

WE ARE DERRY

COACHING AND
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
2021-2026





INTRODUCTION

Derry County Committee invests in coaching and games within our clubs and county structures. This brings many benefits to the whole county, including the community pride when we see both Derry county teams and club teams competing successfully on the national stage. Our most notable footballers and hurlers act as role models and their performances add fuel to the dreams of others. They also inspire coaches and players at all levels to be successful, whether in Gaelic games or as part of our wider communities. A strong Derry presence across the codes helps promote us as a thriving county. Derry GAA works closely with our clubs and schools to continually support our 7,000 playing members. Derry GAA has a proud history of being a cornerstone of the communities we live in and the units we serve. This plan has been developed in consultation with key stakeholders, both internal and external to Derry GAA, who share and contribute to our vision. Senior hurling implemented its own plan two years ago and it needs to be in before being reviewed for its effectiveness.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

Derry County Committee appointed a sub-committee to investigate and explore the coaching of GAA games throughout Ireland. Consultations were held with key stakeholders in other counties. The committee debated what constituted best practice and what would suit Derry GAA and its member clubs and schools. The process was all-encompassing to ensure that a wide range of views was secured and incorporated. The plan also considers other policies and framework documents which engage with the GAA. The strategy for Derry City also fits within this plan.

The committee was made up of Damian Cassidy (Chairperson), Bobby Farren (Coaching and Games Officer), Chris Collins (Games Development Manager), Philip Kerr, Sean McGoldrick, Danny Quinn, Chris McNicholl and Brian O'Donnell. The group met with John Costello CEO Dublin, Ger O'Connor Games Development Manager, Dublin GAA and Stephen O'Shaughnessy Football Development Officer, Dublin GAA and Terence Houlihan Coaching Officer, Kerry as part of this process.

VISION

To create and manage a Derry GAA learning environment where as many as possible can participate and develop for as long as possible at the levels to which they aspire.

MISSION

To reflect the GAA's unique ethos within our community through a sustainable support system which promotes the highest coaching and performance standards, leading to increased

participation at both club and county levels over a five-year period.

PHILOSOPHY

An inclusive community-based organisation which is individual and team focused, performance driven and supported by clubs, through a fun and enjoyable approach.

VALUES

- Community identity
- Pride in Derry GAA
- Player welfare
- Volunteer ethos
- Club welfare

PARTNERSHIP

- Build a partnership approach between club, county, schools and communities
- Support the development of coaching standards within club and county

EXCELLENCE

- Strive for continuous improvement and enjoyment.
- Reach the highest standard at club and county level.
- Regular reviews of our systems.

RESPECT

- Build on trust within our clubs, our membership and the county committee
- Openness, transparency and accountability

COLLABORATION

- Appreciation of responsibilities
- Teamwork between club and county
- Inclusiveness

STRATEGIC GOALS

- Continuous development of our coaches.
- Increased participation in Gaelic games
- Closer and strengthened links between all feeder primary schools and their clubs
- Assistance for junior, intermediate and senior clubs towards improved playing performances
- Additional player pathways for junior and intermediate players to elite/representative levels
- An increased pool of players who can play at elite level for our county teams
- Supplementary pathways for development of our referees.
- Enhanced support systems for the health and wellbeing of our participants
- Amended support structures to influence the behaviour and culture around our county teams
- Implementation of the Derry City Strategy

IMPLEMENTATION

We will undertake a thorough approach to the implementation of the Strategic Plan which will involve:

- The establishment of an Implementation Committee which reports to the Games and Development Committee
- The creation of operational plans, setting out annual goals, targets, lead responsibilities and the initial steps to be taken.

- The ongoing monitoring of progress against the indicators set out in the plan.
- Regular reporting to the County Committee and clubs

STRATEGIC DRIVERS

PEOPLE

Attract, develop and invest in people who can provide sustainable quality coaching across all levels

CULTURE

Cultivate a high quality culture of excellence in coaching through our people, resources and facilities.

