



# DOWN GAA

*Cumann Lúthchleas Gael Coiste Chontae An Dún*

## DOWN HURLING DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY



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## INDEX

Purpose	Page 4
Methodology	Page 4
Introduction	Page 4
Critical Success Factors	Page 5
Summary of key recommendations	Page 5
Player pathway	Page 6
Review findings	Page 32
Down Player Pathway	Page 32
Emerging Talent squads	Page 32
Management Structure	Page 33
Squad Structure	Page 34
Coaching Principles	Page 35
Coaching	Page 36
Player Selection	Page 36
Emerging Talent Squad Games Programs	Page 37
Squad Resources—Equipment & Facilities	Page 37
Coaching Personnel	Page 38
Emerging Talent Squad Communications	Page 38
Club coach development	Page 39
Culture	Page 39
Schools	Page 40
Club Competitions	Page 40
Appendix 1 Hurling Review Document	Page 42
Appendix 2 Skills Challenge Guidelines	Page 43



## PURPOSE

The purpose of the document is to:

- Establish a player pathway which will provide a template for the development of hurlers at all levels within the county that will contribute to the success of present and future county teams.
- Review existing development programs, structures and systems, with regard to development activities, to determine key areas where improvements can be achieved.
- Propose key recommendations and timescales for implementation of a program to facilitate improvement.

## METHODOLOGY

A review of existing development programs, structures and systems currently in situ within the county involving discussions with all relevant stakeholders was carried out in order to identify key areas where improvements can be achieved.

A documentation review and evaluation of a number of existing, hurling specific, player development models at club and county level was carried out to develop a player pathway which provides for a consistent and integrated approach to player development within the county.

A review of the relevant GAA and other applicable youth sport development models including the

County's gaelic football program to ensure that the proposals align with GAA and other applicable youth sports models.

A review of the proposed changes to hurling competition formats at National level in order to ensure that the proposals facilitate both planned and proposed changes to the current competitions.

Contributors to this process include the Chairman of the National Hurling Development Committee, Down Coaching & Games Department, Down Coaching & Hurling Officers, Regional Hurling Development Officers, Club Representatives, Coaches and Players.

## INTRODUCTION

There is a clear body of evidence from within the GAA and other sports that success at senior level is dependent on having clearly defined player development pathways and models. This development approach ensures that everyone who is involved in player development process, be it at club, schools, development or county squads share the same objectives and are capable of effectively delivering age appropriate training.

Our senior county hurlers are the product of our coaching system and we all play a part in this either directly or indirectly. Multiple coaches will have influenced the development of a player on their journey from U6 through to senior level. It is therefore critical that everyone fully understands the development pathway and how we achieve the desired outcomes.

Everyone involved in the coaching process, whether it is expressed or not, share the same goals, namely, to develop individuals who are exceptional

**Hurlers** - Players with the technical skills required to effectively hurl.

**Athletes** - Players with the physical capacity and skills required to compete

**Players** - Players with the game intelligence and decision making skills (both on and off the field) required to perform.

The player pathway is therefore constructed around developing these three key skill sets. The pathway is based on established development models. We haven't reinvented the wheel but taken best practice from various development models and presented a package which combines the best elements of each.

One of the biggest challenges we face as coaches is the need to encourage players to practice outside of the coaching sessions? The Kilkenny player pathway for example includes guidance on skills testing or skills challenges at each age group. Players are competitive and will practice to ensure they will perform as well as they can, especially when all their peers are in the same mode. We therefore have developed a series of skills challenges for each age group. These are only guides and coaches are expected to use their own discretion depending on the abilities and capabilities of the particular group of players that they are coaching in any given

season, in formulating training plans.

The player pathway also incorporates practical examples on the development of skill sets using basic games and how these can be progressed to ensure that we balance the development of the hurler, athlete and player.

The player pathway is designed to provide help to coaches at all youth levels in clubs, schools or development squads and recognise the skills, experience, abilities and commitment of Down hurling coaches at every level. It is therefore designed to provide a framework and guidance on a process which will assist in developing the type of player we all want.

Various clubs already have established player pathways and development models and each one will be unique. It is important to recognise that it is the process and outputs rather than the detail which is important here and for these clubs the process should involve checking that the existing club model aligns and reflects the proposed Down Player Pathway.

Player development does not happen in isolation and there are many factors which are outside the control of coaches but by adopting a coherent and focused approach we can all help to develop hurlers who are capable of competing at the highest level

This report therefore includes suggested recommendations which would facilitate the changes necessary to deliver the performance improvements

identified. These are not prescriptive and will need to be reviewed and approved by the various working groups operational in Down prior to implementation.

## CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS

- Everyone involved in hurling accepts that “we are where we are”, and if we want to move forward, then we all need to embrace change. There is no “magic wand” – it will take a lot of hard work by everyone involved.
- A coherent and structured plan is developed, implemented and reviewed on an ongoing basis to generate continued improvements in all aspects of player development.
- Everyone involved in the coaching or development process accepts and embraces the development model suggested i.e. hurler, athlete and player.
- Greater support forthcoming from key hurling personal throughout the county, to help the small base of volunteers currently developing hurling at county level.
- Effectively use the support and opportunities offered by Down GAA, Ulster GAA and Central Council.

## SUMMARY OF KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations are a summary of the detailed recommendations and action points arising out of this review and contained within the body of the report. These have been compiled to show the critical pathway for delivering the desired objectives, within the time frame specified.

1. Approval of the player pathway and recommendations – May 2017
2. Present to clubs/coaches and makes available online/hard copy – June 2017
3. Appoint an individual on a voluntary basis to oversee the development process and support Down Coaching & Games Department accordingly – August 2017.
4. Draw up a defined Emerging Talent Squad Programme for hurling covering: - November 2017
  - Vision and objectives
  - Management structures
  - Squad structures
  - Squad resources
  - Coaching principles
  - Squad communications
  - Player selection
  - Games programs
5. Implement strategy – November 2017 onwards
6. Review effectiveness of changes and establish plans for 2019 – October 2018



## PLAYER PATHWAY

The player pathway has been designed to provide a framework for developing

- The hurler - the technical skills required to allow an individual to play.
- The athlete - the physical capacity and skills required to compete.
- The player- the game intelligence and decision making skills required to perform.
- The pathway has been developed in line with the relevant GAA and other applicable youth sport development models.
- The player pathway has incorporated best practice as currently defined in established models including the Kilkenny Player Development Pathway.
- The player pathway provides for a consistent and integrated approach to player development amongst schools, clubs and development squads at all youth levels.
- The player pathway and supporting documentation are in no way intended to be prescriptive and coaches will have the freedom/ability to tailor their programs to meet the needs of their individual players/teams.
- The player pathway provides a framework for measuring, managing, and improving player development/ performance of at all levels.
- The document provides clear guidance to coaches at all levels and grades on the practical application of the player pathway.
- The pathway as far as practical ensures that the technical and physical developments outlined at each point of the development pathway can be objectively measured.



***“Down produces hurlers who are technically as good as any in Ireland”***

**Paul Flynn**  
**Waterford U21 manager and former all-star.**








## 4 - 6 Year Old

HURLER	ATHLETE	PLAYER
<b>Striking</b>  Ground strike of stationary sliotar on both sides.	<b>Running, jumping, throwing (RJT's)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Basic Running skills</li> <li>on the toes</li> <li>using arms and legs</li> <li>jog/sprint</li> </ul> Running <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>forwards</li> <li>backwards</li> <li>sideways</li> <li>starting/stopping</li> </ul> Jumping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>standing jump</li> <li>moving jump</li> </ul> Throwing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>under arm - bowling</li> <li>over arm</li> </ul>	<b>Core Values</b>  Respect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>for self</li> <li>for team mates</li> <li>the game</li> <li>for referees</li> </ul> Honesty  Self-practice
<b>Lift</b>  Two handed jab lift.  Two handed roll lift of static sliotar.	<b>Agility, balance, coordination (ABC's)</b>  Changing direction off both feet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>turning</li> <li>swerving</li> <li>side stepping</li> </ul> Balancing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>single leg</li> <li>squat</li> <li>skipping</li> </ul> Hand eye coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>bouncing and catching sliotar</li> <li>turning over / picking up cones</li> <li>tagging</li> </ul>	<b>Game intelligence</b>  Basic concepts of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>marking</li> <li>positions</li> <li>team</li> </ul>



HURLER	ATHLETE	PLAYER
<div><div>Hands</div><div>Grip, ready, lock and swing</div><div>Catching<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>bucket</li><li>claw</li></ul></div></div>		<div><div>Lifestyle</div><div>Hurl everyday</div><div>Continually learn and develop</div><div>Aspire to be the best</div></div>
<div><div>Sliotar control</div><div>Dribble<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>two handed</li><li>one handed</li></ul></div><div>Stopping the sliotar</div><div>Solo<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>bouncing</li><li>stuck to the hurl</li></ul></div><div>Sliotar hops - one side of the bas</div><div>Tippy taps - both sides of the bas alternatively.</div></div>		

Philosophy	Play to Learn			Learn to Compete			Compete to Win		
									
Stage	Child			Youth			Adult		
Age Group	Age 4 - 11			Age 12 - 17			Age 18 +		
Phase	Nursery	Early Go Games	Late Go Games	Early Teenage	Mid Teenage	Late Teenage	Early Adult	Adult	Retirement/ Retainment
Specific Age	4-6 Years	7-9 Years	10-11 Years	12-13 Years	14-15 Years	16-17 Years	18-21 Years	22+ Years	Becoming a Coach/ Officer/ Referee

## COACH NOTES U4-U6 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

### Developing the hurler

The emphasis in this phase should be about building a solid foundation in terms of basic technique incorporating:

- Fun with activities based on individual skill development in a non-competitive environment
- Building the basics of the swing and ball control including ground striking off either hand.

