



**DISABILITY
ACTION
PLAN**

2018-2021

INTRODUCTION

This action plan builds on the opportunity we have to grow the game within the 2017 – 2021 RFU Strategic Plan by “encouraging rugby and its values to flourish across England”. Especially through the ‘Grow’ and ‘People’ pillars of that plan, we aim to provide more opportunities for people; and build a sport which embraces diversity and inclusion and is renowned for excellence.

The plan sets out a series of interventions and partnerships which aim to grow participation levels within club rugby among players with different disabilities. It will enable our Constituent Bodies (CBs) to be more confident in providing rugby for those with disabilities. It will monitor the positive physical and mental health impacts and attempt to be more proactive around player welfare concerns. And, crucially, it will raise the visibility of disabled people in our sport and change perceptions of those within and outside of rugby.

The plan will reference the work that already goes on in the game to provide an environment appropriate for disabled participants, from grassroots clubs to stadia, as well as developing our areas of governance, to improve diversity and inclusion within the RFU and its Constituent Body structures.

“Activity Alliance know that being active in sport can be life changing for many disabled people. We are delighted to see that the RFU is breaking the mould and positively embracing new ways to bring more and more disabled people to the wonderful game of rugby. I am particularly pleased to see the powerful commitment to changing perceptions about disabled people in rugby and we know that this is an essential foundation for all the other tangible steps that rugby will take.

We are committed to working closely with RFU to change the reality of disability, inclusion and sport!”

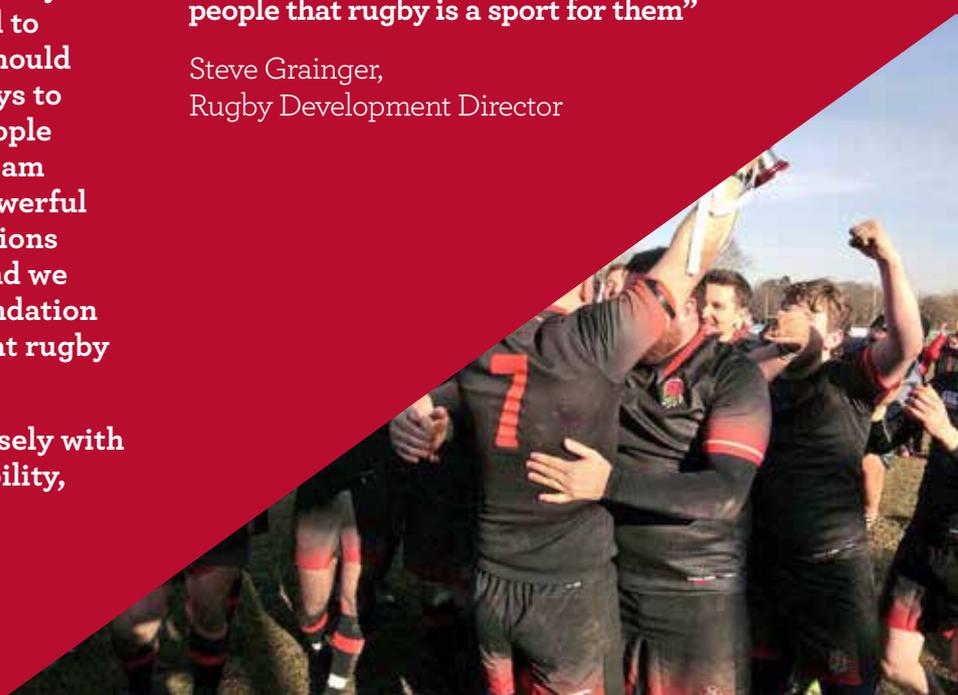
Barry Home, Chief Executive,
Activity Alliance

We want to build on long-standing partnerships and successes, as well as nurturing more recent partnerships in developing this plan. Our current partners include: Activity Alliance, IMAS, Premiership Rugby and England Deaf Rugby Union. This will ensure that rugby is a game for all, encouraging those who may not have considered the sport to try it and to give confidence to those already within the sport and to welcome and provide rugby for all.

