



The Camogie Association

Written Statement to Joint Committee on Media, Tourism, Arts, Culture, Sport and the Gaeltacht –written evidence on the elimination of any and all abuse directed toward referees, officials, and players in sport

Submission Deadline Date 15/12/2021

1 The Camogie Association – An Introduction

The Camogie Association is the national Governing Body for Camogie, responsible for promoting and developing the game, and is an independent voluntary led organisation founded in 1904.

Camogie is one of the most popular female team sports in Ireland with 578 registered Camogie clubs in Ireland and a growing number of clubs developing internationally – on all 5 continents. Through the work of a vast volunteer network, the Camogie Association provides a range of training and competition outlets for players of all ages. Camogie has been recognised as making a significant contribution to Irish Sport, as part of the family of Gaelic games with over 2% of the population volunteering in hurling and camogie (Source Irish Sports Monitor), and more than 100,000 people playing the game.

Camogie operates at a club, county, provincial and international level with teams of all ages participating in the sport. The Camogie Association works closely with colleagues in The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), and LGFA at all levels, who share the ethos, culture and background of Gaelic games, while operating as individual national governing bodies. This collaborative working has gone from strength to strength over recent years and is increasingly visible to members as we deliver joint projects such as child safeguarding, Foireann –membership management system, Joint Foundation Coaching Programme, Aligned Player Pathway and Coaching Frameworks etc., particularly the joint approach that has been taken throughout the Covid 19 pandemic. The Covid 19 advisory group had representatives from all 3 Association and ensured a co-ordinated return to sport for all in the Gaelic games family. This collaboration and partnership will continue, building on the positive developments achieved during the last Memorandum of Understanding between the GAA and Camogie Association, and the GAA and LGFA.

The Camogie Association provided at national level almost 500 competitive fixtures in 2021 – notwithstanding Covid 19 restrictions in place for the first 5 months of the year. Across the entire Camogie Association structure (from club to national) thousands of games and events are co-ordinated and managed in any given year. Of course, as a result of Covid 19 and associated restrictions the scheduling of games in 2020 and 2021 was altered significantly from what a ‘normal year’ would look like. The Camogie Association have carried out research in relation to games programmes provided by all counties across the country. At present we are collating this data with a view to compiling a comprehensive report on the numbers of games, and from a development perspective, providing guidance e to units on how to maximise games programmes for their members. Further information in relation to this will be available in Q1 2022.

Heritage – UNESCO Status

In 2018 Camogie and Hurling were included on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity - an historic achievement which we need to celebrate and promote.

There is an opportunity for the inclusion of the History and Heritage of Camogie and Hurling on the Education Curriculum – promoting the UNESCO Heritage Status of the sport.

2 The Camogie Association and The Elimination of Any and All Abuse Directed Toward Referees, Officials, And Players In Sport

The Camogie Association is committed to providing a safe, supportive and respectful environment for all, with these objectives and values sets out under rule 2.2 of the Association Official Guide Part 1.:

2.2. The objectives of the Association are to:

- a. Promote, develop and manage Camogie in Ireland and internationally;
- B. Promote the active participation of women in sport;
- C. Work in partnership with the wider Gaelic games family;
- D. Foster an awareness of the richness of our national culture, including the Irish language;
- E. Support Irish industries;
- F. Create a safe environment for our members and supporters;
- G. Promote community development and community spirit.
- H. The Association recognises the role of the Dual Player. The Association, in partnership with the LGFA, will endeavour to facilitate as far as is practicable, the Dual Player.

2.3. The core values guiding the Association are:

- A. Inclusiveness;
- B. Voluntarism;
- C. Equality in accordance with relevant equality legislation and fair play;
- D. Anti-racism and anti-sectarianism;
- E. Openness, accountability and professionalism;
- F. Respect and welfare towards our members.