The importance of using a six inch hurl as a first hurl and training aide cannot be over emphasised.

The six inch hurl

- Is light, easily carried and used regardless of the child's physical development. It is

easily manipulated which is key to developing a quick swing and sliotar reactions.

- Facilitates the development of the range and speed of wrist and stick movement. In terms of hurl size and weight the appropriate hurl is one which the child can repeat the speed and range of wrist movements achieved with the six inch hurl.
- Prevents the non-dominant hand being placed on the top of the hurl.
- Allows the child to develop balance of the hurl using the thumb.
- Significantly speeds up development of other key skill areas e.g. block, solo

When used in conjunction with bean bag's/sliotars, tennis balls etc. will achieve early successes

but more importantly develop an effective wristy swing.

Progression to a bigger hurl can be made when the basics have been learned and the child is both competent and confident in using the six inch hurl.

### Developing the athlete "DANCING FEET"

The emphasis in this phase should be on developing the basic movement skills.

Running on the toes - forwards, backwards, sideways.

Jumping - forwards, backwards, vertically

Mobility - turning, pivoting, stepping, stopping

The majority of training should be over short times and distances using fun activities.

## Developing the player

Children at this age are more interested in "I" rather than "Team", attention span is short,

and they crave positive feedback/attention from the coach. During this phase our core values should be introduced including

- Respect - for self, team mates and referees
- Practice makes perfect
- Honesty

The basic philosophy of constant improvement and learning should also be introduced to the players replacing the fear of failure with the opportunity to learn and develop.

Training should create the maximum opportunity for individual success and praise. Activities should be fun based, short and varied.

## Games Development

In this phase we want games to be fun and create the maximum number of successes within a short period of time. Success should be framed around players demonstrating the correct technique(s) as opposed to single outcomes e.g. who is quickest or who collects most balls.

Game 1.

A simple rob the nest game. Players are split into 3/4's at cones 5m from the set of balls. The first player in the group runs out picks up a ball runs back and taps the next person in the group who goes. Run for approximately 60 seconds. Award points for running

technique, good turns, speed etc. as well as balls collected.

## Developing the hurler

Game 2.

As per game 1 only use bean bags and the players have to solo on the way back using the 6 inch hurl.

Again award points for toe out and correct position of the thumb. Progress to adding a flick off the hurl into the hand on the way back. Again reward the catch.

Game 3.

Same as game 2 only use balls and bean bags.

Game 4.

Same as game 3 only give the players the option of using their own hurl.

As the players progress then basic hurling skills can be introduced into game 2 for example players on the way out have to jab or roll lift a ball and solo on the way back. Again reward good technique in relation to running, turns, lifts and solo.

*Here by making simple changes to the way the game is played we encourage players to develop whilst linking their skills sets.*

## Developing the athlete

Agility

The same as game 1 only the players waiting to go are facing away from the centre and are forced to turn before they go.

Speed endurance

The same as game 1 only increase the number of balls or increase the distance by 1m ( 20 % ).

*By making simple changes to the way the game is constructed we can more effectively develop the athlete.*

## Developing the player

The same as game 1 only an equal number of balls/bean bags are placed at each starting cone and groups try to rob each other's nest. All players go at once so run the game for a shorter period as players are not getting any rest and energy levels will dip quickly. This variation can be used with any of the games shown above.

*By altering the game we now add evasion skills, multi directional movement and introduce the players to decision making, communication and team working skills.*

***Regardless of the skills we are trying to develop if we apply the same game design principles we will effectively produce the type of hurler, athlete and player we all want.***



## 6 - 8 Year Old

HURLER	ATHLETE	PLAYER
<b>Striking</b> <p>Ground strike on both sides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>static/moving sliotar</li> <li>player static/moving</li> <li>both moving</li> </ul> <p>Strike from the hand on both sides - player static</p> <p>One handed flick of sliotar on the ground</p> <p>Ground clash</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>padded hurl</li> <li>tyre</li> <li>against opponent</li> </ul>	<b>Running, jumping, throwing (RJT's)</b> <p>Basic Running skills at speed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>on the toes</li> <li>using arms and legs</li> <li>jog/sprint</li> </ul> <p>Running at speed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>forwards</li> <li>backwards</li> <li>sideways</li> <li>starting/stopping</li> </ul> <p>Jumping at speed</p> <p>Fast feet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>forwards</li> <li>backwards</li> <li>side ways</li> </ul>	<b>Core Values</b> <p>Respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>for self</li> <li>for team mates</li> <li>the game</li> <li>for referees</li> </ul> <p>Honesty</p> <p>Self-practice</p>
<b>Lift</b> <p>One handed jab lift.</p> <p>One handed roll lift of static sliotar</p>	<b>Agility, balance, coordination (ABC's)</b> <p>Changing direction off both feet at speed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>turning</li> <li>swerving</li> <li>side stepping</li> </ul> <p>Balancing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>one leg hop</li> <li>Squat to jump</li> <li>high skip</li> <li>upper body twisting</li> </ul> <p>Hand eye coordination</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>bouncing and catching sliotar with player static/moving</li> <li>turning over / picking up cones</li> <li>tagging</li> </ul>	<b>Game intelligence</b> <p>Basic concepts of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Competition</li> <li>player positions</li> <li>rules of the game</li> </ul>

HURLER	ATHLETE	PLAYER
<div><div>Hands</div><div>Grip, ready, lock and swing</div><div>Catching using either hand.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>bounced sliotar</li><li>thrown sliotar</li></ul></div></div>		<div><div>Lifestyle</div><div>Hurl everyday</div><div>Continually learn and develop</div><div>Aspire to be the best</div></div>
<div><div>Sliotar control</div><div>Dribble<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>two handed</li><li>one handed</li></ul></div><div>Stopping the sliotar</div><div>Solo at speed<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>bouncing</li><li>stuck to the hurl</li></ul></div><div>Sliotar hops - one side of the bas</div><div>Tippy taps - both sides of the bas alternatively.</div></div>		



## COACH NOTES U6-U8 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

### Developing the hurler

The emphasis in this phase should be about consolidating and developing the skills learned.

- Building movement, pace and/or speed into skills execution.
- Developing hand eye coordination and basic catching skills
- Aligning wrist speed/ movement with touch, ball control and striking.
- Introducing striking from the hand again working on both sides.

### Developing the athlete

The emphasis in this phase should be development of agility, quickness and changes of direction. The focus should be on

- Increasing the speed of basic movement skills and patterns previously developed
- Linking the basic movement skills into game type situations
- Developing fast feet and quick movements over short bursts

### Developing the player

The player at this age is full of enthusiasm but still craves individual attention, positive feedback and the maximum opportunities for success. It is key that we re-enforce the core values

and create a fun based learning environment with focus on continuous improvement. In this phase we can introduce

- Basic communication skills
- Basic attacking and defending principles
- Rules of the game
- Basic discipline and boundaries.

Training should allow the maximum opportunity for individual success and praise whilst ensuring that key technical skills are developed. Scoring systems for games should focus on good technique and the correct execution of skills as opposed to goals. Performance rather than results matters.



## Games Development

In this phase again we want games to be fun and create the maximum number of successes within a short period of time. Success should be framed around players demonstrating the correct technique(s) as opposed to single outcomes e.g. who is quickest or who collects most balls.

### Game 1

Across the river. Divide players up into groups of 3/4's. Create two linked 10m square areas. Place a number of balls in each area. Players have to strike the ball across the centre line (river). Reward good movement, striking on the move of a static ball, strikes off non dominant hand, striking a moving ball, stopping ball and striking etc.

## Developing the hurler.

### Game 2.

As per game 1 only players must wait for the ball to stop before jab or roll lifting the ball. Player has to drop the ball before striking off the ground back across the river

### Game 3.

As per game 2 only the players are looking to control the moving ball into the hand before dropping and striking off the ground. If the ball stops the player can jab/roll lift the ball

*Here we increasing and developing the players skill sets whilst linking movement and technical skills into match type scenarios.*

## Developing the athlete

### Speed agility - Game 4.

As per game 1 only place a cone in the centre of each area when a player strikes the ball they have to run and touch the cone whilst always facing the river before running back into play and striking the next sliotar.

### Speed endurance - Game 5.

As per game 1 only once the player strikes the sliotar across the river they turn and run backwards across the river and strike another ball from the opposite side of the river.

*Here by changing the game set up we are increasing the range of movement, developing multi directional speed and speed endurance whilst encouraging the players to play with their heads up and encouraging them to move so that they are always facing the ball.*

## Developing the player

### Game 6.

As per game 3 only when the player controls the ball he has to drop the sliotar and call a team mates name that must run on and strike the sliotar across the river.

### Game 7.

Link 3 areas together and the group in the middle has to keep the sliotar out of their area by striking to either end area.

