

25/01/26 - Announcement of age group change from 2027

An announcement today that for the 2027 season the Under 18s age group for the British STRUK season will be changing to the under 17s age group.

We announce this now so that everyone has a year's notice for the change. It does mean that there will be two year groups that have to finish their time in 18s/17s this year alone. Please have a read through of a bunch of questions and answers we have prepared.

What is the reason for the change?

It has been under discussion for some years now whilst seeing the small number of riders carrying on from under 18s into the open age group. Under 18s has become a natural stopping point for many riders and families due to them going on to start work or further education at that age. The previous age group of under 17s meant riders got to enjoy a year of opens before having those extra responsibilities come their way.

This is also not just theory based with true data coming from Germany who made the change to their age groups in 2022 and have since seen a rise in overall riders competing every single year. That is what the graph in the comments shows.

What are the effects on international selection?

None. How the British season operates its age groups has nothing to do with the age groups chosen by IMGA. STRUK competitions have not been listed as selection shows for international selection for the past few years but if they were in the future we would help them to identify riders eligible for under 18s that are riding in the open age group.

What competitions are affected?

The competitive competitions affected are the three all weather league shows (League Starter, British Championships and the Summer Tournament/Spring Show). Also the Knights pairs. The winter season friendly competitions then of course change as well.

The European Pairs & STRUK Individuals will remain as under 18s continuing to take place both abroad and in the UK.

What happens to the riders that will miss an extra year of under 18s in 2027?

We will encourage them to make that step up into the open age group just as it would have been in 2020 and prior. We are also looking at some rewards this coming season for riders not in their final year. For example the highest placed team without a rider in their final year and highest placed pair at the Knights that are not in their final year. There will also be prize based rewards for the younger teams in the open age group.

How does this work with MGAGB?

We had hoped to make the change with them but they will be remaining with an under 18 section. We would encourage teams that have riders turning 18 in 2027, that are competing in the under 18 section at MGAGB to stick together and compete up into the open age group at STRUK. Keeping teams together wherever possible. There are some riders this year already who are making the early step up to open and we want to encourage more of the same.

What has been the main criticism from riders/trainers you have consulted on this?

The main one is riders who in their mindset are not even considering taking part in the open age group and simply view it as their time in mounted games ending a year early. But to them we will say please enjoy your last year of under 18s with Mgagb and come and give opens a go with us when you can! Feel the speed, feel the buzz, feel the atmosphere! The open age group also opens up the option of choice with a lot of people finding it more relaxing and are doing it for the love of the sport rather than only thinking about results.

What does this mean for the under 17 age group?

For the 2027 year alone the under 17 age group might be a smaller one but it will then grow again from 2028 onwards. A key benefit that has been discussed has been exams. Many riders miss some under 18 shows due to their final exams falling in their last year in that age group, it is hoped they would miss less in their penultimate year. The year where they may miss some shows then falls when they are in open and finding their feet instead of at the top of their game in the junior section. We also hope this will further our growth plan of working with the pony club and encouraging riders to carrying on into mounted games and stunt racing. Making that step a little less drastic and allowing for a two year transition period into the open age group.

What about riders who want to double ride?

This will still be possible for under 17 riders to double ride into the open age group. There will be one year next year that is affected but we shall endeavour to continue with second pony pairs competitions wherever possible to help riders with novices or new partnerships.