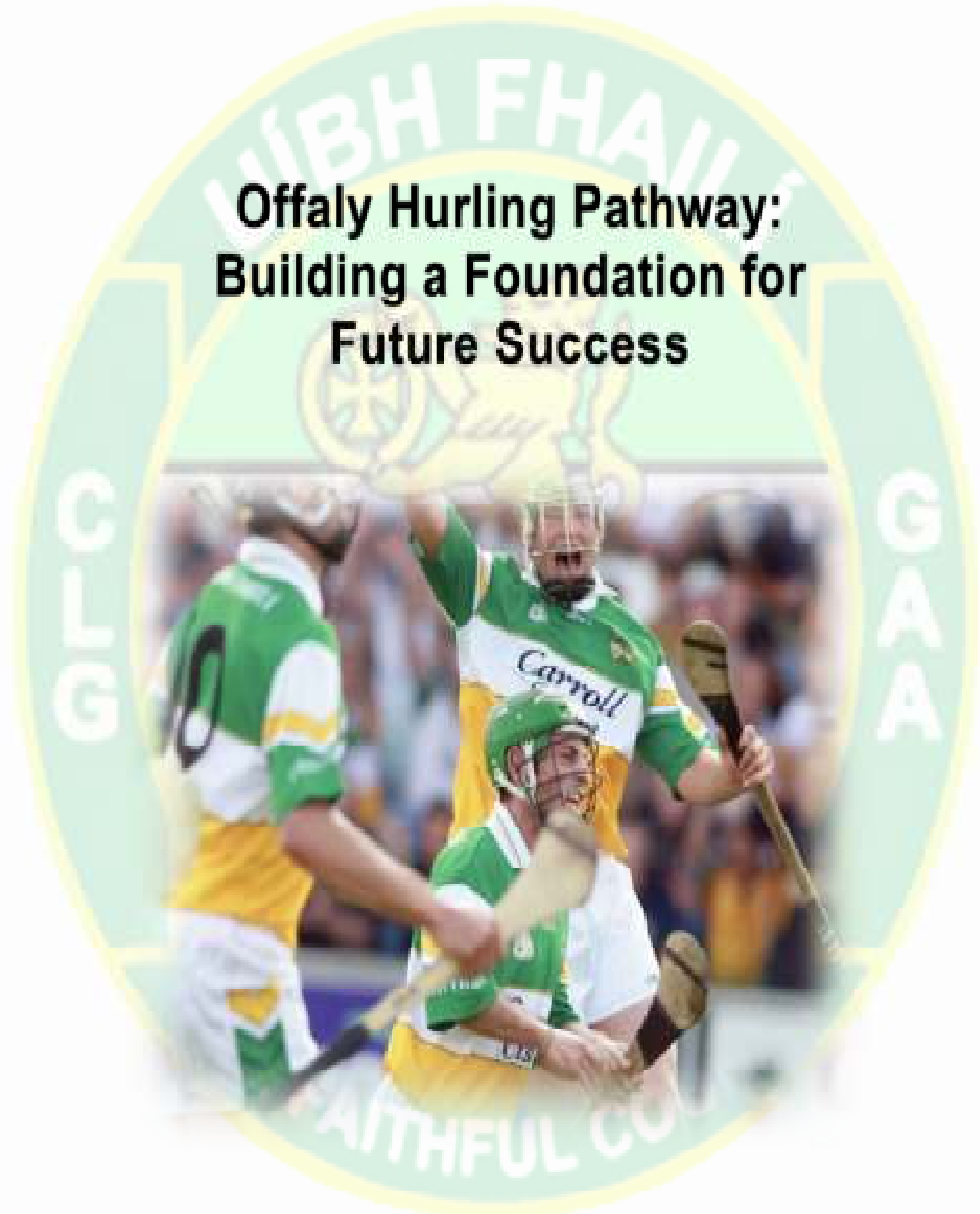


**Offaly Hurling Pathway:  
Building a Foundation for  
Future Success**



# Contents

## Part 1

Offaly Hurling: Our Inheritance, Our Legacy	Page 4
1. Introduction	Page 5
2. Consultation Process	Page 5
3. The current picture of Offaly Hurling	Page 8
4. St Brendan's Park, Birr	Page 9
5. The Current Review Committee	Page 10
6. Demographics and Playing Population	Page 10
7. Nurseries	Page 11
8. Primary Schools	Page 12
9. Cumann na mBunscol	Page 14
10. Post Primary Schools	Page 15
11. Juvenile to Under 21	Page 16
i) U14	
ii) U16	
iii) Minor	
iv) U21	
12. Retirement and Retention	Page 18

## Part 2 *Long Term Player Development*

1. Offaly Hurling Development	Page 19
2. An Effective Talent Development Environment	Page 19
3. System Coherence	Page 21
4. Areas for Attention	Page 21
5. Going Forward	Page 22

## Part 3 *Structure of the Offaly Hurling Pathway*

A. Organisational Approach	Page 24
a. Implementation Committee	Page 24
b. Director of Hurling Coaching	Page 24
c. Director of Fitness	Page 24
d. Underage Fixtures Coordinator	Page 25
e. Cooperation between key stakeholders	Page 25
Offaly Hurling Pathway Structure	Page 26

B. Offaly Hurling Academy Page 27

- Why?
- When?
- What?
- Who?

Hurling Academy Training Session Exemplar Page 28

Offaly Hurling Academy Structure Page 29

C. Offaly Development Squads Page 30

- Why?
- When?
- What?
- Who?

D. Coach Education Programme Page 31

E. Competition Structures Page 31

F. Under 12 and Nursery Hurling Page 32

Potential Season Overview Page 33

G. Structures and lines of Demarcation with Full Time Staff Page 35

H. Offaly Mandatory Coaching Standards Page 36

- 1) Inter-County Management Teams
- 2) Club Management Teams
- 3) Club Coaching Officers
- 4) Development Squads and Academy Squads

I. Offaly Coaching Course 3 Year Targets Page 37

J. Review of Offaly Hurling Pathway Page 37

K. Monitoring, Mentoring and Review of Offaly Coaches Page 37

Appendix 1: Primary Schools in Cumann na mBunscol Competitions Page 38

## Part 1

### **Offaly Hurling: Our Inheritance, Our Legacy.**

The Hurling Review Committee would like to thank Offaly County Board, under the Chairmanship of Pdraig Boland for the vision to set up a committee to carry out a root and branch review of Offaly Hurling and for the patience and support shown to the Review Committee while that task of work was being carried out.

We would also like to thank Dr. Áine McNamara for her expertise and experience and for the many hours spent helping us to put together this plan. While she is Limerick born and bred, her father is an Offaly man. She is currently the course leader for the Professional Doctorate in Elite Performance at the Institute of Coaching and Performance, University of Central Lancashire. Her research focuses on sport psychology and particularly talent development processes in sport and other performance domains. As an applied sport psychology consultant she has worked with a variety of elite and development level performers across different domains.

We would also like to thank Shane Flanagan and the Leinster Council for their sound advice, and for the expertise and support which was freely forthcoming when it was requested.

While this document identifies certain problems within Offaly Hurling, the overriding thrust of the document is to identify the solutions to those problems and to put structures in place which will ensure that Offaly Hurling never again has to endure the lean times that it has endured in recent years.

Is this document flawless? No it is not, and we strongly feel that while it is a five year plan, it must be reviewed and where necessary amended every six months during that five year term. It is a living breathing plan that demands attention if it is to succeed.

Offaly Hurling and its proud traditions is a part of who we are; part of our inheritance, handed down to us by our fathers, mothers, uncles, aunts, grandfathers and grandmothers. They gave us something that we can rightly be very proud of, something that is a unique part of hurling history.

The important question is though; what will our legacy be to our sons and daughters?

In twenty or thirty year's time, when they look back at what is happening right now in Offaly hurling, how will they regard us and our role in the demise or resurrection of Offaly Hurling?

What will our legacy be?

For this plan to succeed there must be a coherent and concerted effort by everyone involved in Offaly GAA, from grassroots level to the Chairman himself. There is no room for complacency.

## 1. Introduction:

Offaly hurlers last contested a Leinster Senior Hurling final in 2004 and were beaten in that game by Wexford by 4 points.

At U21 level Offaly last contested a Leinster Hurling final in 2007 and 2008 losing by 6 points and 12 points respectively.

At Minor level Offaly last contested a Leinster Final in 2003 losing to Kilkenny by 5 points.

The last time an Offaly college even contested a Leinster final was in 2005 when St Kieran's beat Birr Community School by 1-18 to 1-12, and before that it was in 1989 (26 years ago) when St Kieran's beat Birr CS 2-11 to 1-09.

The picture painted above does not take account of the fact that since 2000, Offaly hurling teams at all grades have suffered heavy defeats at the hands of various opposition, prior to provincial finals.

In 2014 the minor, U21 and senior hurlers lost to provincial opposition, by a combined aggregate total of 42 points.

