

**Guidelines for hosting**

 **Staffordshire**

**Mini-Midi (U7 to U12)**

**County Festivals 2023**

# Dates and Venue

The dates and venues for the festivals for the forthcoming season will be set by the Mini Junior County committee at the end of the previous season. Clubs wishing to host a festival will be asked to put their names forward, but they will have to be able to fulfil the following criteria;

* Clubs must be able to host all Staffordshire Clubs that have a team at the Age Grade they are hosting along with their supporters,
* They must have the space to be able to play all the games within a reasonable time,
* They must have ample parking for all cars.

Preference will be given to clubs who have not hosted a County Festival or Finals Day in the previous season. Where appropriate, consideration will be given to which age groups a club is planning to run in the following season.

**Communication**

It is the responsibility of the host club to send out the invitations to the teams, asking for participants to reply by a set date, i.e. 1 month before the festival. If a club can host more teams then possibly a development team could participate in a separate round of games but this is entirely down to the host club and should also be stated on the invitation. It must also be stated on the invitation that any teams participating must provide a referee. The host club must provide the visiting teams with a copy of the rules and regulations before the festival starts.

**Teams**

The size of the teams participating is no longer prescribed by the RFU, the following guidelines are a recommendation, however the objective of the County Festival is to encourage participation for all registered players and consideration should be given to this principle.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Age Group** | **Squad size** |
| Under 7 | 8 |
| Under 8 | 10 |
| Under 9 | 12 |
| Under 10 | 14 |
| Under 11 | 15 |
| Under 12 | 18 |

Teams can participate with less or more than this number should they wish but it is expected that all players will play at least half the total playing time on the day.

If more than one team is participating from one club, then players cannot move from team to team and all names of players per team should be sent to the host club at least a fortnight before the festival starts.

**Games**

The host club will set the draw for the games and have a board set up so that the participants can see the schedule of games and the allocation of referee to ensure everyone is aware of when and where they should be.

The total playing time for a festival or tournament is prescribed in RFU Regulation 15 – Age Grade Rugby. Details for each age group varies and is noted in the table below:



Under no circumstances should any games exceed the time laid down.

The format should be a round-robin pool format, structured to give the greatest variety of opposition for each team and enabling each participant to play in as many games as is allowed in the total playing time.

**Food**

Due to the change of guidelines removing the limit on squad numbers, the host club is no longer required to provide all playing participants with food/refreshment during the festival. However, it is recommended that the host club make food and refreshments available for purchase at reasonable cost. At some club’s cake stalls, tombola table, BBQ’s, etc. are set up to help cover any costs.

**Programmes**

The host club is not required to provide a programme, but it has been found in the past that if this is done and a small charge made for each programme, this will help to offset the cost of the day. A suggestion would be that the participating teams provide a photo, (providing that the individual club photo policy allows this) so that it could be put in the programme and possibly a sponsor might be able to provide some funds to cover the cost of producing the programmes.

The host club is permitted to sell advert space in their programme, either to parents of the host club or participating clubs, who wish to place a message of good luck, or, to business.

**Certificates**

The county provide certificates for all participants and host clubs will receive these in advance of the day. These should be given to the team coaches, so they can be presented back at their own clubs.

**Charging**

The host club may not charge for entry or car parking at the festival but as stated above can raise funds through selling a programme, sponsors and having a draw,

**Pitch and Game Guidance**

The table below confirms the current pitch sizes as defined under RFU regulations;

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Age Group** | **Dimensions (metres)** |
| Under 7 | 20 x 12 |
| Under 8 | 45 x 22 |
| Under 9 | 60 x 30 |
| Under 10 | 60 x 35 |
| Under 11 | 60 x 43 |
| Under 12 | 60 x 43 |

At Under 7 and 8 because coaches are no longer permitted on the field of play (other than the Game Coach), this provides scope for those coaches to manage (referee) other games on other pitches.

The Game Coach (referee) should endeavor to encourage both teams;

* If possible try and get to know the names of children on both teams (parents & children appreciate this, especially at U7),
* Try and avoid blowing the whistle unless absolutely necessary. Use voice to encourage and prevent infringement,
* Be empathetic – these are children,
* At Under 7 provide players with chances, especially early in the season (e.g. if they run out of play encourage them to come back in and carry on, or pass, if they drop the ball over the line, tell them that next time they need to place the ball, but award the try). A game, for a 6 or 7 year old can be a daunting, exciting, brand new experience **– you can help to make it a positive one**

For player & spectator safety and enjoyment, Respect Barriers should be positioned at least 2 meters from the touchline and all spectators should remain behind the barriers at all times. Where this is not possible, due to the lay-out of the pitches, it is recommended that spectators are positioned 3 meters behind the dead-ball line

The game coach (referee) should also be a coach **for both sides** and negate the necessity to have a coach from either team on the pitch. Children should be encouraged to explore and discover for themselves with a little guidance from the game coach. Often other adults on the pitch (although well meaning), and advice from the touchline, can be a distraction and prevent children from making their own decisions – an important part of their learning and development. In line with this, **all feedback** and comment should be positive and constructive.

As the game coach is also acting as a coach it is not entirely necessary to have a coach from each club in attendance for each game. Parents can be utilised to report back on the team and individual performance where necessary. By rotating pitches/matches it may be possible for each coach to see all the players from their club.

Where clubs have larger numbers of players coaches may consider splitting into two squads or if numbers are appropriate consider joining players from two clubs to make a 3rd barbarians type squad. It is important, however, that each player is provided with the opportunity to develop and ‘A’ and ‘B’ teams should be discouraged. **The building of confidence and self-esteem in children is of paramount importance and “categorising” children at such a young age is not conducive to achieving that objective**.

**Photography**

Given the number of potential attendees to the County Festivals it is impractical to limit the use of cameras or even ask for each camera user to be registered with the festival organiser, however if there are children attending the festival that are, for whatever reason, protected against photographs being taken of them, the team manager/coach should advise the organisers and the other team managers/coaches should be advised of the restriction and all spectators of the game should be advised of the restriction and photographs should not be taken to ensure the protection of any child who may be at risk.

**Half Game Rule**

All players in each squad should play a minimum of the equivalent to half the playing time unless they are injured during the festival.