



ROSCOMMON GAELS

Men's Football | Ladies Football | Hurling | Camogie | All Stars | Scór



Roscommon Gaels Underage Game Policy

Context

Roscommon Gaels recognise the importance of implementing the Underage Code of Behaviour that was ratified by the Club Executive in May 2022. This Underage Games Policy has been developed to frame best practice for Coaches and Mentors regarding Games, notably participation in games of all Underage Players in our Club. Roscommon Gaels will operate all games from U7, up to and including U12 in GAA, LGFA & Camogie under the GAA Go Games National Policy (May 2023).

The guidelines within this Club policy for U13, up to and including U18 was developed by a working committee within Roscommon Gaels.

In line with current mandated Child Safeguarding Policies across all Underage Sports in Ireland, any Coach/Mentor/Supervisor involved with underage players (U18) in our Club must have the following:

1. Garda Vetting
2. Child Safeguarding Level 1
3. GAA Foundation Coaching Course

Roscommon Gaels will not allow Coaches/Mentors/Parental Supervisors to volunteer within the Club at Underage Level until all three parameters are met and checked by the Club Children's Officers with the support of the four committees and their respective Coaching Officers in the Club.

Roscommon Gaels underage players will spend some of the most enjoyable days of their lives playing our games and socialising with their friends. Whether training on Club grounds or playing GAA matches, they will do so during critical times of child and adolescent development.

Our role, and our responsibility as a Club is to ensure that all Children registered with the Club benefit from and participate in our Gaelic Games in a safe and enjoyable environment, where games are conducted in a spirit of fair play, respect, dignity, and non-discrimination.

This Policy ensures a truly Child-Centred approach that promotes our games amongst young people and enables us as a Club develop all our underage players. The welfare of the child is of paramount importance in our Club. Roscommon Gaels GAA Club will maintain and implement a framework to ensure maximum participation by all players regardless of skill or ability. In essence, the Club will endeavour to meet the underage player where 'they are at' in terms of player development. This policy also recognises the importance of player retention into adult competition, whilst helping them to achieve their full playing potential in accordance with the club's player pathway development programme.

This policy recognises that Roscommon Gaels operates under the One Club model, and as such supports dual underage players. Roscommon Gaels Coaches and Mentors will be cognisant of the demands on dual players at certain times during the season. These players should be supported when representing their club. Underage Coaches and Mentors across codes should communicate and collaborate to ensure dual players can cope with the stressors associated with a busy game schedule. Regarding dual players, on the occasions that a League or Championship fixture clashes with training or a challenge match across codes, precedence is given to the official fixture and accommodations are agreed between underage managers to avoid stress on the underage player.

Purpose

The intent of this policy is to outline clear, consistent, and fair team structures and outline Coach/Mentor responsibilities that will foster the participation and development of all underage players across four codes in all our games.

Scope

This policy applies to all players from U7, up to and including U18 players in the following codes

- Football
- Hurling
- Ladies Football
- Camogie

Games Policy at different ages

This underage games policy was first developed following a Club Child Safeguarding brainstorming session. This session was attended by the Club Chairperson, the Four Code Club Chairperson, the Clubs Children's Officers, and representatives from the four Codes Committees within the Club. At this meeting, the idea of establishing a Games Policy was identified as a priority within the Club. The question posed was "how you blend competitiveness within a Child Centred Approach at Underage Level, whilst at the same time ensure that all players get 'meaningful playing time' to develop their skills.

The following was agreed from U7, up to and including U12 – GAELIC GAMES GO GAMES

The Gaelic Games Go Games refers to a games development pathway that is aligned to the Gaelic Games Player Pathway Foundation 2 (F2). Emphasis during this phase is on further developing functional movement skills and the early acquisition of the specific skills of Gaelic Games. The child should have several years before participating in formal Gaelic Games competition.



Go Games is national policy of the GAA, Camogie Association, Ladies Gaelic Football Association, and their constituent units at provincial, county, club, and educational level, responsible for the organisation and delivery of Go Games. **Each unit must be aware of and comply with the provisions of this policy.**

Above all this policy is in line with the Gaelic Games Player Pathway and its six key underlying principles:

1. Club is Core
2. Player Centred
3. Quality Coaching Experiences
4. Connection
5. Inclusive
6. As Many as possible for as long as possible

Organising Go Games

- I. Go Games U-11 and below must be organised on a blitz basis. Go Games may be organised by the County, Club, Primary School or at an approved venue on an internal (i.e., single unit) or external (i.e., multiple units) basis. A blitz or a festival must include a minimum of three clubs or multiple teams from two clubs
- II. The relevant County Coaching and Games Development Committee shall oversee the delivery of Go Games.
- III. U12 age grade is organised on a league basis. No knockout rounds are permitted as part of the U12 league programme

Roscommon Gaels Hurling, Football, LGFA & Camogie – U7 to U12

From U7, up to, and including Under 12, Games should be 100% about enjoyment, player participation, skill development and fair game time, the GAA **Go Games** Policy.