PLANNING AND MONITORING

Use leading analysis, planning and monitoring to enhance performance.

INTEGRATION

Provide support networks which help foster the development of club and county players

INTELLIGENCE

Secure knowledge of best practice in sports applicable to GAA

STABILITY

Adopt a 5-year view of progression to bring about success within Derry GAA, through coaching and games development.



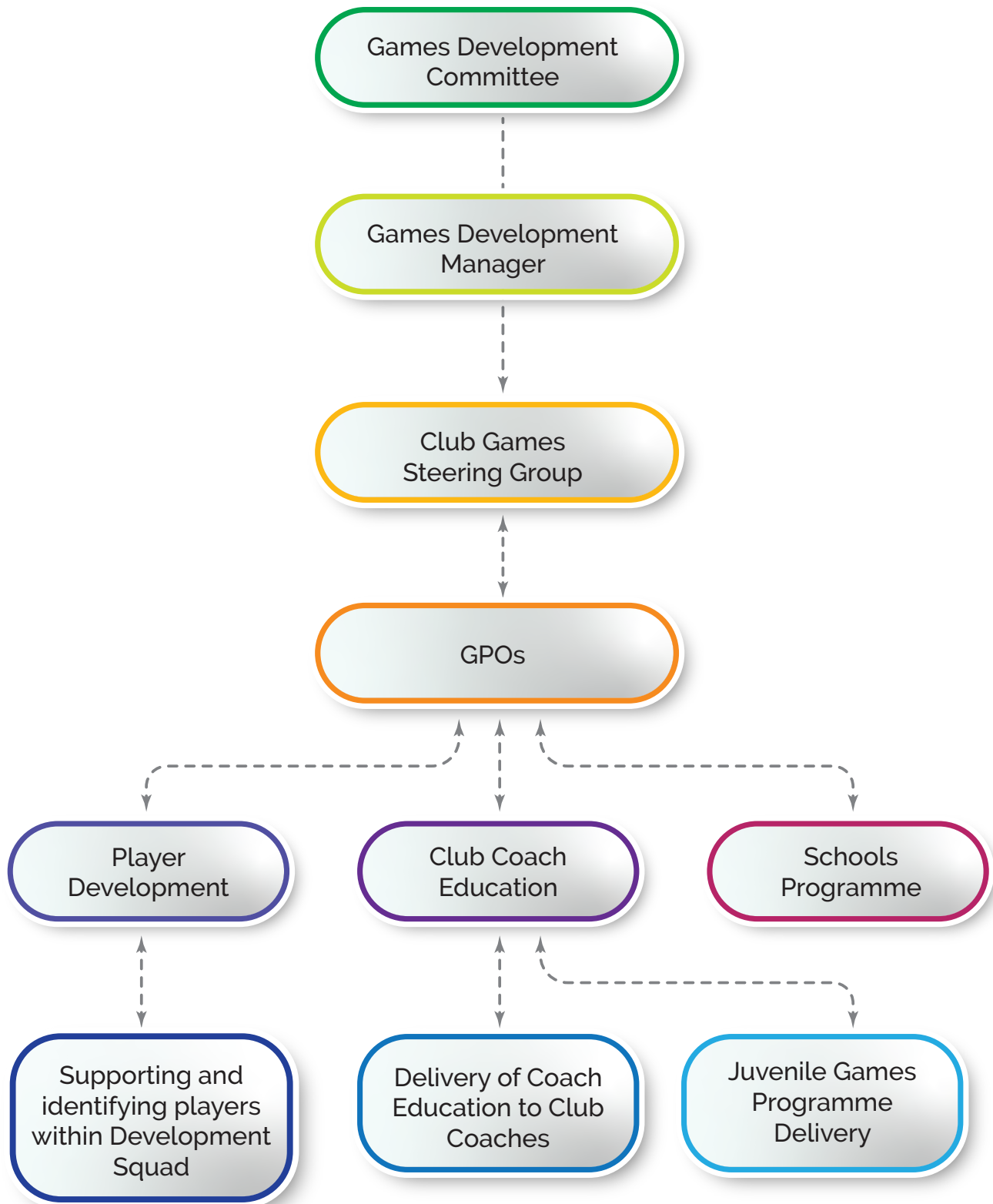
Priority 1: Coaching Within Clubs

In order to support the further development of coaches and players at both club and county, the committee explored different approaches being used in GAA circles and across other team sports. It is important that Derry moves to help players and coaches to become more autonomous, more competent and to have a greater sense of belonging. Plans include reviews and restructuring of coaching practices, education, underage and youth participation. Outline proposals are set out below:

- Carry out a 'Coaching Review' with each club to identify areas for further development.
 - Employ a GPO/Coach Developer (dual role) for each club and its feeder primary schools. Fund the post on a shared basis between club and county, enabling free uptake for primary schools. Offer a year-long coaching programme for primary school pupils, led by the club GPO.
 - Identify the Coach Developer (CD) as the link between club and county and the primary source of learning and support for club coaches.
 - Introduce a coaching model that will add breadth and depth to player and coach development. Promote a games-based coaching approach as the primary method of player development in both club and county.
 - Promote individual coaching as a core element to be practised at club and county levels, through a variety of coaching styles.
 - Reduce the need for substitutes through the introduction of a range of 50%+ participation competitions which guarantee meaningful involvement for all players. Establish an agreed template and increase awareness among coaches, parents and young players of how to develop a culture of providing for all.
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- GPOs within every club.
 - Coaching the coaches.
 - Working with our schools.
 - Developing our players.



Coaching Within Clubs



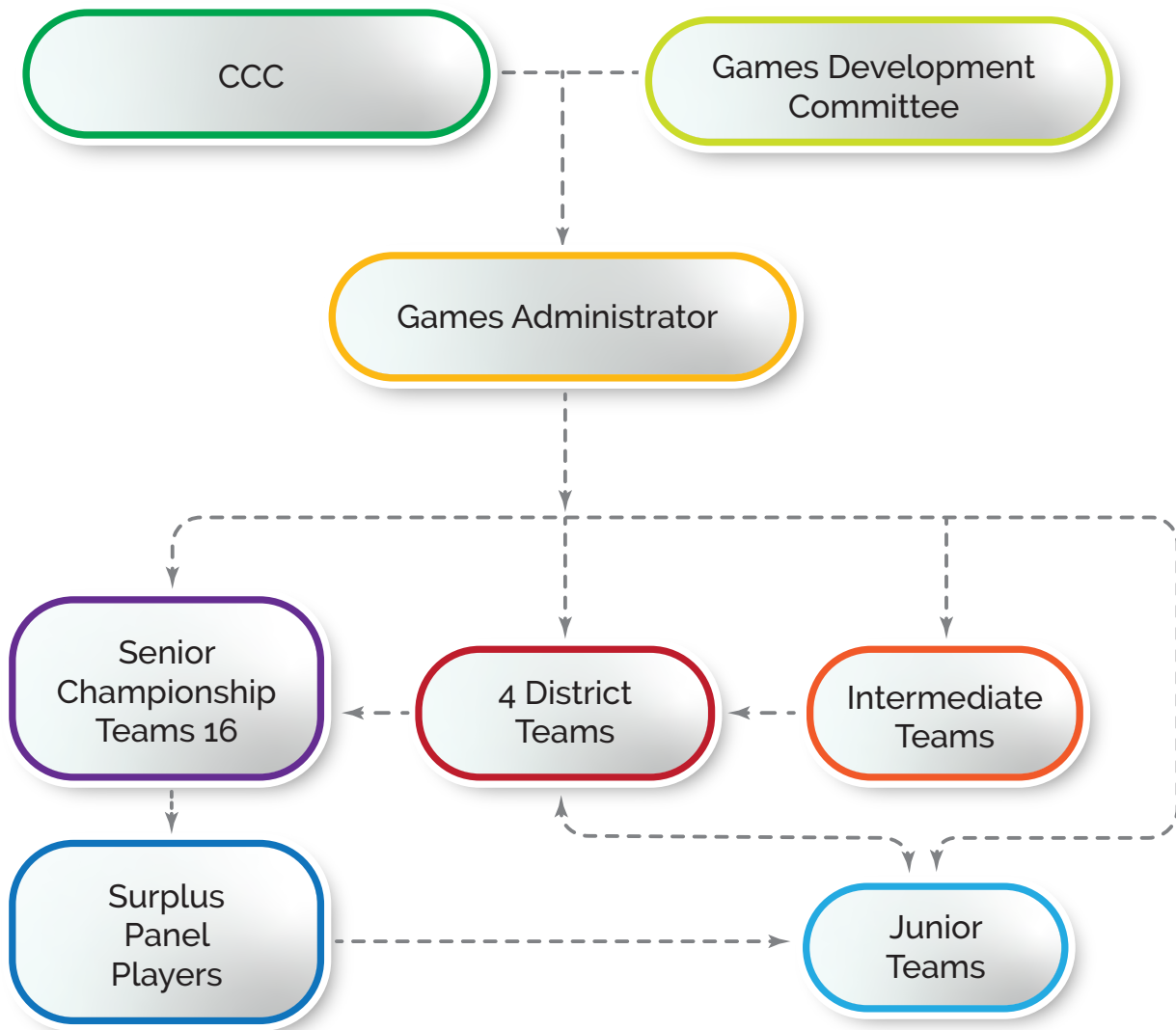
Priority 2: Junior and Intermediate Player Development

