

GAA Club Child Welfare & Safeguarding Audit

One of the primary objectives of the National Child Welfare and Protection Committee (NCWPC) for 2017 was the organising of the first Club and County Child Welfare and Safeguarding Audit.

In the absence of any previous audits the NCWPC recognised that it was not possible at any given time to accurately identify how various safeguarding initiatives had been delivered upon and implemented within the GAA or within our sister Associations, with whom we share many of our child safeguarding policies, procedures and practices at Club, County and national levels.

As this was the first such audit Clubs or County Children's Officers were encouraged to participate in the process by completing a series of questions on-line via gaa.ie. Each Club Children's Officer had the option of responding whether as a joint response e.g. on behalf of all Gaelic Games Associations or individually on behalf of the GAA (including Handball and Rounders). A similar option was made available to both LGFA and Camogie Association at Club level.

An overall Club Audit Report, representing the responses from the GAA, LGFA and Camogie Associations, was presented to the recent Child Welfare and Safeguarding on 11 November 2017 in Croke Park.

In addition to the Club audit a separate Child Welfare and Safeguarding Audit also commenced for the County Children's Officer in our three Associations.

Given that this was the first such audit we were pleasantly surprised with the response we received from 1,367 Clubs across every County in Ireland. Of the 1,367 respondents it was possible to identify that 1,038 GAA Clubs or 76% of the total respondents included GAA Clubs.

This report concentrates on the audit responses received from the 1,038 GAA Clubs on a national basis. It will assist the NCWPC in developing a Child Safeguarding Strategy for 2017-2021 and we wish to thank each and every one of the 1,038 GAA Children's Officers for completing the process.

In addition to the national picture that can be gleaned from the audit a County by County break down of responses was provided for each GAA County Children's Officer. This information will be valuable in ensuring compliance with legislative requirements and in the planning at County level of their own child safeguarding strategies and interventions, over the next few years.

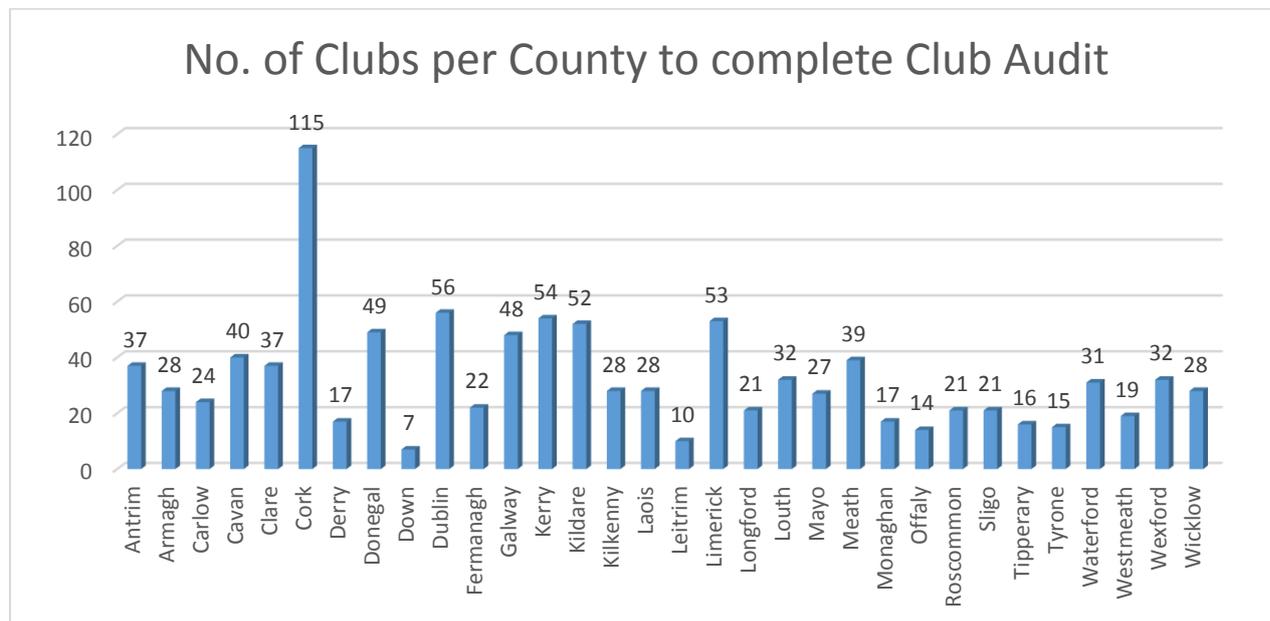
As we embark now on the next phase of improving the levels of compliance with child safeguarding practices in the GAA we should recognise with appreciation that much has been achieved at Club and County level in recent years. We thank our Children's Officers, the parents in our Clubs, our coaches and the children who play our games for their commitment to maintaining our safeguarding procedures and in doing so we acknowledge that while we can always do better the paramountcy of care of our children shall always remain our primary objective.

