

The Boyce Family's Statement

The Boyce family, from Cratloe, Co. Clare, allege that from June 2019 onwards, GAA Officers, from Club up to National level, inflicted terrible treatment on them and made up false allegations and false club decisions against their family to:

- cover up (in 2019) GAA Officers' failure to report a 2019 violent attack on their son to the authorities and investigate it professionally, so as to protect the children involved
- cover up (from 2020) public knowledge and the email trail left behind from 2019, that evidenced wrongdoing by those the Boyces were told were responsible, their identity and Officers' mismanagement

The Boyces allege that nothing has been addressed. Their child welfare investigation request remains **obstructed** within the GAA. Outside of it, the GAA are not within the remit of the Children's Ombudsman and no one will address it. In addition, they allege that State Bodies, not only refuse to act on remit they have to intervene and investigate, but instead, along with National Politicians, assist the cover up. They state the cover up can be for someone else to pursue. Their priority is their 3 asks:

1. For the people who have not been investigated regarding child welfare, but who currently have indirect or direct access to their children—to have that access removed immediately. This must happen even if nothing else has been addressed, so their family, in particular their children can participate in a community that is uninhibited and unconflicted insofar as one would reasonably expect.
2. To clear their (Siobhan and Laurence) and their son's name, and for GAA Officers to be investigated on the terrible treatment inflicted on the Boyce family, on:
 - a. A false statement they were told in 2019 was submitted by a conflicted adult that wrongly implicated their son on the violent attack he was subjected to
 - b. The obstruction, in 2020, of their son's effort for child welfare support, followed by the horrific reopening of a previously reported 2018 welfare situation (different to the 2019 attack), back on top of their son, in 2020
 - c. False allegations and club decisions made up against their family from 2020, by Officers using their Club's good name for personnel gain, that they learnt of through a Data Access Request and a 2023 AGM broadcast, to destroy their credibility and obstruct their child welfare investigation request for over 6 years

3. For the GAA to be placed under the remit of the Children's Ombudsman to ensure independent oversight for how its child welfare procedures are applied. For State Bodies and National Politicians to be investigated.

They highlight their **sole** complaint in relation to the 2019 attack is that no one will investigate it to clear their son's name. That **ALL** their other complaints relate to the terrible treatment, false allegations and club decisions inflicted on their family **from 2020**

Timeline of Events

June 2019

The Boyces were told the violent attack was witnessed by many and the actions within it reported to the GAA by coaches and parents, with an ask for child welfare involvement. That County and National Welfare were involved in the decision making. There is CCTV at the pitch. The unprovoked attack involved their son, with no ball in his hands, been restrained face down on the ground by one child while a second choked him. Their son was only able to escape after the first child released and got off him, allowing him to free his arms and defend himself. He then had to defend off a 2nd choking attempt from the 2nd child before escaping to adults, who helped him as he struggled to breathe.

To note - the Boyces highlight that the Club Executive, made up of Club 'Volunteers', were not independent of the incident, of each other or with County 'Volunteers', and should not have been next or near the management of the incident or the voice of the club thereafter

A Club Executive Officer sought from the Boyces their son's account and witnesses they had become aware of. They allege this knowledge was used to make up a statement that wrongly implicated their son, which the Officer, on the next call, told them had being submitted by an adult, who was not independent of the Club Executive or the incident. The Boyces checked with coaches, parents, many witnesses, who remain available to confirm and their son. All replies were consistent: their son had done nothing untold.

The Boyces then observed the incident, that had caused their son harm and exposed him to a serious risk of serious harm been covered up, with GAA National Welfare, mandated by Tusla, failing to investigate it professionally and report it to the statutory authorities.

The Boyces understand that the false statement that wrongly implicated their son was used to misrepresent the incident to GAA National Welfare as of a less serious type. This understanding came from a March 2020 email received from GAA National Welfare where he identified that Croke Park had no previous knowledge of such an incident and through the Boyces discovery of the contents of a Tusla report in 2024 (page 9).

The Boyces have repeatedly sought written confirmation as to whether the false statement they were verbally told of was or was not reported and documented about their son. Their **sole** complaint in relation to the 2019 incident, is that over 6 years later, **no one** will investigate the incident to clear their son's name.