*Here we are adding skill sets e.g. doubling on the ball whilst developing communication, support and team working skills. Players are also introduced to basic decision making skills who do I call, which direction do I hit the ball etc.*

***Regardless of the skills we are trying to develop if we apply the same games design principles we will effectively produce the type of hurler, athlete and player we all want.***

8 - 10 Year Old

HURLER	ATHLETE	PLAYER
<div><b>Striking</b>  Ground strike on both sides at speed<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>static/moving sliotar</li><li>player static/moving</li><li>both moving</li></ul> Strike from the hand on both sides<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>static</li></ul>on the run  Ground clash introduction to shoulder clash  Shooting<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>points</li><li>goals</li></ul> Sideline cut  Free taking</div>	<div><b>Running, jumping, throwing (RJT's)</b>  Speed endurance  Stamina  Reactions</div>	<div><b>Core Values</b>  Respect<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>for self</li><li>for team mates</li><li>the game</li><li>for referees</li></ul> Honesty  Self-practice  Discipline  Responsibility</div>
<div><b>Lift</b>  Integrate jab and roll lift into striking routines</div>	<div><b>Agility, balance, coordination (ABC's)</b>  Integrate speed and movement into skills games.</div>	<div><b>Game intelligence</b>  Basic concepts of<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Competition</li><li>communication</li><li>team play</li><li>creating/closing space</li></ul></div>
<div><b>Hands</b>  Grip, ready, lock and swing  Catching using either hand over increasing distance  Static hand pass off either hand</div>	<div><b>Strength</b>  Using own body weight<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>pushing</li><li>pulling</li><li>basic plank</li></ul></div>	<div><b>Lifestyle</b>  Hurl everyday  Continually learn and develop  Aspire to be the best</div>

HURLER	ATHLETE	PLAYER
<b>Ball control</b>  Moving sliotar touch to hand  Two handed high block		
<b>Tackling</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frontal block</li><li>• ground clash</li><li>• strike</li></ul> Hook		





## COACH NOTES U8-U10 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

### Developing the hurler

The emphasis in this phase should be on consolidating and linking the basic skills learned and applying these in games based scenarios.

- Execution of basic skills should be further developed with the gradual introduction of controlled competition and physicality.
- Striking and ball control skills should be developed over increasing distances with increasing pace on the sliotar.

### Developing the athlete

The emphasis in this phase again should be on the development of bilateral agility, quickness and changes of direction. At this stage skills should be practiced at full pace. The focus should be on

- Increasing the speed, range and complexity of movements

in relation to game scenarios.

- Linking basic movement into skills performance
- Develop the reaction speed of players
- Introducing basic strength activities such as pulling and pushing.

### Developing the player

The player at this age is in transition with the focus moving from I to we (Team). Development activities should reflect this with greater emphasis on working with a partner and working as part of a team. In this phase we should be introducing and developing the basic concepts of

- Positional understanding
- Decision making
- Creating and closing space

- Working on and off the ball
- Communication

Coaching and games should progress into partner and team based activities to develop and reinforce skill sets. Scoring systems for games should focus on good technique, skills execution and team work as opposed to goals. Players will start to play regular matches and it is important that the focus is still placed on individual and team performance as opposed to match results. Individual praise and recognition should now be an integrated into a team situation.

### Games Development

Game 1.

Three players equally spaced across the field. Bring the players in 10m from the side lines. The player on the side line strikes the ball to the player in the middle who controls the sliotar, turns and



strikes the ball to the player on the opposite side. They control the ball and delivery the ball into the middle player who returns to the player on the opposite side line. Run game for one minute and rotate players. Reward good control, movement and striking.

### **Developing the hurler**

#### **Game 2.**

Divide players into pairs operating between the end line and 45. The player on the end line with the sliotar strikes a high ball and the player on the 45 has to catch the sliotar and return a high ball. Where the ball is dropped the player should recover control of the sliotar and strike.

#### **Game 3.**

As per game 2 with two players at each line with one player blocking the high ball and the other gaining control of the sliotar and returning the high ball.

*By altering the game we are linking and adding blocking and catching skills to the control skills in game 1.*

### **Developing the athlete**

#### **Speed endurance - Game 4.**

As per game one set up but with sliotar's at either end side line. The sliotar is struck to the player in the middle who controls and strikes back to the player who struck the ball. The player in the middle then turns and goes to collect a ball struck from the opposite side. Run for one minute and rotate the players.

#### **Speed agility - Game 5.**

As per game 1 only shorten the distance between players e.g. set up on the end line and 20m lines with a player in the middle.

*By altering the game we are encouraging increased work rate and speed into execution of the basic skill sets.*

### **Developing the player**

#### **Game 6.**

Two players on either side line with three players (two attackers and one blocker) in the middle playing between the end line and 20m line. The defender attempts to stop the attackers winning the sliotar and striking to the other side. Run for 4 balls and then rotate players.

*Here we are adding the execution of passing and tackling skill sets, introducing competition therefore encouraging the players to develop their team working, communication, evasion and decision making skills.*

***Regardless of the skills we are trying to develop if we apply the same games design principles we will produce the type of hurler, athlete and player we all want***

10 - 12 Year Old

HURLER	ATHLETE	PLAYER
<div><b>Striking</b>  Strike from the hand on both sides at speed<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>long striking</li><li>short striking</li><li>striking diagonally</li></ul> Increase the variety of ball striking to include delivery from the hand on both sides<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>short</li><li>long</li><li>driven</li><li>flighted</li><li>low</li></ul></div>	<div><b>Core strength</b>  Plank  Squat  Lunge  Press up  Bridge</div>	<div><b>Core Values</b>  Respect<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>for self</li><li>for team mates</li><li>the game</li><li>for referees</li></ul> Discipline  Responsibility  Honesty  Commitment  Self-practice</div>
<div><b>Lift</b>  Jab lift both with static and moving sliotar<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>into either hand</li><li>straight to solo</li></ul> Roll lift to burst and delivery</div>	<div><b>Flexibility</b>  Stretches<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>hamstring</li><li>groin</li><li>quads</li><li>glutes</li><li>calf</li><li>lower back</li><li>abdominal</li></ul></div>	<div><b>Game intelligence</b>  Creating and closing space  Selecting the best option  Communication  Working on and off the ball</div>
<div><b>Hands</b>  Catching the sliotar in either hand  Hand pass from either side on the move  Catching the high ball</div>	<div><b>Speed</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>straight line</li><li>turning</li><li>reactions</li><li>multi directional</li><li>endurance</li></ul></div>	<div><b>Lifestyle</b>  Hurl everyday  Continually learn and develop  Aspire to be the best</div>



HURLER	ATHLETE	PLAYER
<p><b>Aerial ball</b></p> <p>Aerial block</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>two handed strong block</li><li>one handed block</li></ul> <p>Moving the aerial ball on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>doubling</li><li>one handed flick</li></ul> <p>Catching the sliotar over game distances</p>		
<p><b>Tackling</b></p> <p>Hook</p> <p>Block</p> <p>Defensive flick</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>on solo</li><li>on lift</li><li>on strike</li></ul> <p>Using the body in the tackle</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>to screen</li><li>to shoulder</li><li>to stop the run</li><li>to mark</li></ul>		



## COACH NOTES U10-U12 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

### Developing the hurler

The emphasis in this phase should be on completing the individual skill sets of the player and fully integrating skills application into match and team based scenarios.

- Skills execution should be developed and linked into multiphase, competitive team based activities.
- Striking and ball control skills to be developed over increasing distances with increasing pace on the sliotar with the emphasis shifting to target based activities including scoring.

Training should be focused on partner or team based skills development games with competition progressively introduced. Coaches should control the competitive element of games by matching players of similar abilities and strengths together to maximise their own development

whilst allowing others to develop their potential in an appropriate competitive environment.

### Developing the athlete

The emphasis in this phase should be the introduction of structured physical development using the players own body weight.

- Introducing basic core strength exercises
- Introducing basic stretching and flexibility exercises
- Building stamina and speed endurance

The distance and repetition of movement patterns should increase significantly in this phase with players operating at full pace over short bursts. Emphasis to be on the correct execution of core strength and flexibility exercises rather than the number or duration of repetitions.

### Developing the player

The emphasis in this phase should be on introducing and consolidating the techniques of

- Creating and closing space
- Selecting the best option
- Communicating effectively in a game situation
- Working on and off the ball effectively

Players should be encouraged to start to think about what they are doing during a game therefore the coach should develop games which ensure that players have to make decisions for themselves. Be prepared for a lot of errors and tantrums as the players complete the transition from I to team.



## Games Development

### Game 1.

Three players 15m apart in a triangle. A player strikes the ball low to another player who controls and strikes low to the third player. All players to be moving. Run for two mins.

## Developing the hurler

### Game 2.

Three players 15m apart in a triangle. A player strikes the ball at chest height to another player who catches and strikes to the third player. All players to be moving. If a player drops the ball then it is jab lifted and passed. All players to be moving. Run for two minutes.

### Game 3.

Three players 20m apart in a triangle. A player strikes a high ball to another player who catches and strikes to the third player. All players to be moving. If a player drops the ball then it is jab lifted

and passed. All players to be moving. Run for two minutes.

*Here by modifying the game we are introducing different skill sets and encouraging players to execute the basic skills on the move.*

## Developing the athlete

Speed endurance. Game 4.

As per game 1 only extend the distance between players to 30m. This can be applied to both games 2 and 3.

Reaction speed. Game 5.

As per game 1 only reduce the distance to 10m.

*Here by modifying the distance we can develop the athletic ability whilst developing the same set of technical skills.*

## Developing the player

Game 6.

Three players 15m apart in a triangle and add two blockers into

the middle. The three players attempt to pass the ball between them and the blockers attempt to gain possession. All players to be moving. If the blockers win the ball then the roles reverse. Run for one minute.