On 10<sup>th</sup> May 2014 Offaly Minor Hurlers were beaten 0-18 to 1-09 by Wexford. (6 points)

On 25<sup>th</sup> June 2014 Offaly U21 Hurlers were beaten 2-17 to 0-13 by Wexford. (10 points)

On 7<sup>th</sup> June 2014 Offaly Senior Hurlers were beaten 5-32 to 1-18 by Kilkenny. (26 points)

It was against this backdrop that on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2014 Offaly County Board set up a committee to carry out a root and branch review of Offaly Hurling, the main objective being to formulate a plan to arrest the decline of Offaly hurling and to plot the revival of the ancient game from grass roots level, all the way to County Senior Standard.

The members of the original committee who met at the County Arms Hotel were:

Kieran Keenaghan (Chairman)	St Rynaghs
Diarmuid Healy	Conaghy Shamrocks
Damien Martin	St Rynaghs
Pat Cleary (County Coaching Officer)	Ballinamere Durrrow
Patrick Connors	Coolderry
Martin Hanamy	St Rynaghs
Liam Hogan	Coolderry

## 2. Consultation Process:

An extensive consultation process was undertaken in which club coaches, primary school teachers, secondary school teachers & development squad coaches were consulted.

On 10<sup>th</sup> September 2014 an open forum took place at the County Arms Hotel in Birr which was opened to all club officials, members, team mentors and players. The forum was chaired by Kieran Keenaghan and, Diarmuid Healy made a presentation on Implementing Skills Coaching in Team Preparation.

Further to the consultation process above, members of the committee have been consulting with individuals throughout the county. This was done to ensure that a broad understanding of the problems (and hopefully suggestions as to solutions) could be obtained. The committee have also been meeting on almost a weekly basis to carry out brainstorming sessions and to formulate solutions to each problem on the section by section basis.

Our problem in Offaly is that we are a very small county. It is to our credit as a county that we are one of a very small group of counties that has excelled in both Football and Hurling. The downside of this division of skills is that our pool of hurlers is even smaller than most other 'hurling' counties.

Therefore, we must absolutely optimise the potential of every single player at our disposal, both male and female. We have to build a culture where there is an unquenchable thirst for knowledge in terms of coaching ability. The knowledge is inherently there already; built up in the DNA of the communities who have nourished Offaly hurling for generations and who are still its driving force.

The problems up to now have been numerous:

- 1) It is unfortunate that the methods applied to coach hurlers during the golden era from the late 70's to the turn of the century, have elsewhere been replaced by what have turned out to be more effective practices. With hindsight, it appears that as a county, we were slow to realise this. Whilst our hurling knowledge is and always has been second to none, our knowledge of coaching delivery and the latest fitness training has not recently been at the level it should have been.
- 2) The coaching structure favoured by Offaly County Board appeared to allow the clubs to follow their own path. This bore fruit in the success for some of our clubs in provincial and national competitions. However insufficient input was made in relation to our County Development Squads and therefore we began to slip behind the counties who did have those structures in place.
- 3) We delighted in our clubs competing well on the national scene, but with hindsight, that appeared to divert our focus from the work that was required to be done for the county to succeed at national level.
- 4) Our post primary schools, who once competed regularly with the much larger schools in Leinster suffered badly because the clubs who supplied players to those schools had fallen way behind other counties in terms of their player development, and as a consequence the standard of player available to the schools was not what it should have been. This problem has been compounded by the gradual demise of the Hurling Ethos in some schools.

The main difficulties we face at present are;

- a) The underage club championships running into September/October and in 2014 it ran in to November/December. This causes issues with the clubs being reluctant to release players for school training and matches and thus school teams being unprepared for the early rounds of competition at u16 and Senior schools level.



- b) The U14½ schools championships are played in February/March/April and so are not clashing directly with club competitions, but with clubs returning to training at this time of year there are issues with players training and playing matches excessively so early in their overall season.
  - c) A combined Offaly team was supposed to be entered at U14½ A level this year but that did not take place for a number of reasons. This coming year it is absolutely vital that this team is entered in the U14½ A competition and that it is properly prepared and managed. This year for the first time a combined Offaly Colleges team was entered in the Senior A competition under the management of the Offaly minor manager Eamon O Connor. Teething problems experienced in the initial year are expected to be ironed out next year.
  - d) The fact that Birr Community College only competed in the Juvenile (U14½) B competition this year is of major concern and Offaly GAA need to do more to support Birr Community College to remedy this situation.
  - e) Coláiste Choilm in Tullamore has the largest enrolment of boys at second level in Offaly, drawing mainly from 3 Senior Hurling Clubs, (Tullamore, Ballinamere, Shamrocks) but competes at B level at U14½ and U16½ and are expected compete at C level in Senior Hurling this year. Greater effort needs to be made to ensure the development of such a large number of the potential playing pool of Offaly hurling is being promoted.
  - f) Ferbane, Clara and the two Edenderry schools enter no grade of schools competition in Hurling. Again, this leaves a large number of potential hurlers without the opportunity to train or compete for large periods of the year.
  - g) Tullamore College and Killina School presently compete at C level. This year Killina won both the All Leinster Senior(U18½) Colleges C Hurling final and the Leinster Junior (U16½) Colleges Final So good progress is being made there.
- 5) The work in our Primary Schools has been carried out for two purposes. The first, being the promotion of the game of hurling on behalf of the GAA, and the second, being the coaching of the schoolchildren. While there is absolutely Trojan work being done in some primary schools, both by the teachers themselves, by the schools coaches who visit the schools and in some cases by clubs, the quality of coaching in some primary schools is just not what it should be. In order to improve the quality of coaching in our primary schools the situation must be rectified and the following points need to be taken into account.
- a) The ratio of coach to pupil is often 1:24 and even higher compared to the GAA's recommended ration of 1:6.
  - b) At present, a lot of the teachers do not have sufficient training to coach hurling to the required standard.
  - c) The teachers need to be encouraged and incentivised to coach hurling.

- d) The clubs need to actively support the schools by providing hurleys, sliotars and other equipment.
- e) Very often, children are using plastic hurleys which are not their own, which are far too big for them and which are stored on a trolley which is wheeled out in to the yard when the GDA comes to coach in the school. The same thing applies to kids helmets. This is not the fault of the teachers in the schools, but rather a poor reflection on the clubs in whose catchment area these schools lie. Offaly GAA needs to proactively address this problem.

Therefore, we feel very strongly that we must adapt an holistic approach to solving the problem that is Offaly Hurling and our solution must cover the full spectrum of hurling life from 4 years old all the way to the point where we retain people within the GAA to put something back in to the game and the communities in which they live.

### **3. The Current Picture of Offaly Hurling**

- The lack of recent success at senior level has repercussions ‘down the chain’ and there is a perception that the quality of coaching, team support, and management is not at the standard required to be competitive at National level.
- There is a lack of coherence between school, club, and county especially in terms of scheduling of both matches and training – the playing season is condensed into a narrow window with most players having few, if any, playing or training opportunities from October until late Spring. In terms of ‘keeping players in the game’, there is a need to provide training and development opportunities to players during the Winter months.
- There is a lack of coherence between county squads and more joined up thinking is needed to the smooth the progress of young hurlers as they move from underage through to under 21 and senior Offaly squads.
- There are many committed and enthusiastic coaches working within Offaly hurling – however, there is currently a lack of coach education, CPD and opportunities to share good practice within the county. Coaches and clubs feel unsupported and there is a need for a coach education programme to address this.
- There is a perception that the ‘talent pool’ at county level is narrowed too early – given the small player pool available it is important that as many players (logistical and financial resources considered) are maintained on the player pathway and equipped with the skills necessary to ‘stay in the game’ at the level commensurate with their ability and motivation.
- There is a need to address the development of players in all facets of the game. The need to incorporate developmentally appropriate strength and conditioning training at all levels of the player pathway, as well as appropriate facilitation at senior level, is a clear need.



- The current competition (at school and club level) structures in the county do not provide an adequate games programme. Players are not provided with a consistent schedule of matches that should be a central component of their development.

Offaly has 20 hurling clubs in total, of which 7 are dual clubs.

Amalgamations at juvenile level brings this number down to 16 to 18 depending upon the number of amalgamations.

Ballyskenach – Killavilla

Shinrone

CRC

Coolderry

Clareen

Kinnitty

Drumcullen

Birr

Ferbane Belmont

Kilcormac Killoughey

St Rynaghs

Lusmagh

Shamrocks

Brosna Gaels (Erin Rovers, Doon, Ballycumber, Tubber)

Ballinamere Durrow

Tullamore

Na Fianna (Clodiagh Gaels, Raheen, Ballinagar)

Edenderry

Clara

Gracefield



#### **4. St Brendan's Park Birr (Capacity 6,600) (11 Turnstiles x 600 people)**

The vast majority of the committee, although it was not unanimous, strongly feel that both club and county hurling games must return to St Brendan's Park, Birr. We feel that it is the spiritual home of Offaly Hurling.

