (adult/underage Inter County) – some will embrace this, others might not.



# The Sarsfields Way

## Schools Coaching & Off season Activity



Planning for the future: Your Club : Your Community



# Schools Coaching

As rural clubs continue to struggle for numbers, the players the club will rely on over the next 20 years are all now at school. It is from this group of children that the future players, coaches and officers of our club will come, therefore establishing strong club school links and encouraging these children to become club members is absolutely vital for the long-term sustainability of our club. We want all the schools in our locality to know that the Charlestown Sarsfields club is open and welcoming.

With this in mind the club aims to develop closer links between the schools in our community and the Charlestown Sarsfields Club with the aim of supporting schools through the provision of coaches from the club to provide training sessions in schools for children which will provide consistency with what the club are trying to achieve with our underage teams and further reinforce the values and objectives of the Sarsfields Way Player Pathway.

This has multiple benefits for both the club and the school and will help provide familiar faces for children when both in school and when attending the clubs activities.



# Off Season Activity

For our youngest teams (Under 8s to Under 12's) the off season, typically December to February, is traditionally a period where there is no GAA activity but represents a good opportunity to develop children's basic skills and fundamental movements ahead of the following season restarting.

It is our aim that from winter 2021/22 and with 'government and public health guidelines permitting' that the club will run small sided 'little leagues' and skills workshops for our youngest teams, utilising the complex and the new Astro facility in Carracastle for these activities.

As a club we look forward to the development of the fantastic new Colm Horkan Memorial Pitch which once completed in the next 2/3 years will be a fantastic facility for helping our young teams and players develop, particularly during the winter season.





# The Sarsfields Way

## Club & Team Communications



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# Communications

The main method of communication with parents will be through Whatsapp groups set up for each age group from aged 7-9 upwards. Each team coach will set up a group for their particular age group. For the Nursery group communication will be via the Charlestown Bord Na Nog Facebook page or if preferred by parents of children at this age group a Whatsapp group may be used.

Each week our coaches will send out a reminder about the weeks activities. We ask that parents and guardians check the Whatsapp group in case of any changes in times or venues or training etc.

Should you have any queries regarding club communications you can contact the club at [charlestownbordnanog@gmail.com](mailto:charlestownbordnanog@gmail.com)



# The Sarsfields Way

## Player Retention & Playing out of age



Planning for the future: Your Club : Your Community



# Player Retention

Retaining our players right through from Nursery to Under 18 level and onto senior level is a core pillar of 'The Sarsfields Way' Player Pathway programme.

Our aim is to maximise the number of players that graduate to play at adult level and to have as many of those players, and former players, coaching within the club as possible. A key element in achieving that goal is ensuring player's have a positive experience of playing for Charlestown Sarsfields teams. If they do, they are more likely to continue playing into adulthood and return as coaches in the future. Coaches are also likely to repeat what they learned themselves, so a positive environment today is important for the future.

Our coaches play a critical role in helping the club achieve these aims. They create the environment in which our players develop. It is therefore important that our coaches set the values and expectations of the club, for our players, as this greatly affects the development of every player. Players will be afforded the opportunity to develop at their own pace, while assisted in achieving their full potential. While we strive to win, player development and retention is the number one priority and should never be compromised.



# Player Retention

## WHY Children PLAY IN THE FIRST PLACE

Identify where I'm from

To learn new skills

To be part of a team

To make friends

Social aspect

To build self confidence

To have fun

**“Don't wait until the player is walking away”**

Steep Dropout between the ages of 12 and 21 (58%)



# Playing out of age group policy

**The Charlestown Sarsfields Player pathway guidance on 'playing up' is that players 'playing up' should not deprive players who are 'at age' of game time.**

'Playing up' is where a player plays and/or trains with an older panel of players; for example: an under 12 player plays with an under Under-14 team and includes all juvenile age categories across the club. It is commonplace and necessary at times but it is important that the Club does not unintentionally demotivate 'at age' players to the point where they will eventually give up playing and they must get playing time in matches. The Club policy on this issue is to foster and develop both weak and strong players.

In team selection, preference should always be given to players who are 'at age' ie those who will be overage the following year. This should be club policy for all teams up to U-15 level. Coaches may deviate from this policy if there is good reason not to select a player e.g. indiscipline, poor attendance record. In such cases the player should be informed why he is not playing.

The Club Executive will monitor these new guidelines and ensure that fairness and equity is applied. When a player plays up, the coach of his/her own team should be consulted by the mentor of the team in which he/she is playing up for. The parents must also be consulted with regarding their child playing up. The health and well-being of all our underage players is paramount in all decisions regarding the impact of players 'playing up'. The Club will however facilitate 'playing up' where players are required to make up a team due to shortage in numbers.

If issues arise with the implementation of these guidelines, parents should first discuss the matter with a team mentor. Following this, parents may contact the Child Welfare Officer by email or text in regard to their child not getting adequate game time.

The Club wishes that common sense, fairness and good communication between mentors, players and parents will resolve most issues/disputes.