*Here we are adding evasion, communication, decision making and further technical skills into the player's development. The players have to think about creating and closing space in a competitive environment. The game reflects a competitive match situation and links the 3 key elements of player development.*

***Regardless of the skills we are trying to develop if we apply the same games design principles we will produce the type of hurler, athlete and player we all want.***

## 12 - 14 Year Old

HURLER	ATHLETE	PLAYER
<b>Striking</b>  Strike from the hand on both sides <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• long striking</li> <li>• short striking</li> <li>• striking diagonally</li> </ul> Ball delivery from the hand on both sides <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• short</li> <li>• long</li> <li>• driven</li> <li>• flighted</li> <li>• low</li> </ul> Solo and strike from the stick on both sides  Striking of short stick	<b>Core strength</b>  Plank <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• side plank</li> <li>• rolling plank</li> </ul> Squat <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• side squat</li> </ul> Lunge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• with twist</li> </ul> Press up  Bridge	<b>Core Values</b>  Respect <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for self</li> <li>• for team mates</li> <li>• the game</li> <li>• for referees</li> </ul> Discipline  Responsibility in play  Confidence  Honesty  Commitment
<b>Lift</b>  Jab lift both with static and moving sliotar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• into either hand</li> <li>• straight to solo</li> </ul> Roll lift	<b>Flexibility</b>  Stretches <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hamstring</li> <li>• groin</li> <li>• quads</li> <li>• glutes</li> <li>• calf</li> <li>• lower back</li> <li>• abdominal</li> </ul>	<b>Game intelligence</b>  Creating and closing space  Selecting the best option  Communication  Working on and off the sliotar
<b>Hands</b>  Catch the sliotar in either hand  Hand pass from either side <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from the hand</li> <li>• from the stick</li> </ul>	<b>Speed</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• straight line</li> <li>• turning</li> <li>• reactions</li> <li>• multi directional</li> <li>• endurance</li> <li>• good running technique</li> <li>• sufficient stamina for duration of a game</li> </ul>	<b>Lifestyle</b>  Hurl everyday  Continually learn and develop  Aspire to be the best  Target setting  Social and interpersonal relationships within squads



HURLER	ATHLETE	PLAYER
<p><b>Aerial sliotar</b></p> <p>Aerial block</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>two handed strong block</li><li>one handed block</li></ul> <p>Moving the aerial sliotar on</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>doubling</li><li>one handed flick</li><li>deflected block/tap down</li></ul> <p>Clean catch</p>		<p>Time management and understanding the balance between personal life, studies and sport.</p> <p>Discipline on and off the field.</p>
<p><b>Tackling</b></p> <p>Hook</p> <p>Block</p> <p>Defensive flick</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>on solo</li><li>on lift</li><li>on strike</li></ul> <p>Using the body</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>to screen</li><li>to shoulder</li><li>to stop the run</li><li>to mark</li></ul>		



## COACH NOTES U12-U14 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

### Developing the hurler

The primary focus should be on ensuring that the players can execute the skills learned in a fully competitive situation and integrate these effectively into a team and game situation. The development focus should be on developing

- Multi-phase integration of the skills sets learned ( e.g. block, lift, pass/score ) in a fully competitive environment.
- Linking skill selection/execution and game situation ( e.g. when to lift or pull, when to catch or block )
- Linking skill selection/game execution into the team situation

In this phase particular attention needs to be paid to technique as players can often lose technical discipline in a competitive environment. The focus needs to be on doing the right things in the right way. Similarly talented individuals tend to dominate games, now that the full solo is permitted, and hard work is required to integrate these players into a team environment.

### Developing the athlete

This is a critical phase for the development of the athlete. Most players will go through a growth spurt during this period and provides the opportunity for developing stamina and speed endurance. Emphasis should be placed on:

- Developing the range and application of flexibility and stretching exercises for key muscle groups which should be included in each session.
- Developing the range of core strength exercises which should be incorporated into each session.
- Developing speed endurance and stamina through high intensity and multi rep games based training

The majority of training should be carried out at match pace in a competitive environment with the time, distance and number of reps being progressively increased.

The player needs to start increasing physical capacity including stamina to run at various

intensities for 60 plus minutes, the strength to win and retain possession, the power to jump, accelerate and change direction and the speed to react to an ever changing environment.

### Developing the player

This is a critical phase for developing the player as this is when they start to become independent, establish their value sets and boundaries both as an individual and a hurler. Whilst the player has mastered the basic technical skills of the game they need to learn how to use those skills in a match situation. They require new and constant challenges to keep them learning and developing. At this age players are capable of problem solving and should be encouraged to express their opinions during sessions. The sessions should be:

- Games based where players are put into a situation where they have to think for themselves and apply the skills learned in a competitive environment
- Progressive where the coach works up from individual



challenges to 2 on 2, 3 on 3 etc.

- Challenging where the coach continually extends the performance boundaries - ok you can point from 45m but can you point from the 65?

The training should be delivered in a way that creates a culture of players continually learning and improving individually and collectively. Coaches and mentors should also play a key role in highlighting the importance of commitment and building confidence in players.

## Games Development

Game 1.

Player on the edge of the "D" with a sliotar 3m in front of the player. Player has to jab lift the sliotar solo to the 20m line and strike over the bar.

### Developing the hurler

Game 2.

set up as game 1 with a chasing player 5m behind.

Game 3.

Both players start on the edge of

the "D" and try to secure possession. Having won the sliotar that player then has to score. The exercise is only finished when the sliotar goes dead.

*Here we add different skills, add intensity to the game and help to develop match fitness. More importantly we are also developing the player's decision making skills. They now have to decide whether to jab or roll lift, solo or not, strike from the hand or stick etc.*

### Develop the athlete.

Conditioning

Same as game 2 with both players starting in the plank position.

Reactions

Same as game 2 with both players facing away from the sliotar or throw the sliotar in front of the player

Speed endurance

Same game 2 only started on the 45m line.

Speed agility

same as game 2 only the two players start 5m from the top of the "D" sprint out and touch the line to start.

*Here by altering the game set up we are developing the players match fitness, reactions and athletic ability in match context.*

### Developing the player

Same as game 2 and add another two players on the edge of the "D" and whoever wins the sliotar has to try and score.

*Again we are adding passing skill sets, developing their game intelligence forcing them to make more decisions e.g. do I pass and go, or do I take the option, they now have to think about creating and closing space, they need to communicate, they need to work as a team.*

***Regardless of the skills we are trying to develop if we apply the same games/games design principles we will produce the type of player we all want.***

14 - 16 Year Old

HURLER	ATHLETE	PLAYER
<p><b>Striking under game pressure</b></p> <p>Strike from the hand on both sides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>long striking</li><li>short striking</li><li>striking diagonally</li></ul> <p>slotar delivery from the hand on both sides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>short</li><li>long</li><li>driven</li><li>flighted</li><li>low</li></ul> <p>Solo and strike from the stick on both sides</p> <p>Striking of short stick</p>	<p><b>Conditioning</b></p> <p>Target based progressive application of core strength exercises for key muscle groups including</p> <p>Plank</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>side plank</li><li>rolling plank</li></ul> <p>Squat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>side squat</li></ul> <p>Lunge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>with twist</li></ul> <p>Press up</p> <p>Bridge</p>	<p><b>Core Values</b></p> <p>Respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>for self</li><li>for team mates</li><li>the game</li><li>for referees</li></ul> <p>Discipline</p> <p>Responsibility in play</p> <p>Confidence</p> <p>Honesty and willingness to improve</p>
<p><b>Lift - under match pressure</b></p>	<p><b>Speed endurance</b></p> <p>Target based progressive activity to develop the players speed endurance using a maximal aerobic speed based system primarily through games.</p> <p>Ensure good running technique.</p> <p>Sufficient stamina for duration of a game.</p> <p>Develop sound functional movement patterns.</p>	<p><b>Game intelligence</b></p> <p>Creating and closing space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>as an individual</li><li>as a unit/team</li></ul> <p>Selecting the best option</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>as an individual</li><li>as a unit/team</li></ul> <p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>on and off the ball</li></ul> <p>Work rate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>on and off the ball</li></ul> <p>Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>on and off the ball</li></ul>



HURLER	ATHLETE	PLAYER
<div>Hands - under match pressure</div> <div>Catching - under match pressure</div> <div>Hand passing - under match pressure</div>	<div>Flexibility</div> <div>Stretches</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• hamstring</li><li>• groin</li><li>• quads</li><li>• glutes</li><li>• calf</li><li>• lower back</li><li>• abdominal</li></ul></div>	<div>Lifestyle</div> <div>Hurl everyday</div> <div>Continually learn and develop</div> <div>Aspire to be the best</div> <div>Target setting</div> <div>Nutritional requirements</div> <div>Lifestyle choices</div> <div>Social and interpersonal relationships within squads</div> <div>Time management and understanding the balance between personal life, studies and sport.</div> <div>Discipline on and off the field</div>
<div>Tackling</div> <div>Using the body</div> <div><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• to stop movement</li><li>• to deny space</li><li>• to deny opposition clean ball</li><li>• to create opportunity</li><li>• to create pressure</li></ul></div>		



## COACH NOTES U14-U16 PLAYER DEVELOPMENT

### Developing the hurler

The primary focus should be on performing and executing the skill sets developed in a fully competitive environment with an increasing focus on developing and integrating the player's decision making skills. In this phase we should be

- Introducing position, line and unit specific skills
- Introducing the concepts of playing the man, ball or stick and linking to specific situations
- Introducing the concept of individual and collective functions e.g. the full back and full back line/goal keeper.

### Developing the athlete

This is a critical phase for the development of the athlete. Most players will go through a second major growth spurt during this period and provides the opportunity for developing a player's core and engine. Execution of exercises should be performance based i.e. time or number based and increased progressively to develop conditioning levels.

Emphasis should be placed

- Incorporating flexibility and stretching exercises for key muscle groups into each session.
- Incorporating a range of core strength exercises with performance targets into each session.
- Developing speed endurance and stamina through high intensity and multi rep

games based training over match distances.

- Developing match fitness as opposed to gym or exercise fitness.

### Developing the player

This is a critical phase for

- Developing all aspects of a player's game intelligence and decision making skills in a competitive match environment.
- Introducing key performance measures and analysis into coaching sessions.
- Developing player ownership of the team and linking personal and collective responsibilities to performance.