We readily acknowledged the pride that is felt in having a pitch and facilities that match any in the country at O'Connor Park in Tullamore.

However, given the hold that St. Brendan's Park in Birr has on the heart of every hurling fan in Offaly, meaningful dialogue must be held within the county, to discuss the return of some hurling games to this iconic venue. It is immediately recognised that certain Health and Safety issues presently prevent full use of the ground. We must also emphasise that this must not be seen as an attempt to get to play all hurling matches in Birr

It makes no sense to be bringing two Offaly clubs who are located close to St Brendan's Park in Birr, to Tullamore (capacity 20,000) for a game, just as it makes no sense that two teams located close to O'Connor Park should be brought to Birr to play their game.

The argument has been made many times that a county can have only one county ground, but that argument just does not hold water because:

Waterford use: Walsh Park and Fraher Field  
 Wexford use: Wexford Park, Enniscorthy, Gorey and New Ross  
 Dublin use: Parnell Park and Croke Park  
 Cork use: Páirc Uí Chaoimh & Páirc Uí Rinn  
 Antrim use: Casement Park & Ballycastle  
 Galway use: Pearse Stadium and Salthill (?)

We believe that the capacity of O'Connor Park is 20,000 while the capacity of St Brendan's Park is 6,600, but the maximum attendance at any Offaly game either league or championship is far less than the 6,600 capacity of St Brendan's Park.

## 5. The Current Review Committee

Over the last seven months the review committee has evolved and the present committee is constituted as follows:

Martin Hanamy		St Rynaghs
Pat Cleary	Coaching Officer	Ballinamere Durrow
Alan Mulhall	Games Manager	Walsh Island
Finian McDermott		Tullamore
Patrick Connors		Coolderry
Damien Martin		St Rynaghs
Marion Crean	Secretary (Camogie/Primary Schools)	Shinrone
Mary Wyr	PRO (Camogie/Primary Schools)	Tullamore
Ger Scales	(Post Primary Schools)	St Rynaghs
Liam Hogan	Chairman	Coolderry
Jimmy O Dwyer		Leinster Council

## 6. Demographics and Playing Population:

The population of the entire county of Offaly is a mere 76,686 (2011) up from 59,000 in the 1996 census with the vast majority of that increase being accounted for by the influx of people from the greater Dublin area seeking affordable accommodation particularly in the towns of North Offaly where from 2006 to 2011 towns like Edenderry experienced a 54% rise in population and the population of Portarlinton growing by 50%, while the population of the town of Birr grew by 20% during that same period.

Offaly has 21 hurling clubs and of that number 7 are dual clubs. Amalgamations at juvenile level bring this number down to 16 to 18 depending on the number of amalgamations in any given year.

Most of these hurling clubs have on average 1 to 10 teams covering ages all the way from under 8 to adult level. When you compare this to some of the big Dublin clubs like, St Brigids, Ballyboden St Endas and Kilmacud Crokes who each have upwards of 80 teams, it puts the issue of population and playing numbers firmly in focus.

However, Offaly has always had this problem and this is not a new phenomenon. From the mid 1960s to the 2000 all Ireland final, Offaly could always punch way above its weight in hurling terms. Offaly has always used the small playing numbers and the concentration of hurling in the tight geographical area around the town of Birr to its advantage. However there is a danger that in focussing our attention in the south west of the county that we overlook the contribution made by clubs in the rest of the county. Towns like Tullamore, Edenderry and Clara made a telling contribution to the golden era of Offaly hurling. However, if Offaly hurling is to regain its place at hurling's top table, we must ensure that towns outside the southwest are not overlooked. They must be encouraged and utilised to the point where they are once again making telling contributions to Offaly hurling teams at all levels.

If Offaly is to regain its reputation as a giant killer, then it is obvious that it must maximise the development potential of every single hurler in every single club in the county and not just the traditional hurling clubs of South Offaly.

The strong focus must be on the DEVELOPMENT of players at all ages groups from Nursery to Senior level, and ultimately we must also deal with training our adult players as coaches so that when they retire we retain them within the system and avail of their acquired knowledge of the game in order to pass that knowledge and skill on to the next generation of Offaly hurlers.

The emphasis at all age groups must be on INDIVIDUALISED DEVELOPMENT to maximise the potential of every single player at every stage of the Long Term Player Development Pathway.

Therefore, we must concentrate on DEVELOPING each player instead of merely training teams to win competitions. To achieve this goal the key is to constantly upskill our coaches at all levels; to regularly review the performance of coaches at club, development squad, academy, college and county level, and to maximise the DEVELOPMENT of the hurlers under their tutelage.

Our coaches must be as good as they possibly can be in order to maximise the DEVELOPMENT potential of every individual, so in order to maximise that potential it is absolutely imperative that Offaly puts in place a well structured coach education programme which is designed to ensure that Offaly's coaches are highly qualified, motivated and experienced and that the ratio of coach to player is 1:6 as recommended in GAA guidelines.

In that regard, the principal areas over which Offaly Hurling has a major influence are as follows:

## **7. Nurseries**

Each club must have a Nursery set up and have Nursery coaches trained by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2016 so that the ratio of coach to player is 1:6 and that a Nursery/Coach Review process be implemented so that coaches are mentored by external tutors.

Training of Nursery coaches to take place in clusters of 4/5 clubs organised geographically.

Review meetings among the same cluster clubs should take place every two months under the guidance of a tutor/mentor so that coaches in neighbouring clubs can compare notes and learn from each other's experience.

Therefore, our thoughts on the setting up of nurseries in Offaly are as follows:

- All clubs should have a Nursery to cater for children from 4 years to 7 years of age only.
- Before each September, coaches for the Nurseries must be identified and qualified.
- Every Nursery must only have coaches that:
  - a) Have a minimum of a Foundation Award Course completed
  - b) Have a Code of Ethics Course completed
  - c) Have Garda clearance.
- All nurseries, through the Club Coaching Officer will produce a Player Pathway Development Plan based on a model provided by the Implementation/Review Committee. This Long Term Player Pathway Plan has been developed by the Leinster Council and will shortly be made available to every club in Offaly for their guidance.
- The people who will assist in the setting up of the Nurseries will be:
  - a) The G.D.A.
  - b) The Director of Hurling Coaching

## **8. Primary Schools**

1) The work in our Primary Schools has been carried out for two purposes. The first, being the promotion of the game of hurling on behalf of the GAA, and the second, being the coaching of the schoolchildren. While there is absolutely Trojan work being done in some primary schools, both by the teachers themselves, by the coaches who visit the schools and in some cases by clubs, the quality of coaching in some primary schools is just not what it should be. In order to improve the quality of coaching in our primary schools the situation must be rectified and the following points need to be taken into account.

- a) The ratio of coach to pupil is often 1:24 and even higher compared to the GAA's recommended ratio of 1:6.
- b) At present, a lot of the teachers do not have sufficient training to coach hurling to the required standard.
- c) The teachers need to be encouraged and incentivised to coach hurling.
- d) The clubs need to actively support the schools by providing hurleys, sliotars and other equipment.
- f) Very often, children are using plastic hurleys which are not their own, which are far too big for them and which are stored on a trolley which is wheeled out in to the yard when the coaches come to coach in the school. The same thing applies to kids' helmets. This is not the fault of the teachers in the schools, but rather a poor reflection on the

clubs in whose catchment area these schools lie. Offaly GAA needs to proactively address this problem.

2) In order to help strengthen the coaching structure in primary schools and to strengthen the club/school link the Review Committee considers that the following recommendations must be implemented:

- a) Strengthen club/ school links. The Director of Hurling Coaching will be responsible for this.
- b) Every child to bring their own hurley and helmet to school.
- c) Coaching will begin from Junior Infant upwards.
- d) Clubs to provide coaches to work with coaches to coach students, as set out in the local club's Player Pathway Plan. The aim is to lower the ratio of coach to pupil to 1:6.
- e) Clubs to support teachers and schools by providing sliotars, hurleys, helmets and other equipment.
- f) Cluster schools for blitzes for the middle classes (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>) to be organised. Emphasis should be placed on participation, game time, fun, skill development and no finals should be played.
- g) Promote the use of PE Céim ar Aghaidh, a teaching resource designed to assist Primary School Teachers to deliver the Physical Education Curriculum through Gaelic games activities.
- h) Upskill teachers by providing coaching courses on a planned and structured basis. CPD opportunities in the area of coaching children should be available for teachers. Provide an approved summer course that qualifies participants for 3 EPV days (Extra Personal Vacation Days) and aims to develop basic skills through games activities that can be applied in the primary school setting for all ages.
- i) School Liaison Officer to be established in every club.
- j) Resurrect Ucan Awards.
- k) All contact with schools be made within the national Heads of Agreement guidelines.
- l) Finals' Day in St Brendan's Park, Birr and O'Connor Park, Tullamore to be heavily promoted by Offaly County Board and attended by County Chairperson, County Secretary and County Senior Players.

