

Aisling

Annacotty AFC

Schoolboys Handbook



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Introduction

Aisling Annacotty AFC is one of the largest and most vibrant clubs in the country. We cater for boys and girls playing soccer from ages 5 to 16. We have close to 100 teams currently playing matches and more than 300 children in our academy every Saturday morning.

Aisling Annacotty is a very important part of the lives of our young members. Friendships made now will endure for many years to come. Everything we do in the Aisling is done on a voluntary basis by our Coaches – some of whom played with the club, other clubs (and some who still do!) and some of whom knew nothing about soccer until their children showed an interest. Everyone is welcome regardless of their experience playing sport. There are many different roles required for the successful running of a club with the aspirations and size of Aisling Annacotty. The more people who are involved the more fun it is for everyone and the lighter the load.

After our players, our Coaches are the most important people in the Club. They train, guide, and encourage our boys and girls to be their best, arrange matches, wash jerseys, interact with referees/officials, communicate with parents, and deal with bumps and bruises. Our Coaches oversee our young players development and growth as individuals and team players through the ranks until U17s, when they enter the adult section of the Club.

Aisling Annacotty Vision

Aisling Annacotty is committed to having a broad social value and welcomes all. When players enter our academy, they begin a journey with the club through our underage set up with the club aim of bringing as many players as possible through to adult level at a grade that is appropriate to their ability. We believe our members should have a best-in-class environment where they can develop, both as players and people, with the structures to guide and encourage them to be their best and understand the values of hard work, commitment, integrity, perseverance, teamwork and a never give up attitude. We want our members to be proud to be part of Aisling Annacotty, to build lasting friendships through the club and ultimately, to enjoy themselves while they are on their journey.

Aisling Annacotty Mission Statement:

The work of Aisling Annacotty is based on the following principles that will guide the development of sport for young people in this club. Children and young people's experience of soccer should be guided by what is best for the child or young person. The stages of development and the ability of the child should guide the types of activity provided within the club. Adults will need to have a basic understanding of the needs of young people, including physical, emotional and personal.

Integrity in relationships:

Adults interacting with young people in soccer should do so with integrity and respect for the child. All adult actions in soccer should be guided by what is best for the child and in the context of quality, open working relationships. Verbal, physical, emotional or sexual abuse of any kind is unacceptable.

Quality atmosphere and ethos

Soccer for young people should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging atmosphere. A child-centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place. Too often unhealthy competitive demands are placed on children too early and results in excessive levels of pressure on them and consequently high levels of dropout from sport.

Equality

All children should be treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, ability, sex, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion. Children with disability should be involved in sports activities in an integrated way, thus allowing them to participate to their potential alongside other children.

Fair Play:

Fair play is the guiding principle of the Irish Sports Councils Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport.

It states that "all children's sport should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play". Ireland has contributed and is committed to the European Code of Sports Ethics, which defines fair play as: "much more than playing within the rules".

It incorporates the concepts of friendship, respect for others and always playing with the right spirit. Fair play is defined as a way of thinking, not just behaving. It incorporates issues concerned with the elimination of opportunities, excessive commercialisation and corruption. (European Sports Charter and Code of Ethics, Council of Europe, 1993).

Competition

A balanced approach to competition can make a significant contribution to the development of young people, while at the same time providing enjoyment. Coaches/managers should aim to put the welfare of the child first and competitive standards second. A child-centred approach will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.

Role of Coaches

Aisling Annacotty is a voluntary organisation and all our activities are organised by our own members. Aisling coaches, often parents and guardians of our young players, are the people who organise and manage training and matches. As the club has grown, we have introduced the role of Director of Football.