We face many challenges ahead in ensuring compliance with Association guidance and with existing and forthcoming legislation. Above all else we must continue to ensure that children who play Gaelic Games do so in a safe and enjoyable environment and that the adults, chosen to work alongside these children, are supported so that we maintain our high standards on a daily basis.

GAA National Children's Office
Páirc an Chrócaigh

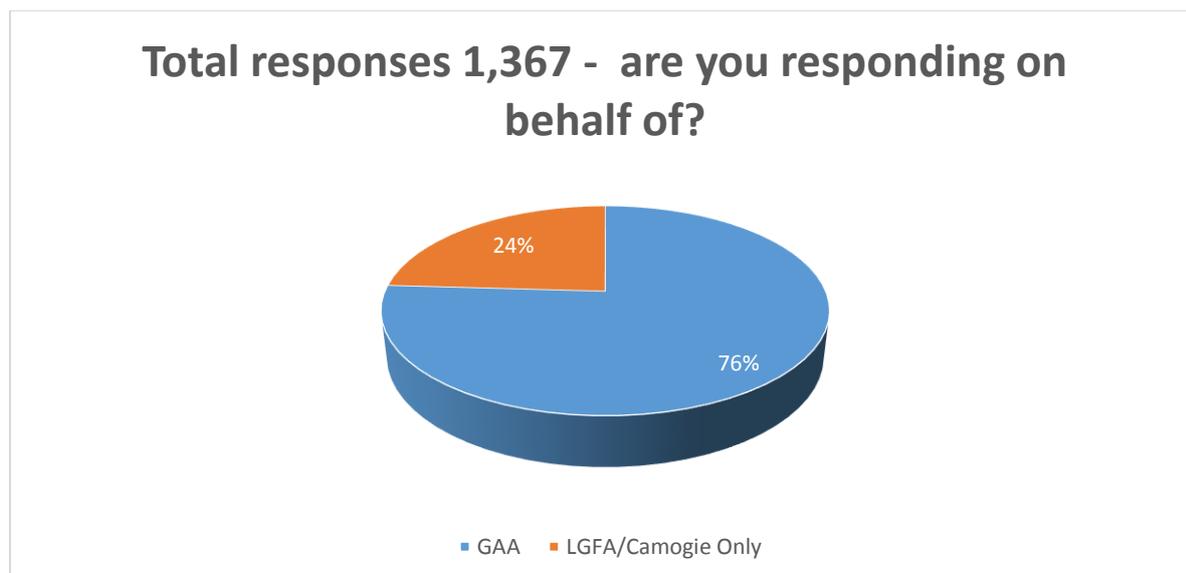
Club Child Welfare & Safeguarding Audit – GAA National Response

Responses per County



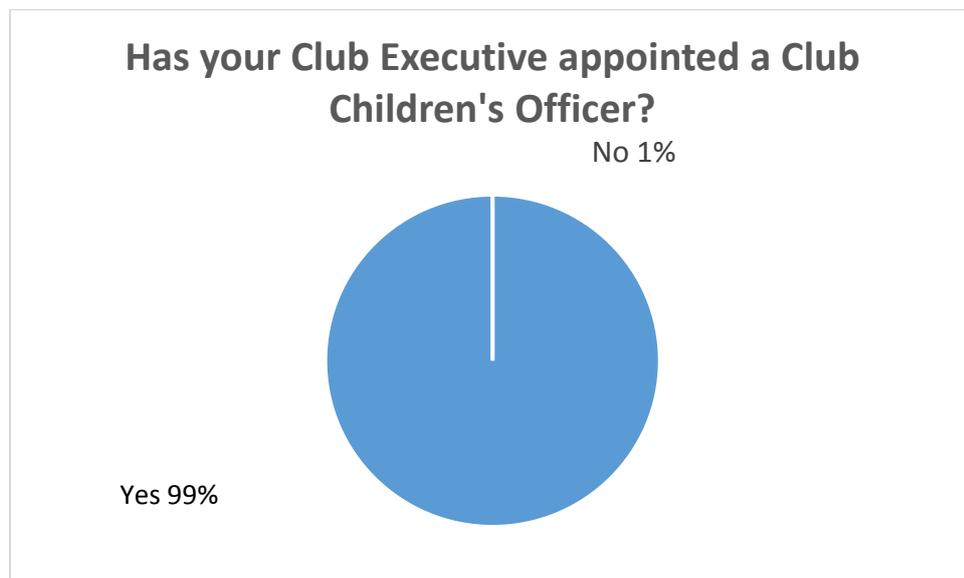
Total responses from GAA: 1,038

- The National overall Club response from the Audit was 1,367. This included GAA, Ladies Gaelic Football and Camogie Clubs.
- The total number of GAA Clubs from this figure is 1,038 which is 76% of the overall total response. (See breakdown above).
- The 1,038 is based on the total number of responses received by GAA clubs only plus the number of Clubs who responded on behalf of “all Associations”.



