



RFU Community Communications

Community Game Update 23/11/2021



We hope the below structure helps to distinguish between where action is required and where information is for awareness.

- 1. Action required**
- 2. Action if of interest**
- 3. For awareness**

1. FOR ACTION

- ☰ **Future Competitions Structure - Lower XV Criteria for entry into RFU Leagues**
- ☰ **17-Year-Olds Playing Adult Rugby**
- ☰ **NEW Girls Age Bands from 2022/23 approved by RFU Council**

2. ACTION IF OF INTEREST

 Register your January Warrior Camp now!

 GMS drop-ins

FOR AWARENESS

 RFU Council appoints four new co-opted members to improve diversity

 'Off-field' support for legal, entertainment licensing and VAT

 Round-Up - Rainbow Laces, 8 Dec, Luke Mortimer's incredible story & Great Rugger mental health run

Future Competitions Structure - Lower XV Criteria for entry into RFU Leagues



As confirmed earlier this year, from September 2022 Lower XV teams will be able to enter RFU leagues [The English Clubs Championship] up to level 7 in the men's game, subject to fulfilling specified criteria.

The criteria is now available for clubs to view [here](#), having been approved by RFU Council on 19 November.

Clubs are encouraged to read the criteria carefully and to consider the playing requirements and implications before moving to the next stage of expressing an interest in participating.

An expression of interest form will be emailed to clubs on **29 November with a completion deadline of 17 January**, to give clubs time to discuss internally.

Clubs who already have Lower XVs playing in the English Clubs Championship are not required to express an interest as it is assumed they will wish to continue their participation in the league programme.

THE AIM

Opening up RFU Leagues to Lower XV teams is a step change in the community game to ensure leagues are safe, fair, and inclusive. Changes to the competition structure have been made in response to participation data and feedback from the Community Game.

The addition of Lower XV teams aims to offer appropriate competition opportunities for Lower XV teams, and to increase the number of teams and leagues at certain levels to help reduce travel time for clubs and players. The goal is to keep more players actively involved in the game and to minimise walkovers in lower leagues by increasing the opportunity for more local rugby.

We will monitor the effect of changes to the competition structure through periodical reviews every three years. This will be pivotal to accommodate the inclusion of the Lower XV teams at the appropriate playing level.

Detailed notes on the timeline and decision making process, alongside FAQs, are available to view [here](#). A topline summary is below:

TIMELINE

- **23 November 2021** - Lower XV entry criteria published on England Rugby and via the Community Game Update (CGU)
- **29 November 2021** - Lower XV expression of interest form will be emailed to clubs
- **17 January 2022** - Deadline for expressions of interest from Lower XV teams/clubs
- **19 January 2022** - Lower XV expression of interest forwarded to CB's and DOC's. Window opens for CB's who wish to consult with their clubs (**closing on 18 February**) about disapplying the national policy of Lower XV teams being eligible to join RFU Leagues in favour of them playing in local CB/Merit leagues
- **28 February – 28 March 2022** - Clubs to submit Lower XV final entry request. Clubs are informed if they have been successful by a date to be determined
- **W/c 15/16 June** Fixtures release



**Lower XV team entry criteria for the English Club
Championship.pdf**
147 KB



17-Year-Olds Playing Adult Rugby



Process re-opens from 1st December 2021

As per the Age Grade changes this season, the suspension of 17-year-olds playing and training in adult contact rugby finishes on 1st January 2022.

We would like to remind everyone that the process of assessment and approval – under Regulation 15.6 – needs to be undertaken by clubs for individual players. This process of assessing players can start again from 1st December 2021, however, they are not allowed to play until January 2022. This helps us all get ahead of the New Year.

Please remember that 17-year-old male and female players can only train and play in adult contact rugby if they and their club have undertaken the full process and received approval from their CB from January 2022.

The Age Grade changes document is on the [Return to Rugby page](#).

The regulations, processes and forms for clubs and individual players are on the [Regulations page](#).

NEW Girls Age Bands from 2022/23 approved by RFU Council



The purpose of this communication is to provide advance notice about a change that will be implemented from the 2022/23 season, to enable people to familiarise themselves over the coming months. In the New Year, we will provide more detailed guidance to support players, coaches, match officials, parents and volunteers through the transition.

“This decision shows our commitment to the girls’ game and that we’ve listened to feedback and frustrations. The change to the age bandings provides a structure that supports and encourages girls to play rugby and enables the age grade girls’ game to be in a position to grow for years to come. It also provides equity in the rules of play with the boys’ game, allowing the playing development journey to be the same.

"Even despite Covid we have seen continued growth. This is testament to the hard work and dedication of our volunteers, coaches and match officials, and to the girls for wanting to play rugby.

"This is a really positive step in the girls' game, showing we are growing in numbers and feeding into our wider growth ambitions as part of the [Every Rose Strategy](#).”