The Camogie Association deals with any breaches of the rules of the Association by members and units of the Association) under rule, through various processes including:

- Official Guide Part 3 – Code of Practice for all Officers of the Association
- Part 4 – Disciplinary Code and THDC Mandatory Procedures

These documents and Camogie Association Policies are available to view at <https://camogie.ie/administration/official-rules/>

3 Education and Training

The Camogie Association has developed and delivered in conjunction with a number of external collaboration partners a suite of education and awareness raising modules to support our members to operate safe and supportive clubs.

Raising awareness of all (players, parents and leaders in sport) of the impact of inappropriate comments, bullying, exclusion etc. is an important element in education of our members.

In respect of awareness raising, during the first 6 months of 2021, the Camogie Association Learning and Development focus for volunteers was 'Inclusion' with volunteers attending 12 online events which were facilitated by partners CARA and ShoutOut. These events included:

- 3 training sessions on Sport Inclusion and Disability Awareness
- 3 training sessions on Disability Inclusion Training
- 3 training sessions on Autism in Sport
- 3 training session on LGBTQ+ Awareness:
 - Children's Officers
 - Players and Young Adults
 - Parents, Coaches and Teachers

These events were very well attended and highlighted this as an area that our volunteers are interested in pursuing.



This training is in addition to the range of coaching courses (113, 1031 participants qualified), referee education (24 courses, 1945 referees qualified and upskilled), safeguarding education and training and various leadership and volunteer training delivered through the year which all incorporate the ethos of respect, inclusion, and fair play, including: - Finance and governance training for club treasurers, Chairperson, Secretary, PRO, Creating a safe club, Essential communication skills for club officers, Essential training for data protection, Games Management System.

Collaboration continues across the Gaelic Games family to develop and roll out such training.

4 Evidence of Abuse

While there is increasing anecdotal evidence of abuse taking place at competitive fixtures etc., in evaluating the facts The Camogie Association can review evidence of individual processed that were undertaken to deal with such complaints through our official processes.

In preparation of this submission the Camogie Association invited feedback from Units and reviewed reports from Transfers hearings and Disciplinary Committees, over the past 3 years.

4.1 NTHDC Feedback

The NTHDC dealt with the following number of cases involving abuse from 2018 to November 2021. All cases involved verbal abuse of Referees or match Officials. None of the cases of abuse involved players.

- 2018- No case
- 2019 - 7 cases
- 2020 - 1 case
- 2021 - 4 cases

4.2 Referee Survey - November 2021

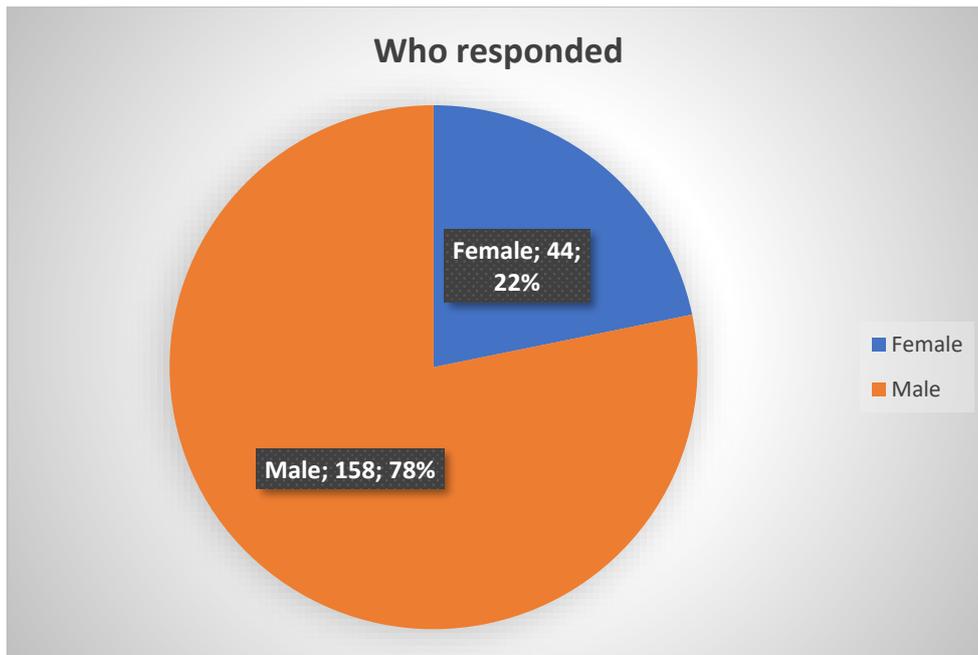
In November 2021, the Camogie Association also carried out a brief survey of referees who have engaged in referee training in recent years, which received 207 responses. The key points from this survey include:

- Of those no longer actively refereeing only 4% stated abuse as a reason for giving up
- However, 80% have reported that they have been subjected to abuse
- Types of abuse reported include – verbal, physical, racist, gender based, sectarian

Please see more detailed findings below. Please note – this is not statistically tested data – merely a snapshot taken in November 2021.

4.2.1 Who responded to the survey – gender breakdown

207 referees responded to the survey



4.2.2 When did the referees last engage in referee training through the Camogie Association:

- 74% said they engaged in training in 2021
- 11% said they last engaged in training in 2020
- 4% said they last engaged in training in 2019
- 11% said they last engaged in training in 2018 or before

4.2.3 Actively Refereeing; If not, why not?

- 77% stated that they were still actively refereeing with 23% stating that they were no longer actively refereeing
- The 23% not actively refereeing were asked why. Only 4% stated abuse as a reason for no longer being involved.

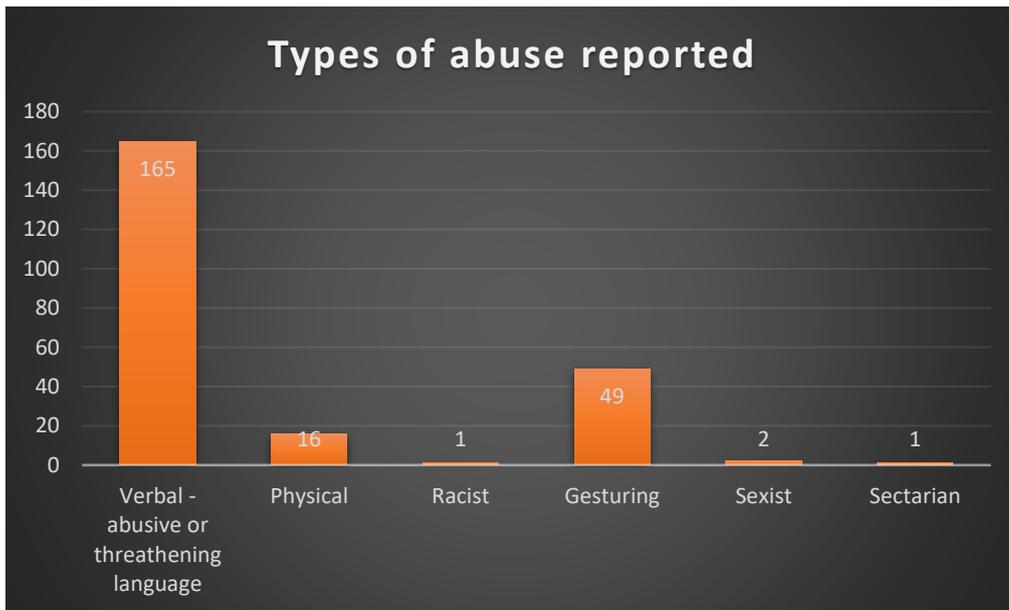
4.2.4 Abuse:

All participants on the survey were asked if they were ever subjected to abuse as a referee.