The focus here is increased opportunity. This takes many forms; from enabling adult players to perform at higher levels of club football to creating standalone promotions in different competitions. The committee explored ideas which would enhance the playing experiences of adult footballers, support clubs struggling for numbers and allow individuals to showcase their talents in more competitive environments. The outline proposals are set out below:

- Promotion to and from each adult championship will be based on championship performance.
- The senior championship to be expanded to include junior and intermediate players in four 'District Teams' to improve player and club standards.
- The senior championship would consist of 16 senior club teams and 4 District teams in a round-robin format of four groups of five teams (twenty teams in total).
- A separate District championship will be played.
- The adult leagues will be standalone competitions that will not be linked to any of the senior, intermediate or junior championships.
- The U17, U18.5 and U20 competitions will consist of a minimum of 10 league games and championship.
- The U17 to be expanded to include district teams to embed a culture of aspiring to play for your district from a young age and to provide a pathway to improve players and club standards
- Increase the competitiveness of junior and intermediate teams.
- Provide the structures to enable junior and intermediate players to aspire to county teams.
- Create regional teams to increase competitiveness of our clubs.



Junior and Intermediate Player Development



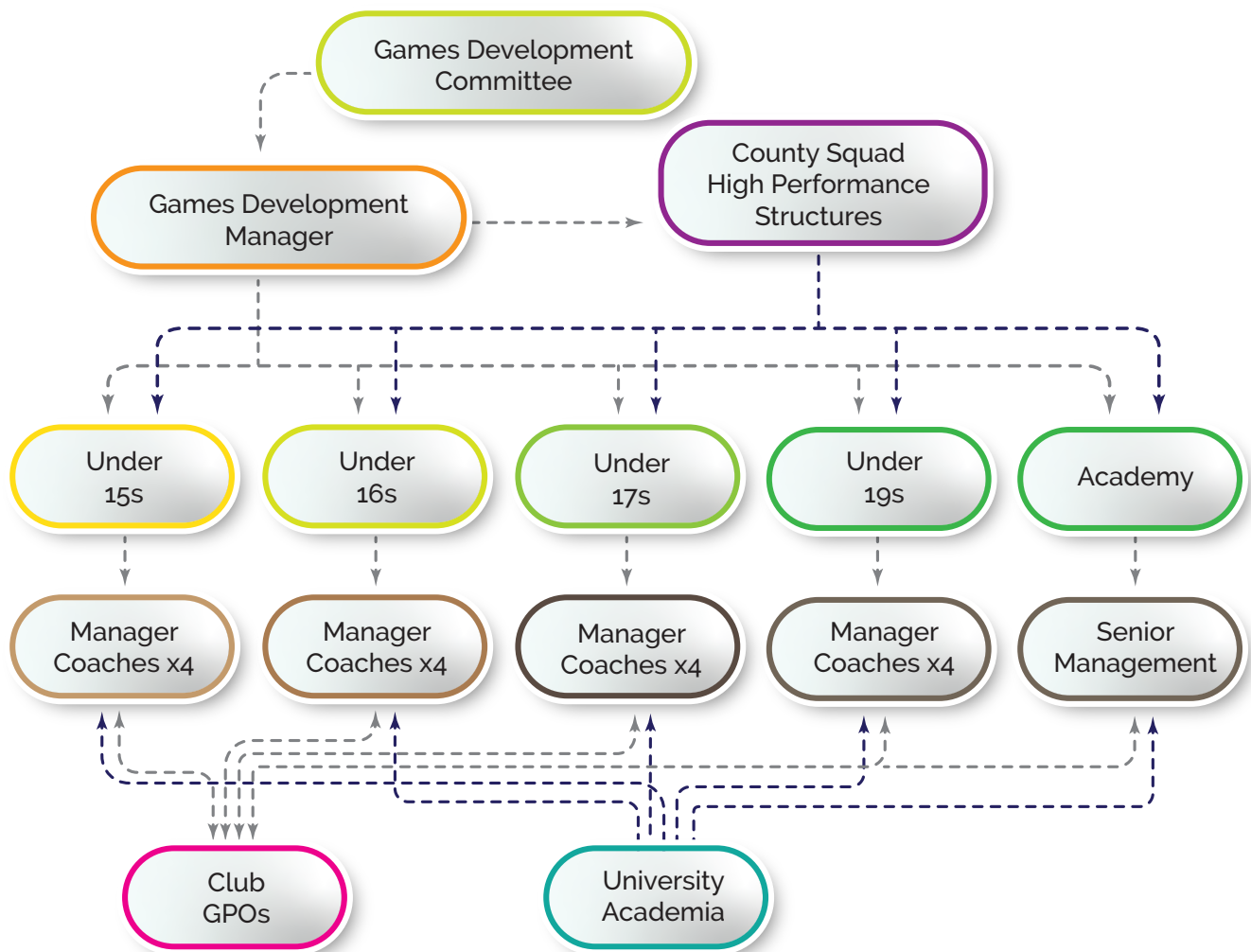
Priority 3: Development Squads

Following official confirmation from the GAA of the value of continuing to promote county development squads, the committee set about exploring the specifics of how Derry development squads are provided for currently and what measures need to be taken to further improve that provision. Topics under discussion included selection and deselection, athletic development structures, an integrated games programme, player education, saving and sharing of information and the upskilling of club volunteers to assist with the development of participating players. Outline proposals are set out below:

- Develop the player pathway structures from U15 through to county senior level. Produce athletically strong players who can kick with both feet, have problem solving-skills and are good decision makers.
- Develop squad selection and deselection processes, which will involve full-time games development staff, school and club coaches. Provision for Relative Age Effect will be taken into consideration. Players who do not make initial squads will have further opportunities that season.
- Expand the athletic development programme to upskill club volunteers to assist with delivery and support across each club in the county.
- Develop a pathway for coaches to be involved within squads and supported by Derry GAA through small incentives and in their own personal development.
- Introduce a coaching model that will add breadth and depth to player and coach development. Promote a games-based coaching approach as the primary method of player development in both club and county.
- Create a high performance team culture with the values/behaviours and accountability necessary to support this.
- In conjunction with senior team management and the county high performance team, create an environment where a select number of players can thrive before entering senior county squads.
- Ensure all players involved with Derry at every level of the pathway have a comprehensive database of key information recorded and stored. This information is shared with the individual.
- Develop player pathway
- Squad selection
- Athletic development structures
- Scheduling within the calendar
- Games-based coaching approach
- Values and Behaviours
- Collection and utilisation of data around player development



