



## GO PLAY RUGBY STRATEGY PAPER

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“‘Go Play Rugby’ is the single most important event in grassroots rugby in our lifetime. The game is thriving currently throughout England but this is our best chance to nourish the roots of the game to ensure a positive legacy for future generations to enjoy the game we love. With one year of concentrated effort we can lay the foundation for 100 years of rugby.”

Andrew Scoular, Community Rugby Director



## BACKGROUND

In January 2007 the RFU approved a proposal, based on the findings of a regional pilot, to conduct the single largest adult player recruitment campaign undertaken in UK sport.

The campaign; 'Go Play Rugby' delivering under the brand 'Play' represents a unique opportunity to achieve, in a groundbreaking manner, many of the RFU's critical success factors.

This document explains the overall approach 'Play' will take, provides an overview of key project elements and explains how we will measure our level of success.

## PREPARING TO RECRUIT

The clubs and the individual players, members and volunteers within those clubs are what 'Go Play Rugby' is all about.

Phase One of the initiative addresses three main challenges:

- Education
- Support
- Involvement

## EDUCATION

As the Surrey pilot identified, a crucial element for a project of this nature is to ensure that everyone involved has the appropriate knowledge and skills to fulfil their role. This education phase must be consistent and supported by secondary resources.



## SUPPORT

Clubs will receive direct support from their RDTs and indirect support from a broad range of resources made available to them including recruitment toolkits, campaign materials and a dedicated website.

(RDTs: are Regional Development Teams made up of RFU employees including Rugby Development Officers, Managers and Coaches.

## INVOLVEMENT

All clubs will be given the opportunity to participate in 'Go Play Rugby'. However, it is essential that, given the finite amount of funds available, resource is focused on clubs who have both the desire and ability to participate. Therefore to receive the complete support package clubs will be invited to complete two key commitments:

### Submission of a recruitment plan

- Working with their RDTs each club will have the opportunity to complete a short plan detailing how they intend to utilise the 'Play' initiative alongside their target recruitment levels.

### Sign up to a 'Club Commitment'

- An agreement to endeavour to meet the principles of the Club Commitment.

## DRAFT COMMITMENT

- The club will provide a welcoming environment for all new and returning players and their families and friends in the best traditions of the game.
- The club will find a game for all new players within 14 days of them expressing the desire to play (during the season).
- XYZ Rugby Club commits to deliver the agreed programme of recruitment activities as written in our action plan.



## KEY ACTIVITIES



## THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION

The most modern administration system in British sport was launched on the 6th October 2006 by the Rugby Football Union. RugbyFirst is a game-wide internet-based tool to help run rugby at all levels, with the details of more than one million coaches, referees, players and volunteers held on a single system.

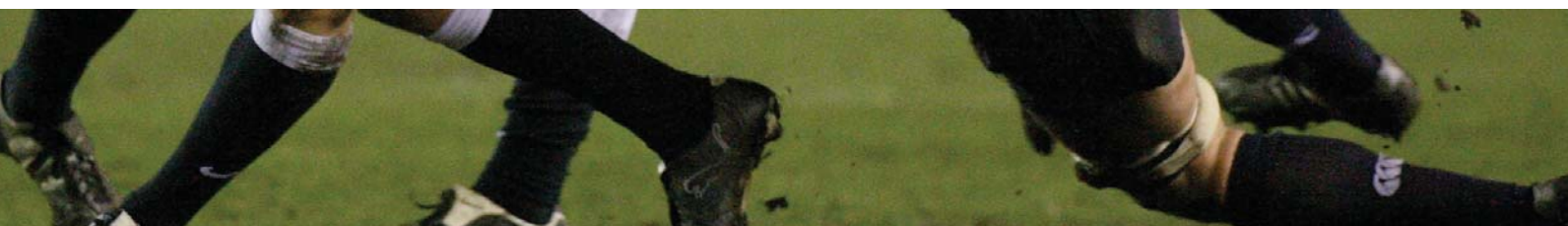
'Go Play Rugby' will utilise RugbyFirst to ensure that we gather a robust contact database of recruited players. These players will then be treated as a sample group to measure their ongoing experiences of the game and the clubs they have joined.

## MANAGING THE MESSAGE

The research outputs from the Surrey Pilot clearly indicated that people are most likely to return to the game when reminded of the enjoyment of playing alongside the health benefits rugby can bring.

The main reason for non-participation was lack of time.

Both of these themes will be tackled directly in the campaign materials.



## THE MEANING OF SUCCESS

We are aiming, with the direct support of the clubs, to recruit an additional 5,000 adult players into the game.

Research suggests that if we are equally successful in retaining these new recruits the community game will benefit from additional revenues in excess of £2.5m per year (based on average revenues of £500 per player per annum).

## ENDORSEMENT

The elite game, at International level, which many of the public relate most directly to, has evolved and continues to thrive on the platform provided through the club network. To help re-enforce the importance of the grassroots game and it's direct link to the England team, representatives from the RWC 07 squad will be used as 'Play' ambassadors.

## COMMUNICATION

Significant emphasis will be placed on the internal and club facing communications. Regular updates, supported by an awareness campaign, will be provided to all RFU staff.

Additionally the 'Play' website will provide an active 24/7 resource including RSS feeds, campaign specific news and updates.



## 'PLAY' AND THE MEDIA

Exposure in both national and regional broadcast and print media, harnessing the interest in the Rugby World Cup 07, is key to the success of the campaign.

A constant 'background' of adverts and editorial coverage focuses, unifies and motivates recruiters. It also places rugby, as a viable way to keep fit and gain enjoyment, in the minds of the public. We will seek to gain media exposure in two main ways:

### Sponsorship

The breadth of coverage and the opportunity to attach themselves to the RFU grassroots during the world cup year should enable 'Play' to secure a sponsorship arrangement that provides access to commercial television, radio and print advertising.

### PR

The media are 'content hungry' for rugby related stories in Rugby World Cup year – particularly when an alternative or audience specific theme can be pursued. 'Go Play Rugby' provides a range of ideal subject matters which we will look to exploit to the full.



## A LASTING LEGACY

Equally crucial to recruiting players is making sure we retain them – both as players and beyond.

A pre-requisite of all educational and support materials is that they can be used beyond the initial thrust of the campaign. This means that clubs will be comprehensively equipped to both continue their recruitment activities and work on keeping those recruits (and existing players) at the club.



**[goplayrugby.com](http://goplayrugby.com)**