- 76% GAA (1,038)
- 24% LGFA/Camogie Only Clubs (332)

GAA Club Child Welfare & Safeguarding Audit Responses

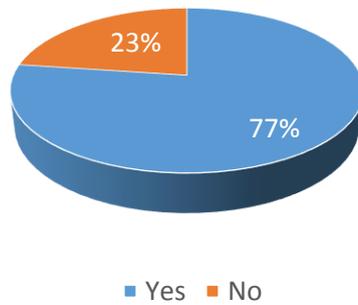


- Of the 1,038 responses received 7 clubs indicated the club did not have a Club Children's Officer.
- The National Children's Office has contacted all 7 clubs who now have a Club Children's Officer in place.



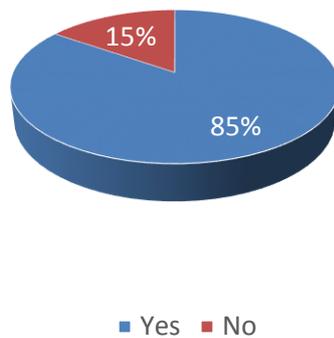
- 91 responses were No (9%)
- In all of our Associations the Club Children's Officer should, in accordance with Rule, be a member of the Club Executive Committee. This is a matter worthy of discussion by the County Children's Officers with their County Chairperson and Secretary who may be requested to inform all clubs that a Children's Officer is required to be appointed as part of their incoming 2018 Club Executive Committee.

Has your Club Children's Officer attended the Gaelic Games Children's Officer Workshop?



- 801 clubs said Yes and 237 clubs said No
- The Club Children's Officer workshop was developed in 2016 and has been delivered in many Counties in the last year. Not all Counties have organised a workshop to date and we would encourage those Counties to do so in the early months of 2018.

Has your Club Executive Committee appointed a Designated Liaison Person for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse?

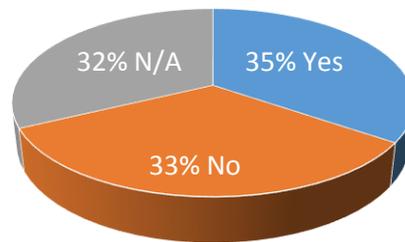


- Yes 882 (85%)
 - No 156 (15%)
- In accordance with current safeguarding structures and our proposed Children First Child Safeguarding Statement, the appointment of a DLP shall be a mandatory position at Club & County level- a requirement under the Children First Act that commences in full in December 2017.

Club Website

- The following questions relate to the club website. This feedback will be presented to the Communications Unit in each Association for their information. Based on the responses it may be that up to 32% of GAA Clubs do not have a website. Further assistance may be required to enable Clubs create and upkeep their websites or social media platforms.
- If LGFA and Camogie Clubs were added to the website responses it would show that almost 40% of clubs do not operate a website.
- It is also worth noting that the responses vary between the three questions. The document that is most available on Club websites is the Code of Behaviour (Underage)

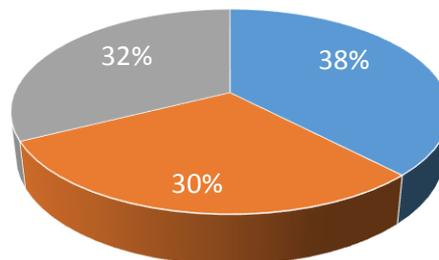
Our Games Our Code- link on your Club website?



■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A

- **Yes 359** **No 345** **N/A 334**

Code of Behaviour (Underage) on your website?

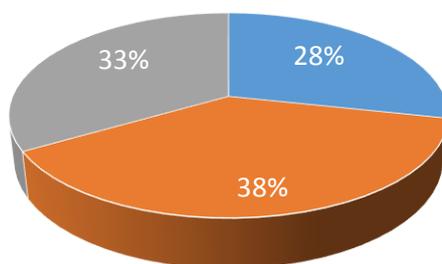


■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A

- **Yes 393** **No 308** **N/A 337**

- When calculating the number of GAA clubs who do not have a website and those that do not display the Code of Behaviour (Underage) on their website it comes to 62% of all GAA Clubs.
- It is hoped that such matters can be addressed and rectified at Officer training early in 2018.

Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Abuse on website?