To support the participation and development of the Under-12 player in Roscommon Gaels, the following principles underpin Go Games:

- Participants train and play in a safe, supportive, and stimulating environment where they are encouraged to risk error, to learn and to derive maximum enjoyment from their involvement.
- Players master the basic skills of Hurling/Camogie and GAA/LGFA Football and experience the sense of accomplishment, which derives from acquiring playing proficiency on the left- and right-hand side of the body.
- Everybody involved in Go Games, whether as players, parents/guardians, spectators, mentors, teachers, officials etc., should adhere to the key underpinning principles and give expression to the **GAA 'Give Respect, Get Respect' initiative**.
- At Under 12 level, competitions may be organised on a league format, with no championships, on the basis that participating teams should be a maximum of 13-A-Side. Only children whose 10th, 11th or 12th birthday is on or after January 1st can play at the U-12 age grade in that calendar year. Games should be organised over four quarters, and provision shall be made for all members of the team panel to participate in a minimum of one quarter.

The full GO GAMES Policy should be used in line with this club policy.

Roscommon Gaels Hurling, Football, LGFA & Camogie – U13 up to & Including U18

As part of the Roscommon Gaels Underage Games Policy, it was agreed to recognise and encourage the importance of competition at appropriate times in a player's development.

Under 13 in Hurling/Camogie, and GAA/LGFA Football is recognised as that transition point.

In keeping with the Gaelic Games Player Pathway Foundation 3 stage: Retention & Lifelong Participation - Phase Outcome.



Equally, it is extremely important that the Club recognises the needs of all underage player at U13 and above. This can be done in several ways.

- As Roscommon Gaels is a large Club with a depth of underage players, many age groups have two and three playing squads. In the event of two teams e.g., at U14, it is recommended that one panel of players play at a competitive level.
- By competitive, it is understood by all stakeholders at the beginning of the season, that this panel has a goal to compete and try to win Championships/League Titles. Players will display commitment, a work ethic, and a drive to continually improve and develop their skills by attending the training sessions organised by their mentors and coaches, where possible.
- The players not chosen for a competitive squad will train and play with a development squad, within the same age group. The purpose of this squad is to ensure games participation, enjoyment, and skill development. This development squad will participate in League and Championship. However, the focus is not on winning championships. Rather there should be an emphasis on equal playing time to ensure all players get meaningful playing time to develop their skills, gain confidence and experience a sense of belonging in the Club.
- A Development Squad should result in greater player retention from U14 and above. More importantly, it should facilitate a pathway for committed players and late developers to more competitive squads at Underage in the future.

Roscommon Gaels Framework for Playing Up after U14 across the Four Codes

At times it may be necessary to supplement a team with a player from a younger team ('playing up'); e.g., an under-14 player plays with an under-16 team for games.

Our club policy discourages 'playing up' but allows it in certain circumstances, and where players are needed to make up a team for games only. 'Playing up' should not deprive players who are at the correct age for getting game time.

The club policy on 'playing up' is outlined below - only the Chairperson of the Code may sanction exceptions to this policy-

- Players should only be selected from the underage group directly below i.e., U14 can only play up to U16.
- If a player is selected to play up, they must continue to train and play with his/her own age-group. Their own age always gets priority for competitive fixtures.
- When a team needs a player to play up, the coach must seek permission of the coach of the younger player and the younger player coach is responsible for communicating the offer to the parents of the player involved. **Parental consent is a MUST if a player is to 'play up'**.
- Players selected to play up should be capable of competing at the higher age group both physically and mentally.
- Overall workload should be considered.
- If the need is around overall team ability, and there are already big numbers, then the older age management **must** provide for a second team, to ensure players have access to meaningful game time to continue their development.

Under no circumstance, should the player be placed in a position of conflict between teams or codes. No player should be made choose an age grade by any manager. Ongoing communication between mentors is essential to ensure the effective management of our players and the avoidance of any potential conflicts.

In the first instance, Team Managers / Head Coaches are expected to liaise with each other to ensure ongoing communication and planning occurs throughout the year to support the effective management of players.

In cases where consensus cannot be achieved between Team Managers / Head Coaches, they should work with the Chairperson and Secretary of the Code, to discuss and arrive at a reasonable solution. In the unlikely event a dispute remains, the matter will be referred to the Club Executive, who will make a final decision as appropriate.

The application of these rules should be based on a common sense and cooperative approach. Competition should always be with opposing Clubs and not among teams within the Club.