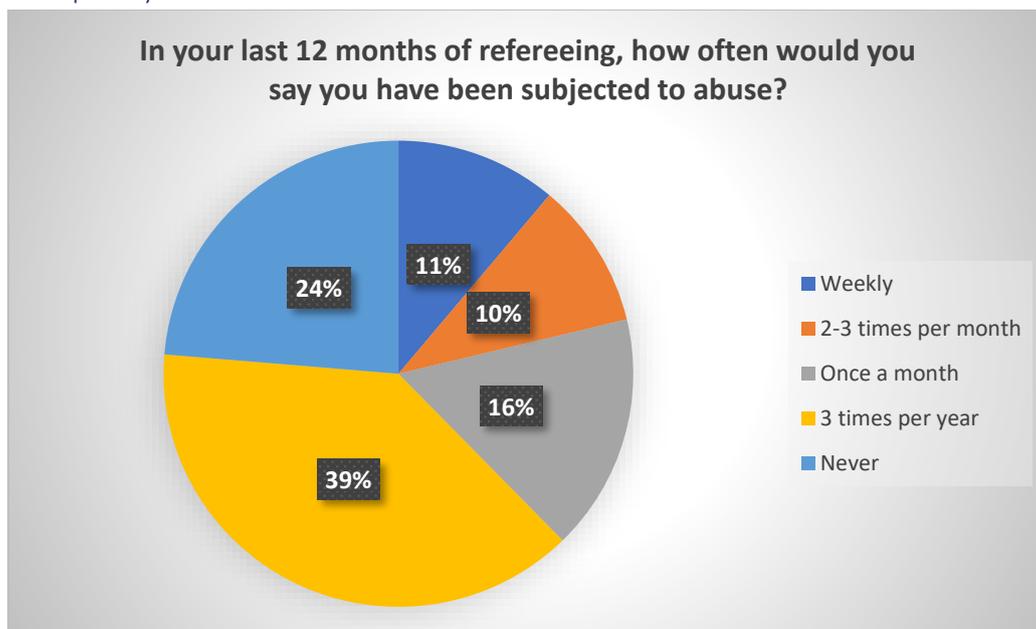
- 80%, or 166 people, stated that they have been subjected to abuse.

4.2.5 Types of abuse:

We asked participants of the survey to what type(s) of abuse they have been subjected to and the following is a breakdown of what they reported:



4.2.6 Frequency of Abuse



4.3 Camogie Units THDC Survey

There were 9 responses to this call for feedback. The feedback is set out below:

4.3.1 From 2019-2021 inclusive has your THDC unit received official reports of PHYSICAL abuse?

22%- Yes

78%- No

- How many cases in 2019? 12
- How many cases in 2020? 12

- **How many cases in 2021?** 15

4.3.2 From 2019-2021 inclusive has your THDC unit received official reports of VERBAL abuse?

78%- Yes

22%- No

- **How many cases in 2019?** 12
- **How many cases in 2020?** 24
- **How many cases in 2021?** 36

4.3.3 From 2019-2021 inclusive has your THDC unit received official reports of RACIAL abuse?

22%- Yes

78%- No

- **How many cases in 2019?** 1
- **How many cases in 2020?** 0
- **How many cases in 2021?** 1

4.3.4 From 2019-2021 inclusive has your THDC unit received official reports of GENDER abuse?

0%- Yes

100%- No

- **How many cases in 2019?** 0
- **How many cases in 2020?** 0
- **How many cases in 2021?** 0

5 Online Abuse

The development and exponential growth of social media has facilitated wider promotion of Camogie and increased engagement between players, teams, fans, members, units, officers and unfortunately 'social media trolls'. This phenomenon has been evidenced across the sports world, with sometimes devastating impacts on individuals.

Camogie is by definition an amateur sport, and players, officials and officers should be protected from abuse by individuals using these channels. While we do not have statistics to provide on this matter, we are aware of increased incidents, and have utilised social media platform tools, to minimise interaction and comments on occasion, particularly in relation to underage activities and events.

Again, where evidence of such online abuse exists, the Camogie Association can deal with it using the Social Media policy and official guide. However this is more challenging where pseudonyms are used, and comments are by individuals who are not members of the Association.