Coaches are usually recruited when they first bring their children down to our Saturday morning Academy. A gentle tap on the shoulder to help out results in quick entry to the rank of coach. This can be a very rewarding role – guiding young players through the age grades, helping each one to play to the best of their ability. The coach's role is influenced by the personal capacity and drive of the individual and can encompass:

- Getting Garda vetted and completing Safeguarding 1
- Be conscious of child welfare and report any issue to Club Child Welfare Officer
- Organising and running of training sessions.
- Review training/match schedule regularly (published on coaches WhatsApp group/club website)
- If a training session is cancelled the head of coaching needs to be informed immediately.
- Ensuring your group does not encroach the pitch until training is due to begin.
- Ensuring pitch is cleared after each training session in a timely manner to allow the next team on.
- Leaving the pitch in a condition you would expect to find it after both training and matches
- Communicating time and venue of fixtures and ensuring sufficient numbers to field teams
- Organising and managing teams on match days.
- If a coach has an issue with a fixture, the club secretary Joe Pond needs to be informed immediately. Opposition club not to be contacted directly.
- If the referee does not show up for a fixture, the fixtures secretary must be notified immediately as per LDSL Rule Book.
- No walkovers may be given unless every avenue has been explored and club secretary has given full permission.
- If a coach has any other issue, please notify the age group captain who can notify the football committee if necessary.
- Coaching & developing players to the best of their ability
- Encouraging players to give the best of themselves for the team
- Ensuring teams have necessary equipment to train and play games in a safe environment.
- Collection of club memberships from parents/guardians.
- Ensuring that player's time spent with you is a positive experience.
- Establishing a Training and Development Plan for year ahead

Player registration

All new players to register with club Registrar to be added to waiting list. The registrar will notify age group captains of new player requests.

Once the appropriate squad is assigned the new player will provide the registrar with a profile picture, copy of ID, guardian email, and home address.

FAI Comet is used to register the player with the LDSL.

The player will then be requested to pay membership through Club Force.

Non-members cannot play matches.

Transfers and transfer dates and windows for winter football (LDSL):

A child can only move between clubs, including club squads during set periods. The transfer window closes on the 24th of September and reopens on January 1st. The winter transfer window closes on 31st January. Players not already signed for a club can join up until 31st March.

Coaching Development

There are an increasing number of courses available for coaches to help them improve their coaching skills. Details are circulated in the Club's coaches WhatsApp groups.

Codes of Best Practice

The Club Codes of Conduct and Child Welfare Statement is available in the [downloads section](#) of the club website.

Communications, including social media

Coaches should never communicate by text or email with an individual under-age player.

Grading or Streaming of Teams

Aisling Annacotty has a huge number of children playing our games and our policy is to encourage them all to play to the best of their abilities. Before the start of each playing season coaches must review their teams and consider on which team each child will achieve their potential. Children develop at different stages and a child who is potentially weak at age 10 may be a very strong player at age 14 and vice versa. Grading must be constantly reviewed.

What is streaming?

Streaming is putting players of similar ability on the same team as opposed to having a team of mixed ability playing together.

Why do we Stream?

The central theme behind streaming is about developing those players who are not considered as the "strong" players and by putting these players together they will all get a better chance to get more of

the ball and consequently have more fun and develop. This decision is also closely linked to the structure of the LDSL. Clubs are expected to grade teams as per their ability.

Player Pathway

U6/U7 (5 v 5)

For many, this is your child's first involvement in organized training at the club. The focus here is on fundamental movement skills (FMS).

At U7s Teams will play organized Blitz tournaments against other clubs in the city. Both boys and girls train together in this age group.

There is no streaming at this age and kids of all abilities train together.

U8 (5 v 5)

We have a 'Whole' (Small sided games e.g., 2 v 2, 3 v 3 & maximum 4 v 4), 'Part' (Skills coaching with emphasis on Ball Mastery skills), 'Whole' (Games) approach to training at this age group with 20 minutes allocated to each section. Players train once a week (Saturdays) and have games against opposition (Blitzes) on alternate weekends.

These games are 5 v 5 and all players must have equal playing time. This includes rotating players' positions including Goalkeepers.

There is no streaming at this age and kids of all abilities train together.

U9s (5 v 5)

This group follows a similar program to the U8s.

There is no streaming at U9s to begin with and games are mixed groups. However, after Christmas, the professional coaches and parent coaches will begin to assess and highlight players who are standing out.

The professional coaches will communicate with the team captains of the provisional squads for the following season in May. If there is a question mark over a player further assessment will take place when players return for pre-season training.

Children out of their age (i.e. 2016 born playing with 2015) can remain in this group with their friends.

