



Under 8 Mentors Manual



Contents

1. Introduction
2. One club, two sports
3. Coaching courses for mentors
4. Quality training
5. How often to train
6. Number of mentors
7. Streaming of Players

- 8. Training slots and Raheny pitches**
- 9. Access**
- 10. Registering teams**
- 11. Child protection responsibilities**
- 12. Child protection course**
- 13. Financing your team and collecting subs**
- 14. Equipment**
- 15. Jerseys, socks and shorts**
- 16. Match day Referees**
- 17. Fixtures**
- 18. Match day**
- 19. Setting up goal posts**
- 20. First Aid**
- 21. Playing the right age**
- 22. Lockers**
- 23. Communicating with our schools**
- 24. Role of Club officials**

1. Introduction

This manual aims to help those who wish to mentor a Raheny GAA team at Under 8. Being involved in mentoring is very rewarding and can be a really enjoyable experience. Those who have gone before in Raheny GAA have successfully coached players payers of mixed ability. Players who have been picked for development squads, have won all Ireland medals and even All stars. Regardless of ability, players have developed as people, most have made friends for life and have developed a sense of community and volunteerism. Every player should be developed to reach their potential. At Raheny GAA, we pride ourselves on the fact that there is a team for everyone.

2. One club, two sports

From as early an age as possible we try and introduce the concept of one club, two sports. Raheny GAA has a very long and proud tradition in both sports. The best way to encourage

all kids to play both sports at an early age is to have training sessions that are half and half football and hurling for as long as possible and have mentors also rotating through both hurling and football. If this can be sustained until around Under 10 or 11, it will help generate very strong numbers in both sports.

3. Coaching courses for mentors

The first coaching course is the **Foundation level course** that is generally carried out over a few evenings. This is essential for those getting involved for the first time. Our GPO will have details of the next available courses and may organise one if there are some willing participants.

For those who have completed a Foundation level course and want to learn a bit more, they progress to level one and two courses. Again, the GPO will have all of the details.

4. Quality training

“Practice does not make perfect – perfect practice makes perfect”. Good quality coaching is so important and the balance here is to have fun games-based football and hurling sessions while also ‘sneaking in’ some good quality instruction. At this age the kids will learn by seeing the exercise being performed and then by doing it themselves. Ensure that games do not involve queuing up to do an exercise. “No lines, no lectures”. As a coach it’s important to intervene when you see an exercise being done incorrectly e.g. swapping a grip in hurling, but it is important to first build a rapport with the individual child before they are shown the correct way to do things. *Mol an óige agus tiocfaidh sí. (Praise a youth and she will come).*

Support is available to assist with training plans from the **Games Promotion Officer (GPO)** and the clubs **Coaching officer**. There is a lot of material on-line and on the Raheny GAA website. Teams are also encouraged to link up with the team directly above them as they will have first-hand experience of what training games work well and what doesn’t. Remember, winning is not important at this age. Fun, making friends and a sense of achievement are the main drivers for children of this age.

5. How often to train

It is expected at under 8 that teams move to **two mid-week training slots**. This is normally done at the latest after the winter training at the start of the season (Feb for the U8 season). But that is up to the new mentor group to decide. There are lots of skills in the two sports and one mid-week session is simply not enough if the aim is to develop each player to their potential. At U8, other clubs tend to train twice per week and you will notice a gap appearing if you remain with one session per week.

Encourage parents to practice with their kids and don’t be afraid to give ‘homework’.

6. Mentors and their roles

While it is important to have a clear lead mentor (and if possible over time, a clear lead mentor in both codes) the more mentors you have the better. These days with numbers of kids between 45 and 60, mentor teams of 10 or more are not uncommon and there is still

plenty of work for all to do. A really important role is communications. A good communicator will make such a difference and avoid confusion amongst parents. WhatsApp groups can be a nuisance if strict guidelines are not put in place. Going to broadcast mode where only admins can post is a good option. However, as the children get a bit older, the more open WhatsApp group can be invaluable for parents asking for and offering lifts.

We would strongly recommend appointing someone as team treasurer. This can be a non-coaching mentor who manages the team finances. See section 13 below.

There are various other club WhatsApp groups that it is important for lead mentors to be part of. Speak to the mentors a year older for advice on that.

7. Streaming of players

It is not recommended to stream players according to ability at Under 7 or Under 8 either for matches or at training sessions. Under 8 Go-Games matches are not streamed.