We are delighted to be working in close partnership with Activity Alliance on the implementation of this Action Plan’. Activity Alliance brings members, partners and disabled people together to make active lives possible. Collectively, they challenge perceptions and change the reality of disability, inclusion and sport.

“We believe that rugby is a sport for all and to make absolutely sure that it is, the RFU wants to offer the warmest welcome possible to disabled people so that they can play and take part in our sport. We want to remove any perceived barriers and to encourage real diversity and inclusion, with help and encouragement for players and coaches alike. A great deal of work is already going on in our clubs, and by building on this we hope to provide more opportunities and inclusion nationwide and, with the help of this plan, to convince more and more people that rugby is a sport for them”

Steve Grainger,
Rugby Development Director



WHAT WE KNOW

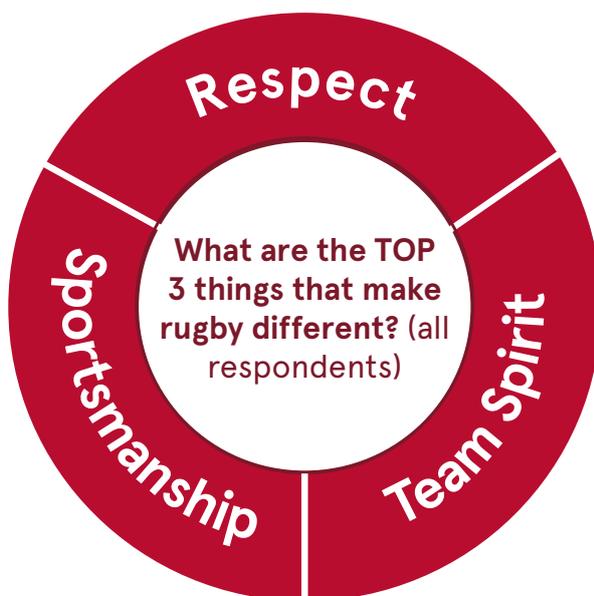
There are currently **30** Mixed Ability Rugby teams worldwide with around half in England



There are 4 England Deaf rugby teams

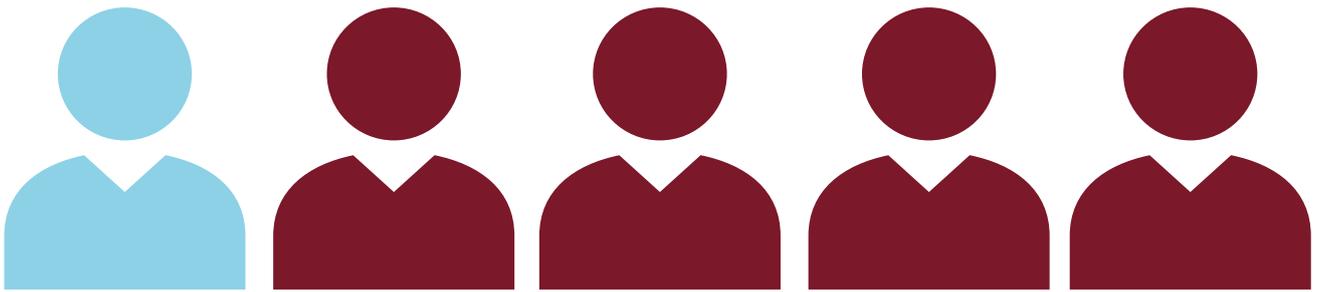
-  **WOMEN'S 15s**
-  **MEN'S 15s**
-  **WOMEN'S 7s**
-  **MEN'S 7s**

What the National Rugby Survey told us.....



5% of our rugby community state that they are disabled, compared to **21%** of the general population in England

(DWP, Family Resources Survey, 2016/17)



Almost one in five people in England have a long standing limiting disability or illness.

(Sport England; Mapping Disability – The Facts)



Six in ten disabled people claim that either not knowing about opportunities or a lack of available activities is what prevents them from taking part.

(Activity Alliance Lifestyle Report)



Seven in ten disabled people have not taken part in any physical activity in the last month compared to five in ten (48%) non-disabled people.