The training should be delivered in a way that creates a culture of



players continually learning and improving performance individually and collectively. Players at this age have matured to a level of increased focus and ability to improve any competencies with the correct attention and application.

## Games Development

### Developing the hurler.

Game 1.

Two players on the edge of the square competing for a high ball fed in from a player on the 65m. Whoever wins the ball has to take a score.

Game 2.

Same as game 1 only one player is designated as a defender and the other the forward.

Game 3.

Same as game 2 only we add a goal keeper into the scenario and the defender/keeper has to work the ball so they get a free strike.

*Here we are adding position specific skills and linking communication and decision making skills into the game scenario.*

### Developing the athlete

Speed endurance - game 4.

Both players, attacker and defender, start on the 21 m line facing the 65m and the ball is floated into the edge of the square. Defender looks to clear and forward looks to score.

Reaction speed

Same as game 4 only the player playing the ball in can strike any type of ball so both players have to react.

*Here we are adding the execution of different physical skill sets which developing match fitness through the physical competition for the ball.*

### Developing the player

Game 5.

An attacker and defender on the edge of the square and an attacker and defender on the edge of the "D". High ball is played in from the 65. Players on the edge of the square compete for the ball whoever wins attacks.

Game 6.

As per game 4 only vary the flight of the ball into the competing sets of players.

*Here we add communication, decision making and support skills into the game situation.*

***Regardless of the skills we are trying to develop if we apply the same games/games design principles we will produce the type of player we all want.***

## REVIEW FINDINGS

### DOWN PLAYER PATHWAY

At present there is no clearly defined pathway for hurling development within the County.

If we are to effectively develop players then everyone involved needs to be singing off the same hymn sheet.

It is therefore recommended that:

1. The Down Player Pathway and associated documentation are reviewed and approved by the relevant committees and personnel.
2. The Down Player Pathway and associated documentation are made available to everyone either online via the County website or provision of hard copies.

**Responsibility:**  
Hurling Officer.

**Timescale:**  
May 2017

A Point of contact is established for supporting implementation as required.

**Responsibility:**  
Hurling Officer.

**Timescale:**  
June 2017

### EMERGING TALENT SQUADS

#### DEVELOPMENT VISION

What are the purposes of the Emerging Talent Squads?

Does the county want to develop players capable of performing at the present level or players who are capable of taking our performance at senior to the next level?

At which point does the development process end?

Why is performance at under age not being translated into similar performance at senior level?

These are some of the key questions that need to be addressed as at present there is no clear vision, plan or objectives in relation to the development process. There needs to be collective agreement on the latter

and clear guidance given to everyone involved in the development process.

The Emerging Talent Squads are currently aligned with competition age grades and this invariably leads to issues over whether these squads operate as high performance or development squad. The reality is that there has to be a balance of both within the development process.

Players do improve by virtue of being involved in a high performance environment.

The individual/collectively competitive results, performance and honors at all under age levels are testament to the excellent work being done at every level within the County.

We are where we are. The only way to change the future is to create it.

It is recommended that:

3. The County's vision and associated objectives for the County's Emerging Talent Squads are defined to create a clear way forward for all involved in player development

**Responsibility:**  
Hurling Development Committee

**Timescale:**  
October 2017



## MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

At present U17, U18 and U21 management teams are appointed by Coiste Banisti, with the U14 and U16 management teams appointed by the Coaching & Games Department.

There is a lack of people volunteering for roles within the development process. Emails are sent out to clubs by the Coaching & Games Department at the start of each year requesting volunteers but the response is generally poor. The posts are generally not advertised which limits the potential pool of applicants significantly.

Agreement and implementation of an effective policy with direct responsibility for the overall development process would certainly have a positive effect on the development process.

Each Emerging Talent Squad will have a manager and a number of coaches working together to deliver this Pathway. The personal for these positions will be selected and appointed by the Hurling Development Coordinator (HDC) and Games Development Manager (GDM). This pathway is focused on the development of managers, coaches and players to reach their full potential.

Each squad will have an appointed Games Promotion Officer, whether Down or Ulster GAA.

Guest coaches will be invited to take some sessions throughout the year and this may include provision

of sports science, strength and conditioning, goal keeping etc.

The GDM will work together with the HDC to deliver an effective Emerging Talent Squad Programme.

The duties of the GDM will include:

- Liaising with HDC, Managers and coaches as required.
- Confirm annual training and match schedules for U14 and U16 squads to ensure no conflicts with football squads.
- Management of all logistical aspects.
- PR and communication with key stakeholders.

The HDC will join senior Coiste Banisti Officers to appoint future U17 and U20/U21 management teams. The HDC will also communicate with Down Senior Hurling Management accordingly.

The HDC will report every quarter to a steering group consisting of Hurling Officer, Coaching Officer and Hurling Development Committee.

The Hurling and Coaching Officers will report back to Coiste Banisti on a regular basis.

It is recommended that:

4. Appointment of Hurling Development Coordinator (HDC) on a voluntary basis, to oversee/champion the development process from U14 through to U20, with an overall responsibility for delivery of the development program. Role to be similar to the Mourne Academy Chair and will work closely with the Games Development Manager (GDM).

### **Responsibility:**

Hurling Officer and Coaching Officer

### **Timescale:**

August 2017

## SQUAD STRUCTURES

At present there are development squads at U14, U16, U17, and U18. We compete at U21 level but there is little or no development work undertaken at this level.

A significant number of development squad players are from junior and intermediate clubs where they will for a variety of reasons, if left exclusively in this environment, struggle to achieve their potential when they leave the development process at 18. We effectively lose up to 60% of our talent after minor level and this is reflected at senior level where there are only a small number of players from outside the Ards. Development needs to continue through to 20 and beyond if we are going to realize our full potential.

This is not an easy problem to solve but the proposed U20 competition at national level gives us the opportunity to continue the development process and, in all probability, improve the quantity and quality of players feeding through to the senior squad.

Consideration needs to be given to how these players are developed after this point and how they get meaningful games. This year's U21 competition has shown that there is significant talent outside of the Ards but at present we have no means of developing it through to senior level. A solution may include development sessions for 18, 19 and 20 year olds, from August through December.

The U17's in 2016 were integrated into the minor set up. The regrading of U18 to U17 (2018) and U21 to U20 (2018/2019) will have

an impact on squad structures and the timing of development activities.

In 2017, two U14 and a single U16 team will be entered into each of the National Competitions. In order to maximize the opportunity for players to benefit from development activities, we should avail of the opportunity to enter two teams at all levels where practical. U14 Squad will consist of 45 players. U16 Squad will consist of 30 players in 2017 and 45 in 2018.

The timing and duration of development activities would appear to be based around competition needs as opposed to development needs. Antrim by comparison hold their underage trials in December with squads functional from December/January whereas in Down trials are only held in March/April. Antrim therefore have players in development squads for 50% longer than Down. Development plans should be drawn up and time tabled around the GAA calendar to maximize development opportunities without impacting on clubs or schools.

In future trials for all U14 and U16 players will be held in February / March each year. Players will be selected as a result of a management review, along with input from previous year coaching event facilitators e.g. U13 summer coaching days.

It is recommended that:

5. In 2017, Down will have 6 Teams from U14 through

U21, as follows:

- 2017 – 2 X U14, 1 X U16, 1 X U17, 1 X U18 and U21

The proposed number of Teams for 2018 and 2019, for entry into competitions as follows:

- 2018 – 2 X U14, 2 X U16, 1 X U17 and U21
- 2019 – 2 X U14, 2 X U16, 2 X U17 and U20

### **Responsibility:**

Hurling Development Coordinator (HDC), GDM, Hurling Officer and County Secretary

**Timescale:** January 2018

6. Timing and duration of development squad activities to be reviewed by the relevant management teams and planned to ensure we meet player development and competition needs.

### **Responsibility:**

HDC and GDM

**Timescale:** November 2017

7. Review how the county can best develop and retain non Ards players through to senior level, establish a plan and implement. This may include development sessions for 18, 19 and 20 year olds, from August through December.

### **Responsibility:**

Hurling Officer

**Timescale:** July 2017

## COACHING PRINCIPLES

Players only enter the development process at 13 at which stage the player has gone through a number of key stages in their development both technically and physically. This can/does limit their development potential for example bilateral striking, fast feet, and agility. This is a limiting factor in the overall development process and will be covered under the "Coach Development and Support" section of the review.

A player can generally play around his weaknesses and even excel at club or schools level but any technical and physical issues are very quickly exposed at county level.

Development squads at each level will pick up the collective failures of schools, clubs, previous development squads and the collective coaching system. Coaching within development squads tends therefore to focus almost exclusively on collective performance issues rather than on individual player development. There is a clear need to rebalance the focus back onto individual player development.

There is no formal integrated approach to individual player development and coaching through the development squad system. Players therefore can/do progress through the development system without technical/physical issues being addressed.

Similarly there is a lack of a structured physical development program at any level and given the ever increasing physical demands of the game at all levels there is a clear need to integrate this within the development process. A pilot physical development program will be introduced in 2017 for the minor and U17 development squads. The effectiveness of this will be reviewed at the end of the season and proposals for physical development programs produced each age group.

At present there is little or no contact/communication between club/schools coaches and development squad coaches in relation to the programs that individual players are being assigned. There is a clear need to improve this communication to not only protect the player but to optimize the player's development opportunities.

It is therefore recommended that:

8. Formal assessment and tracking of the technical skills and athletic performance of individual players based on the player pathway from U14 on, to improve the quality of the hurler, athlete and player.