Should you wish to play challenge matches, it is necessary to find a club who has similar numbers. Usually Naomh Mearnóg, Vincents, Naomh Barróg and St Brigid's are good options.

8. Training slots and Raheny pitches

Training slots on the new Astro at Pitch 5 and the small Astro beside the club are allocated by the Raheny GAA Astro Pitch co-ordinator. Lead mentors are contacted when the slots become available. Match and Training slots in our St Annes pitches are allocated by the Raheny GAA St Annes pitch co-ordinator.

So for winter mid-week training the options are the Raheny GAA club Astro beside the club house and the New Astro Pitch 5 beside the tennis courts. Other Under 8 teams have used the Manor house hall but this must be organised directly with Manor house. More recently, we have also secured slots at Alfie Byrne Road and St David's in Artane.

For summer training slots Raheny Pitches include Pitch 6,7, 9, 10, 12, 12A, 19 and 29. And Raheny also share Pitch 1 with St Vincent's. Pitch 3 is a St Vincent's pitch which Raheny have in recent years been allowed use on Saturday mornings for our Under 7s. Also, between Pitch 2 and Pitch 3 there is a space that can be used for training.

The New Astro Pitch 5 is run by the Raheny Sports Alliance (joint venture between Raheny GAA and Raheny Utd). The Pitch has a caretaker who you will get to know and an Administrator, who you need to contact to cancel sessions (otherwise your team account gets charged).

9. Access

Mentors will need:

- a token or App for the club lockup (the room to the left of the club house that has all the team lockers. Tokens are easily lost and damaged and the new App system works well and can be used for both the lockup and the club Astro pitch

- a token or app for the club Astro. Both are currently managed by Eoin Gillen.
- a key to the back door to turn on the astro lights if training in the dark. A token is needed for the pitch lights and are available in the club bar. Often the bar will not be open when you are training so be sure to secure one in advance. The key for the back door can be copied from the team above you or any other mentor in the club
- a key for the container in the park that has the goals - available to copy from team above you or any other mentor in the club

10. Registering teams

Our delegate to the juvenile County Board (CCC1) will notify the County Board letting them know how many teams Raheny GAA is entering in Camogie, Hurling and Football for Under 8. This normally happens around late November. Depending on the number of players, teams are entered into groups with clubs of similar numbers. Each team typically plays a seven a side match. So, for example, if Raheny have 50 kids they may have one squad in the three-team league and one squad in the two-team league. Probably best to stretch yourself a little and try and increase your squad number rather than participating in a league that leaves you with lots of players on the side-line.

11. Child protection - Garda Vetting

The safety and welfare of all our children is of paramount importance to the GAA. Garda vetting is an integral part of this process. There is now a legal requirement that all coaches working with children undertake Garda vetting so it is important to raise this with the coaches. The vast majority of coaches are parents so this should not be a barrier. The good news is that this process has been greatly simplified and can be done on-line. It can be completed within 3 to 4 weeks. Copies of identification documents (e.g. passport and driving licence) will be required.

Full details can be found at <https://www.rahenygaa.ie/Coaching/garda-vetting>

12. Child protection Course

All mentors must attend a Child protection course at the earliest possible opportunity. Enquire with GPO or Child protection officer regarding upcoming courses.

13. Financing your team and collecting subs

Every team in the club finances itself from subs they collect or from any fundraising that is carried out. Normally €10 a month does the trick. This money then goes towards all the expenses of the team including hire of venues for winter training, purchase of gear and equipment, referee's fees etc. It is worthwhile explaining to your parents that these subs are in addition to the club membership that each child must pay from Under 8. Family club membership is also available. If parents have paid in advance for Ógra, then subs do not come into play until teams return after the summer break.

You can set up a club account with the club administrator. Once you have funds, it can be used to automatically purchase equipment through the club shop, pay for pitch hire and even for refreshments etc from the club bar management team.

The club treasurer shares a monthly suns report. Subs can be paid online monthly or for the full year up front. It is up to the mentor group if they also want to accept cash but that has pretty much disappeared now.

14. Equipment

Using the subs money you will need First touch footballs, first touch sliotars, multi coloured bibs, cones, hurleys, helmets etc. Speak to the Ógra team who will assist with this and who aim to provide enough equipment to start new teams off on their journey.

A certain amount of Ógra equipment is made available to new teams starting up, accessible from a shared equipment locker at the club. Speak to the Ógra team to find out the details.