# The Sarsfields Way

## Code of Conduct



Planning for the future: Your Club : Your Community



# Code of Behaviour

Charlestown Sarsfields GAA club has always had a strong and proud tradition and reputation from a code of behaviour perspective and this is something we are very proud of as a club.

This GAA Code of behaviour policy brings together the collective good practice experiences of the Association and seeks through the implementation of an agreed and joint policy document, that while promoting our games amongst young people we also seek to provide a safe environment in which we can develop children, under 18 years of age, in a caring and respectful environment. This Code applies to all persons under 18 yrs. of age who participate in our games or other activities and to those who work with them and assist them in any capacity on our behalf.

The Code of Behaviour provides statutory guidance that governs our work with young people and children. This will assist and direct our members and units in our work and provide a platform and support for those working with young people and children at all levels in our Associations.

We ask that all parents/guardians/coaches and players within our club familiarise themselves with the Code of Behaviour Document. The document can be found here <https://www.gaa.ie/api/pdfs/image/upload/ukepuvlq3qhyie10jfqy.pdf>

Throughout the season we will reinforce the code of behaviour and the values associated with same to ensure we uphold the longstanding club tradition in this regard.







# Code of Conduct (Coaches)

Team Coaches involved with our underage teams can ensure that sport has a beneficial impact when they adhere to the following guidelines:

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person and treat each one equally regardless of age, gender or ability.
- Ensure that nobody involved with the team acts towards or speaks to another person in a manner or engages in any other conduct which threatens, disparages, vilifies or insults another person on the basis of that person's race, religion, colour, descent, nationality, ethnic or socio-economic background.
- Ensure that each player observes a high standard of personal hygiene.
- Make adequate provision for First Aid and do not encourage or allow players to play while injured. Keep an adequate record of each injury and ensure that the appropriate treatment is sought
- Ensure that another official – referee/team mentor – is present when a player is being attended to and can corroborate the relevant details.
- Ensure players are safely attired and that proper insurance arrangements are in place.
- Be positive during coaching sessions so that participants always leave with a sense of achievement and an increased level of self-esteem.
- Plan and prepare appropriately for each session and ensure proper levels of supervision.
- Be punctual, properly attired, and lead by example; avoid smoking or the consumption of alcohol in the presence of young people.





# Code of Conduct (Coaches)

- Don't shout at or lecture players or reprimand/ridicule them when they make a mistake. (Children learn best through trial and error. They should not be afraid to risk error to learn)
- Set realistic – challenging but achievable – performance goals.
- Praise and reinforce effort/commitment and provide positive feedback.
- Recognise the developmental needs of young players (avoid excessive training or competition) and ensure that they are matched on an individual or team basis.
- Rotate the team captain and the method used for selecting teams so that the same children are not always last to be selected.
- Develop an understanding of the OTú Coaching Model and ensure the appropriate level of coaching accreditation has been attained.



# Code of Conduct (Players)

Those involved in our activities shall accept the roles and responsibilities that they undertake as we, as a club, commit ourselves to maintaining an enjoyable and safe environment for all where the safeguarding of our members will always be paramount.

Young Players can benefit greatly from sports in terms of personal development and enjoyment. Our players are encouraged to realise that as a result of their participation in our Gaelic Games that they also have a responsibility to treat other players and officials with fairness and respect. With rights there will always be responsibilities. The term young players also refers to children i.e. any person who is under 18 years of age, regardless of what team or age group they play with.

Inevitably, there will be issues with discipline from time to time and whilst we will always look to protect our players and coaches, where there is clear evidence of repeated breach of our disciplinary standards as a club we must address this. The following guidelines are the Charlestown Sarsfields Policy in dealing with issues that may arise.

Through this, we hope to be consistent and fair to all players. Should a fine be sanctioned by the county board, the offending player will be required to pay it.

**WHEN A PLAYER TURNS OUT IN THE CHARLESTOWN SARSFIELDS COLOURS THEY ARE REPRESENTING NOT ONLY THEIR CLUB, BUT THEIR TOWN, THEIR COMMUNITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES**





# Code of Conduct (Players)

The below is a guideline for coaches where expected standards of conduct are not adhered to

Offence	U-8's to U-11's	U-12's – U-14's	U-16's to U-18's
Continued criticism of team mates, opponents	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Immediate substitution & misses next game
Critical of coaches or referee	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Immediate substitution and misses the next game	Immediate substitution & misses next game
Refusal to allow coaches to talk to the group Refusal to follow coaches instructions in training/games	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	immediate substitution, miss next game if repetitive
Refusal to shake hands with team mates, opponents, coaches, referees when requested	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Starts as a substitute in the next game	Starts as a substitute in the next game
Failure to keep a balanced attendance at training / games when playing other sports	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Start as a sub for next game, but brought on ahead of players who are subs because of indiscipline	Start as a sub for next game, but brought on ahead of players who are subs because of indiscipline
Failure to turn up to training /games without a valid excuse	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Start as a sub for next game, but brought on ahead of players who are subs because of indiscipline	Start as a sub for next game, but brought on behind players who are subs because of indiscipline
No valid excuse for poor time keeping for training / matches	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Start as substitute for next game	Not allowed to train. Dropped for next game
Starting a fight at training / match	Loss of game time (escalating from 2,5,30 mins, full game)	Immediate substitution and misses the next game	immediate substitution and misses the next game
Breaking team rules on social life expectations	Not applicable	At Discretion of Coach	At Discretion of Coach
Sent off for violent conduct	Misses next game	Punishment by County Board	Punishment by County Board



