

Independent Teams - Guidelines
Governance, Finance, Child Safeguarding and Registration

Independent Teams are allowed for in the GAA Official Guide and are regulated by Rules 3.19 (n); 6.3; 6.8¹.

According to Rule 3.19 (n) and Rule 6.8, two or more Club(s) that are unable to field a Club team at U.21/20, U.17 or younger age-grades may seek permission from the County Committee for their players to play with another team. There are two possible ways in which this can happen.

- If there are four players or less involved, they can play with another Club;
- If there are five players or more involved, they must play on an Independent Team.

A Club with four players or less at a particular age group may seek permission) to play with another Club's team without having to form an Independent Team. Where Club A receives permission for a player to play with Club B under this Rule, the Executive of Club A must delegate the power to safeguard their player/s to Club B. The Executive of Club A must also delegate power to register their players as playing with Club B's team for player Injury fund purposes (players retain membership of Club A and their unique membership number will not change). The Executives of Clubs A and B must also agree a system of sharing costs between the two clubs if costs be incurred.

E.g.

St. Brigid's only have 3 boys registered at U.17 age-grade and cannot field a team. They seek permission from the County Committee for the 3 boys to play with their neighbouring Club, St. Columba's, which has an U.17 Gaelic Football team. The County Committee grants permission and the players from St. Brigid's are allowed to play with St. Columba's. The 3 players remain registered members of St. Brigid's but the Executive of St. Brigid's delegates power to St. Columba's to register their players as part of the St. Columba's U.17 Gaelic Football team for Player injury fund purposes and also delegates power to St. Columba's to safeguard their players.

In the second case, where a Club seeks permission for 5 or more players to play on another team, an Independent Team must be created. The team will play under and be recognised by the combined names of the two Clubs in question or by an Independent name which will not bear the name of an Adult Club within the County. The creation of an Independent Team results in certain responsibilities for the Clubs concerned from a Governance perspective including Finance, Registration and Child Safeguarding (see below).

E.g.

Two Clubs – St. Brigid's and St. Columba's – do not have enough players each to field a team at Under 17 age-grade. The two Clubs agree to form an Independent Team – St. Patrick's and seek the permission of the County Committee to do so. The Under 17 players registered with St. Brigid's and the Under 17 players registered with St. Columba's play on the Independent Team – St. Patrick's.

Key points of note:

¹ See Appendix.

- In the first instance an Independent Team can only come about when the Executive Committees of two or more GAA clubs decide to form one and get the consent of their County Committee.
- Independent Teams are subject to permission by the County Committee.
- The fact that the County Committee must give its consent to the formation of an Independent Team or Teams means that it has a responsibility for ensuring that all Independent Teams playing under its jurisdiction are not only constituted in accordance with Rule but that they adhere to best practice, particularly in relation to matters of Governance, Child Safeguarding, Finance and Registration.
- Independent Teams are only allowed at Under 21/20, Minor or Younger Grades.
- Independent Teams will not bear the name of a Club within the County.
- A player of a Club without an Under 21/20, Minor or Younger Grade team may play with an Independent Team.
- A player must be a registered member of his Club in order to play on an Independent Team and he remains a registered member of his Club, during and after the period he is playing on the Independent Team.
- Independent Teams can involve players registered with two or more Clubs. An Independent team is not a Juvenile club because the Official Guide does not recognise Juvenile clubs as such.

Q: What is the situation where more than two Clubs wish to form an Independent Team?

A: The outcome is exactly the same albeit with more Clubs involved

E.g.

Three Clubs – Naomh Éanna, Naomh Fionnbarra and Naomh Gall – do not have enough players to field a team at Under 13 age-grade. With the permission of the County Committee, the three Clubs agree to form an Independent Team – Naomh Uinseann. The Under 13 players registered with Naomh Éanna, the Under 13 players registered with Naomh Fionnbarra and the Under 13 players registered with Naomh Gall play on the Independent Team – Naomh Uinseann.

What Governance Guidelines apply to an Independent Team?

Where an Independent Team involving players registered with two or more Clubs is formed, specific Governance Guidelines apply.

Each Club Executive must agree to form a joint sub-committee of equal membership to run the Independent team.

E.g.