Therefore, Offaly must embark on a coach education programme designed to up-skill Primary School Teachers on a planned and structured basis. If teachers are up-skilled by having them complete coaching courses then the Offaly School Coaches who presently go into those schools to coach pupils there, will be able to assist the teacher(s) in coaching the pupils, thus lowering the coach to pupil ratio and therefore making coaching far more effective.



Clubs must assist the teachers by providing the teachers with the necessary equipment such as soft-touch sliotars, hurleys, helmets, goal posts & nets, pole trainers etc. They should even consider providing non-hurling/GAA equipment to assist in the development of fundamental movement skills. Each club's Coaching Coordinator with the assistance of the teachers should ensure that a coaching plan is put in place to develop systematic planning and implementation of a Long Term Player Development Pathway.

The work being done in the primary school must be part of the coaching development plan of the local club.

The work of Primary School Teachers must be acknowledged and the Offaly Hurling Review Committee strongly recommends that Offaly County Board should provide the Primary School Teachers that are actively involved in coaching hurling at Primary School Level with two tickets to the Offaly Senior County Hurling Final each year. These tickets should be sent to Cumann na mBunscol for distribution, accompanied by a covering letter stating that the teachers actively involved in the coaching in the school must receive them.

Additionally, the names of all of the schools that enter the Cumann na mBunscol Hurling Competitions should be entered into a draw for two Leinster Senior Hurling Final tickets each year. These tickets should be provided by Offaly County Board and the school drawn will be given two tickets that are to be given to the teacher(s) in the school that are actively involved in coaching.

### **Primary Schools V Club Conflict on Fixtures**

In order to resolve the annual conflict between the clubs and Cumann na mBunscol in relation to fixtures, the Review Committee agreed that the following days should be reserved for fixtures;

#### **9. Cumann na mBunscol (13-a-side)**

Boys' Competitions-Tuesday and Thursday

Girls' Competitions-Wednesday and Friday

#### **Clubs**

Monday- Under 10

Wednesday- Under 12

Saturday Morning-Under 8

The Hurling Review Committee strongly recommends that there are representatives from Cumann na mBunscol on the Implementation Committee.

## **10. Post Primary Schools**

1. Difficulty exists at present in the successful running of post primary schools hurling with Offaly underage club championships running into late October and in 2014 November/December. This causes issues with reluctance to release players for school training and matches. Thus school teams are unprepared for the early rounds of competition at U16½ and Senior schools level, which currently commence in late September. A more streamlined club structure will help to alleviate this problem. However, this gives rise to the issue of players who don't make school hurling panels, particularly in the larger schools, being left with no hurling for a substantial period of the year. In order to combat this it is proposed that Under 14½ (1st and 2nd Year) lunchtime hurling leagues will be organised and run by teachers and Transition Year Students in all secondary schools in Offaly. These leagues will commence early in the academic year, immediately following completion of U14 and U16 club championships. Each school will have a coordinating teacher for the hurling leagues. These teachers, along with school management, will be contacted in relation to establishing the leagues in their schools. The winning team in each school will be presented with tops with an Offaly crest and the coordinating teacher in each school will receive a jacket in recognition of their efforts in organising the leagues. All tops and jackets will be provided by Offaly County Board. The leagues will be well publicised with photographs of the various teams and results of the games being forwarded to the P.R.O. of the Review/Implementation Committee whereby they will be uploaded onto official social media sites. The possibility of arranging follow on inter-schools blitzes will also be explored to build on this initiative.
2. Greater collaboration between clubs and schools is needed at all times throughout the season to ensure that school teams preparations for competition are not negatively impacted on by clubs early season trainings. It is necessary that during their peak competition times, school teams be prioritised to ensure they are properly prepared for competitive fixtures.
3. A combined Offaly team was supposed to be entered at U14½ A level this year but that did not take place for a number of reasons. This coming year it is absolutely vital that this team is entered in the U14½ A competition and that it is properly prepared and managed. This year for the first time a combined Offaly Colleges team was entered in the Senior A competition under the management of the Offaly minor manager Eamon O Connor. Teething problems experienced in the initial year are expected to be ironed out next year.
4. It is imperative that Birr Community School remain in the U16½ 'A' championship to ensure that Offaly are represented at 'A' in all categories of post primary competition.
5. As regards the relationship between the various Offaly Post-Primary Schools and the Offaly Development Squads, and indeed Offaly Minor Management, it is absolutely vital that there is a close and effective working relationship between all concerned. Therefore, all parties involved with the Combined Schools Teams, the County Minor team and Secondary School

teams will meet on a monthly basis, under the chairmanship of the Offaly Games Manager to create a training plan for the players involved. Also, the various post-primary schools will have preference over their players during the week and the Combined Colleges Team and the Offaly Minor Hurling Team will train collectively once per week at the weekend. The County Games Manager and his staff will provide one strength and conditioning session for these players in their respective secondary schools each week. If the County Minor Manager feels that there is a need for the Minor team to train or play practice matches during the week; it will be subject to the approval of the Games Manager, and decisions in that regard will be based on the workload of the players. It will be the role of the Director of Fitness to review the workload of the players on an ongoing basis.

6. It is imperative that close cooperation exist between the combined U14½ team, the County Development Squad and Academy Managements.

## **11. Juvenile to Under 21**

The present structures in the Under 14 and Under 16 league and championship seem appropriate for the moment but will be reviewed by the implementation committee in consultation with the clubs in October 2016.

At U14 level, each team is guaranteed a minimum of 3 league games and 6 championship games.

At U16 level, each team is guaranteed a minimum of 3 league games and 7 championship games.

### **i) Under 14**

#### **League**

- Presently the Under 14 Championship runs from April to September. There are 16 teams involved.
- The League is made up of 4 groups with 4 teams in each group. The top team in each group qualifies for the semi-final. The semi-finals and final are played on the same day.
- League winner goes to Féile Division 1.
- Runner-up goes to Féile Division 2.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> goes to Féile Division 3.
- The entry fee for this competition is €100 which is refunded if all fixtures are fulfilled.

#### **Championship**

- Championship starts in April and 16 teams participate.
- There are 2 groups of 6. The top 4 in each group qualify for quarter finals of Group A. The bottom 2 teams in each group go to semi-finals of Group B.
- A separate group of 4 form the C Hurling Championship and play each other twice. There was a problem in this group last year as Edenderry did not field a team and the group dropped to 3 teams.

- Games are played every second week which allows clubs to do some coaching and/or organise challenge games.
- Teams are guaranteed 3 league games plus 6 championship games which amounts to a minimum of 9 games.

## **ii) Under 16**

### **League**

- Spring League commences in February 2016.
- There are 4 teams in each group. 3 games in each group are played with the top team in each group progressing to the semi-final stage followed by a final.
- There is a problem with the uptake of this competition.

### **Championship**

- The Under 16 Championship is seeded on results in the Under 14 Championship.
- It consists of one group of 7 teams and one group of 8 teams.
- The top 4 in each group progress to the A quarter final.
- Team 5 in the 8 team group goes into the B semi-final.
- The other 6 teams go into the B quarter finals.
- All teams are guaranteed a minimum of 3 league games and 7 championship games.
- Games are every second week so that on the alternate week clubs are free to either coach their team or arrange challenge games.

## **iii) Minor Championship.**

The Review Committee consider that the present structure of the Minor Hurling Championship are far too complicated, unnecessarily so, and consider that the alternative structure outlined below should be considered.

### **Alternative Format for Minor Championship**

- 15 teams are divided into two groups; one group of 7 and one group of 8.
- The top two teams in each group qualify for semi-finals.
- The County Minor Final to be held as a curtain-raiser to the Senior County Final.
- Bottom two teams in each group contest the Minor B Semi-finals.

## **iv) Under 21**

- The Under 21 Championship will be played on a knock-out basis early in the year.
-

## 12. Retirement and Retention.

All hurlers who are playing at either club or county senior level should be encouraged and incentivised to complete a Foundation Level coaching course and to become involved in some way with assisting the nurseries in their own clubs, or indeed some of the clubs underage teams.

After a period of 12 months actively coaching, or assisting in coaching an underage team, the players should then be encouraged to complete an Award 1 course.

Retiring Players should also be strongly encouraged to take up one of the following roles, most of which the GAA have excellent courses for;

Chairperson	Secretary	Treasurer
Referee	Children's Officer	School Liaison Officer
Hurley Maker/repairer	I.T Coordinator	First Aider
Social Organiser	Club Lotto	Pitch Maintenance
Physical Fitness Instructor	Scór Organiser	





## Part 2: Long Term Player Development

Áine McNamara 2014

### 1. Offaly Hurling Development

The GAA's vision states the need to

*“promote and organise the playing of our national games by having sustainable structures at club and county level built on achieving a strong sense of local community identity”*

It is important, in order to achieve this objective, that Offaly's schools, clubs, and county teams work in partnership to maximise the opportunities for all to participate. Careful attention must be paid to the programme of games and playing opportunities offered to players at all levels. Working together, we can ensure that players at all levels are provided with an appropriate programme of games and coaching as well as an effective pathway for aspiring inter-county players. By providing more opportunities to players and coaches, improving the coaching structures in the county and ensuring a consistent programme of games we can widen the pool of players available to all which will benefit Offaly hurling at all levels.

