



RFU COMMUNITY GAME UPDATE

12th May 2015

Age Grade Competition Review

The RFU Council meeting of 17th April agreed key actions to drive implementation of the Age Grade Competition Review (AGCR) from **September 2016**.

The AGCR Implementation Action Plan, which also includes a new strategic direction for Under 16 representative rugby, has foundations based on the firm principles that the game must be “player-centred, development-driven and competition-supported”, in that order. This ensures that the motivations and welfare of all players, no matter their experience or ability, are the cornerstone of the game they play week in week out.

The plan includes, from the 2016-17 season, consistent age bandings and incremental player progressions for all Age Grade Rugby; a nationally consistent playing menu and calendar that increases inclusivity, clarifies player priorities and dovetails club, school, college competitions; an integrated England Rugby Player Development pathway and representative framework and training and Continuous Professional Development for coaches, referees, parents, teachers and others. It will support and work with counties, clubs, schools and colleges over the next 16 months to make the changes.

Implications requiring some change for those organising, delivering and playing rugby at Under 18 and below include:

Playing Framework

- Mixed contact rugby finishes after U11
- U13 dual age band for girls does not include U11s
- 15 a side rugby starts at U14
- U13 New Rules are implemented nationally in 2016-17
- Lineout introduction is delayed to U14

Competitive Diet and Season

- A nationally-defined consistent menu of national and county competitions per age group
- No formal league rugby before U15
- Competitive festivals before U12, not competitions/tournaments that find overall winners
- Competitions and representative rugby at all levels (local to CB to national) to be played in specific, nationally-consistent season windows

Representative Pathway

- Formation of Regional Player Pathway Groups to drive the programme
- Divisional representative level replaced by regional programme matched with the 14 Regional Academies at U16 (implementation of this point from 2015/16 season)
- No representative rugby before U15
- No district programmes at U16

The significant changes to the England Rugby player pathway in this third section will result in development opportunities extended to 250 more English players each year (with a residential festival involving 14 Regional Academy sides) and a single clear pathway from 2016/17. A strategic review of the U16s programme studied the AGCR's work, the RFU Talent Symposium's findings and best practice from other nations. The Review Group recommended broad numbers accessing talent development opportunities, less layers of representative rugby, improved pathway clarity, more development, less selection and age appropriate competition.

Implementation will be carried out in two stages and be managed locally by the newly-formed Regional Player Pathway Groups to ensure implementation best overcomes local challenges. Key stakeholders from across the Academy Region have a critical role to schedule development activities and manage player programmes to ensure they are mutually supporting and not conflicting.

Please Note: The full Under 16 Pathway Strategic Review is available [here](#). The file is from a trustworthy source and opens as a pdf document.

Between May and September 2015, an information and awareness campaign will share the plan detail to ensure that everyone involved in Age Grade rugby union knows how the game will look from September 2016 onwards. Regular updates on EnglandRugby.com, in Touchline and other game communications will be key to keeping everyone informed.

A series of resources, events and support programmes will continue through to and beyond the start of the 2016-17 season. The RFU is committed to helping the game to make the changes and to be ready for kick-off in 16 months' time.

For more detail about the AGCR Implementation Action Plan, its back story and the rollout please go to www.englandrugby.com/age-grade-rugby or contact agegraderugby@rfu.com

New Rules of Play – from September 2015

A key element of the AGCR is the player progression pathway from Under 7 through to 15-a-side rugby. Relating to this, the RFU Council also agreed the rules and regulations for the 2015-16 season in April 2015. Under 11 New Rules of Play come into effect nationally from September.

In early 2015, the Independent Association of Prep Schools (IAPS), of which the vast majority of rugby-playing prep schools are members, adopted the New Rules of Play up to Under 11 for 2015-16 and at Under 12 & 13 from September 2016. IAPS and the club game are therefore aligned.

The attached table shows a summary for each age group of the game format for next season, including the discretionary age group of Under 12 and the ongoing pilots at Under 13 and 14 for information. The full rules themselves will be uploaded onto www.englandrugby.com/regulations by the end of May 2015 latest.

For more information about the New Rules of Play please contact adamcottingham@rfu.com.

Monthly “Rugby Shorts” – Positive Stories from Across the Game

Please find attached the latest “Rugby Shorts” which highlights just a few of the many positive stories from across the Game.