- Lou Latter, Women and Girls Rugby Representative, RFU Council



	YEAR 7 UNDER 12	YEAR 8 UNDER 13	YEAR 9 UNDER 14	YEAR 10 UNDER 15	YEAR 11 UNDER 16	YEAR 12 UNDER 17	YEAR 13 UNDER 18
CURRENT	U13		U15		U18		
NEW	U12 GIRLS SINGLE AGE BAND*	U14 GIRLS DUAL AGE BAND		U16 GIRLS DUAL AGE BAND		U18 GIRLS DUAL AGE BAND	
RULES OF PLAY	REG 15 APPENDIX 6 (ALIGNED TO U12 BOYS)	REG 15 APPENDIX 8 (ALIGNED TO U14 BOYS)		REG 15 APPENDIX 9 (ALIGNED TO U15-18 BOYS)		REG 15 APPENDIX 9 (ALIGNED TO U15-18 BOYS)	

Visit www.englandrugby.com/regulations

*Please read additional detail regarding flexibility for U11s

This image can be used for sharing on social media.

Why have we reviewed the age bands?

- The women's and girls' game is moving into an exciting new phase having enjoyed an average year-on-year increase of 12% over the past 10 years. Thanks to the growth in profile and popularity, there are now enough girls playing rugby in England to be able to introduce the additional age band at Under 12 and to reduce the U18 triple age band to a dual band.
- Feedback from the game highlighted the need to review the triple age band due to player welfare concerns as well as player development, enjoyment and social factors. There were increasing reports of concerns around expecting 15-year-olds to play with and against 17-year-olds who would turn 18 (adult) during the season, and vice versa.

- This was the same at U13 where expecting current Under 11s or new Year 7/Under 12 players to step into a two-year age band, at this major entry point to rugby for girls, presented safety and retention concerns.

What is the purpose of the change?

- To create smaller age bands where girls are training and competing against more similar ages and physiques to support player welfare and skill development.
- To retain teenage players and support their transition – especially 16-18-year-olds – by no longer having a three-year age band at U18.
- To support the future growth and sustainability of girls' rugby.
- To align playing rules to the boys' game for clarity, consistency and equity as we work towards an equal approach in everything we do.
- To support the increasing number of girls currently playing KidsFirst Rugby to transition into girls' rugby if they wish. Moving from U11 mixed rugby to U13 girls' rugby has been seen by many as too big a jump. It is important to note there will be more flexibility around the type of rugby U11s can play (see below), so teams don't need to worry about breaking any chain they have previously built.

What are the changes?

From season 2022/23, girls' age bands will move from the current U13, U15, U18 bands to:

- **U12s – a single year age band will be introduced at U12 level**

U11/Year 6 regulations will be changed so girls can:

1. Continue to play U11 mixed rugby; and/or
2. Play girls only U11 rugby; or
3. 'Play up' into U12s, following appropriate playing up sign-off by parent and coaches, following the approval requirements outlined in [Reg 15.3](#).

We are keen to enable U11 girls to play with U12 girls IF they are ready. However, regulations will remain tight to prioritise player safety and continue to follow a building blocks approach to learning and development to ensure players are physically ready/equipped to 'play up.' We recognise there can be a knock-on benefit to the U12 single age group too.

- **U14s – two year age band**
- **U16s – two year age band**
- **U18s – two year age band**

The new age bands and rules of play within each band are summarised alongside FAQs on the [AGE GRADE page here](#)

What next?

We recognise clubs, schools/colleges, parents and players will have questions around implications on competitions, pathway, regulations and data systems, and support will be required for volunteers, coaches and match officials.

Please [CLICK HERE](#) for initial FAQs which will continue to be updated and will provide further detail around the changes and rules of play.

A detailed implementation plan is ready with full guidance and support planned. This will be communicated during the remainder of this season. We will include targeted engagement in the New Year with key groups such as CB Women & Girls' representatives (already underway),

club volunteers/leads, girls' rugby coaches and referees, schools/colleges, competition organisers and player pathway personnel. The aim is to help everyone plan well ahead of the new age bands coming into effect for the 2022/23 season.

Maggie Alphonsi MBE - RFU Council Member and England Rugby World Cup Winner:

“This is a game-changing move. It reflects how rapidly the girls' game is growing and the future looks strong. It will be strengthened further by the 'Every Rose six-year action plan' and those plans will hopefully be supercharged if we are successful in our bid to host the RWC 2025.

“Reaching the stage where an additional age band can be introduced is testament to the fantastic work of players, coaches, match officials, organisers and volunteers across the country over the last 10 years. It sets us up to take the game to a new level for the next 10 years.”



Register your January Warrior Camp now!



Registration is now open for clubs to submit their event information and to be included within the national campaign in January.