(Sport England APS8)

National Statistics: Disabled People in England

11.5m disabled people (21% national population)

(Sport England, Active Lives)

73% non-disabled people are open to participating with disabled people

(Activity Alliance, Lifestyle Report)

64% of disabled people prefer to participate with a mix of disabled and non-disabled people; compared with 12% who favour disability specific sessions

(Activity Alliance, Lifestyle Report)

43% disabled are inactive versus 21% non-disabled

(Sport England, Active Lives)



WHAT WILL WE DO?

AIMS:

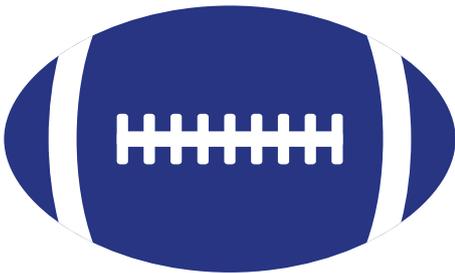
- **PERCEPTIONS**

We will change the perceptions of disabled people who think rugby is not a sport for them, and non-disabled people who think disabled people can't be involved in rugby.



- **TRAINING**

We will empower people who deliver rugby to feel as confident delivering to disabled people as they do to their non-disabled peers.



- **PLAYER SAFETY**

We will become more proactive in ensuring player safety for disabled participants. We will conduct or commission research and development, and create partnerships with specialists within sport for disabled people.





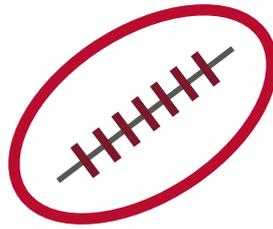
WAYS TO PLAY

These are the same as for any potential player:

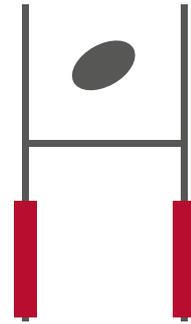
Club based 15-a-side rugby
Integrating disabled people either to mainstream, mixed ability or walking rugby



TOUCH



SEVENS



X RUGBY

Access to the same playing opportunities and player pathways as any other player

TIMELINE

MORE DISABLED PEOPLE PLAYING RUGBY

WORKFORCE TRAINING

RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

PARTNERSHIPS DEVELOPED

PARTNERSHIPS MAINTAINED

PERCEPTION CHANGE – CONTINUOUS

2018/19

2019/20

2020/2021

*NB Delivery will occur throughout the plan as research and development, and will be subject to monitoring and evaluation to aid the roll out of focussed delivery in 2020/21



PERCEPTIONS

WHAT WE KNOW

There are societal issues regarding perceptions of disability. In 2009 over a quarter of people reported believing that there was a lot of prejudice against disabled people.

Psychological barriers play the biggest role in preventing disabled people from taking part in sport. Their perception of their own abilities matters as well as others' opinions on whether the activity suits them (Activity Alliance Barriers to Participation Report).

For many disabled people, personal perceptions, bad past experiences or a lack of awareness of opportunities or possibilities that exist, contribute to a lack of confidence and self-belief which can lead to them believing they are unable to play sport, or not even considering trying sport or physical activity.

Attitudes of non-disabled people contribute either through a lack of confidence to deliver to, or even approach potential partners, a lack of awareness of the opportunities for disabled people within their sport, and the changes and adjustments required to allow them to participate. In some cases, there can be a culture of hiding behind health and safety as an excuse not to make changes.

However, there are some excellent examples across sport and rugby, which shows how positive experiences for the participant are having a significant impact.

WHAT WE WILL DO

We will work with our Constituent Bodies, member clubs, partners and stakeholders to help change the perceptions of disabled people who think rugby is not a sport for them, and non-disabled people who think disabled people can't be involved in rugby.

KEY ACTIONS: 2018-21

- We will work to gain a better knowledge of what disabled people want from rugby, consulting with those already in the game in order to create appropriate playing opportunities.
- We will use our channels and reach, using accessible and inclusive formats to tell more real life stories of disabled people taking part in rugby.
- We will grow the amount of disability specific content and engagement with a view to growing this across all England Rugby channels.