The Club Executive of St. Brigid's and the Club Executive of St. Columba's agree to form a joint sub-committee composed of two or more members of the St. Brigid's Club and two or more members of the St. Columba's Club to run the Independent team called St Patrick's. It would not good be practice to have more members of the St. Brigid's Club than members of the St. Columba's Club on the joint sub-committee or vice versa.

Each Club Executive must ratify the membership of the joint sub-committee and devolve agreed functions to them.

The members of the joint sub-committee must report to their own Club Executives as required/requested.

The Joint Sub-Committee of the Independent Team has the exact same status as a Juvenile Sub-Committee of a single GAA Club. All sub-committees end at the AGM and must be reconstituted for the following year and the same applies to a sub-committee(s) overseeing Independent teams. This means that the process of forming the Independent team or teams must begin again at the start of the following year and, the name can be changed if that is what the constituent clubs wish and if the County Committee gives its approval.

Q: What governance guidelines apply where the same Clubs have Independent Teams at multiple age-grades?

A: The governance guidelines remain the same, however, the Club Executives may agree to form a joint sub-committee of equal membership that will have responsibility for running more than one Independent team i.e. the same joint sub-committee has responsibility for an Independent team at U.15 and U.17. This may only happen where a) the Clubs involved in the Independent team(s) are the same at each of the age-grades; and b) each Club Executive agrees to this.

E.g.

The Club Executive of St. Brigid's and the Club Executive of St. Columba's agree to form a joint sub-committee composed of two or more members of the St. Brigid's Club and two or more members of the St. Columba's Club to run two Independent teams called St Patrick's at both U.15 and U.17 age-grades.

At U.13 age-grades three Clubs – St. Brigid's, St. Columba's and St. Dymphna's – do not have enough players each to field a team at Under 13 age-grade. With the permission of the County Committee, the three Clubs agree to form an Independent Team. As St. Dympha's are involved at U.13 age-grade but not at U.15 or U.17 age-grade, the Independent Team at U.13 age-grade must be given a different name (i.e. cannot be called St. Patrick's) so it is called St. Eunan's. The three Club Executives must agree to form another joint sub-committee composed of two or more members of St. Brigid's, two or more members of St. Columba's and two or more members of St. Dympha's to run the Independent team called St. Eunan's at U.13 age-grade.

What Financial Guidelines apply to an Independent Team?

Each Club Executive must agree to nominate and ratify separately, one of the Club Treasurers to act as Treasurer of the Independent team from AGM to AGM.

Club Executives may agree to put arrangements in place to change or rotate this appointment as appropriate as long as it is ratified annually by each Club Executive. The Clubs may decide to have the same individual or the same Club continue holding this position if it suits the Clubs as long as that decision is both taken and ratified annually.

E.g.

The Club Executive of St. Brigid's and the Club Executive of St. Columba's agree that the Treasurer of St. Brigid's will act as Treasurer for St. Patrick's Team for 2020.

When devolving functions to the joint sub-committee each Club Executive permits the joint sub-committee to oversee expenditure/income for the Independent Team subject to the control of the respective Executives through their jointly ratified Treasurer.

The financial affairs of the Independent Team must be regulated through one bank account i.e. the Club Bank Account of the nominated Club Treasurer. The nominated Club Treasurer must invoice the other Club/s in order to recoup costs.

E.g.

The Treasurer of St. Brigid's is acting as Treasurer for the Independent Team St. Patrick's and therefore, income and expenditure for the St. Patrick's team will be regulated through the St. Brigid's bank account. The St. Columba's club will be invoiced by the sub-committee Treasurer (the St. Brigid's Treasurer) for their agreed equal share of the costs of the independent team.

The joint sub-committee must provide through the nominated Treasurer a financial report and a set of financial accounts to each Club Executive on an annual basis and/or as requested.

What Child Safeguarding Guidelines apply to an Independent Team?

Each Club Executive must agree to nominate and ratify one of the Club Children's Officers to act as Children's Officer for the Independent Team from AGM to AGM.

Club Executives may agree to put arrangements in place to change or rotate this appointment as appropriate as long as it is ratified annually by both Club Executives. The Clubs may decide to have the same individual or the same Club continue holding this position if it suits the Clubs as long as that decision is both taken and ratified annually.