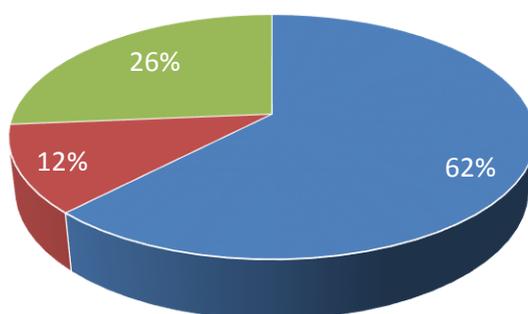


■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A

- **Yes 295** **No 396** **N/A 347**

A similar challenge faces us here where the availability of this vital document, while accessible from gaa.ie, should also be on the club websites.

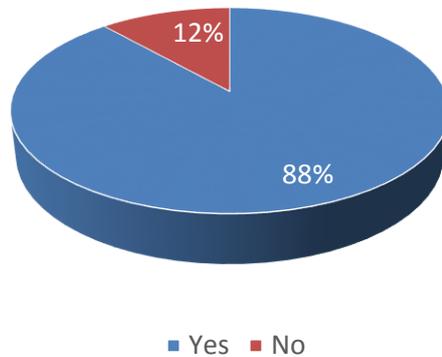
Bord na nÓg members Vetted?



■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A

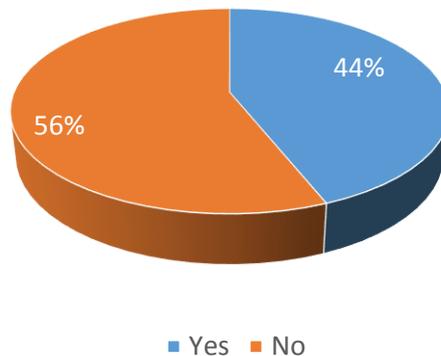
- For those Clubs that answered No (119) this is a challenge that should be addressed by the end of the year as our Child Safeguarding Statement will commit our Associations to training and vetting our Bord na nÓg members.
- Earlier this year Ard Comhairle agreed that in the interest of child safeguarding in the Association that good practice would determine that the membership of each Committee at club, national and county level would be vetted under AccessNI or via the National Vetting Bureau. This decision takes effect as and from 1st January 2018.

Extracts of the Code of Behaviour distributed to relevant club personnel?



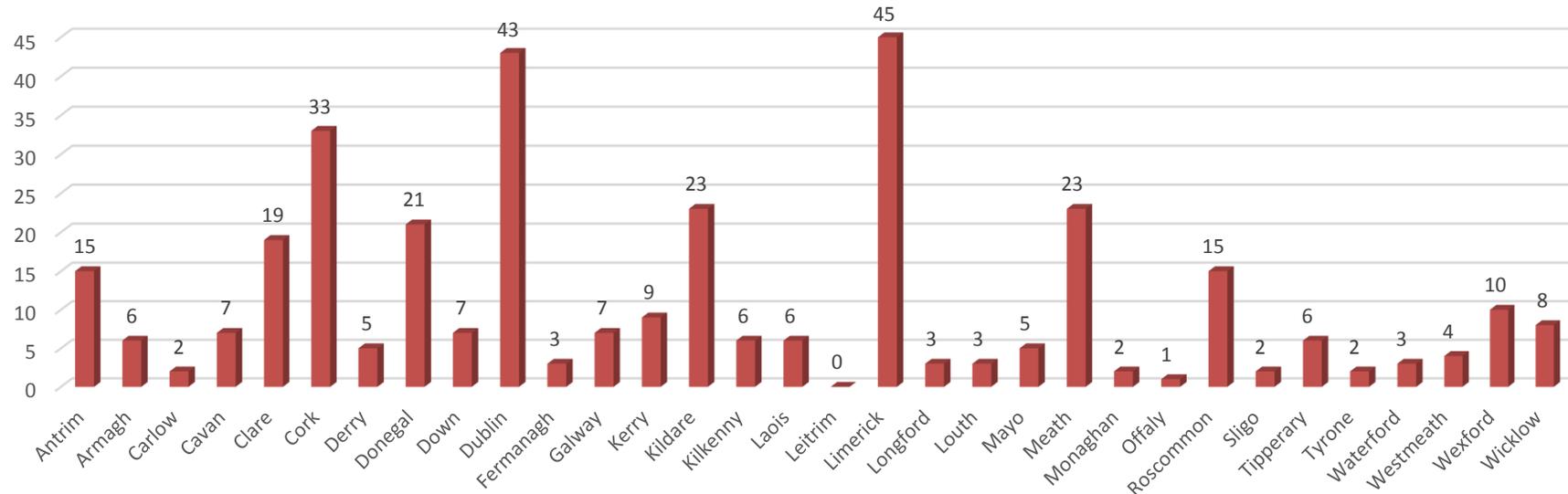
- The figures are encouraging in that 1,022 of the 1,038 Clubs recognise the Code of Behaviour as a key document in promoting good practice for all club personnel.