December 2019

Their overcome son, who had experienced a difficult time, wanted his father, Laurence, to be a coach with him again at his age level for welfare support. Laurence made himself available for his son's age group. The Club Officer texted back: "No problem." The Boyces told their son and they understood that they were in a position to help rebuild his confidence that he had a voice, and in a way that would impact no one

January - July 2020

Laurence was stopped from coaching at any age level at which their son would participate in both codes of the GAA. The Club Executive (that includes Child Welfare) ignored Siobhan's emails, which clearly explained their welfare efforts. As a result, she could not discuss the issue or arrange any alternative support. County and National Welfare Officers concealed the Boyces efforts as "primarily non-Welfare," blocking their son's ask for welfare support. He had to learn he had no voice, even through his parents.

July 2020 onwards – Officers reopening a 2018 welfare situation

County and National Welfare Officers chose to accept the Club Officers' word over the Boyces' word on a 2018 verbal bullying incident, as they concealed/withheld information.

Important context:

- In 2018, their son was verbally bullied by one child at school and on the GAA pitch
- In June 2019, their son was physically assaulted (restrained and choked) by different children (not the same child that did the 2018 verbal bullying) on the GAA pitch
- A coach, connected with the child that was responsible for the 2018 bullying, had become compromised by it in 2018
- The Boyces had not asked for the coach to be moved to another age as they did not want to impinge on sensitive circumstances the coaches' family had met with. Instead, a verbal agreement had been put in place in 2018 with Club Officers that this coach would not be put in a position to address issues between the other child involved in the 2018 verbal bullying and the Boyces' son.
- In August 2019, a parent had told Siobhan that the child who verbally bullied their son in 2018 was doing it again in the pitch. Another parent intervened between the two families on it outside the club. The Boyces' son had said nothing, but had withdrawn from the pitch during that week. His confidence in having a voice was shattered.

From July 2020, County Welfare was to introduce to the Boyces that Club Officers were claiming that the 2018 verbal bullying was not previously reported, even though the Boyces had not raised a complaint about it in 2020. County and National Welfare accepted the Club's claim, even though the Boyces emailed it had been reported and to who, and that their son was available to confirm. (To note: The Officers it was reported to in 2018 were not independent of the 2019 attack. The Boyces have contacted them directly, but they continue to withhold the information).

Consequences:

- Their son was re-exposed, in 2020, to the child who had verbally bullied him in 2018

- The 2018 verbal agreement about the coach was disregarded as the Boyces were to realise he had been appointed to a role since January 2020 that would see him in charge of managing issues between both children
- Their son became so inhibited that he had to withdraw from the pitch
- The Boyces were wrongly portrayed as people who had made child safeguarding complaints against the coach

The truth: The Boyces say the email trail evidences they were considerate throughout and mindful of sensitive circumstances affecting the coach's family. Despite this, their name was blackened across the Club as complainants against the coach.

August 2020 - January 2021

Through a data access request, the Boyces discovered that GAA Officers from Club level up to the National level had acted in a conflicted manner and made up information for personal gain, to destroy the Boyces credibility and obstruct a child welfare investigation.

What they found:

The Club had imposed a severe disciplinary measure, of a restriction of members' rights on the grounds of having made false allegations on child welfare. It was

- Based on “we Cratloe GAA”, in January 2021, having disengaged from them
- On the grounds that the Club supposedly, in August 2020, found Siobhan guilty of making untrue statements about child welfare.

What this restriction meant:

The GAA National Welfare identified this would restrict their rights to access GAA investigative platforms—meaning they could not use GAA channels, to:

- Get their terrible treatment addressed

- Clear their son's name regarding the assault

Problems with these Club decisions (revealed by the data access request):

- The decisions were invalid
- They were processed by the Club Secretary and approved by her father (the County Chairman, appointed 4 weeks earlier), the County Secretary and GAA National Welfare
- There had been no AGM since January 2020 or Club meetings in between
- The Boyces and their Club were never made aware of the club decisions
- Neither was told they had done anything wrong

The effect of these made-up decisions:

They destroyed the Boyces' characters and credibility, serving to:

- Undermine the email trail about the 2019 assault
 - Undermine the Boyces' word that the 2018 verbal bullying was previously reported
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January 2021

The Boyces say that the January 2021 Club disengaging email—sent as if on behalf of the Club—desperately misled the issues that had been applied to the Boyces' son as their "son's issues." The Boyces point out: he had no issues—he encountered issues.

