



ROSCOMMON GAELS

UNDERAGE GAMES POLICY

COACHES / PARENTS / MENTORS

Created By	Ros Gaels Executive
Date	2023
Revised	August 2025
Status	Ratified
Revision No:	Rev 2

Context

Roscommon Gaels recognises the importance of implementing the Underage Code of Behaviour. A Club Child Safeguarding brainstorming session was held to form this policy. It was attended by the Club Chairperson, the Four Code Club Chairperson, the Clubs Children's Officers, and representatives from the four Codes 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 regular, fair and meaningful playing time to develop their skills and ensure retention of players". The policy was initially ratified by the Club Executive in May 2022 and with a review by the Four Codes committee to take place annually.

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.

1. Roscommon Gaels will operate all games from U7, up to and including U12 in GAA, LGFA & Camogie under the GAA Go Games National Policy (2025).
2. The guidelines within this Club policy for U13, up to and including U18 (*U19 LGFA) was developed by the Four Codes committee within Roscommon Gaels.

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 (*U19 LGFA) in the following codes

- Football
- Hurling
- Ladies Football
- Camogie

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 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.
- with a Child-Centred approach that promotes our games amongst young people and enables us as a Club to develop all our underage players.
- where the welfare of the child is of paramount importance in our Club to ensure participation by all players regardless of skill or ability
- That our 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 Association’s player pathway development programme.

Part 1 - Mandatory Safeguarding - GAA, LGFA & Camogie

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. This applies to adult coaches in all codes who have underage players playing on adult teams.

Roscommon Gaels will undertake to run two safeguarding courses and a dual foundation coaching course in the first quarter of the calendar year with a third mop up safeguarding course mid-year to assist with compliance with above compulsory criteria for all Associations. Coaches can also avail of these courses which are organised outside of the club. Assistance regarding safeguarding is available from the Children’s Officers in Roscommon Gaels all year around.

Part 2 Roscommon Gaels - One Club Model

This policy recognises that Roscommon Gaels operates under the One Club model, and supports dual 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 and county.
- Underage Coaches, Mentors and parents across codes and age grades 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, the players and their parents to avoid stress on the underage player.

Part 3 Roscommon Gaels Games Policy at different ages

(A) 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 official / 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.

GAA Rule 6.27 of the Official Guide

LGFA Official Guide 2025 Rule 279.

Camogie Rule 33.8

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

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. The relevant County Coaching and Games Development Committee shall oversee the delivery of Go Games.

U12 Leagues in GAA, LGFA & Camogie

- U12 age grade is organised by the various County Coaching and Games Development Committee / County Boards
- It is organised on a league basis and no knockout rounds permitted as part of the U12 league programme
- In LGFA scores will not be published other than, WIN, LOSS OR DRAW and there are no trophies and everybody reaches a final with medals or certs for all.

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, regular and equal game time.

It is recommended that a record / log of attendance is kept at these age grades

Players must train and play with their own age-group from U8 upwards and this must be communicated to parents from the outset, commencing at Academy.

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, 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 by the relevant Association Co Boards, 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 for members of the panel to get adequate quality playing time.

The full GO GAMES Policy should be used with this club policy. [Go Games Policy 2025](#)

(B) Roscommon Gaels Hurling, Football, LGFA & Camogie -U13 up to & Including U18 (*U19 LGFA)

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 players at U13 and above. It should be noted that not all underage players are driven to compete at the highest level.

(1) Age grades from U13 and above with Multiple panels

- 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 /three teams at an age grade 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.
- A record / log of attendance must be kept by mentors of all players at these age grades
- All players within the same age group should be trained together regardless of what divisional team they are on.

- Players on the first 12 / 15 should be correctly chosen and should be a true ref
- The purpose of the 2nd and 3rd divisional squads is to ensure games participation, enjoyment, and skill development.
- These development squads will participate in their particular Divisional League and Championship. The focus should not be on winning competitions but rather there should be an emphasis on regular and meaningful playing time to ensure all players get game time to develop their skills, gain confidence and experience a sense of enjoyment and belonging in the Club.
- Priority should be given to the development players for all matches up to and including semifinals and finals of their divisional competitions and players moving down from the higher Division should only be played to ensure that the squad can field and has subs. Development players, regardless of their ability **must** get precedence on the starting team over higher divisional players moving down.
- These Development Squads 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.
- Cognisance of club dual players playing on multiple divisional panels should be had to ensure their training and match schedule is not too much and a burden. Ideally the dual players should aim to play on one divisional panel only.
- All of the above should be communicated to players and parents/ guardians at the start of the season the approach toward participation in the Divisional League & Championship competitions.