Has your club appointed a Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport Hearings Committee?



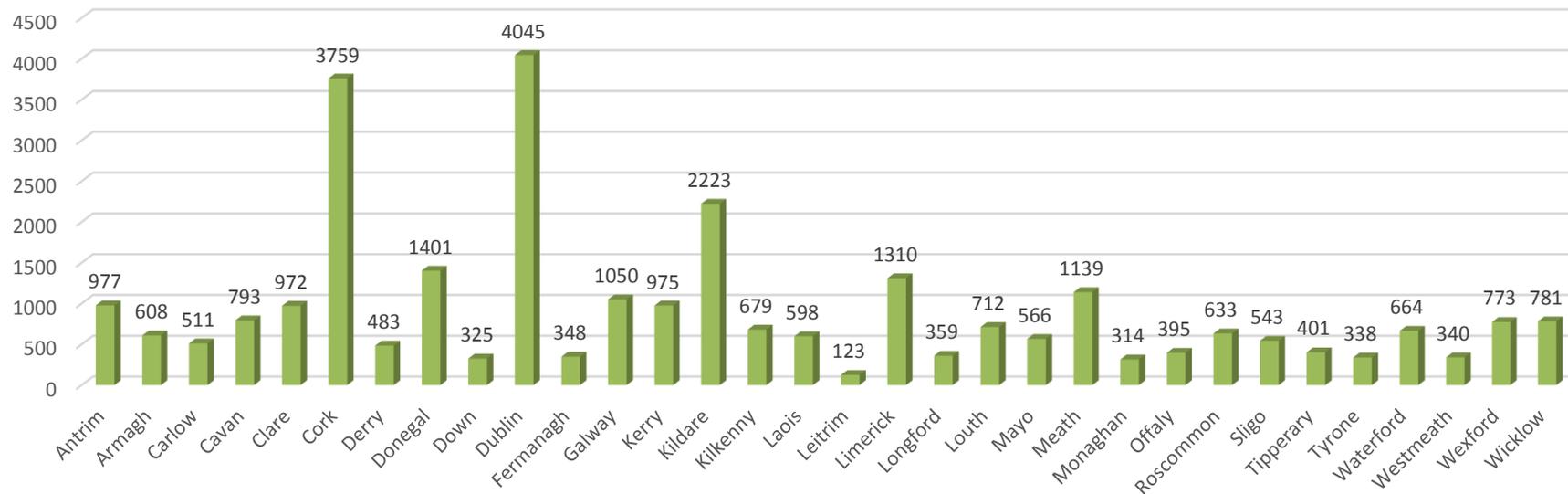
- 570 clubs said No.
- While we strongly encourage Clubs to have a Code of Best Practice in Youth Sport Hearings Committee in place, some Clubs do not establish their hearings committee until there is a case to be heard. This feedback correlates with the number of cases considered at club level and is in line with the statistics that can be gathered elsewhere in this report.

Since its establishment (Nov'14) how many cases, if any, has the Club Code of Best Practice Hearings Committee heard?



- Since its establishment in November 2014, the audit indicates that 344 Cases have been heard by 155 GAA clubs
- This is an encouraging statistic in that the 344 cases were heard as required but many more were obviously dealt with informally at Club level in all probability due to the intervention of the Club Children's Officer.
- Our 2018 Child Safeguarding Statement will also address the need to establish 'Code Hearings Committees' at both Club and County level, all of which must be completed in the early months of 2018.