This strategy focuses on underage development and ensuring that the correct structures are put in place to develop hurlers with the ability to play at the highest level. Of course, for this to happen there must be cooperation between clubs, schools, and county for this to happen. If implemented correctly and effectively there are significant benefits for all levels of the game.

In the first section below, the rationale underpinning the Offaly Hurling Pathway is outlined with emphasis on the areas in need of attention and a rationale provided for the proposed changes. Following a consultation process with key stakeholders in the county, the key areas requiring attention are presented.

In the second section, an overview of the organisation of the Offaly Hurling Pathway -the 'how we are going to do it' – is presented.

### 2. An Effective Talent Development Environment

Many influences have a crucial and lasting impact on the development and eventual success of a talented player. One major factor that influences all athletes is the quality and appropriateness of the **coaching environment**.

Five key features of effective **Talent Development Environment** include:

- Long terms aims and methods
- Wide ranging coherent messages and support
- Emphasis on appropriate development rather than early success
- Individualised and ongoing development
- Integrated, holistic, and systematic development

**KEY FEATURES**

**KEY METHODS**

**NATURE OF MODEL**

**Long Term Aims and Methods**

- Develop a Long Term Vision, Purpose and Identity
- Develop Systematic Planning and Implementation
- Provide Coherent Reinforcement at a Variety of Levels

**Wide Ranging Coherent Messages and Support**

- Provide Coherent Philosophies, Aims and Methods at a Variety of Levels (e.g. Parents, Coach Content, Practice and Reward Systems, Selection, Funding, Competition Structure, NGBs, Educate Parents, Schools, Peers, Coaches & Important Others (and encourage positive contributions!))
- Utilize Role Models at a Variety of Levels
- Set Up a Variety of Support Networks Over the Long Term (e.g. Peer, Coach, Sport Staff, Family)
- Provide Forums for Open and Honest Communication Patterns at a Variety of Levels

**Emphasize Appropriate Development NOT Early Success**

- De-Emphasize 'Winning' as Success at Developmental Stages
- Provide Clear Expectations, Roles, and Meaning Within the 'Big Picture' at Every Level
- Provide 'Stage Specific' Integrated Experiences and Teaching
  - Fundamental Physical and Perceptual Skills
  - Fundamental Mental Skills (Learning and Development; Life; Performance Related)
  - Sport Specific Skills (Technical, Tactical, Mental, Physical, Perceptual)
  - Balance
- Encourage Increasing Responsibility and Autonomy in Learning/Development
- Develop Intrinsic Motivation and Personal Commitment to Process
- Promote Personal Relevance, Athlete Understanding and Knowledge

**Individualized and Ongoing Development**

- Provide Opportunities and Fundamentals to as Many Youngsters as Possible
- Provide Flexible Systems to Allow for Performance and Physical Development Variation
- Identify, Prepare for and Support Individuals Through Key Transitions
- Provide Regular Individual Goal Setting and Review Processes
- Provide Systematic Reinforcement Contingencies

**Integrated, Holistic and Systematic**

There is a recognition that current structures at county level do not optimally operationalise the principles outlined above and that there is a need for change in order to meet the needs of young hurlers. The proposed structures operationalise the principles defined in section 1 – *'how it could be implemented'*.

A tension currently exists between long-term development and the desire for underage success – young hurlers are missing crucial, long-term development opportunities because of a misplaced focus on performance and preparing for specific competitions rather than learning and development. This emphasis on competition subsequently impacts on the selection and training of underage squads. It is important that the role of competition within the player pathway is clearly understood.

Until competitions actually count (i.e. at senior level), their role is to manipulate pressure demands and challenge on players as a key part of the development process. Competition, especially when it is 'realistic' and implemented in appropriate loads is, of course, crucial for development.

***However, the overriding issue is that competition is used to develop players, not that players are developed for specific competitions!***

It may well be that this represents an important change of direction for how we organize and coach at developmental levels. HOWEVER, this approach will certainly enable a more developmental emphasis, with the consequence of more and better players at senior level. Of course, the 'selling' of this change of rationale to key stakeholders (e.g., parents, counties, coaches) is a vital element for the success of this change and one that warrants close attention.

These features underpin the proposed structure of the Offaly Hurling Pathway and guide the planning, implementation, and coaching offered at all stages. Essentially the '*why we do things in the way we do*'.

### **3. System Coherence**

The role and relationships of the different stakeholders in Offaly Hurling is a key feature that warrants attention. The success of a young player is enhanced if all stakeholders (e.g., county board, schools, clubs, coaches at all levels, managers, selectors, parents and players) have similar perceptions (and therefore similar behaviours and reinforcement / support) of all the key elements of development. The importance of a **shared understanding** among the key stakeholders, at various levels within the system (e.g., club, school, county), about what they are collectively trying to achieve should be a central part of Offaly Hurling strategy and policy.

### **4. Areas for Attention**

It is important that **consistent messages and methods** are built into Offaly's Hurling's pathway to ensure long-term and sustainable development. An inclusive **coach development program** is needed to drive these changes.

The **facilitation of appropriate coach education** within the county that meets the needs of coaches, and supports their development within the game.

The **organisation of development squads** at county level must account for a shift away from an emphasis on training for, and winning, specific underage competitions to long-term development -this will have both immediate and long-term consequences for how we schedule fixtures, and select and coach teams. Currently, there is a focus on preparing for competition rather than on long-term development.

**Systematic planning and implementation** of the aims and practices of the Offaly Hurling Pathway is needed to ensure long-term aims.

**Cooperation** is needed between coaches at school, club, and county level to ensure optimal training and competition for young players. The relatively small player pool in Offaly must be maximised in order to ensure that we are making the most the resources available.

**Co-ordination of fixtures** at club, county and school level to ensure an appropriate and consistent programme of training and matches at all levels. There may be a need to develop and promote alternative competitions to meet the needs of hurlers in the county. Stronger communication between Bord na nÓg and the county board in terms of fixture scheduling is a prerequisite for change.

**Recognition and support** of young players' involvement in other sports and the dual nature of the GAA in Offaly.

Attention needs to be paid to the **transitions** within the development pathway; the most important would appear to occur at U12, U16 and from Minor through to U21 and senior.

The development and implementation of a **clear and holistic developmental curriculum** covering;

1. Technical,
2. Tactical,
3. Physical,
4. Mental Development.

## **5. Going Forward?**

### **Aims and Philosophy underpinning the future of Offaly Underage Hurling**

1) To ensure that there is a shared understanding and coherence among key stakeholders about the long-term, developmental focus of Offaly Hurling (from under 14 through to senior inter-county level).

2) To equip young hurlers with the skills (technical, tactical, physical, and mental) needed to reach their potential in the sport.

3) To ensure that appropriate competition, training, and development structures are implemented to support the development of young players.

4) To provide young hurlers with **developmentally appropriate training** and competition opportunities in line with long-term aims.

5) To provide coaches with opportunities to develop their coaching practices and progress along a coaching pathway. In practice this entails:

- a. Increasing the number of Level 1 and Level 2 qualified coaches coaching in the Offaly system.
- b. Formal and informal communication and sharing of practice between management teams at all levels.
- c. Formal and informal communication and sharing of practice between key stakeholders in Offaly hurling – schools, clubs, county.
- d. Regular and open communication between the key stakeholders involved in Offaly hurling (clubs, county, schools).





## Part 3: Structure of the Offaly Pathway

Áine McNamara 2014

### A. Organisational Approach

#### a. Implementation Committee.

It is recommended that an implementation committee is formed that has responsibility for:

- a) The implementation of the Offaly Hurling Pathway.
- b) Overseeing the Offaly Hurling Academy and the Development Squads.
- c) Appointment of coaches, support staff and facilities.

The Implementation Committee becomes the '**system controller**' of the player pathway and shall consist of the following;

1. County Chairman
2. County Secretary
3. Games Manager
4. Coaching Officer
5. Director of Hurling Coaching
6. Director of Fitness
7. Committee Member (Primary Schools Rep)
8. Committee Member (Post-primary Schools Rep)
9. Committee Member
10. Committee Member
11. Committee Member

The Games Manager, the Coaching Officer, the Director of Hurling Coaching and the Director of Fitness will sit of the Offaly Coaching and Games Committee.

#### b. Director of Hurling Coaching.

The appointment of a Director of Hurling Coaching to oversee coaching and provide mentorship to coaches involved in the Offaly Hurling Academy is recommended. This individual may be involved in coaching (e.g., minor coach) but will also have responsibility for coaching content, mentoring, and overseeing hurling at all levels of the Hurling Academy. Building on this, the Director of Hurling will provide CPD opportunities within both schools and clubs. This sharing of practice has important benefits since the success of a young player is enhanced if all stakeholders (e.g., county board, schools, clubs, coaches at all levels, managers, selectors, parents and players) have similar perceptions (and therefore similar behaviours and reinforcement / support) of all the key elements of development.

