



# Policy on Use of Mobile Phones for Underage Players

April 2026

## Objective

As part of its efforts to safeguard the mental and emotional health of our underage players, Ranelagh Gaels (the Club) is establishing the sidelines as a mobile-free environment. This Policy supports a community-wide effort to delay smartphone use, helping our youth focus on social skills and natural development before they start using mobile phones.

Research indicates that excessive mobile phone use among children and teenagers is linked to increased rates of cognitive impairments, emotional dysregulation, social isolation and anxiety. By limiting digital distractions during our activities, the Club is encouraging underage players to develop essential "soft skills" and assisting them in engaging more socially with each other.

## Requirements

### Mobile Phones during Carpooling

When carpooling or taking other forms of shared transportation, mentors, parents or guardians should collect mobile phones and place them in the glove compartment or another storage area for the duration of the journey.

### Mobile Phones at Training and Matches

Underage players are discouraged from bringing mobile phones to training sessions and matches, both home and away.

While the Club recognizes there may be a need for underage players to have a mobile to allow their parents or guardians to contact them when participating in Club activities, any mobile phones must be 'Unseen/Unheard' on the sideline while training and matches are ongoing. This means that they must be turned off, stored away, and not be used by underage players during that time, even during breaks or half-times.

Mentors are encouraged to foster a 'phone-free' period in the 10 to 15 minutes before the start of training or warm-up to allow players to socialize and engage as a team.

## Mobile Phones in Dressing Rooms

Mobile phones are prohibited in dressing rooms at any time due to the potential misuse of cameras and internet capabilities, especially if photographs or videos are taken without consent. They must be powered off and stored inside bags before entering the dressing room.

## Implementation

The Club believes that the best way to maintain a mobile phone-free environment is through mutual respect and open discussion rather than strict disciplinary measures. To ensure this policy benefits every underage player, we will use the following collaborative approach:

- **Peer-Led Accountability:** We encourage underage players to support one another in staying "unplugged." By making the sidelines a space for team bonding and strategy talk, the team helps define its own culture of presence.
- **The "Check-In" System:** If a mobile phone becomes a distraction, mentors will initiate a brief, private conversation with the underage player. This is an opportunity to discuss the benefits of being present and to help the player find a secure place (such as a kit bag or handing it to the mentor) to store the device until the session ends.
- **Collaborative Dialogue:** If a player consistently struggles to stay off their device, mentors will have a meeting with the underage player and their parents or guardians. The focus of this meeting will be to understand the player's needs and to find ways the Club can better support their mental well-being during our activities.

## Compliance – Mobile Phones in Dressing Rooms

While we prefer a collaborative approach to phone use on the sidelines by players, the rules for dressing rooms are strictly enforced to ensure the safeguarding and safety of every child. Any attempt to take photographs or videos will be treated as a major safeguarding violation and be

reported immediately to the Club's Children Officer and disciplinary or administrative measures may be further implemented.

## For More Information

Inquiries regarding the Policy can be directed to the Healthy Club Officer at [healthyclubofficer.ranelagh@gmail.com](mailto:healthyclubofficer.ranelagh@gmail.com).