E.g.

The Club Executive of St. Brigid's and the Club Executive of St. Columba's agree that the Children's Officer for St. Columba's will act as Children's Officer for St. Patrick's for 2020.

Similarly, each Club Executive must agree to nominate and ratify one of the Club Designated Liaison Persons (DLP) for the Independent Team. (The DLP is not required to sit on the joint sub-committee).

In the event of an alleged breach of the Code of Behaviour (Underage) the appointed Children's Officer for the Independent Team and/or identified Designated Liaison Persons (DLP) must make such concerns known to the Club Executive(s) of that member(s). The matter may then in accordance with procedures be forwarded to the relevant Club Code of Behaviour Hearings Committee of that member. In the event of an alleged breach of the Code of Behaviour (Underage) at an Independent team activity or game by a non-member of the Association, the Club to which the alleged breach is reported shall deal with the matter if appropriate in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Behaviour (Underage).

What Registration Guidelines apply to an Independent Team?

Registration is governed by Rule 2.2. and 2.3 of the Official Guide².

A player must be a registered member of his Club in order to play on an Independent Team and he remains a registered member of his Club, during and after the period he plays on the Independent Team.

In the first instance each Club Registrars must comply annually with requirements set out regarding the registration of members (Rule 2.2). The respective Club Registrars must be in a position to furnish the allocated Registration Number (Rule 2.2 e) of all players as required to register an Independent Team.

Each Club Executive must agree to nominate and ratify one of the Club Registrars to act as Registrar for the Independent Team from AGM to AGM. Club Executives may agree to put arrangements in place to change or rotate this appointment as appropriate as long as it is ratified annually by both Club

² See Appendix

Executives. The Clubs may decide to have the same individual or the same Club continue holding this position if it suits the Clubs as long as that decision is both taken and ratified annually.

On an annual basis each Club Registrar must provide the appointed Registrar for the Independent Team with the registration details of the members that they are sending to play with the Independent Team. The appointed Registrar for the Independent Team must then enter these members as players affiliated to the Independent Team in accordance with Rule 2.3.

In practice this will be done through the GAA's process of Electronic Registration and the sharing of membership numbers will be automated. Once the players have paid a subscription to their respective Clubs, the Club Registrar(s) must then register the players as members through Electronic Registration. Subsequently, through the online system, the appointed Registrar for the Independent Team will then seek permission to affiliate an Independent Team by first identifying: a) the Club(s); and b) the age-grade involved. The affiliation of the Independent Team must first be approved via the online system by each Club Executive, after which the Registrar will be able to add players to the affiliated Independent Team and seek final approval from the County Board. The affiliation of the Independent Team will only be complete once the County Board has approved it via the online system.

E.g.

The Club Executive of St. Brigid's and the Club Executive of St. Columba's agree that the Registrar for St. Brigid's will act as Registrar for St. Patrick's for 2020.

The Registrar for St. Brigid's registers all St. Brigid's members who have paid their subscription. The Registrar for St. Columba's does likewise.

Via the online system the acting Registrar for St. Patrick's will then seek permission to affiliate an Independent team.

Step 1: Through the online system the Registrar will be asked to identify the Club(s) involved in the Independent Team and to identify the age-grade of the Independent Team.

Step 2: An automated request for approval will go to each of the Club Executives to grant approval to the affiliation and to allow for their players at that age-grade to be registered with the team. The Registrar for St. Patrick's will not be able to proceed until approval is granted.

Step 3: Once approval is granted by each Club for the Independent Team, the Registrar for St. Patrick's may register players to the team.

Step 4: An automated request for approval will go the County Board to grant approval to the affiliation of the Independent Team. St. Patrick's will not be recognised as an affiliated team until approval has been granted.

The Registrar must at all times ensure that the registration process for players with St. Patrick's is carried out in accordance with Rule.

Appendix

Rule 3.19

Powers

A County Committee shall be the governing and controlling body of all the affairs of the Association within the County, excepting those functions reserved to the Provincial Council and Central Council under this Official Guide. The following shall be the powers of the County Committee:

- (n) To allow Under 21, Minor or Younger Grade players of Clubs that are unable to field Under 21, Minor or Younger Grade teams to avail of a provision of Rule 6.8, Exception (1) (a) or (b).