#### c. Director of Fitness.

It is recommended that a Director of Fitness is appointed to implement and oversee the physical conditioning of players at all levels of the pathway from under 14 to Minor (and potentially senior) level. There are significant benefits in terms of coherence and continuity to such an

appointment. Upskilling and providing development opportunities to coaches within the county should be central to this role. Building on this, the Director of Fitness will provide CPD opportunities within both schools and clubs. This sharing of practice has important benefits since the success of a young player is enhanced if all stakeholders (e.g., county board, schools, clubs, coaches at all levels, managers, selectors, parents and players) have similar perceptions (and therefore similar behaviours and reinforcement / support) of all the key elements of development.

#### **d. Underage Fixtures Coordinator.**

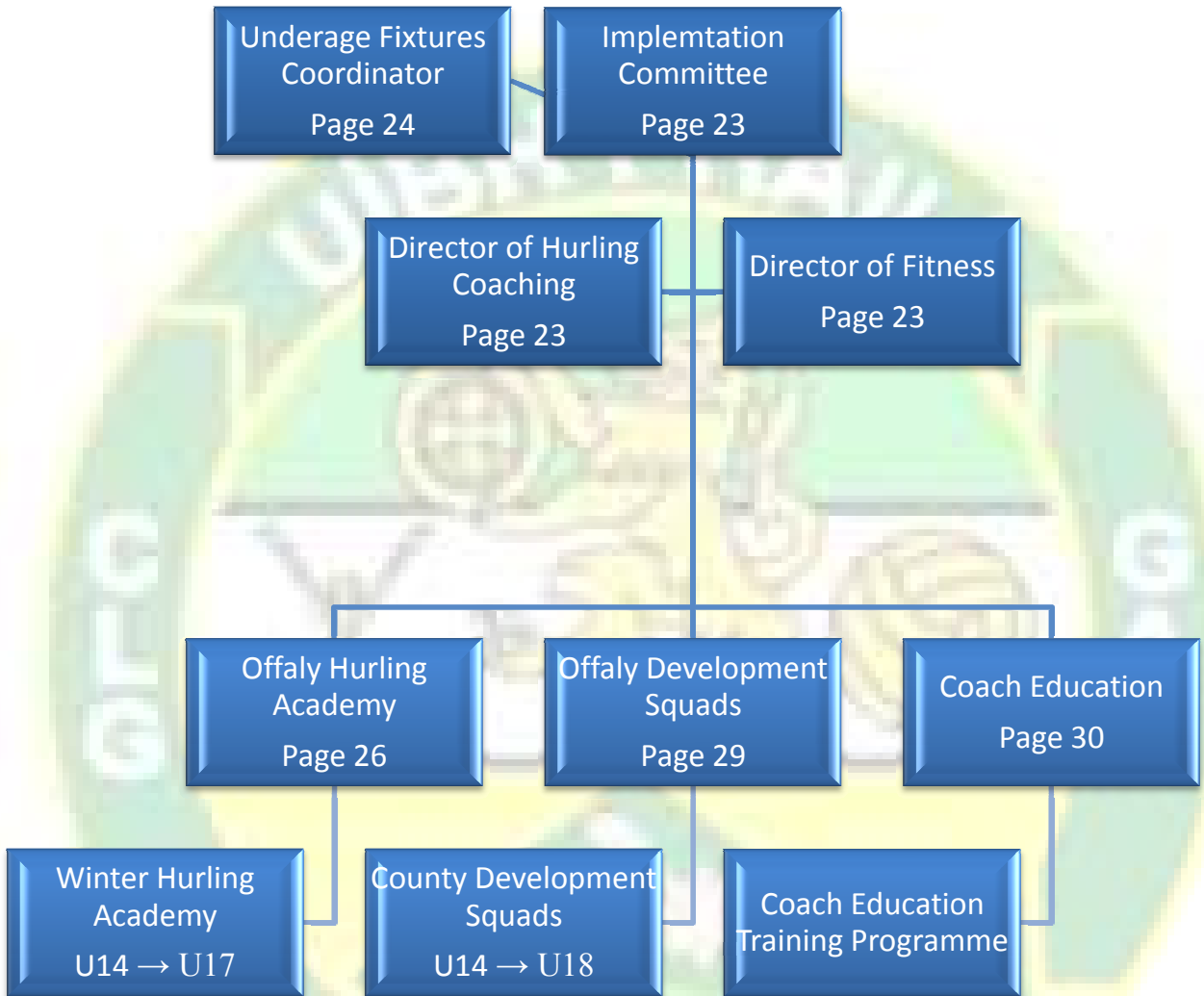
An underage fixtures coordinator should be appointed. This individual, or group, should have responsibility for overseeing and coordinating the organization of the competition structure at school, club, and county level. This would be a useful step towards ensuring an appropriate programme of games for our young players. The role of the coordinator is not to prepare a fixture schedule but to act as coordinator and liaison to ensure the programme of fixtures is appropriate and in line with the Offaly Hurling Strategy and to ensure coherence and cooperation between different stakeholders (e.g., school, club, county). However, it is important that those charged with fixture scheduling (CCC, for example) do so with the philosophy and ethos of these proposals in mind. As such, decisions about the scheduling and cancellation of games etc. must be taken with the developmental ethos of the players in mind.

#### **e. Cooperation between Key Stakeholders.**

Talented Offaly hurlers will also be playing at high level for their clubs and school. To optimize development and success it is vital that there is cooperation between all parties. In practice, this entails:

- Cooperation in terms of coaching / fitness between schools and county teams. By sharing practice, continuity in terms of coaching and physical preparation is enhanced. This cooperation would also expose more players (i.e., those outwith the Development Squads) to the physical preparation and coaching curriculum, which can result in a deeper pool of players for the future.
- Open communication between school and county management teams.
  - Given the overlap between school competition and the Hurling Academy / Development Squad programme, communication between school and county management is important. A good relationship, facilitated by the Underage Fixture Coordinator will positively impact on player welfare (e.g., burnout, overplaying) and development.

# Offaly Hurling Pathway Structure



## B. Offaly Hurling Academy

### Why?

- To provide structured coaching to a large pool of Offaly Underage Hurlers during the winter season and deepen the talent pool available to Offaly Development Squads.
- Currently, most school and club competition is over by the end of October. Therefore, the winter provides a good opportunity to provide a coaching programme to young hurlers without an emphasis on competition.
- To improve the coherence of the pathway and ensure players are equipped with the skills necessary to progress to the highest level.
- To provide mentoring and development opportunities to a large pool of interested coaches.

### When?

- Under 14 (i.e., players who will be part of the Under 14 development squad the following summer), 15, 16, 17 twice-monthly training sessions to run September – February. Each Academy would receive 12 coaching sessions.
- All Academy Squads will train at the same venue to establish a 'centre of excellence' recognised by players, coaches and family.

### What?

- Structured training focused on the key technical, tactical and physical skills highlighted in the Offaly Hurling Curriculum.
- Internal Academy Tournaments will provide appropriate competition while maintaining the emphasis on development.
- An Offaly Academy planning day will be arranged to design and coordinate the development of an Offaly Hurling Curriculum and the content of each coaching session.
  - In practice a session might have (for example) 60 players, split into 4 groups of 15, with a coach assigned to each group who takes charge of one component of the camp.
  - This approach maximises coach involvement as players move around coaches in a circuit and improves quality as the coach is focusing on just one component (e.g., striking, tactical modified game, conditioning component) – see below for exemplar.

**Hurling Academy U14,  
Lead Coach: Joe Bloggs**

	10am to 10.30am	10.30am to 11am	11am to 11.30am	11.30am to 12 noon
<b>Group 1</b>	Coach 1	Coach 2	Coach 3	Director of Fitness
	Warm-up & Striking	Conditioned Game	Skills	Strength & Conditioning
<b>Group 2</b>	Director of Fitness	Coach 1	Coach 2	Coach 3
	Strength & Conditioning	Striking	Conditioned Game	Skills
<b>Group 3</b>	Coach 2	Coach 3	Director of Fitness	Coach 1
	Conditioned Game	Skills	Strength & Conditioning	Striking
<b>Group 4</b>	Coach 3	Director of Fitness	Coach 1	Coach 2
	Skills	Strength & Conditioning	Striking	Conditioned Game

- Academy squads also widen the pool of coaches by providing opportunities to upskill county, club and school coaches.