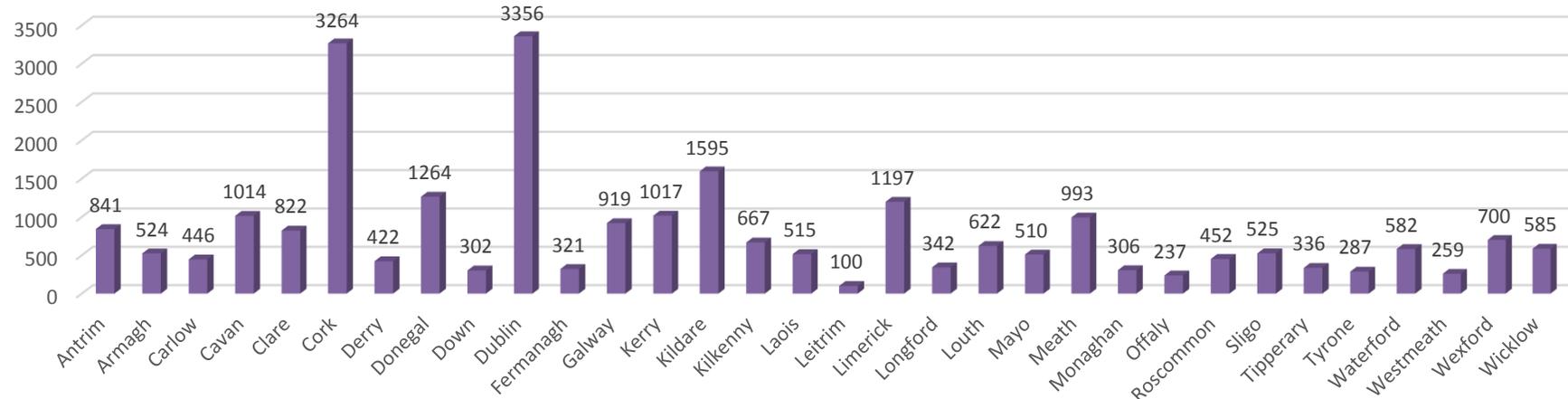
No. of coaches/mentors/selectors/managers in the Club currently working with children?



Total 29,138

- Given that our audit, which was voluntary in nature, attracted 1,038 responses this equates to almost 28 coaches per club or as is the case in some areas per amalgamated club for juvenile purposes. This undoubtedly will vary from club to club and from urban to rural areas. A parallel exercise in quantifying an estimated total number of coaches (underage) in each County may be required in cooperation with our Coaching and Games colleagues but given that the GAA alone will have vetted approx. 25,000 personnel working with children on the island of Ireland by year end we can presume that the 29,138 estimated coaches from 1,038 Clubs is a minimum number.
- On a national basis the estimated number of coaches and mentors working with children in GAA Clubs, based on an estimated 1,500 clubs fielding teams at underage level would be approximately 42,000.

How many of your underage mentors selectors/managers have been vetted in your clubs?

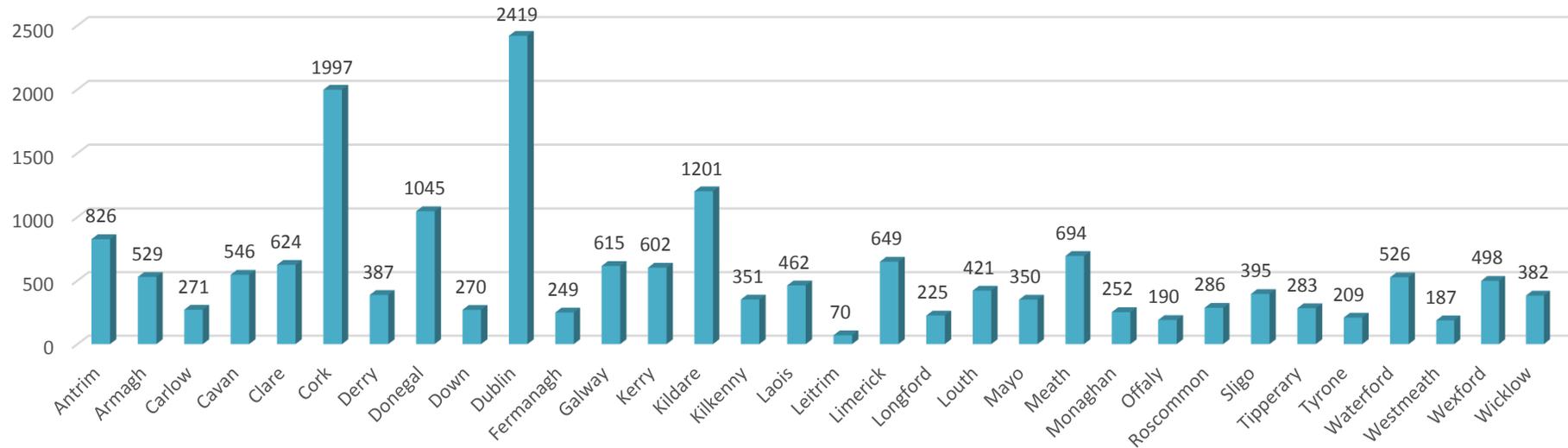


Total 25,322

- This graph shows that 3,816 out of 29,138 underage coaches were not vetted when the Audit took place. In the six Counties this is currently in breach of law.
- By 1 January, when the Vetting Act is fully implemented, it will be illegal on an All-Ireland basis for these 3,816 people, and for any other non-vetted 'underage coaches', to continue in their roles as they must in accordance with legislation and Association rules be vetted by then.
- The introduction of EVetting has simplified vetting services for the GAA* and coupled with the campaign to ensure that coaches not previously vetted undertook vetting this year it has proven to be most successful. The GAA, through National Vetting Bureau and AccesNI vetting services will vet approx. 25,000 people this year alone.