Development Squads



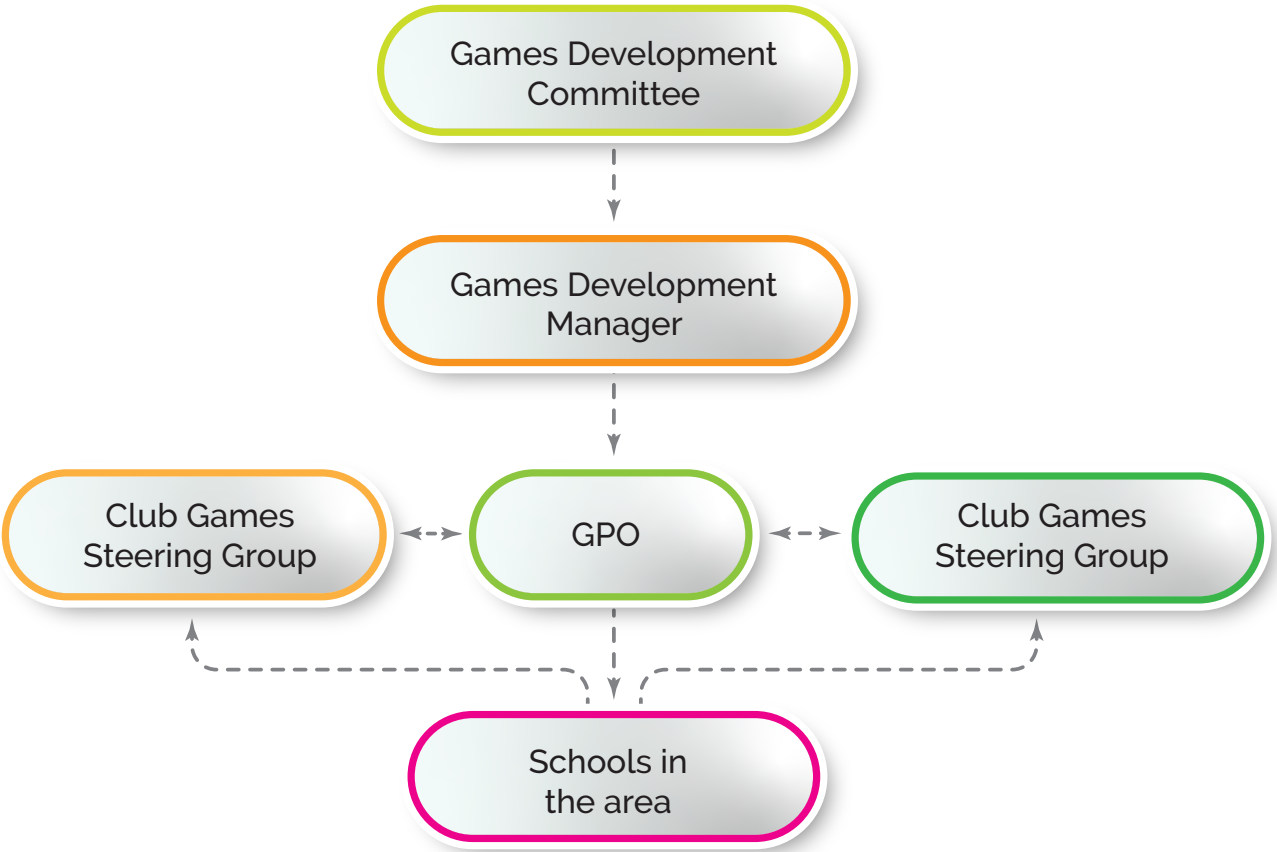
Priority 4: Schools

The committee set out to examine the important role schools have in developing Gaelic games, optimising pupil engagement and promoting health and wellbeing of all participants. The committee decided that the focus at this stage should be primary schools. The following priorities were identified:

- Encourage all primary school children to participate in Gaelic games through a structured programme, delivered by the club GPOs.
- The development of Gaelic games skills and the health and wellbeing of all children will be central in all activities and links to the local clubs will be developed.
- Encourage teachers within primary schools to attend Foundation stage courses in order to support, develop and promote GPO activities in school.
- Encourage each school to become a GAA 5 Star Centre, through participating in a range of Gaelic activities for 60 minutes of the school week.
- Develop strong communication links between school committees (Cumann na mBunscol) and relevant committees within the Derry County Committee to continually develop and promote engagement and involvement in Gaelic games.
- Derry City Strategy will provide a focus on primary, secondary and third level education.
- Encourage all primary schools to participate in Gaelic games.
- The health and wellbeing of all children should be key to all coaching in primary schools.
- Encourage teachers within the schools where coaches are working to attend Foundation courses
- Develop higher levels of communication between school committees and county committees to ensure full understanding of the needs of all and how this can be addressed.
- Encourage each school to become a GAA 5 Star Centre.



Schools



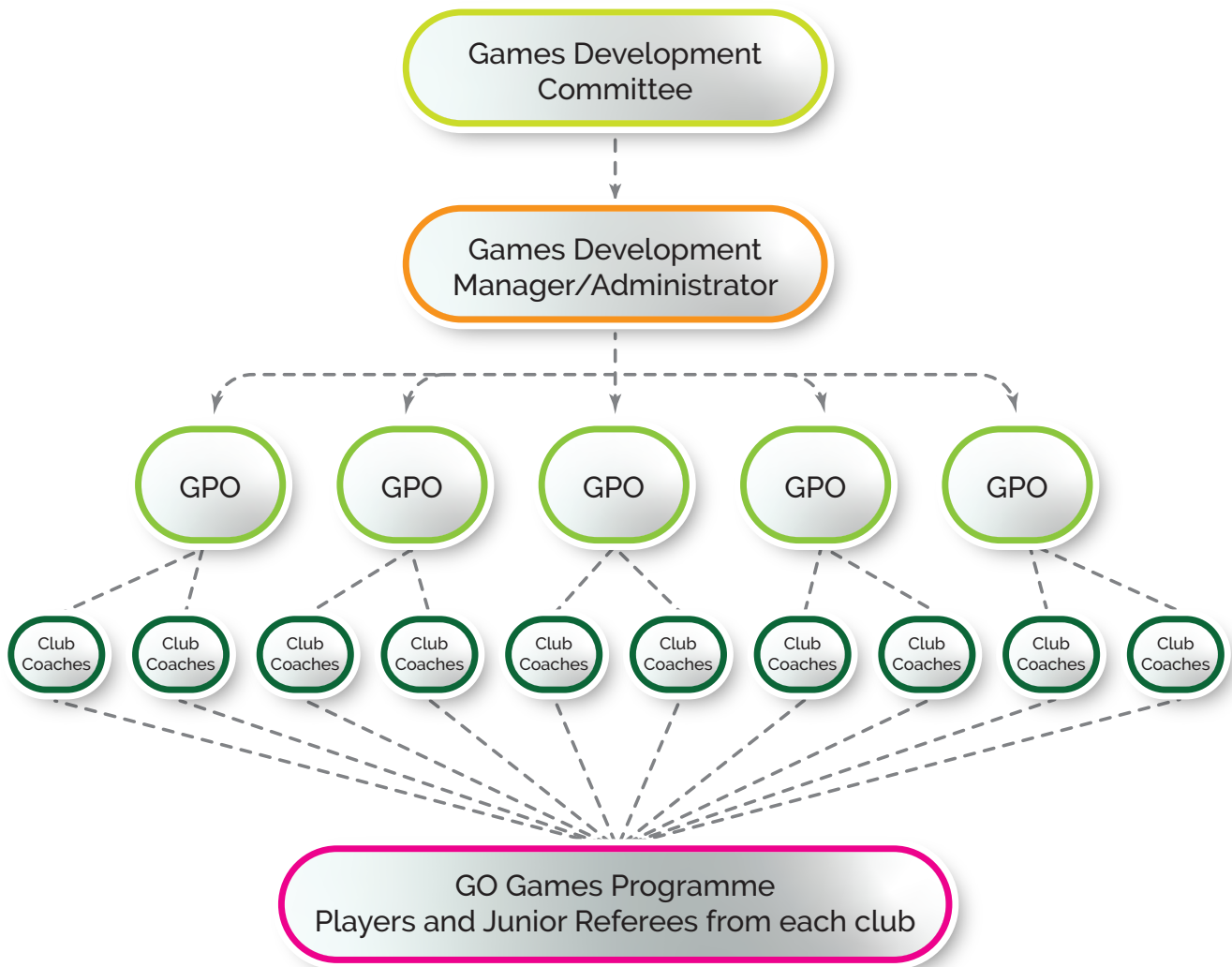
Priority 5: Go Games and Participation

The committee set out to examine the Go Games concept and the realities of how it was being practised in Derry. It did so with particular emphasis on involvement, enjoyment and retention. Current practices were identified and compared with the ideals. Areas for consideration include; how to increase levels of enjoyment, involvement and retention; addressing the impact of relative age effect; bilateral skills development; removing pressures on players and referees; game rules to promote good decision-making and teamplay. Outline proposals are set out below:

- To increase "Go Games" participation, football and hurling should to be played on alternate weeks/ weekends up to the end of October.
- Centrally-based Go Games blitzes, of which there will be at least two organised each year, will be on a 1-year age band basis. The blitzes will be based on classes P3, P4, P5, P6 and P7.
- Club hosted Go Games will be based on a 2-year age band with class groupings P2/P3(U7.5) and P4/P5 (U9.5) teams being 5-a-side and P6/P7 (U11.5) having a maximum of 9-a-side, all under the one touch rule.