**Responsibility:**  
HDC

**Timescale:**  
November 2017

9. A formal feedback mechanism to club coaches regarding individual player development programs and objectives to protect and optimize player development is introduced.

**Responsibility:**  
HDC

**Timescale:**  
November 2017

## COACHING

At present there is no formal integrated approach to coaching which links individual development squads in a coherent and sequential process. The Player Pathway will provide guidance to development squad coaches at each level and if followed should provide continuity. This will ensure our young players are developed in a progressive manner from U14 to U17 level and onto U20.

Our collective approach tends to focus on developing technical skills and/or touch - invariably this involves single phase, uncontested drills over a short distance which don't reflect game pressures and do little to develop a player's game intelligence. (Eammon Ryan would advocate that 80% of a session should be games based i.e. competitive.) This approach was supported by recent speakers at

the 2017 GAA Games Development Conference including Prof Niall Moyna and David Herrity.

The results of this approach are clear in that in general we produce technically gifted hurlers but limited athletes and players. There are clear benefits in terms of developing both the athlete and player to move to a games based approach to development at all levels. Coaching within the development process should reflect best practice and this is something that we should be encouraging all coaches to incorporate into their coaching programs.

It is recommended that:

10. All development squad coaches should adopt a games based approach rather than a drill based

approach to all development activities to ensure that the potential within development squads is effectively realized.

**Responsibility:**

HDC and Development Squad Management

**Timescale:** February 2018

11. Club coaches should be invited to attend a minimum of three open sessions per year at each development level where the sessions are organized around specific coaching themes to assist in raising the profile, quality and standard of coaching at club level.

**Responsibility:**

HDC and Hurling Officer

**Timescale:** February 2018

## PLAYER SELECTION

At present there are no formal guidelines with regard to panel selection but the present system appears to be effective in capturing and keeping the majority of available talent at youth level.

Conflicts can and do arise in the team selection process which can and do lead to issues with both parents and players primarily due to the fact that most if not all have never been part of a development squad. Naturally anyone who is not picked on a starting fifteen will feel hard done by but if there are clear guidelines on team selection then these issues can be effectively managed.

Last year trials were held at U14 and U16 whilst participation with the minor and U21 panels was by invitation of team management. The pilot program run at U13 within the County last year was open to anyone who wished to attend which is similar to the very successful program run by the Meath County Board. Should we adopt the principle that if a player wants to participate, learn and develop then they should be given the opportunity to do so?

It is clear that we need to define and formalize the selection criteria and process for both the development panels and the selection of teams for competitive games. The aim will be to identify

and develop young players who have the potential to play at an higher level. It is important that all clubs participating at U14 and U16 grades get the opportunity to be represented on Emerging Talent Squads.

It is recommended that

12. Guidelines for squad and team selection to be prepared for coaches, players and parents which ensuring transparency for all involved.

**Responsibility:**

HDC & Hurling Development Committee

**Timescale:** November 2017



## EMERGING TALENT SQUAD GAMES PROGRAMS

The Emerging Talent Squads will compete in the relevant competitions as provided by the Ulster and National Councils. In 2016 the following games programs were undertaken:

### U14

3 Games days – Ulster GAA Blitz (April), Ulster GAA Cross Provincial Blitz (July) and National Blitz (August).

This was supplemented by a small number of friendlies.

### U16

3 Games days – Ulster GAA Blitz (April), Ulster GAA Cross Provincial Blitz (July) and National Blitz (August).

This was supplemented by a small number of friendlies.

### U17/U18

3 games in the Leinster Minor Hurling League. 5 games in the

Ulster Hurling League. 2 games in the Ulster Minor Championship. 2 games in the All Ireland B Minor championship. 7 games in the Celtic Challenge.

This was supplemented by a small number of friendlies including a training weekend which included games against Kildare and Tipperary

### U21

1 game in the Ulster Championship.

This was supplemented by a small number of friendlies.

It is clear that there is significant scope for improvement in the number of games arranged for all age groups with the exception of the U17/U18 group. A key part of development is getting an adequate number of meaningful games and balancing the training to coaching ratio. There is a clear

willingness on the part of the National Hurling Development Committee to assist counties in developing meaningful games programs and we should seek to avail of this support. There is also significant opportunity to provide meaningful games through the existing competition structures for example at U21 we could enter the All Ireland B competition and/or enter an U21 team into the McGurk Cup.

It is recommended that

13. A review is undertaken and a meaningful games program established at each age grade. This will be incorporated into the relevant development plans.

#### **Responsibility:**

HDC, GDM and Hurling Officer.

**Timescale:** November 2017

## SQUAD RESOURCES – EQUIPMENT & FACILITIES

The County Board ensures that the Emerging Talent Squads are well resourced in terms of playing/training kit and all match/training day needs. There is a need for the Hurling Development process to access and utilize the resources which exist within the County particularly with regard to physical development. There are also minor issues with regard to accessing training equipment and how the issue repair/replacement of players hurls is managed.

There is clear opportunity to promote and utilize the various coaching resources and

opportunities provided by the National Hurling Development Committee and various sources of coaching resources available including gaa.ie, Ulster GAA.

Similarly the appointment of Martin Fogarty provides a tremendous opportunity to develop a strong working relationship and to harness his undoubted skills and experience to help improve the development process.

It is recommended that

14. A review of the resources available to development

squads is carried out and all relevant personnel advised of what resources are available

#### **Responsibility:**

HDC & GDM

**Timescale:** January 2018

15. A definitive policy on the replacement or repair of player hurls whilst playing or training is agreed and all relevant personnel advised.

#### **Responsibility:**

HDC & GDM

**Timescale:** January 2018

## COACHING PERSONNEL

There are a relatively small number of personnel involved in coaching and managing development squads and as result they are involved in managing or coaching more than one squad. Tremendous work is done at all levels by this group and their collective bank of experience and unique skill sets is invaluable. Last year's U21 managers ( G Savage and M Mallon ) and P Coulter who was involved in the U18's, U17's and U16's are the new county senior managers and this will leave a significant void at juvenile level.

The Celtic Challenge and U20 competitions when fully introduced are scheduled to be played at the same time so the scope for personnel to be involved

in more than one squad will be limited if not impossible which will again stretch resources.

Guidance has been provided by the National Hurling Development Committee for management teams involved in the Celtic Challenge competition. It is clear that we do not meet the suggested coach/ player ratios with all our development squads which have an obvious impact on our ability to effectively develop players.

It is recommended that:

16. A review be carried out to determine the resource requirements for development squads, a plan established and

implemented to ensure that we adequately resource development activities going forward.

**Responsibility:**  
HDC & GDM

**Timescale:** November 2017

17. Formalize recruitment policy and seek additional personnel in the various roles identified by the review process to ensure that development squads are adequately resourced.

**Responsibility:**  
HDC & GDM

**Timescale:** December 2017

## EMERGING TALENT SQUAD COMMUNICATIONS

Club coaches and indeed players often find themselves in a position where they don't know what/when development squad programs are resulting in players not being available for training or matches, clubs organizing training weekends etc. There is a need to improve our communication with clubs, coaches, players and parents.

At present we do not formally communicate protocols on strength and conditioning,

supplements, injuries, nutrition and codes of conduct which should be addressed.

It is recommended that:

18. A player handbook, based on the football model, is developed which details as a minimum:
  - Protocols on nutrition, supplements, injuries, behavior, responsibilities

- Managements contact details
- Outline program including matches and planned training sessions

**Responsibility:**  
HDC & GDM

**Timescale:**  
November 2017

## CLUB COACH DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT

Foundation and level one courses are standalone courses with no follow up and no formal support mechanisms for new or existing coaches. Coaching up to U12 is carried out exclusively at schools and club level. Players only enter the development process at 13 at which stage the player has already gone through a number of key stages in their development both technically and physically and it is very difficult if not impossible to coach or train these skill sets into a player in subsequent years.

Similarly the development of the player needs to be progressed not only within development squads but also at club and schools level.

The U4 to U8 age groups are traditionally an area where there is not a great depth of coaching experience and yet in terms of development this is a critical period. If we get this phase of development right then standards will improve throughout the process.

There is a clear need to move to a games based coaching strategy and club /schools coaches will need help, support and encouragement to facilitate the transition from drills to games based coaching and training if we are to raise the overall standard of hurling in Down.

Whilst the player development pathway will help there is an obvious need to develop a support mechanism for new and existing youth coaches at club and schools level within the County.

It is recommended that:

19. The County designs and delivers a coach mentoring program which is designed to support and encourage player development with a particular focus on coaches involved at U4 through to U10.

**Responsibility:**

Hurling Officer and GDM

**Timescale:** December 2017

## CULTURE

What of the culture of Down hurling? Are we stuck in the past longing for "Glory Days"? Do we take responsibility or do we blame everyone and everything for what is happening? Do we focus on the one thing that a player does wrong in game rather than the 99 things a player did well? Are we guilty of wishing for what could be rather than actively making it happen?

There is no simple answer to this particular issue but what we can learn from successful teams and sports is that a clear focus on continuous improvement, learning from what has happened and using this experience to positively influence future performance not only improves performance standards but ultimately leads to success.

Dave Beresford and Clive Woodward both championed the concepts of continuous improvement in sport recognizing that it is a process or journey rather than a destination with everyone involved. This is approach is supported by recent articles by a number of high profile current players.

In terms of improving the standard of hurling and creating a positive, progressive culture of improvement for our young players.

It is recommended that:

20. A different skills challenge is incorporated into each of the county blitzes held for U8's and U10's which players can participate in during the down time between games.

A separate U13 skills challenge to be facilitated during summer months.

**Responsibility:**

Hurling Officer and GDM.