6 Conclusions

As can be seen from the evidence above, there is evidence of abuse being identified, called out and dealt with under existing processes withing the Camogie Association.

Across the Association we have been made aware of increased incidences of verbal abuse from side-lines towards players, referees, officials etc, cases which often do not progress to formal complaints or processes. It is an unwelcome development, and not fitting with the ethos of our game or values of the Camogie Association, or desirable behaviour from our members or fans.

The growth in abuse in sport appears to be a growing phenomenon worldwide across all sports codes. With 100,000 active members of the Camogie Association, while it is disappointing to see cases being dealt with at all, it is worrying that the numbers appear to be on the increase year on year.

Actions which have proved beneficial in practise in camogie and wider sport include

- Silent side-lines
- Education and training for all – including players/ parents re good practise and positive coaching/ reinforcement
- Communication of expectations of members in relation to good and positive behaviour
- Implementing Code of Conduct for All
- Awareness Raising – helping people to understand and appreciate the impacts of abuse of any variety on individuals
- Including elements in all education courses in relation to bullying, appropriate language etc.
- Ensuring that social media platforms enable use of ‘no comments enabled’ features
- Ensuring that someone is responsible for the behaviour and actions of fans and spectators.
- Ensuring that poor behaviour/ bullying/ abuse etc. is dealt with swiftly and appropriately
- Reminding all members of the ethos of providing a safe and supportive environment for all of our players and members

7 Recommendations

Sport Ireland have prepared, as part of the Child Safeguarding and Code of ethics draft codes of conduct for players, parents, coaches etc.

https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2021-10/safeguarding-guidance_0.pdf

A nationwide campaign on media and social media promoting positive behaviours and raising awareness of negative impacts of poor behaviours would be very helpful, supporting all national governing bodies.

The Camogie Association will continue to play its part in ensuring safe and supportive environments for their members at all sporting events and activities, encouraging positive coaching, inclusion, and raising awareness of the code of behaviour (underage), Codes of Practise for Officers, and using rules in place to deal with any and all issues that arise.

8 Appendices

8.1 Approximate Referee Numbers Registered 2018-2020

| | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Row Labels | Sum of Referees | Sum of Referees | Sum of Referees |
| Connacht | 99 | 108 | 100 |
| Leinster | 284 | 229 | 235 |
| Munster | 95 | 96 | 87 |
| Ulster | 178 | 176 | 172 |
| Grand Total | 656 | 609 | 594 |

Note – comparative data is not currently available for 2021 due to a change in the membership Management System.

8.2 Games Programme Data – The Camogie Association – National Competitions

1. Overall Figures 2021

- a. Teams participating: 132
- b. Games played: 238
- c. Venues Used: 220
- d. National Referee's and Support Panel required for delivery of games: $238 + 373 = 610$
- e. Games streamed by the Camogie Association: 26

2. Littlewoods National League

- a. Teams participating: 38
- b. Games played: 72
- c. Venues Used: 36 used (59 venues required for competition)
- d. National Referee's and Support Panel required: $72 + 153 = 225$
- e. Games streamed by the Camogie Association: 10

3. Tesco U16 All Ireland Championship

- a. Teams participating: 28
- b. Games played: 44
- c. Venues Used: 39 used (44 required for competition)
- d. National Referee's and Support Panel required: $44 + 28 = 72$
- e. Games streamed by the Camogie Association: 2

4. Tesco Minor All Ireland Championship

- a. Teams participating: 28
- b. Games played: 54

- c. Venues Used: 42 used (46 required for competition)
- d. National Referee's and Support Panel required: $54 + 36 = 90$
- e. Games streamed by the Camogie Association: 4

5. 2021 All Ireland Championship

- a. Teams participating: 38
- b. Games played: 69
- c. Venues Used: 53 used (71 required for competition)
- d. National Referee's and Support Panel required: $69 + 156 = 225$
- e. Games streamed by the Camogie Association: 10