U10/ U11 (7 v 7)

At these age groups, we begin to stream players. Players are divided up into 4 or more Groups: Red, Blue, and Green & Brown consisting of approximately 20-30 players. This is dependent on the overall size of the age group.

The entire age group is fully streamed by the professional coaches to avoid any bias towards parent-coach players.

The Red group is streamed fully with Team 1 & Team 2. However, the other groups use a mixed-ability approach, and the team managers decide the squads every week.

This is a continuous assessment approach with players moving between groups. Parents will be notified 2 weeks in advance if their child isn't developing within their respective groups. If this situation remains the parent will be notified that their child is moving group. The child will begin training with the group at the first session of the following week.

If a player is moving up a group, the parent will be notified that the player has been asked to train with the group above. There will be a two-week trial period to see if the child has adapted to the demands of the higher level. If the child is struggling, he will return to his original group.

For U10s in May, organized in-house games will be played amongst the possible respective squads for the following season. The professional coaches will decide which team each player plays with the following year based on their training and LDSL games.

For U11s, after Christmas, a number of blue players will get the opportunity to train and be assessed with the red group. The training groups will be increased to 12-14. These players may also be involved on match day with the red squads.

Provisional Squads for the following season are announced at the end of the season. However, there are no definite squad announcements until pre-season commences the following season.

U12 (9 v 9)

This is the first year of competitive football. Squads for this season will be announced during pre-season.

This is also the first season of the designated transfer window. A child can only move between clubs, including club squads during set periods. The window closes on the 24th of September and reopens on January 1st. The winter transfer window closes on 31st January.

If a player is moving Teams within these windows, the parent will be notified 2 weeks in advance that the development of the child would be more suited to a different team. A further conversation will be had to make clear how the transition between squads will take place.

U13-U16s (11 v 11)

At these age groups, the players are assessed as normal. The club strives to promote players from within, however, if players are unable to make the transition up to an 'A' squad then players from outside the club may come into the squad. To maintain a community-based club squads will consist of 85% of locally developed talent. In exceptional circumstances (i.e. players moving to the League of Ireland or other clubs) this may not be possible. A review of this will take place at the football committee to ensure that the ethos of the club is not being undermined.

Club Policy on Playing Within Age

1. The following is the policy ratified by the Executive Committee regarding juvenile players playing within their own age groups:
 - a. Players should play and train with their own age group.
 - b. Players may also play on a team one year above their own age group provided that:
 - i. the managers of both age groups have given consent
 - ii. the parents of the child playing up has given consent
 - iii. exceptional players that need to be challenged may be called up on a more regular basis.
 - iv. The above will not prohibit any squad players from their recommended FAI game time.
2. Occasionally groups may struggle to field a full second or third team because of the numbers within their group so players may be called up from the year below.
3. In this scenario where age group, or a team within an age group, typically a B or C team, needs consistent support from the younger age group then this should be discussed at the start of the year between the coaches from both age groups and with the age-group captains. The younger team coaches are encouraged to support the older team to ensure that the Club helps to retain those older players by having a viable team in place. Coaches of the lower age groups should use this opportunity to rotate players willing and able to play up.
4. For players requested to play up in competitive fixtures between two club teams, e.g. AA U15 B V AA U15 C team, due consideration must be given particularly for players playing up who have previously played for the A team. Agreement between both managers is recommended.

Playing 2 years out of age

In exceptional circumstances, it may happen that a team cannot secure enough players from the group one year younger and then can consider approaching the group 2 years younger. This is not encouraged and should be considered a last resort. Player welfare should always come before competition considerations, and this is especially true in the event the children are being asked to play 2 years out of their own age group. In this scenario permission must be granted by the parents involved and all coaches must be in agreement.