[Register here](#)

January has historically been the most successful recruitment phase for clubs welcoming new and returning players. This January, we are confident more women and girls will feel ready to return to sport and physical activity, as lives are becoming more settled and people are starting to think about what they've missed or put on hold.

Research shows women are looking for activities where they can feel a sense of belonging, where they know they will enjoy themselves and where they don't feel any pressure or judgement.

Warrior Camps are ideally placed to provide all of the above!

The visibility and success of the Red Roses this Autumn will undoubtedly have inspired more women and girls to give rugby a go. Make sure your club is taking advantage of this excitement and energy, and start planning your Warrior Camp now.

For further information please visit www.englandrugby.com/innerwarrior

To find answers to FAQs visit [Club Support Centre](#)

You can contact us on innerwarrior@rfu.com

GMS drop-ins



Thank you to everyone who has joined the GMS drop-in sessions over the past month. The feedback has been valuable and we hope the sessions have given users more confidence in using the system.

You can find recordings on the [Club Support YouTube Channel](#)

RFU Council appoints four new co-opted members to improve diversity



“I’m thrilled to be welcoming Garnet, Matthew, Roxy and Yemi on to Council and have no doubt they will contribute greatly to the role of Council in representing the views of our players, match officials and volunteers across the game.”

- HH Jeff Blackett, RFU President

The RFU has a clear [strategic objective](#) to drive rugby union in England to reflect the diversity of society. We published our [D&I Action plan](#) in June and since that time the RFU Council and its Nominations Committee has run a recruitment process to co-opt four new members on to Council to improve its diversity.

Following a thorough recruitment process, which attracted interest from over 70 high calibre candidates, the RFU Council voted in four new members who have been co-opted on to Council for a fixed term until 31 July 2023.

The newly appointed co-opted members are Garnet Mackinder, Roxy Fearon, Yemi Gbajobi and Matthew Webb. The RFU Council intends to seek engagement from the wider range of applicants to ask them to consider other roles within the game.

For more information about the RFU's focus on Diversity and Inclusion, visit our [D&I hub](#)
[here](#)

'Off-field' support for legal, entertainment licensing and VAT



As we approach a busy December period for clubs, we'd like to remind you of several 'off-field' support functions we provide; many of which are free of charge.

- Guidance on legal or tax** matters for clubs is provided by England Rugby's Official Legal Partner, Irwin Mitchell, via the **Legal & Tax Helpline: 0333 010033**. A wide range of online legal documents is also available free of charge on the [Irwin Mitchell Legal Documents Portal](#)
- For entertainment licensing**, including premises licences, club premises certificates and gambling, we operate the free specialist **Alcohol (& Gambling) licensing Helpline 0115 934 9177** in partnership with Poppleston Allen Licensing Solicitors.
- For VAT** support contact Russell Moore, a former partner at a leading sports advisory accountants. The first 30 minutes of advice is free to clubs, with any additional services provided at greatly reduced rates. Either call Russell on 07710 329317 or email russellmoore@sportsvuk.at.co.uk
- Did you know we automatically provide member clubs with insurance for various third-party claims? The cover includes: Public Liability Insurance, Professional Indemnity Insurance, Employers Liability, Directors and Officers Liability – for more details [click here](#)

Round-Up - Rainbow Laces, 8 Dec, Luke Mortimer's incredible story & Great Rugger mental health run



Rainbow Laces Day - Wednesday 8 December

Rainbow laces have become a symbol of inclusion, promoting equality and inclusivity within sport for LGBTQ+ people and tackling discrimination to help make sport everyone's game.

If your CB, club, school/college, university or referees society would like to find out more about how you can support please visit [Stonewall.org.uk](https://www.stonewall.org.uk)

Luke Mortimer's incredible story

It is beyond imagination, a seven-year-old saying thank you to his hands for all they had done for him before being wheeled into a hospital operating theatre to have them amputated. Days later the rugby-loving youngster was told he would also have to lose his legs from below the knee.

The fight continues today for Luke and his family. His dad Adam who coaches Luke's 12-year-old brother, Harry, at Skipton is now a now full-time carer, while mum Christine has returned to work.

[Read more here](#)

If you would like to support Luke, [donations are welcomed here](#)

The Great Rugger mental health run

Having been a first XV player and head coach for Old Colfeians, Tim Tunnicliff found retiring from playing rugby quite a challenge.

“It wasn’t just losing my team, it was more like losing my identity, not being able to do something I felt I was good at, and mourning the loss of that identity,” he recalls.

Running filled some of that emptiness and, together with travelling the world and designing websites on the road to fund his nomadic existence, became a new passion.

At the end of the summer Tim touched base again and, remembering two opposition players and one teammate who committed suicide around the time he himself stopped playing, decided to lace up his running shoes and run between 104 clubs in the South of England, covering 542 miles to raise awareness and funding for four mental health charities.

[Read more](#)