(2) Age grades from U13 and above with single panels

- A record / log of attendance must be kept by mentors of these age grades
- With single panels all players should get regular, fair and meaningful playing time to develop their skills in the League and the Championship should be based on competitiveness where the need is around overall team ability,
- Where there is a single panel, management should communicate to players and parents/ guardians at the start of the season the approach toward participation and in the League & Championship competitions.
- Every effort must be made by coaches to ensure all players in their age grade on a single panel get regular, fair and meaningful game time in all competitive and challenge matches throughout the playing season.

(3) Playing Up in Age grades

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' to ensure the development of all players and to avoid overload / burn out but allows it in certain circumstances; which are as follows;

- (a) Playing up to field a team in all competitions entered
- (b) Playing up based on ability for Championship at higher divisions at Minor and U19 LGFA age grade only (Playing up at any other age grade in Championship is not permitted where there are sufficient numbers.)

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

(i) Players should only be selected from the underage group directly below **and should be confined to those in their last year at that age grade.** (* LGFA allows two age grades below and Camogie allows only those in their last year of the age grade to play up at underage)

(ii) 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.

(iii) When a team needs a player to play up, the coaches of the age grades across the codes must communicate, liaise and work towards an agreement to allow players to play up if required. The younger player coach is responsible for communicating the offer to the parents of the player involved. **Parental / Guardian consent is a MUST if a player is to ‘play up’.** Players must not be added to panels until all of the above is agreed and in place.

(iv) Players selected to play up at the higher age group / adult teams should be capable of competing both physically and mentally. Priority must be given to play with their own age grade in either code if there is a clash with a fixture. Undue pressure to play at higher grades to loss of playing games at their own age grade cannot be put on players.

(v) Overall workload should be paramount in a player playing up at one or more codes. The high risk of injury, burnout and demands from too many panels is something that must be avoided. Players, their parents/guardians and coaches across all panels must communicate regularly. The child/players welfare, not the team’s, is the most important factor.

(vi) If the need is around overall team ability, and there are already big numbers, then the older age management **should, where feasible and where player and coach numbers allow,** provide for a second team, to ensure players have access to regular and meaningful game time to continue their development.

(vii) Under no circumstances, should the player be placed in a position of conflict between teams or codes. Clashes of training and fixtures at the same age grade across the codes should not happen so that players are not required to choose. No player should be made to choose an age grade or a code by any

manager.

Many times, the **dilemma** experienced by the player is internalised and not communicated by the underage player. A POLICY OF CHECKING IN BY COACHES, MENTORS AND PARENTS WITH THESE PLAYERS IS HIGHLY ENCOURAGED.

(4) Communications, Consensus and Complaints

Ongoing communication between mentors, players and parents/guardians is essential to ensure the effective management of our players and the avoidance of any potential conflicts. The sequence of communications should be as follows;

- (a) Team Managers / Lead Coaches across the codes and age grades are expected to liaise with each other to ensure ongoing communication and planning occurs at the start of the year and throughout the season to support the effective management of players. This should be communicated to parents / guardians.
- (b) In cases where consensus cannot be achieved between Team Managers / Lead Coaches and / or Parents/Guardians, they should work with the Chairperson and Secretary of the Codes in the club to discuss and arrive at a reasonable solution.
- (c) Coiste na bPaistí (which consists of the 2 Club Children's officers, DLP, Coaching Officer, Parent rep and Club Executive rep) is available to consult with for support and to seek advice / guidance from at any time.
- (d) In the unlikely event a dispute remains, the matter will be referred to the Club Executive, who will make a final decision as appropriate under all the Association's Child welfare/ safeguarding policies, the code of behaviour for parents, players and coaches, the club constitution and any other relevant policies/guidelines .

The application of the above should be based on a common sense and cooperative approach. This document should be read in conjunction with the code of behaviour (underage) for coaches, players, supporters and parents

Maintaining Good Practice & Behaviour

Competition should always be with opposing Clubs and not among teams / codes within our Club.

This policy will be reviewed annually in the last quarter and has been ratified by the Club Executive at its meeting of **5th August 2025**. Next review date December / November 2026 (see above)

Signed on behalf of Roscommon Gaels



Cathaoirleach



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Date: August 2025