**The GAA provides vetting services for both the Handball and Rounders Associations.*

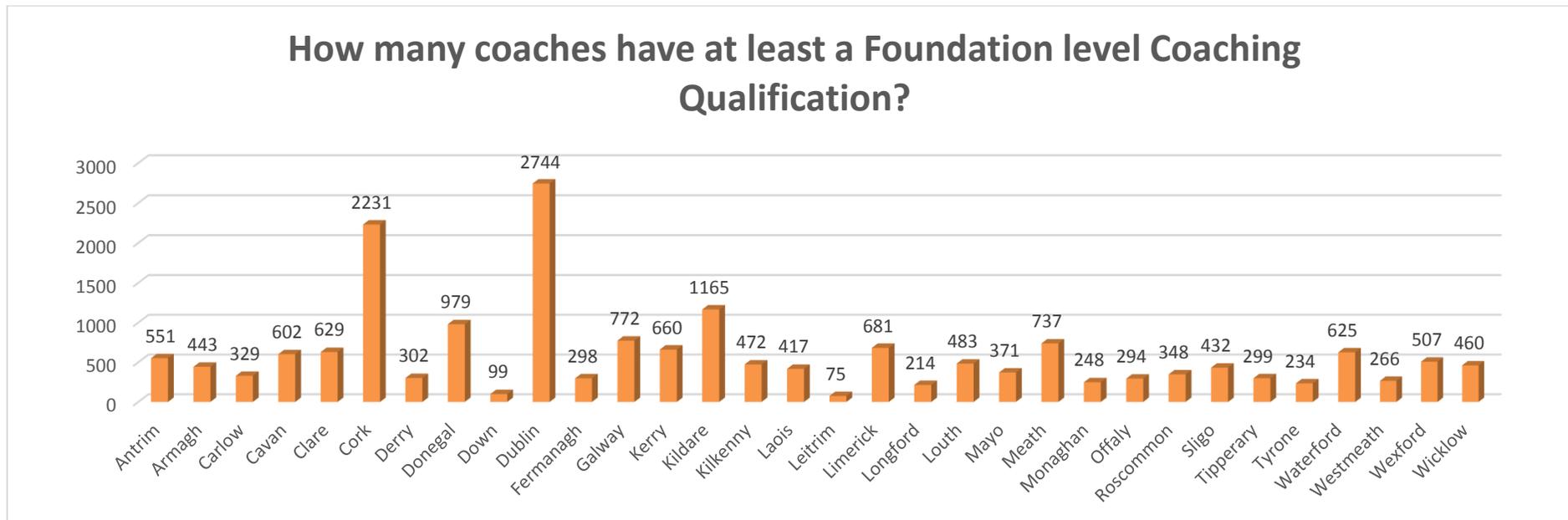
How many coaches have attended the Child Protection Workshop?



Total 18,011

- The Gaelic Games Safeguarding 1 workshop has been amended in recent years and is now a most interactive and thought provoking presentation. A special emphasis shall be placed next year on ensuring that all of our underage coaches have completed this workshop in accordance with our code requirements.
- Our national statistics on attendances at Child Safeguarding 1 (basic) Training are not good and may have been underestimated for a number of years. Based on these returns alone 38% of coaches have not attended this training which must become a priority service in 2018.
- Progress has also been made with a view to affording those who have previously attended the Workshop to undertake an on-line refresher programme, all of which will be unveiled in 2018.

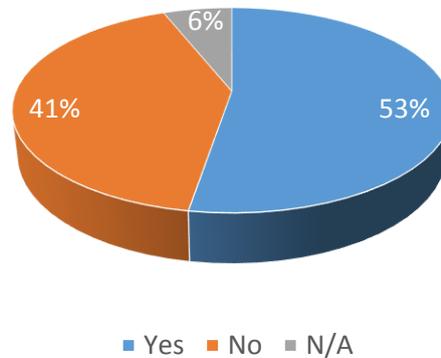
- It is worth noting that the Children First legislation, commencing in full on 11 December 2017, requires that persons working with Children **MUST** attend Child Safeguarding training as provided by the Association or by Tusla.