**Timescale:** March 2018

21. Skills challenge days be established for U14's and U16's based on a three center model involving players from the Ards, Belfast and South Down. These sessions would include workshops on nutrition, lifestyle, mental health etc.

**Responsibility:**

HDC, Hurling Officer and GDM

**Timescale:** March 2018

## SCHOOLS

At present Down GAA employs 1 full time coach, Danny Toner and part time hurling coach, Liam Hardy. The provision of school coaching is supplemented by 2 part time Ulster GAA coaches.

A number of schools at primary and secondary level are not providing any or very limited competitive or development activities for hurling at present for a variety of reasons. Excellent work has been done with the An Dun team in the Mageean Cup but there remains significant scope to improve development at both primary and secondary level.

A lack of meaningful hurling from September through to March inevitably has a negative effect on the development process. Some of the root causes include insufficient hurling coaching capacity and currently no opportunities to take up both football and hurling within the same year through the Down Schools Coaching Programme.

From 2017 / 2018 on, Primary schools affiliated with Hurling clubs will be offered an additional option, hurling before and football after Christmas. The Coaching & Games Dept. is also exploring the option of engaging 1 full time placement student each year from UUJ.

It is important that any future coaching delivery aligns with the player pathway. There is a need to clarify what all these coaching programs are designed to achieve outside of satisfying Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 objectives to determine the effectiveness of the present programs.

It is recommended that:

22. A review of the 2017 /2018 Schools Coaching Programme and prepare a deliverable Schools Strategy covering both primary and secondary school levels to ensure development opportunities are uniformly provided and are effective

**Responsibility:**

Hurling Officer and GDM

**Timescale:** February 2018

23. Interactive training workshops to be designed and introduced for all schools/club coaches based on U4/U6, U8/U10 and U12/U14 age grades where coaches can participate and learn from others at the same level.

**Responsibility:**

Hurling Officer and GDM.

**Timescale:** March 2018

## CLUB COMPETITIONS

A lot of good work was carried out with regard to juvenile fixtures significantly increasing the number of meaningful games at all levels. The introduction of Og Sport and U21 championship were also positive developments and will be permanent fixtures in the games program going forward.

The failure to complete league programs has again led to issues of awarding titles and consideration should be given to having a play off between the top 2 or top 4 teams.

One issue of concern is that not all club teams are competing at juvenile level. This can negatively impact on individuals and in some cases threatens the long term viability of some of the clubs competing at senior level. The model of combined teams at U21 level has proved that we can provide a solution to this problem if we are proactive in developing club links. Similarly consideration should be given to facilitating amalgamations to compete at senior championship level.

It is recommended that

24. Review the existing championship structures and timings with a view to increasing the number of teams competing at senior level.

**Responsibility:**

Hurling Development Committee

**Timescale:** September 2017





## APPENDIX 1

Following discussions with Development Coaches etc., the following areas were highlighted as continuous weaknesses evident in Down Hurling that should be covered at the Coaching Forum. This covers player's attributes and approaches to training.

### 1. STRIKING

Poor striking techniques is an issue displayed by players coming into Development squads. This includes slow and open striking that can be easily looked, blocked and even dispossessed. One of the key basics we fail on is striking comfortably on both sides. Down teams at different grades find it difficult to take scores from open play, especially when under pressure.

### 2. WIN OWN BALL

A lot of players do not have the ability to win clean ball under pressure, particularly with aerial ball dual's. Areas of improvement are clean catching, reading and positioning under the high ball, defending and disrupting their opponent.

### 3. FIRST TOUCH

Down's first touch in pressure situations can be better and sometimes get exposed when competing against quality opposition who play at a higher intensity.

### 4. DECISION MAKING

Hurlers can be guilty of making poor decisions when

under pressure. Down hurlers need to instinctively make the correct decisions especially when under pressure. A system of play engrained in all players at all levels, needs to be implemented throughout the development program.

### 5. RUNNING MECHANICS

Players need to be coached at an early stage of proper running mechanics. This can include leading off front foot, strong stance when shoulder to shoulder, proper technique when completing running drills such as high knees, butt kicks etc.

### 6. TEMPO

Down hurling can improve the tempo and intensity brought to training and games. The difference in intensity can sometimes be evident when watching teams play down south. Players at all grades could improve the level of intensity and work-rate at training to bring it into the game scenario and this should be the corner stone of future Down Hurlers. This is the key attribute of Kilkenny Hurling.

### 7. INDIRECTNESS

Some team tactics and coaching is leading to over complicating hurling in Down, at the end of the day Hurling is a simple game. Down hurlers tend to run the ball into trouble as opposed to releasing direct ball at speed. Players also need to improve

their confidence to allow them to take points from outside the 45m line, on the run and when under pressure. Forwards need to become more direct and take on their marker as opposed to always looking to pass off the sliotar.

### 8. STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

Lack of S&C programs in previous years has affected Down teams when up against the likes of Antrim. This has been addressed with programs at advanced Development stages but need to be introduced as part of an overarching Strength and Conditioning Hurling Program in Down. Down Coaches need to be able to deliver S&C on the training field to supplement any gym program.

### 9. GAMES BASED APPROACH

Down Coaches need to buy into a more games based approach to training sessions. Too much time is spent with cones and a games based approach should be integrated into their training sessions, to ensure sufficient exposure to the basic skills of hurling, such as running, tackling, and ball control, catching and striking. Players want to play games and more games, therefore this approach will improve the enjoyment factor and help encourage hurlers to 'play and stay'.

APPENDIX 2

DOWN HURLING SKILLS CHALLENGES

INTRODUCTION

At first sight the skills challenges may seem like an onerous task. The challenges at each age group with a panel of 20 players and four markers can be completed within approximately 90 minutes.

There is no requirement to run all the skills challenges all in one session. Time tabling of the challenges is at the discretion of each coach for example Carryduff have run a skills week where they run three different skills challenges on each day.

The concept of the skills challenges can be incorporated into normal training activities for example in the U4 – U6’s we have a ground striking challenge. Here we can set three cones from the starting line

during a normal training session at 10m, 20m and 30m. Explain that the very best Kilkenny or Tipperary hurler i.e. Gold Award, will strike the sliotar past the 30m cone, Silver Award between the 10m – 20m cones and Bronze Award up to the 10m cone. This will establish not only aspiration to get to the standard but motivation to improve on the distances that the players are currently striking the sliotar.

Coaches may feel that there are better skills challenges with regard to ground striking or the distances in the challenges need adjusted and coaches have the freedom to vary from the suggested model as they see fit. It is the process of setting bench marks and

encouraging players to continuously aspire and improve which will ultimately lead to hurling standards being raised at all levels.

The data collated from the skills challenges can be used to show areas that need to be worked on individually and collectively as well as how effective we have been as coaches.

Some clubs award certificates at the end of the year based on the results of the skills challenges which has been shown to motivate both the players and their parents and helps everyone to focus on development rather than just winning.

SKILLS CHALLENGE SCORING SYSTEM

AGE GROUP	TOTAL MARKS	GOLD AWARD	SILVER AWARD	BRONZE AWARD
U4 – U6	240	190 +	120 - 189	< 120
U6 - U8	360	290 +	180 - 289	< 180
U8 – U10	480	390 +	240 - 389	< 240
U10 – U12	450	360 +	225 - 359	< 210
U12 – U14	690	560 +	345 - 559	< 345

## SKILLS CHALLENGES U4 -U6

SKILL	TEST	Score1	Score 2	Score 3	Testing notes
Striking 1	Player strikes a static sliotar on right side	0 - 5m	5 - 10m	10m +	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	
2	Player strikes a static sliotar on left side	0 - 5m	5 - 10m	10m +	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	
Lift 3	Player roll lifts a sliotar into a cupped hand for one minute.	0 - 10	10 - 20	20 +	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	
4	Player attempts to jab lift a sliotar off a short run.	Attempt 1	Attempt 2	Attempt 3	
		10 points	10 points	10 points	
Hands 5	Coach throws a sliotar from 5m for the player to catch it	Attempt 1	Attempt 2	Attempt 3	
		10 points	10 points	10 points	
Ball control 6	Player dribbles the sliotar from end line to 14m line	5 + loss of control	1 - 5 loss of control	No loss of control	
		10 points	10 points	10 points	
7	Stationary Player attempts to balance the sliotar on the hurl for one minute without	0 - 30 seconds	30 - 60 seconds	60 seconds +	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	
8	Stationary player bounces the sliotar on the hurl for one minute without dropping it.	0 - 30 hops	30 - 60 hops	60 + hops	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	



## SKILLS CHALLENGES U6 -U8

SKILL	TEST	Score 1	Score 2	Score 2	Test notes
Striking 1	Player runs onto a static sliotar and strikes off the right hand	0 - 14m	15 - 30m	30m +	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	
2	Player runs onto a static sliotar and strikes off the left hand	0 - 14m	15 - 30m	30m +	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	
3	Player roll lifts the sliotar and strikes off the dominant hand	0 - 20m	20 - 45m	45m +	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	
4	Player roll lifts the sliotar and strikes off the nondominant hand	0 - 20m	20 - 45m	45m +	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	
Lift 5	6 sliotars placed in a 5m square. Player attempts to roll lift each of the sliotars in 30 seconds.	0 - 2 successful attempts	3 - 5 successful attempts	6 successful attempts	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	
6	6 sliotars placed in a 5m square. Player attempts to jab lift each of the sliotars in 30 seconds.	0 - 2 successful attempts	3 - 5 successful attempts	6 successful attempts	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	
Hands 7	Coach throws or strikes a sliotar from 14m for the player to catch it	Attempt 1	Attempt 2	Attempt 3	
		10 points	10 points	10 points	
Ball control 8	Player solos from the end line to the 21m line bouncing the sliotar and without dropping the sliotar.	2 + drops	1 - 2 drops	0 drops	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	
9	Player solos from the end line to the 21m line with the sliotar flat on the stick without dropping the sliotar.	2 + drops	1 - 2 drops	0 drops	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	
10	Player bounces the sliotar on either side of the hurl for one minute without dropping the sliotar	0 - 30 hops	0 - 60 hops	60 + hops	
		10 points	20 points	30 points	
Tackling 11	Player attempts to block a coach who strikes a sliotar	Attempt 1	Attempt 2	Attempt 3	
		10 points	10 points	10 points	
12	Player attempts to hook a player who is striking a sliotar on the ground	Attempt 1	Attempt 2	Attempt 3	
		10 points	10 points	10 points	