+

TRAINING

WHAT WE KNOW

Only 2% of disabled coaches (across sport) have obtained a coaching qualification since 2009. The proportion of disabled people receiving tuition or coaching is lower than the overall population and many non-disabled coaches fear getting it wrong with disabled people. This means that there is a significant gap in providing a good coaching environment for disabled people.

We know that emotional intelligence is paramount, good coaches and referees have high levels of emotional intelligence, and there are some fantastic examples of where this is happening. Feedback from those within rugby via the National Rugby Survey states inclusiveness as one of the top three things that makes rugby different from other sports.

WHAT WE WILL DO

We will empower people who deliver rugby to feel as confident delivering to disabled people as they do to non-disabled people.

KEY ACTIONS: 2018-21

- We will provide disability workforce training for RFU Development staff.
- We will support the development and delivery of training for CB and club coaches and volunteers.
- We will support the education of match officials around interpretation of the Laws in relation to players with disabilities, with the aim of also improving on-pitch communication.



PLAYER SAFETY

WHAT WE KNOW

If rugby truly aspires to be a game for all, then it is paramount that the appropriate guidance is available at national union level. However, this guidance does not cover all disabilities or, at times, full open participation to those with impairments, meaning we are reactive to individuals' needs', rather than being able to provide more guidance up front.

Many organisations use peer to peer education and training involving disabled people, and rugby has a number of positive case studies to draw upon to highlight how accessible the game is. We know that we have these examples: we have been able to encourage others to help facilitate rugby for people who may wear prescription sport goggles, have a cochlear implant or wear a prosthetic limb.

When we consider rugby for disabled people in England, we know we have a large number of players with learning difficulties. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 states "every adult has the right to make his or her own decisions and must be assumed to have capacity to do so unless it is proved otherwise".

It is the choice of an individual as to whether they take part in contact or non-contact rugby. Many individuals will live unassisted, travel to training independently, and take part in a range of activities. We need to continue to ensure that the training and match environment is safe and accessible for all, regardless of ability.

WHAT WE WILL DO

We will make rugby an accessible and attractive choice for more disabled people by conducting player safety research and development and creating partnerships with specialists within sport for disabled people.

KEY ACTIONS: 2018-21

- We will continue to work to identify areas of the game where players might be more at risk in order to mitigate those risks.
- We will improve how we develop and share information and resources on player safety.
- We will work with our colleagues across other unions and World Rugby.





ENABLER: PARTNERSHIPS

The Disability Action Plan recognises the need to maintain existing, and develop both short and long- term partnerships. These will include delivery partners, research and development partners, key rugby stakeholders, media partners and other experts in the field.

Key partnerships will need to be developed to deliver this plan and support the various areas around broader society, health and wellbeing, legislation and the Laws of the game.

CBs have an important role to play across the implementation of this plan, with examples of CBs who are supporting the growth of rugby in their areas through helping their clubs to deliver rugby to disabled people.

KEY ACTIONS: 2018-21

- We will work with other unions and World Rugby to look at how we can jointly support and promote disability rugby, and develop more inclusive guidance.
- We will form partnerships with experts in disability coaching and officiating to develop more inclusive workforce development.
- We will continue to work with a range of delivery partners to grow rugby for disabled people.

“As a player myself, I’ve seen players come together from all over the UK and the bond across all the squads is phenomenal. Both the men and women played in the first ever Deaf Rugby 7s World Cup in Australia and they found it very difficult being back at home and work with people who were not deaf aware. Being with other deaf people who understand the issues is liberating and it makes me realise how crucial the work we do is in ensuring those who are deaf and hard of hearing are included in the sport of rugby.

I hope to continue our work on spreading deaf awareness and providing a platform for deaf and hard of hearing men and women to integrate into playing rugby. I also applaud the RFU for their support for deaf rugby and for creating this Disability Action Plan to ensure that rugby welcomes and embraces diversity and inclusion and all disabled people”

Gina Iaqaaniello, Chair of England Deaf Rugby Union







England
Rugby

THE
GAME
OF OUR
LIVES

With Support from

activity
alliance

disability
inclusion
sport