Total 18,967

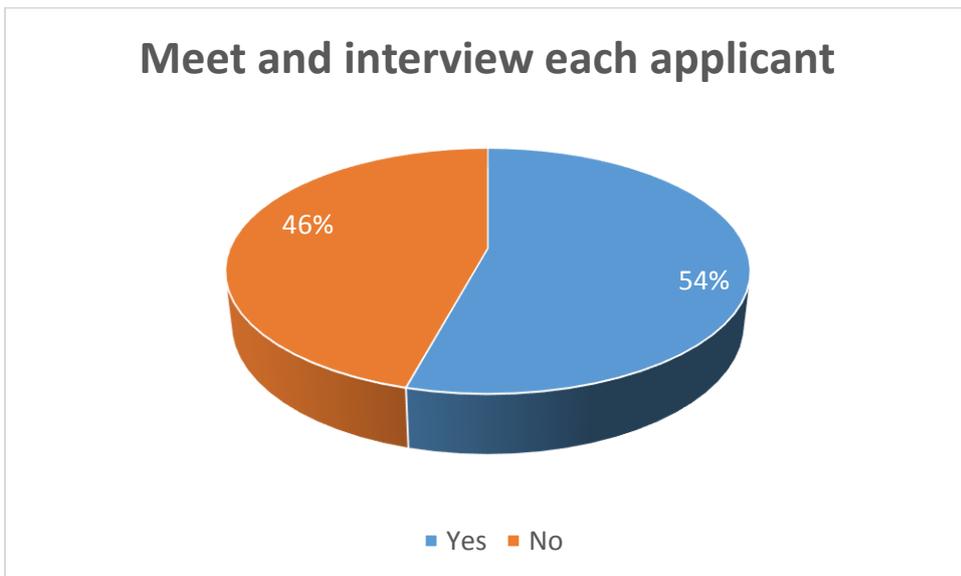
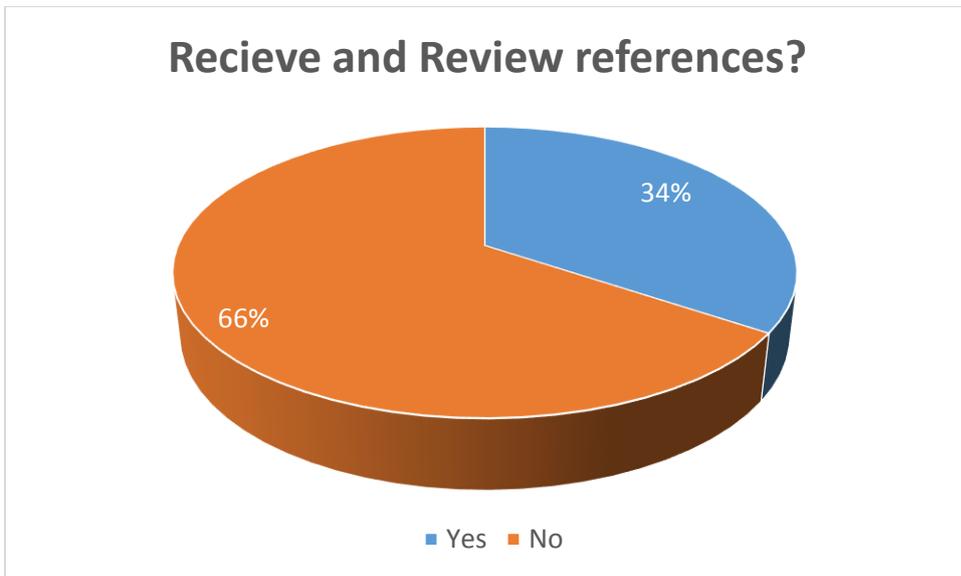
- If we have a concern relating to attendances at Child Safeguarding Training similar concerns relating to who has a minimum coaching qualification. Based on these returns 35% of those appointed as coaches of underage teams may not have a foundation coaching qualification.
- While the number of people who indicate they have a minimum coaching qualification i.e, 18,967 from 1,038 GAA Clubs is surprisingly low it still exceeds the number stated as attending Child Safeguarding Training (18,011).
- Given that attendance at the Child Safeguarding Training is a mandatory requirement for those wishing to complete the Foundations level coaching qualifications, both the Child Safeguarding and the Coaching statistics are worthy of further discussion.

Do you request coaches to sign of the Code of Behaviour (Underage)?



- As with other Children First Child Safeguarding requirements the signing of the Code of Behaviour by coaches of underage team shall become mandatory in 2018.
- When a coach signs the Code it shall be an indication as to knowledge of its contents and is equally important not just for the coach themselves but also for the club should an alleged breach of the Code be considered at a later stage.

As a policy does your Club ensure that the following procedures are adhered to when recruiting people to work with children?



- This aspect of our recruitment procedures is disappointing but is in line with anecdotal evidence previously shared with and by Children’s Officers. Appointing coaches is a Club responsibility in the first instance and should not take place without agreed selection and appointment procedures.
- In collaboration with Coaching Officers or Games Development personnel we need to agree a more educationalist and developmental approach to the appointment of people who wish to work with children in our Associations. Meeting or interviewing these Coaches should be seen as a basic prerequisite.