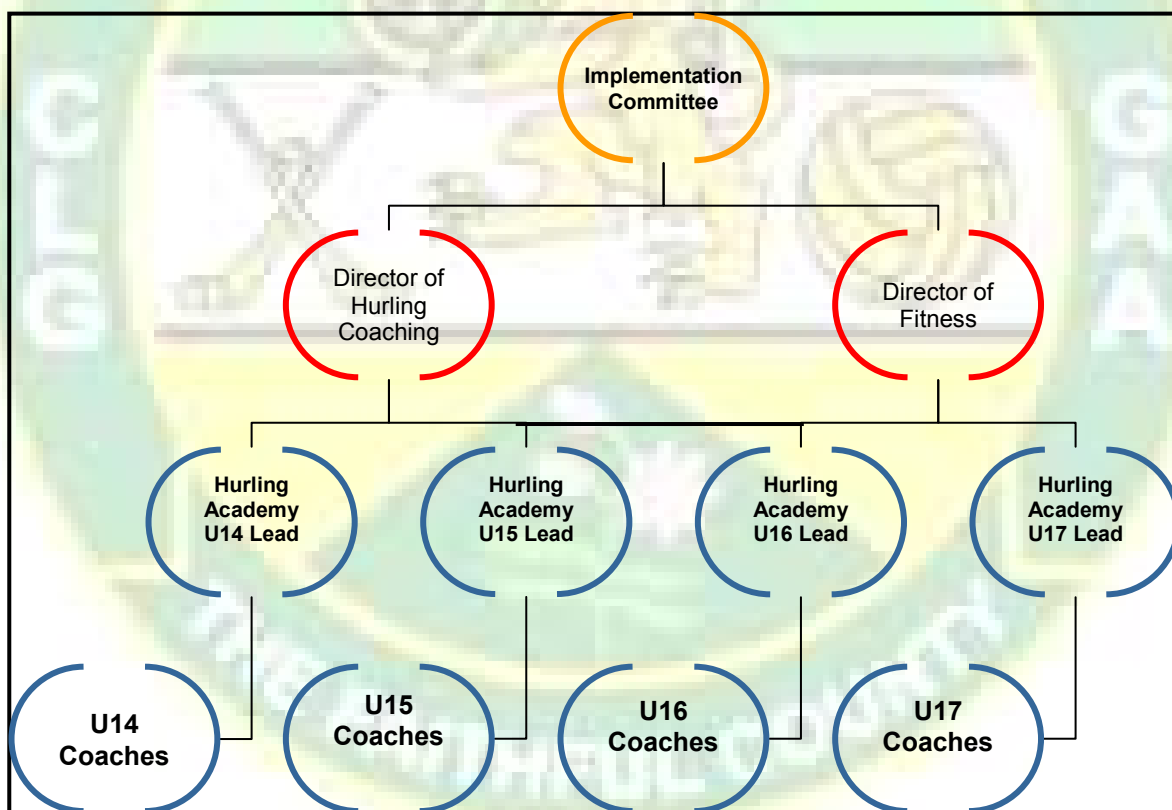
**Who?**

- Players – Identified players (through club contact, liaison with schools and clubs, previous involvement at inter-county / school / club competition) will be asked to attend the Offaly Hurling Academy.
- The rationale underpinning this ensures that a range of players from throughout the county are exposed to a high level of coaching.
- Selection onto the Offaly Hurling Academy should not be based on current performance or anthropometric qualities (e.g., current physical size) but on potential to develop for the future. A broad base of participation and inclusion underpins this ethos.
- Participation in the Offaly Hurling Academy does not guarantee selection for Development Squads. Likewise, not being part of the Academy Squad doesn't stop players from being selected on a county development squad. For example, players involved in other sports or those involved in the latter stages of schools competitions may not have the time to attend the Hurling Academy.
- **Director of Coaching:** This individual oversees, supported by the county board structures and officials, the academy squad structure for all age groups.



- **Director of Fitness:** This individual will develop and oversee the physical preparation element of the Offaly Hurling Academy.
- **Hurling Academy Coaches:** Training for each squad is lead by an Academy Lead (e.g., the Development Squad Manager for the Age group) supported by coaches (3/4 coaches) who aspire to coach at inter county level. This team will develop and plan the programme and sessions in advance.
- **A Games Development Officer** will work with each development squad and provide coaching input.
- **Club and school coaches** will be encouraged to attend, shadow and participate in these sessions under the direction of the Director of Coaching / Academy Lead Coach.

### Offaly Hurling Academy Structure



## C. Offaly Development Squads

*Under 14 – Under 18 Development Squads*

***Saturdays will be reserved for the exclusive use of Development Squads and Academy Squads and no games should be fixed for under 14 to under 18 on any Saturday.***

Why?

- To provide a structured development pathway for county teams. From under 14 – under 17 the focus is primarily on development. At minor level, although the primary focus is on development of young hurlers, there is also a recognition that ‘training to perform’ becomes important. This ethos is operationalised through the squad selection, squad size, and coaching ethos.

When?

- Under 14 – Under 17: February – August (in conjunction with the Hurling Academy Programme)
- Minor: October – August (in conjunction with the Hurling Academy Programme)

What?

- A structured, developmentally appropriate programme of training and matches. The Development Squads should embrace a ‘Development Focused, Competition Supported’ ethos.
- Overplaying matches reduces the amount of coaching and development young hurlers are exposed to; as such, it is important that an appropriate balance between training and matches is planned for each development squad. As a rule of thumb, a ratio of 4:1 training to matches would be recommended.

Who?

- Players:
  - Players will be selected from participation in the Offaly Hurling Academy and in consultation with Development Squad management.
- Management Team:
  - Development squad management teams are encouraged to cooperate with and participate in the Offaly Hurling Academy.
  - Each management team must provide details about their plans for the season and regular updates throughout the season.

- The Director of Coaching and Director of Fitness will provide input for each Development Squad.
- Each management team should comprise
  - Manager
  - 2/3 coaches / selectors
  - Strength and Conditioning Coach
  - Specialist sport science input – nutrition, sport psychology
  - A Games Development Officer will work with each development squad and provide coaching input.

***Saturdays will be reserved for the exclusive use of Development Squads and Academy Squads and no games should be fixed for under 14 to under 18 on any Saturday.***

#### **D. Coach Education Programme**

- Coaches that aspire to coach within the Offaly Hurling Programme will be expected to hold or complete at least a Level 1 coaching qualification.
- Completion of this qualification will be facilitated by the County Board.
- Coaches and managers will be offered a range of CPD opportunities including workshops, practical sessions, and mentoring. This will be supported by the appointment of a Director of Hurling and Director of Fitness and supported by the Implementation Committee. Regular coaching workshops for coaches involved in the Offaly Hurling Pathway should take place from September to June.
- The appointment of coaches and managers will be made on a yearly basis and will be flexible based on the needs of individual squads and coaches. In practice, this means that some individuals may stay at a particular age-grade for a number of years to gain experience and do not follow up a particular age-group of players.
- As part of the Offaly Hurling Academy, coaches from schools and clubs will be offered opportunities to shadow more experienced coaches both through informal and formal 'workshops'.
- Coherence and continuity between squads will be ensured through regular scheduled "communities of practice", sharing of best practice and formal planning and debriefing. Each management team will
- Submit their training schedule at monthly intervals and this will be shared with all those involved.

#### **E. Competition Structures**

There are limited playing opportunities for young players as they move along the pathway.

Unsurprisingly, this coincides with key points of dropout at U14 and U16 level since young players are

not being provided with a consistent and appropriate programme of games. Attention should therefore be given to the implementation of:

- Appropriate club league structures that provide consistent games to young players from U14 to minor level. Given the developmental focus required at these ages, these leagues may include (but not limited to)
  - 13-a-side leagues
  - Blitz events
  - Clubs amalgamating for 'one-off' leagues or competition
  - Games going ahead regardless of inter-county involvement of some players
  
- Appropriate school competition structures that provide consistent games to young players. At the moment, many schools players finish competition by the end of October. Given the developmental focus required at these ages, these leagues may include (but not limited to)
  - Creation of an 'Offaly Cup' for Schools competition (at various age-grades)
  - Blitz tournaments against schools from other counties.

## **F. Under 12 and Nursery Hurling**

Heretofore, much of the emphasis in this report has been placed on structures at inter-county level. There is no doubt however that success at this level is contingent on effective coaching and skill development from Under 12 age group and below. As such, attention must be paid to ensuring that the coaching and games programme at these ages is appropriate and effective in producing players able, and motivated, to 'stay and play'. Young players must be provided with a structured and developmentally appropriate programme of coaching and games.

Go-Games represents 'best practice' internationally in terms of appropriate games and coaching provision for youth sport. It is important that this model (e.g., small sided games, playing opportunities for all, emphasis on developing perceived and actual competence) is adopted consistently across both schools (at primary level) and clubs (at Nursery through to Under 12 level).

The emphasis at this level should be on fundamental skills including fundamental movement skills. The emphasis should be on providing developmental opportunities to young children and not just playing and games promotion.

County Games Officers currently provide much of the coaching within the primary school sector. Although this approach has significant benefits in terms of quality of coaching etc, it is important that a legacy and long-term view is taken. Foundation and Level 1 coaching courses, in addition to ongoing support from Games Officers, should be facilitated for primary school teachers. In this manner,

teachers can assist the Games Officer in the delivery of coaching within the school environment and act as the point(s) of contact, and ongoing support, for that school community. Ensuring quality and appropriate coaching at this level is key to future success.