2022

The Boyces discovered a way of lifting redactions on emails (that Data Protection had refused to lift), which revealed:

- The Club Chairman and Club Welfare Officers' email addresses had been blacked out. There was not an appropriate quorum (minimum number) of Officers on the disengaging email—further evidence that the Club decisions were invalid
- National Welfare had emailed Officers beneath, that he had “to use many paracetamols” in his “discussions” with the Boyces, as he pretended he had told the Boyces about the made-up Club decisions (Siobhan’s emails show he did not)

Officers at each level ignored the Boyces’ January 2023 statutory rectification requests as they now withheld the information that evidenced the ‘Club’ decisions were false

Their son went to a Club committee meeting with his parents to “establish the facts”, as was on the agenda. However, he was prevented from speaking and then ignored

GAA Director General concealed the welfare matters raised through the "GAA speak up" facility. Instead, he directed GAA National Welfare to write an email about their family.

February 2023 - Orchestrated AGM

At an AGM, the Club Chairman read out that National Welfare email in full to ~ 95 people to try to justify that the Boyces deserved the made-up Club decisions, withholding the information that proved such decisions were false. It seriously misrepresented what had transpired and the Boyces, and contained many items never previously put to the Boyces.

A sample of the disturbing contents of the email included:

- It identified the Boyces' efforts from March 2020—which Siobhan's emails show were parents' efforts to support a child—as "borderline harassment of Officers"
- It opened up details about the actions within the uninvestigated assault
- It broadcast that the Boyces had "a right to fight their son's corner"—as if their son had done something wrong

What happened at the AGM:

- The Boyces were stopped from replying and reading out their official record of the 2022 AGM minutes to be ratified, as Officers withheld that information too
- AGM minutes farcically portray a call for a show of hands to 'move on the meeting', carried out by conflicted Officers, as evidence that members agreed all matters were dealt with in relation to the Boyces (re-validated the made-up Club decisions)
- This action leaves on record that National Welfare's decision remains intact— meaning all GAA platforms are inaccessible to the Boyces to have the terrible child welfare treatment addressed. As a result, they still do not have a voice.
- Responsibles outside the Club identify that their complaint is against their Club, which is not the case – the complaint is against conflicted Officers at Club, County and in particular National level, who are using their Club's good name for personnel gain).

What the Club conceal from Data Protection since the 2023 AGM:

- Club Executive withhold the fact that they read out the National Welfare email in full
 - They claim they only read out 2 lines of it and destroyed the AGM recording
 - As a result, the public assassination of their family continues
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Responses from Authorities

Children's Ombudsman - no remit as the GAA is not on their list of bodies in scope

Tusla, Gardaí, National Politicians, Legal

All identify no remit. The Boyces are advised no legal route exists, which they struggle with. The Guards refuse to act on their remit to intervene where information is made up / withheld that obstructs a child welfare investigation and on their responsibility to uphold the Boyces' human rights in the absence of external oversight.

Protected Disclosure (Whistleblowing) Commissioner

Identify the GAA Director General as the "suitable person" to investigate himself and his colleagues. The Commissioner sent him all the Boyces' information, including the identity of people the Boyces rely on to speak up. The Boyces observe since, how some of those people now find themselves relying on Club and County Officers, to remain in the Club.

Tusla CEO

- Continues to obstruct the Boyces' appeal to a Tusla whistleblowing-type process
- Instead, directed the lodging of a seriously misrepresenting, finalised and processed Tusla report on the Boyces' records, that the Boyces discovered through another Data Access Request. Tusla continue to refuse to rectify the report.

What the Boyces learned from the Tusla report:

It explains why the 2018 verbal bullying and re-compromising of a coach was reopened:

- Tusla mixed up the serious assault (June 2019) with the less serious verbal bullying (2018)
- Tusla misrepresent the two-on-one assault as a one-on-one assault. This aligns with the false statement submitted in June 2019 that wrongly implicated their son
- The assault is misrepresented as a less serious, one-on-one bullying-type incident
- This misinformation tries to justify why GAA National Welfare failed to:
 - Address it as an incident of harm and with a serious risk of serious harm
 - Deal with it professionally and report it externally
- By mixing up the verbal bullying with the physical assault, Tusla's report portrays that the child responsible for the verbal bullying was also responsible for the assault.
- It distances the assault away from those the Boyces were told were responsible.

Data Protection Commissioner

- Sent the Boyces "around the house". They lost confidence in this body, cannot trust them with anything, walked away realising they had to go public to get rectification
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