Rule 6.3

Definitions

First Club: The Club (or Club within an Independent Team) with which a player first legally (i.e. in accordance with Rule and Bye-Law) participated in Club Competition at U.12 Grade or Over (including Go Games) organised by the County Committee or one of its Sub-Committees in the County of his permanent residence.

Rule 6.8

Playing Restrictions (Club)

(A) A player may not play in any Championship with two Clubs in a given year's Championship, either within a County or in different Counties save as provided for in Exceptions below and in Rule 6.12.

(B) A player may not play with two Clubs in the exact same Competition of a given year.

Exceptions:

(1) A player of a separately affiliated Hurling Club may play football with a separately affiliated Football Club, and vice versa, within a County, subject to any restrictions provided in County Bye-Laws. A County Committee may make alternative arrangements in the interests of the promotion of Hurling/Football, provided that the arrangements have been approved by Central Council.

(2) Subject to allowance by the County Committee under Rule 3.19 (n): A player of a Club without an Under 21/20, Minor or Younger Grade team, subject to County Bye- Laws and any restrictions therein, may play:

(a) With an Independent Under 21/20, Minor or Younger Grade Team within the County which shall not bear the name of an Adult Club within that County;

or

(b) With another Under 21/20, Minor or Younger Grade Team within the County. In the case of a team having five or more players under this provision in Rule, the team shall play under and be recognised by the combined names of the two Clubs in question or by an Independent name which shall not bear the name of an Adult Club within the County.

A player who plays on a team provided for in (a) or (b) above, shall be a registered member of his Adult Club and shall retain membership of that Club during and at the conclusion of his playing participation with a team formed under 78 (a) or (b).

Rule 2.2

Registration of Members

- (a) Before April 1st, a Club Registrar shall submit annually to Central Council, by the process of Electronic Registration, a list, in the Irish Language (except as provided for in Rule 1.7) of Full Members who have fulfilled their Annual Subscription requirement in accordance with Rule 6.2 of the Club Constitution and Rules. This list shall include the full name and address of each Full Member. A copy of the Club's Registration shall be forwarded by e-mail by Central Council to the County Secretary and Divisional Secretary, where applicable.
- (b) (b) Before April 1st, a Club Registrar shall submit annually to the Central Council, by the process of Electronic Registration a list, in the Irish Language (except as provided for in Rule 1.7) of Youth Members of all ages Under 18 years who have fulfilled their Annual Subscription requirement in accordance with Rule 6.2 of the Club Constitution Chapter 2 membership & registration 15 and Rules. This list shall include the full name, address and date of birth of each Youth Member. A copy of the Club's Registration shall be forwarded by e-mail to the County Secretary, and where applicable to the Secretaries of Divisional, County Minor and County Juvenile Committees.
- (c) (c) It is optional to have the addresses of Full and Youth Members registered in either Irish or English.
- (d) (d) Clubs shall submit through the County Secretary, an annual fee of €2 for every Full Member who has paid his Club Membership fee for the year.
- (e) (e) Each Member shall be allocated a Registration Number by Central Council. The member shall retain this number while a member of the Gaelic Athletic Association

Rule 2.3

Registration of Players

- (a) A Club Registrar shall submit annually to Central Council, by the process of Electronic Registration, separate Registers in the Irish Language (except as provided for in Rule 1.7) of the Club's Adult, Under 21/20, Minor and Juvenile (all grades) players. A player is to be included in only one of the Registers. A copy of the Club's Registration shall be forwarded by e-mail by Central Council to the County Secretary, the Divisional Secretary, where applicable, and the County Minor and Juvenile Committees, as appropriate. This list shall include the full name, address and date of birth of each player.
- (b) (b) It is optional to have the addresses of Players registered in either Irish or English.
- (c) (c) Additional Registrations may be made subsequently. A Player must be registered at least three days before a game.
- (d) (d) A Register of Players shall be available for inspection to the Secretary of any Unit, upon demand in writing.

Penalty: The Penalty for playing a non-registered player shall be: On a proven Objection - Award of Game to the Opposing Team. On an Inquiry by Committee-in-Charge - Forfeiture of Game without Award of Game to the Opposing Team, or Fine, depending on the circumstances.