## SKILLS CHALLENGES U8 -U10

SKILL	TEST	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Test notes
Striking 1	Coach rolls the sliotar in front of the player who runs and attempts to strike the moving sliotar as far as possible off the dominant hand.	0 - 20m 10 points	20 - 45m 20 points	45m + 30 points	
2	Coach rolls the sliotar in front of the player who runs and attempts to strike the moving sliotar as far as possible off the non-dominant hand.	0 - 20m 10 points	20 - 45m 20 points	45m + 30 points	
3	Coach throws a sliotar to the player who catches turns and strikes the sliotar as far as possible off the dominant hand.	0 - 20m 10 points	20 - 45m 20 points	45m + 30 points	
4	Coach throws a sliotar to the player who catches turns and strikes the sliotar as far as possible off the non-dominant hand.	0 - 20m 10 points	20 - 45m 20 points	45m + 30 points	
5	Player jab lifts the sliotar and strikes as far as possible of their dominant hand.	0 - 20m 10 points	20 - 45m 20 points	45m + 30 points	
6	Player jab lifts the sliotar and strikes as far as possible of their non-dominant hand.	0 - 20m 10 points	20 - 45m 20 points	45m + 30 points	
7	Player roll lifts the sliotar and strikes as far as possible without catching.	0 - 20m 10 points	20 - 45m 20 points	45m + 30 points	
Lift 8	6 sliotars placed in a 5m square. Player attempts to roll lift as many sliotars as possible in 1 minute.	0 - 20 10 points	21 - 30 20 points	30+ 30 points	
9	6 sliotars placed in a 5m square. Player attempts to jab lift as many sliotars as possible in 1 minute.	0 - 20 10 points	21 - 30 20 points	30+ 30 points	

SKILL	TEST	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Test notes
<b>Hands</b> 10	Player throws the sliotar onto the stick and flicks into the opposite hand.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
11	Player attempts a 5m hand pass to a target player on his left.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
12	Player attempts a 5m hand pass to a target player on his right.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
<b>Ball control</b> 13	Coach rolls the sliotar to the player who has to flick the sliotar into the hand.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
14	Coach throws the sliotar from 14m and the player attempts a high block.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
<b>Tackling</b> 15	Coach moves and attempts to strike the sliotar from the hand whilst player attempts to hook.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
16	Coach moves and attempts to strike the sliotar from the hand whilst player attempts to block.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	

## SKILLS CHALLENGES U10 -U12

SKILL	TEST	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Test notes
<b>Striking</b> 1	Player starts off on the target line jab lifts catches and strikes over the bar on the	20m 10 points	30m 10 points	40m 10 points	
2	Player starts off on the target line jab lifts catches and strikes over the bar on the move on their non-dominant	20m 10 points	30m 10 points	40m 10 points	
3	Player starts off on the target line facing away from the goal. Player turns and strikes sliotar over the bar on their dominant side.	20m 10 points	20m 10 points	20m 10 points	
4	Player starts off on the target line facing away from the goal. Player turns and strikes sliotar over the bar on their non-dominant side.	20m 10 points	20m 10 points	20m 10 points	
<b>Lift</b> 5	Player attempts to jab lift the sliotar and goes straight to solo.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
<b>Hands</b> 6	Player in the ready position and coach throws the sliotar to the player's dominant hand. Player has to catch the sliotar.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
7	Player in the ready position and coach throws the sliotar to the player's non- dominant hand. Player has to catch the	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
8	Player jab lifts the sliotar, catches and hand passes the sliotar on the move to a player on their right.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
9	Player jab lifts the sliotar, catches and hand passes the sliotar on the move to a player on their left.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	



SKILL	TEST	Score 1	Score 2	Score 3	Test notes
<b>Ball control</b> 10	Coach strikes the sliotar low from 14m to a player who runs onto the sliotar and flicks into their hand.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
11	Coach strikes the sliotar high from 14m and the player attempts a high two handed block.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
12	Coach throws/strikes the sliotar high from 14m and the player attempts to block the sliotar using one hand on the	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
13	Coach throws/strikes the sliotar high from 14m and the player attempts to double on the sliotar.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
<b>Tackling</b> 14	Two players run onto a static sliotar. The test player will attempt to flick the sliotar away whilst the other attempts to strike the sliotar.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
15	One player attempts to strike the sliotar whilst the test player attempts to block the sliotar.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	

## SKILLS CHALLENGES U12 -U14

SKILL	TEST	SCORE 1	SCORE 2	SCORE 3	Testing notes
<b>Striking</b> 1	Player jab lifts the sliotar on the target line, catches and strikes over the bar using dominant hand.	30m line 10 points	45m line 10 points	65m line 10 points	Player collects the sliotar and does test 5 on the way out after the 30m strike.
2	Player jab lifts the sliotar on the target line, catches and strikes over the bar using their non-dominant hand.	30m line 10 points	45m line 10 points	65m line 10 points	Player collects the sliotar and does test 6 on the way out after the 30m strike.
3	Player lifts the sliotar on the 45m line solos to the edge of the D and strikes over the bar without taking a catch using dominant hand.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
4	Player lifts the sliotar on the 45m line solos to the edge of the D and strikes over the bar without taking a catch using non-dominant hand.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
5	Player strikes a static sliotar off the ground as far as possible using dominant hand.	20 -45m 10 points	45-65m 20 points	65m + 30 points	
6	Player strikes a static sliotar off the ground as far as possible using non-dominant hand.	20 -45m 10 points	45-65m 20 points	65m + 30 points	
<b>Solo</b> 7	As per Feile skills test	Total of 30 points deduct 5 points for every dropped sliotar and every second over the test time			
<b>Ball control</b> 8	Player stands on the 45m line and attempts to catch a sliotar hit from the end line.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
9	Player stands on the 45m line and attempts an overhead block onto a sliotar hit from the end line.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	
10	Player stands on the 45m line and attempts to kill and control the sliotar using one hand on the hurl from a sliotar hit from the end line.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	

SKILL	TEST	SCORE 1	SCORE 2	SCORE 3	Testing notes
<b>Hands</b> 11	Player jab lifts the sliotar, catches and attempts to hand pass the sliotar to a player on his right.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	Set up a triangle of cones - 2 on the end line 15m apart with the third on the 14m
12	Player jab lifts the sliotar, catches and attempts to hand pass the sliotar to a player on his left.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	Use above set up.
13	Player jab lifts the sliotar, solos in a straight line and attempts to hand pass the sliotar to a player to his right	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	Use above set up.
14	Player jab lifts the sliotar, solos in a straight line and attempts to hand pass the sliotar to a player to his left	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	Use above set up.
<b>Lift</b> 15	Player runs between the 14m and 20m line jab lifting, catching and dropping a sliotar on each run. The total number of picks in one minute is recorded.	< 20 10 points	20 - 25 20 points	25 + 30 points	Use half the group to count scores
16	Player turns and roll lifts sliotar which is one meter behind him, drops the sliotar and returns to the cones. The total number of picks in one	< 30 10 points	20 - 30 20 points	30+ 30 points	Use half the group to count scores
<b>Hook</b> 17	Player being tested stands directly behind another player who jab lifts the sliotar, takes his steps and strikes whilst the test player attempts to execute a hook.	Attempt 1 10 points	Attempt 2 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	Set up 2 stations on the 14m line with the player hitting into the middle third of the keep net.
<b>Block</b> 18	Player being tested stands 5m directly in front of another player who lifts the sliotar and attempts to strike whilst the test player attempts to block.	Attempt 3 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	Attempt 3 10 points	Set up 2 stations using the 20 and 14m lines with the player trying to hit into the middle third of the keep net.

## PHYSICAL

TEST	TEST	SCORE			TOTAL SCORE
<b>Illinois speed agility test</b> 19	Player to run the pre-scribed course in timed run.	25 sec + 10 points	18 - 25 sec 20 points	< 18 sec 30 points	Set up 2 stations and have 2 players going off at once.
<b>MAS speed endurance test</b> 20	Start on the end line and run to 45m line and back within 30 seconds. Rest for 30 seconds. Repeat for a	< less than 3 completed 10 points	3-4 completed 20 points	5 completed 30 points	Run the entire group as one.
<b>Plank test</b> 21	Player to hold plank position for one minute	< 30 seconds 10 points	30 -45 seconds 20 points	46 + seconds 30 points	Run the entire group as one.
<b>Burpee test</b> 22	Player attempts to complete as many burpee's as possible within 60 seconds.	< 30 10 points	30 - 40 20 points	40+ 30 points	Use half the group to count scores
<b>Push up test</b> 22	Player attempts to complete as many push up's as possible within 60 seconds.	< 20 10 points	20 - 25 20 points	25+ 30 points	Use half the group to count scores
<b>Speed</b> 23	Player sprints from end line for a duration of 10 seconds.	< 45m 10 points	45 - 55 20 points	55m+ 30 points	Split into groups of approx. 6











## **DOWN GAA COUNTY OFFICE:**

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