

HOW TO SET UP AN ÓGRAS CLUB

Setting up an Ógras club is a rewarding way to support young people in using Irish socially, building friendships, and becoming active in their local community. As the saying goes, “Tús maith leath na hoibre” – a good start is half the work, and this is certainly true when forming a youth club. With careful planning, preparation, and support from the Ógras team, your club can get off to a strong and sustainable start.

This guide outlines the key steps involved in setting up a new Ógras club, from planning and insurance to training, funding, and day – to – day operation.



Planning and Preparation

Before starting a club, it is important to take time to plan properly. Don't rush the process – investigate what is needed, ask questions, and put the necessary groundwork in place. The Ógras team is available to support you throughout the process and can provide guidance based on experience from clubs around the country.

Choosing a Location

One of the first decisions is where the club will be based. Suitable venues such as community centres, halls, or youth spaces are often available locally. When choosing a venue, priorities should include having enough space for games and activities, availability on your chosen night, and a reasonable rental cost (typically €20 – €40). Extra facilities such as a stage, additional rooms, or permission to organise céilís or discos are also beneficial.

Garda Vetting

Anyone working with young people must complete the appropriate vetting process.

- In the 26 counties, Garda Vetting is required. Forms are available through Ógras, and the process usually takes 6 – 8 weeks. Leaders may begin once forms have been submitted, but the process must be underway before the club starts.*
- In the 6 counties, leaders must complete the Access NI process.*

Ógras can assist with guidance and paperwork where needed.

Insurance

All club activities must be covered by appropriate insurance. In some cases, the venue used by the club may already have an insurance policy that extends to club activities. However, it is strongly recommended that clubs arrange their own insurance through Ógras to ensure full and comprehensive cover.

Public Liability Insurance

Public liability insurance covers the building and any accidents that may occur during the reasonable use of club facilities. This includes injuries to individuals while on the premises. While venues and local committees are often covered by existing policies, taking out a separate policy helps protect the club, its committee members, and the venue's managing committee in the event of an accident.

Members' Cover

Members' cover applies while participants are engaged in club activities under the reasonable direction of club leaders. This cover is particularly important during physical activities such as basketball and other sports. It protects members in the event of accidents involving other participants, for example during normal play. Leaders must take reasonable care and supervision at all times to ensure this cover remains valid.



Accident Reporting and Record Keeping

If an accident or incident occurs, a clear and accurate record must be kept. Proper record keeping helps protect the club, its leaders, and its members, and ensures that incidents are dealt with appropriately.

An accident record should include:

- *What happened and how the incident occurred*
- *Who was present at the time*
- *When and where the incident took place*
- *Statements from those involved or witnesses*
- *Details of any injury or damage to club equipment*
- *Suggestions or actions taken to resolve the situation*

If an accident involves a club member, parents or guardians must be informed as soon as possible.

Publicity and Promotion

It is important to spread the word when a new Ógras club is being set up. While smaller groups may be easier to manage initially, a strong atmosphere comes from good participation. Promote the club by sending posters to schools and local shops, sharing information with parents, and contacting local radio stations or newspapers. Early publicity helps build excitement and community support.

Starting the Youth Club

Once everything is in place, you are ready to start your club. A typical club year lasts around 32 weeks. Make sure the first night is well organised, with leaders and parents from the rota present. All members must be properly registered, including their name, address, date of birth, contact details, next of kin, and any relevant medical information. Having a weekly schedule and a monthly plan will help the club run smoothly.

Registration Night

Holding a registration night is an excellent way to welcome new members and parents. This gives everyone the opportunity to meet the leaders, learn about the aims of the club, discuss rules, and organise meeting times and parent rotas. An Ógras officer can attend to speak at the meeting if requested. This night can also serve as the club's AGM, where a committee is formed and plans for the year are agreed.

Training and Support

Ógras provides training and ongoing support for club leaders. An Ógras officer can deliver an introductory session covering administration, event planning, finances, and leader responsibilities. Additional training courses are available throughout the year, including child protection, leader development, problem solving, and working with young people. Training can take place before the club starts or shortly afterwards.

Many clubs also establish an Óg - Ógras club for younger members. While these are generally easier to set up, leaders should be prepared for the high energy levels of younger children, and proper planning is essential.

Club Rules and Policies

All Ógras clubs operate under clear rules to ensure a safe and respectful environment:

- Irish is the spoken language of the club. Full fluency is not required, but members are expected to use the Irish they have and improve over time.*
- Bad language and misbehaviour are not permitted.*
- Smoking and alcohol are strictly prohibited.*
- All Ógras policies must be followed, particularly the Child Protection Policy.*

Funding and Sources of Finance

There are many ways to raise funds for an Ógras club once people understand the value it brings to the local community. Investment in the club goes straight back into the area, and former members often remain supportive long after they have moved on.

Local fundraising options include sponsored events, selling items, holding collections, and organising social events such as céilís or discos. Clubs may also sell advertising space in newsletters or programmes. These activities raise funds while strengthening community involvement.

Clubs can also apply for grants from organisations such as Foras na Gaeilge, Seachtain na Gaeilge, and Coiste Gairmoideachais. Clubs based in Dublin may apply for funding through the Dublin City Youth Service Board (CDYSB). Further information is available directly from the relevant funding bodies.

If you would like more information about setting up an Ógras club, or if you need guidance at any stage of the process, please get in touch with the Ógras team. We are happy to support you with advice, training, and resources. All Ógras policies, including our Child Protection Policy, are available on our website at www.ogras.ie.