- Introduce a "silent sidelines, player talk only" rule for Go Games in 2021 and review its operation and impact at the end of the season with a view to extending it to older age groups.
- Set up a "Young Referees" academy to recruit and train a group of 15/16 year olds to referee Go Games specifically.
- Under 13, league only. Games will be 13-a-side 2-touch. No championship.
- The introduction of other rules, for portions of games, to help develop players with all-round skills, should be considered for U13 level; eg promote play on left and right sides
- Increase fun, enjoyment and involvement of all participants.
- Systems to improve skills and understanding of the game.
- Develop a conducive environment for player and referee development.



Go Games and Participation



Priority 6: High Performance Structures

At the heart of this sits a review of support team structures. Resources available to county teams are constantly evolving and Derry must strive to keep pace with this evolution. High performance structures are multi-faceted, involving both human and fixed resources. Whilst this review makes some suggestions around equipment and facilities, the primary areas for consideration focus on support staff appointments, roles, accountability, culture, schedules, communication and liaison. The GAA is an amateur sport; however it is vital the team supporting the players needs to operate as a team of professionals. The basis for the proposals are set out below:

- Appointments: The review identifies the need to make the following appointments: Part-time Team Doctor, Full-time Athletic Performance Lead, Full-time Physiotherapy Lead.
- Protocol for recruitment, advice on terms of appointments and roles and responsibilities for applicants.
- Create a High Performance Team Culture with the values/behaviours and accountability necessary to support this.
- Identify a Liaison Officer between County Committee and support teams. Streamline practical and administrative working and uphold accountability of departmental leads (coaching, athletic performance, physiotherapy/rehabilitation/medicine, performance analysis, nutrition) on behalf of the County Committee.
- Establish communication protocols to support teamworking and facilitate planning.
- Data Management: Medical records, player physical records/athlete management systems.
- Scheduling of county team trainings to maximise facility and support team access.
- Having the infrastructure in place to support squad health
- Systems in place to develop the physical attributes of our squads
- Developing the team to support our teams



High Performance Structures







Photographs kindly provided to Derry GAA by Margaret McLaughlin Photography