Other considerations

1. Coaches of both teams should give due consideration to only allowing these younger players to play up on the basis that both from a skill and physicality perspective that they will not be out of their depth.
2. Parents of the 2-year younger players should fully understand what team their child is being asked to play on and parental consent is required
3. Players are not to play 3 years or more out of age

Age Group Captains

<u>AGE GROUP</u>	<u>NAME</u>	<u>CONTACT NUMBER</u>
<u>U6's</u>	Sameer Salem	087-2833126
	To Be Confirmed	
<u>U7's</u>	Ciaran Likely	087-9934994
	Dermot Clune	086-3050528
	Ronan Ryan	086-3078818
<u>U8's</u>	Kieran O Brien	086-6019214
	Maurice Moloney	087-9566219
<u>U9's</u>	Eoin Doran	085-7100840
	Alan Rossiter	086-1650772
<u>U10's</u>	Jason Sheehan	086-8145913
	To Be Confirmed	
<u>U11's</u>	Jason Sheehan	086-8145914
	Martin Power	086 3169292
<u>U12's</u>	Fintan Walsh	087-2891543
	Ronan Cregan	086-0262222
<u>U13's</u>	Brian Doran	087-3633001
	Hugh McDermott	087-9189827
<u>U14's</u>	Niall Brady	086-9430893
	Denis Foley	087-2219940
<u>U15's</u>	Gary Cregan	086-0662310
	Ronan Cregan	086-0262222
<u>U16's</u>	Eddie Hanarhan	087-6372528
	Patrick Fitpatrick	086-3375306

Age Group Captain Roles and Responsibilities

Main point of contact for parents/guardians of the age group and organise communications when required.

Point of contact for all coaches in that age group.

Provide link between all coaches in that age group and the Head of Coaching.

Provide link between the football committee and the coaches.

Share coaching drills and communications from Head of Coaching with all coaches in year group.

Assist club with registration process.

Work with Head of Coaching in respect to the club streaming process/policy.

Organise involvement in competitions where possible.

Assist and encourage new volunteer coaches to join the club.

Resolve minor issues that may arise within their specific age group.

Football Committee

<i>NAME</i>	<i>CONTACT NUMBER</i>
Eddie Hanrahan	087-6372528
Gary Cregan	086-0662310
Damian Patton	087-2361420
Derek McCarthy	083-3542683
Ronan Cregan	086-0262222
Rachel Begley	086-1037030
Denis Foley	087-2219940
Fintan Walshe	087-2891543
Leanne Downes	086-1053782
Pat Fitzpatrick	086-3375306

Football Committee Roles and responsibilities

Resolving football related issues within the club

Point of contact for age group captains

Provide link between club committee and club coaches

Provide information for coaches on upcoming football tournaments (Please note all tournaments need to be approved by Football Committee before entering, and any tournament hosted by an LDSL club needs to be ratified by the LDSL).

Provide assistance to head coach on scheduling

Provide Club Handbook

Coach Profiles

Derek McCarthy (Head of Coaching)

Derek is a UEFA B licenced coach and holds an MSc in Sports Science. Derek played League of Ireland professionally for Limerick FC, Galway Utd and Waterford Utd. Following on from his playing career Derek moved to the UK as a Sports Scientist with Blackburn Rovers and Preston North End. In his time in the UK Derek has worked with the likes of Sam Allardyce, Phil Brown, and former Irish international players Stephen Reid and Keith Andrews. He has also worked internationally with Jordan and the Chinese national team, while also having a spell with the Thailand academy side Buriram Utd FC. Having returned to Ireland, Derek joined Aisling Annacotty FC to oversee the development of all teams at the club.

Alex O'Donoghue (Lead coach)

Alex is a UEFA C licenced coach and has applied to do his UEFA B licence in 2024. Having played with the club since he was 6 years of age, Alex currently plays with the junior B team. Alex has coached at the club since the age of 15 and is currently coaching with the FAI as an auxiliary. Alex has been an integral part of the Aisling Annacotty Academy, and in the 2022/2023 season led his U12As to the League and Cup double and the National Cup semi-finals.

Important Information

Link to PDP for U6 4 v 4 to U16 11 v 11 <https://www.fai.ie/domestic/player-development-plan/PDP-formats>

Link to courses/child welfare/garda vetting <https://www.fai.ie/domestic/take-part-programmes>

Link to LDSL <https://www.ldsl.ie/>

Link to LDSL Handbook <https://www.ldsl.ie/l-d-s-l-rule-book/>

Link to LDSL fixtures <https://soccerleagues.comortais.com/roundup.aspx?oid=1032&show=f>