15. Jerseys, socks, shorts, helmets, hurleys and gum shields

Most times under 8 teams get lucky and get a set of jerseys from the Under 9, 10 or 11 team who have outgrown their set. Just ask. Alternatively, a parent or parents can sponsor a set. It is roughly €1,000 for a 40-jersey set.

Club shorts, socks, helmets, hurleys and gum shields are available to purchase in the club shop. Expensive gear at this stage is not recommended because they will grow out of it so quickly. Head size is one of the exceptions so a helmet that fits at U8 will likely still fit at U11. The club operates a boot exchange so if your child outgrows their boots, they can be left into the club and exchanged for a larger pair. This is a fantastic service, and we would encourage everyone to participate.

16. Match day Referees

For home fixtures it is your responsibility to ensure that you have referees for each of your matches. Co-ordinate with the Club Referee co-ordinator. For under 8 matches they get paid €10 per team at the end of the matches.

17. Fixtures

Under 8s fixtures typically start late February every year. The information is available on the relevant websites. Our pitch coordinator automatically assigns pitches to teams based on the fixtures website but it is advisable to keep in contact with him so he understands your needs.

18. Match day

It is important to ring your opponents before the game to see how your numbers match up and make a plan if they have lots more numbers or *vis versa*.

If there is a little bit of a mis-match numbers wise it would be normal to even things up by asking players to play for the opposition.

19. Setting up goal posts and nets

At under 8 it is expected that metal goals with nets are in place for all home matches. These are available in the container at the pitch. It can be a bit of a challenge to put up these goals and nets so it is recommend that you speak with the team mentors from the team above to find out exactly how to do this. It is also recommended that you try and seek parents who are not involved in team mentoring that are available on match days to help put up the posts.

Leave loads of time to set up goals and nets and try to avoid having kids arrive for the pre-match warmup and no mentors available as they are all busy setting pitches up.

20. First Aid and Health

At this stage it is best to see if one of the mentors wish to take on a role of first aid. At a minimum you should record minimum health information about each child. Are they allergic to anything, asthmatic etc. The Ógra team will be able to share that info with you as they hand over the team. Record this on an internal list for all the mentors knowledge.

Make sure there is a first aid bag at every training session and match. Gloves, plasters, wipes, an ice pack and water would be a good start.

21. Playing the right age

All kids should play their own age and not play up. This is club policy. This can be difficult because in school, every class will have children born in two different years. It is important early on to know who are playing up at Under 7 and to inform the parents that they will have to play Under 7 again next year. If children are let play with their classmates at a higher age, the teams in general will be disadvantaged compared to teams that have everyone at the correct age. Mentors should be aware that when the players get to Dublin development squad age, players are only considered if they play at their right age.

The ógra team will enforce this with the groups exiting Ógra. It is up to the mentor groups then to maintain the policy.

22. Lockers

Most teams in the club have a locker for all their gear. The Ógra team will attempt to have locker made available for each new team.

23. Communicating with our schools

Raheny GAA have three official feeder schools. These are St Brigids BNS. Springdale national school and the shared campus Raheny national schools of Scoil Íde, Scoil Assam and Scoil Áine. If you wish to send recruitment flyers into the schools or advertise any Raheny GAA events it must go through the PRO or the GPO. Despite our player pool being from a much broader area, GAA flyers may not be sent to any other primary school, nor can other GAA clubs advertise in these schools.

24. Useful Club Contacts (2022)

Be sure to become familiar with the mentors at the age group above yours. They will be the best source of information for you. Mentor contacts for every team in the club are available here - <https://www.rahenygaa.ie/Coaching/Lead-Mentors>

Position	Name	Number
Chairman	Paul Fox	087 2514932
GPO (Games Promotion Officer)	Colly Mc Donald	085 1222157
Coaching Officer		
PRO	Cian Burgess	087 7950130
Ogra	Tom Reynolds	087 2210492
Raheny GAA Astro Pitches Coordinator	Paul Fox	087 2514932
Raheny GAA St Annes Pitches Co-ordinator	Barry O Donnell	087 7711952
Child welfare officer	Jen McQuaid	Childrensofficer.raheny.dublin@gaa.ie
Club Administrator	Greg Broe	admin@rahenygaa.ie
Locker coordinator	Tom Reynolds	087 2210492
RSA Administrator (New astro)	Paddy Moore	0861221614
RSA Caretaker (New astro)	Connie Egan	085 1743384

24th March 2022