Month	Administration Focus	Development Focus	Coach Education	Competition Focus
September	Implementation Committee Meeting	Offaly Hurling Academy U14 – 17	Facilitation of Level 1 and Level 2 Coaching Courses	Schools Competition
	Fixtures Coordinator Meeting	Minor Hurling Selection	<b>Coach Planning Day:</b> Development and Refinement of Offaly Hurling Academy Curriculum	
October	Implementation Committee Meeting	Offaly Hurling Academy U14 – 17	Facilitation of Level 1 and Level 2 Coaching Courses	Schools Competition
	Submission of training plans for Hurling Academy U14 – 17; (October – February)	Minor Hurling Coaching	<b>Coaching Workshop 1</b>	
	Submission of training plans for Minor Hurling coaching (October – February)			
November	Implementation Committee Meeting	Offaly Hurling Academy U14 – 17	<b>Strength and Conditioning Workshop</b>	
December		Minor Hurling Coaching		
	Implementation Committee Meeting	Offaly Hurling Academy U14 – 17	<b>Coaching Workshop 2</b>	Hurling Academy Tournament



<sup>1</sup> This is an example of a *potential* season overview outlining administration, development, coaching and competition focus. Clearly, there is flexibility in terms of scheduling **but** central to the organization of the pathway is a focus on development, accountability, and community in terms of planning and scheduling.

	Fixtures Coordinator Meeting	Minor Hurling Coaching		
February	Offaly Hurling Academy Review	Offaly Hurling Academy U14 - 17		(Proposed) Offaly Cup / Tournament for Schools
	Submission of Development Squad Planning (training and fixtures)	U14 - 17 Development Squad Selection		
March	Implementation Committee Meeting	Minor Hurling Coaching U14 - Minor Development Squad Coaching	Coaching Workshop 4	
April	Implementation Committee Meeting	Minor Hurling Development U14 - Minor Development Squad Coaching		Club Fixtures
May	Fixtures Coordinator Meeting			
	Submission of Development Squad Planning (training and fixtures: May - August)	U14 - Minor Development Squad Coaching	Coaching Workshop 5	Club Fixtures
June	Implementation Committee Meeting	U14 - Minor Development Squad Coaching	Coaching Workshop 6	Club Fixtures Leinster Minor Championship
	Fixtures Coordinator Meeting			
July	Implementation Committee Meeting	U14 - Minor Development Squad Coaching		Club Fixtures Leinster Minor Championship
August	Offaly Hurling	U14 - Minor		Club Fixtures

## G. Structure and Lines of Demarcation with full time staff.

It was decided that:

1. There is a need to appoint a Director of Hurling Coaching.
2. The Games Manager should be part of the Implementation Committee but other than that no full time staff should be part of the Implementation Committee.
3. Implementation Committee will include the Coaching Officer.
4. The Director of Coaching to prepare an annual Operational Plan which will be submitted to the Implementation Committee for Approval. If the Director of Coaching requires the assistance of full time staff in order to roll out coaching courses, nurseries, workshops etc, then the plan will be forwarded to the Coaching and Games Committee and the Games Officer to assist in planning the work schedule of full time staff. The plan will also be submitted annually to the Management Committee for their information.
5. Director of Fitness to prepare an annual Operational Plan which will be submitted to the Implementation Committee for Approval. If the Director of Fitness requires the assistance of full time staff in order to roll out fitness courses, carry out functional screening, carry out fitness tests etc, then the plan will be forwarded to the Coaching and Games Committee and the Games Officer to assist in planning the work schedule of full time staff. The plan will also be submitted annually to the Management Committee for their information.
6. Director of Fitness and Director of Coaching to report to the Implementation Committee only.



## H. Offaly Mandatory Coaching Standards Targets

### 1) For Inter-County Management Teams

- By the start of the 2017 season, all Inter-County Managers will have completed an Award 2 Coaching Course and all Inter-County coaches and selectors will have completed an Award 1 Coaching Course., i.e. anyone involved in the training or management of an Offaly County Hurling Team.

### 2) For Club Management Teams

- By the start of the 2017 season, all Club Managers (at all ages) will have completed an Award 1 Coaching Course.
- By the start of the 2019 season, all club coaches and selectors involved with teams above U12 level will be qualified at Award 1 level.

### 3) For Club Coaching Officers

- By the beginning of 2017, all Club Coaching Officers should have completed an Award 1 Coaching Course.
- By the beginning of 2018, all Club Coaching Officers should have completed an Award 2 Coaching Course.

### 4) For Offaly Development Squads and Academy Squads

- By the beginning of the 2017 season (January 2017), all lead coaches/Managers with Offaly Development Squads or Offaly Academy Squads will have completed at least an appropriate Award 2 Coaching Course.
- By the beginning of the 2017 season (January 2017) all coaches other than the lead coach/Manager involved with Offaly Development Squads or Offaly Academy Squads will have completed at least an appropriate Award 1 Coaching Course.
- The ratio of coach to player must be kept down close to or below 1:6.

### M. Offaly Coaching Course 3 Year Targets

		Foundation	Award 1	Award 2	Tutor
2016	Child	40	40	10	
	Youth	40	30	10	
	Adult	40	30	10	2
2017	Child	40	40	10	
	Youth	40	30	10	
	Adult	40	30	10	2
2018	Child	40	40	10	
	Youth	40	30	10	
	Adult	40	30	10	2
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>360</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>6</b>

### N. Review of Offaly Hurling Pathway.

This plan is a 5 year plan and must be reviewed by the implementation committee every six months, at which point the plan will be amended where necessary and targets adjusted or altered to suit the needs of Offaly Hurling.

### O. Monitoring, Mentoring and Review of Offaly Coaches.

In order for the Offaly Hurling Pathway plan to succeed, we must ensure that the dedicated coaches who are working tirelessly at school, club and county level for the good of Offaly hurling are supported in whatever way we can support them.

They should be supported by;

- i) Up skilling them by providing coaching courses to meet the needs of the individual coach whether that be, Foundation, Award 1, Award 2, Tutor or Master Tutor courses.
- ii) Providing our coaches with high quality workshops to help them improve their coaching knowledge and technique.
- iii) Monitoring and reviewing the performance of all coaches with a view to establishing their strengths and weaknesses, so that we can then provide the necessary training through targeted workshops to address their weaknesses while at the same time harnessing their strengths to maximise the development potential of every single player under their tutelage.
- iv) Where necessary to provide mentoring for coaches and managers of our county teams.

**Appendix 1:**  
**Primary Schools in Cumann na mBunscol Competitions**

Ballinamere  
Ballyboy  
Birr Boys  
Broughal  
Carrig  
Clara (Boys)  
Clareen  
Cloghan  
Clonlisk  
Clonmacnoise  
Coolanarney  
Coolderry  
Crinkle  
Dromakeenan  
Durrow  
Edenderry (Boys)  
Gaelscoil Eiscir Riada  
Gortnamona  
High Street  
Kilcormac  
Killeen  
Killeigh  
Kinnitty  
Lusmagh  
Mountbolus  
Mucklagh  
Portlarlington (Boys)  
Rahan  
Rath  
Roscomroe  
Scoil Bhríde Tullamore  
Scoil Eoin Phóil  
Shinrone  
St Rynagh's





## Conclusion

During the course of its investigations and deliberations, this committee has experienced a huge amount of goodwill and positivity from the GAA folk of Offaly, both hurling and football.

Offaly GAA people are very conscious of the fact that Offaly hurling is dogged by problems from grassroots level at the way to the very top, even to administrative level, and they have openly expressed those views to the members of the Review Committee.

However, the overwhelming view coming from Offaly GAA people is that nothing will be achieved if our efforts are focused on apportioning blame for the current state of Offaly Hurling, and that our time will be much better spent focussing on implementing a plan that will lift Offaly Hurling, a plan that will bring Offaly Hurling back to the top table of hurling's elite once more.

The Hurling Review Committee firmly believe that this plan, if implemented properly, will achieve that purpose, but only if it is supported by everyone associated with Offaly Hurling.

For this plan to succeed it must become a living breathing plan which is reviewed and amended at regular intervals, which sets realistic achievable targets, which focuses on the DEVELOPMENT of our young hurlers, but which above all, is supported and implemented by the hurling clubs of Offaly because without their total support, this plan just will not succeed.

We believe that this plan will lift Offaly Hurling if it is fully and properly implemented and we thank the Offaly County Board for having faith in us to produce this plan and for the support they have given us over the past eight months.

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Martin Hanamy

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Pat Cleary

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Patrick Connors

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Damien Martin

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Marion Crean

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Finian McDermot

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Jimmy O Dwyer

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Mary Wyr

---

Cillian Farrell

---

Alan Mulhall

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Ger Scales

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Liam Hogan