

# Local and National Provision of Hurling



By Kevin McCabe

In this essay I will look at how Hurling is provided for in Belfast at grassroots level to representative level. I will also examine if there is any provision for those with disabilities to play Hurling and I will examine if there is any provision for different gender groups. I will then see what provision is available to play Hurling at national level and see how excellence is developed.

The national governing body of hurling is the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA).

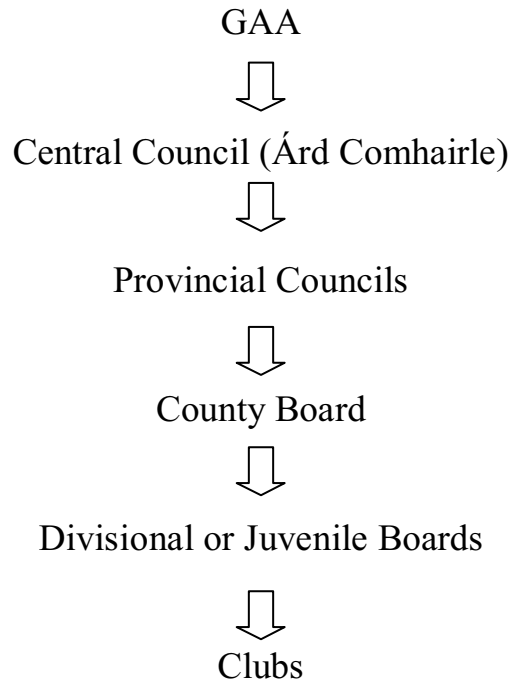
The National Organisation (G.A.A.) is run by Central Council (Árd Comhairle), with the Management Committee (Coiste Bainisti) controlling day-to-day affairs. They run the All-Ireland series of the club and county championships, and look after the Railway Cup competition.

The Provincial Councils are the organisations responsible for the arrangement of G.A.A. matters within their Province. They organise the Provincial Championships for clubs and counties in both hurling and football, and look after organisational and disciplinary matters in their jurisdiction.

Each of the thirty-two counties in Ireland organises its own GAA affairs through a County Board. Counties have a number of Divisional or Juvenile Boards to organise competitions at district and youth levels.

The County Board (and / or subsidiary boards) will organise competitions for the clubs within its jurisdiction. They are also responsible for the organisation of teams to play at inter-county level, at all age groups from Under-10 to Senior.

The G.A.A. has over 2,500 clubs in Ireland alone. The playing of Gaelic Games is based on the G.A.A/ Club, and each of the 32 Counties in Ireland have their own Club competitions, culminating in County Winners in championship and league.



Young people in Belfast are catered to play hurling in a number of different ways. There are GAA clubs they can join which will take them from U8 right through to senior level, but there are also many competitions organised through schools and colleges.

## **Clubs/County**

### U8/U10

*Blitz tournament*  
*Training*  
*Challenge Games*

### U12/U14/U16/Minor/U21

*Structured Club Leagues*  
*Structured Club Championships*  
U12- Nipper Quinn  
U14- Feile na nGael  
*Development Squads*  
*County Teams*  
*Inter-County Competitions*  
Minor- Corn Iom-in na Mionir – Ulster  
Irish Press Cup – All Ireland  
U21- The Costello Cup – Ulster  
Cross of Cashel – All Ireland

### Senior

*Club Hurling Championship*  
Four Seasons Cup – Ulster  
Tommy Moore Cup – All Ireland  
*National hurling League*  
Doctor Croke Cup  
*All Ireland Championship*  
Liam McCarthy Cup  
*Inter-Provincial*  
Railway Cup  
*International*  
Shinty/Hurling (vs Scotland)

## **Schools**

### Primary School

*Inter School Competitions*  
*7-a-side*  
*Mixed Gender*

### Post-Primary School

*Inter School Championships*  
Year 9 – Mac Namee Cup  
Senior – Mageean Cup  
  
*All Star Awards*

### College / University

*Championship*  
Fitzgibbon Cup - Freshers  
Ryan Cup

For children aged seven to eleven, there is hurling in both clubs and schools. In primary school there will be coaching for both boys and girls. There is also a league organized by Cumann na mBunscoil in which it is quite common for both boys and girls to partake in on the same team. There is also a seven-a-side tournament held every year. In clubs from U8 there is coaching for all children that turn up on a Saturday morning. At both U8 and U10 there will be training, hurling blitzes and challenge games. At this age group the emphasis is purely on fun with nothing being taken too seriously, however, it is at this age that most of the fundamental skills will be learnt.

From ages eleven to eighteen there is a number of inter-school championships. However, there is no championship for year 8 pupils. For sixth formers there is also the all-star award which is an award where the best players are put together in a team. At this age, and up to twenty-one, there is a lot of activity in clubs. There leagues and championships for all age groups in local area, county, province and all Ireland. The best players from each club are sent to a county development squad, and it is from these players that the county team will be selected.

At senior level, those players at University or College will take part in a Championship for all colleges in Ireland. At club and county the elite players may become very high profile. There are still leagues and championships and club level, but at this age, for elite performers, the emphasis is on the county. There is the National Hurling League, but more importantly, the All-Ireland Hurling Championship. Winning the All-Ireland is the pinnacle of a hurling player's career. There is little opportunity for a hurler to play for his country as hurling is a sport found mainly in Ireland. The only opportunity to represent their country is in a compromise rules game with Shinty. This however, is more of an exhibition than a highly competitive game.

In hurling there really is not much opportunity for people with physical disabilities to take part in playing the sport because of the type of sport it is. However, there are facilities available to help disabled people watch the matches live and to include their participation as much as possible. There should be an opportunity for people with mental disabilities to take part in hurling, but at the minute, there is no such opening.

There is quite a lot of funding available to aid the development of players that comes from Government, Lottery and private sources. There are various grants made available by the government to help in the development of facilities available to young players. The most obvious and recent form of lottery funding is evident from the amount that has been spent on the redevelopment of Croke Park which has cost around £110 million. Private funding helps with young people in the sport mainly through sponsorship deals to buy essential equipment and kits. For example, O'Donovan Rossa is sponsored by Goodfellas. They will supply kits and training equipment. There is also revenue brought in through a team's social club. The Antrim County team is sponsored by Bushmills. Some competitions also have sponsorship, like the Coca-Cola Feile and the Guinness All-Ireland Hurling Championship.

In hurling there are no obvious gender issues as many females play camogie which is very similar to hurling. At primary school level there would often be both boys and girls on the hurling team. As they get older many girls will join camogie teams with their own leagues and championships. Girls will follow much the same path as boys to elite level. Whilst on the surface there would appear to be no gender issues you only have to look at the television coverage to see that the only camogie televised is the championship final. Camogie is not as high profile as hurling is.

In this assignment I have looked at the local and national provision of Hurling. I initially looked at the structure of the GAA. I then looked at how hurling is provided for from an early age at both club and school level through until they reach the peak of their senior inter-county career. However, there is room for improvement, at the minute there is no competition for year 8 pupils, which needs to be addressed. There is also a problem due to the lack of promotion of camogie and also the lack of participation of disabled people. In conclusion I feel that despite these problems, there is adequate

provision of hurling in Belfast and that, on the whole, hurling has a very strong foundation to continue for many years to come.