As a club we ask that parents/guardians uphold the principles of FAIR PLAY and RESPECT for all and to remember that our coaches are volunteers who give up their time to coach our teams and help our children develop to the best of their abilities – without our coaches and volunteers there would be no club.

# Code of Conduct (Parents)

In common with Coaches and Club personnel the Parents/Guardians of underage players should act as role models for their children as they participate in Gaelic Games and lead by example at all times.

- Adopt a positive attitude to their children's participation in our games
- Respect officials' and coaches decisions and encourage children to do likewise
- Do not exert undue pressure on your child
- Never admonish your own child or any other child for their standard of play
- Be realistic in their expectations and show approval for effort, not just results
- Avoid asking a child or young person, 'How much did you score today' or 'What did you win by' or 'What did you lose by.' Ask them 'Did they enjoy themselves'
- Never embarrass a child or use sarcastic remarks towards a player
- Applaud good play from all teams
- Do not criticise playing performances. Identify how improvements may be made
- Do not seek to unfairly affect a game or player
- Do not enter the field of play unless specifically invited to do so by an official in charge
- If a parent has any issues to raise regarding their child's participation or performance in a team they may raise this with the team coach(es) but should do so in a constructive and non-confrontational manner and not in the company or vicinity of young players or other parents
- Complaints about the conduct or practice of a coach should be brought to the attention of the relevant Club Children's Officer
- Show appreciation to volunteers, coaches and Club officials
- Respecting the rights, dignity and worth of every person and by treating each one equally regardless of age, gender, ability, ethnic origin, cultural background or religion
- Not entering team dressing rooms unless deemed necessary by the team coach(es) so as to protect the privacy of other underage players
- Never ridiculing or scolding a player for making a mistake during games or competitions
- Showing respect to our Club's opponents. Without them there would be no games or competitions



# The Sarsfields Way

## Player Assessment



Planning for the future: Your Club : Your Community



# Player Assessment



At the end of each season all underage coaches will be expected to complete the 'Player assessment Card' provided by the club, which will provide an overview of the season and also provide a summary into how each child in that particular age group has developed over the course of the season, outlining key details such as skills development, weak and strong points, personal development and behavioural traits. This assessment will be shared with the coach in the next age group to assist them with planning for the forthcoming season. This card will greatly help in planning squads and provide an insight into the players the next coach will be coaching, with a particular emphasis on improving each player.

It is important that the player and parent inputs into the card as it will help them understand the challenges which lie ahead for each individual player. As part of the assessment process the player welfare is of paramount importance and all players must be protected from potential injuries and possible burnout.

It is planned that a mid and end season review will be held with all underage coaches to discuss progress and provide any feedback necessary on how the club can improve and grow and address any potential issues that may arise also.







# Conclusion

Our aim as a club is to strive to ensure all players progress, at their own unique rate of progression, and we must allow for this. After a full year of coaching, our objective as a club, is that our players have improved and be in a “better place” as he/she progresses, ready to take on, and relish the next challenge, they face, as they progress to the next age level.

Charlestown Sarsfields GAA Club greatly appreciates the voluntary commitment which coaches and players give to the club. Players as individuals will develop at different rates both mentally and physically. Teams themselves will mature and develop at different rates and as a club we need to be aware of this. Rather than compare their team to what has gone before, our focus is on helping our children and their teams reach their potential in an enjoyable and structured manner.

Every child in our underage club should have the resources to develop both as a player but more importantly as a person. The ‘Sarsfields Way Player Pathway’ is designed to ensure our underage club continues to grow with a clear structure and goals in place and becomes a central component of the overall club strategy.





# Committee Members

The Charlestown Sarsfields GAA Bord Na Nóg committee members for the 2021 season are.

**Chairman:**  
Donal Healy

**Secretary/Children's  
Officer:**  
Ryan O' Connor

**Treasurer:**  
Siobhan Horkan

**Coaching Officer:**  
Gareth O'Donnell

The Charlestown Sarsfields GAA Bord Na Nóg committee are actively seeking to fill additional positions for the 2021/2022 season.

If you are interested in joining the committee and helping shape the future of our underage club please get in touch at

[charlestownbordnanog@gmail.com](mailto:charlestownbordnanog@gmail.com) or message us through the Charlestown Bord Na Nóg Facebook page



# The Sarsfields Way

## Thank You



**Let's ensure our future is as bright as our past!**