

## MEMORANDUM

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From: **Rob Udwin**

Date: **30<sup>th</sup> May 2010**

To: **Council**

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Subject: **Report of the Player Development Pathway Task Group**

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As you know, the consultation period following the publication of the preliminary draft report of the Player Development Pathway Task Group was launched at our last Council meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2010. The consultation has been led by Council Members, and supported by the RFU's Coach and Player Development Officers.

There have been many consultation events and meetings around the country involving relevant stakeholders, and we have had some excellent and meaningful input into the final draft of the report. There have also been key consultation meetings with both the England U18 group, and the England U16 group.

The Community Coaching and Player Development department has distilled the feedback to extract the common themes, and this document is attached for your information.

Based on this feedback, and from the key consultation meetings that have been held, we are now in a position to present to Council a final report, with firm recommendations for Council approval.

If Council does approve the report and its recommendations, the implementation timetable for the Aspirational Pathway will be:

- September to December 2010/11      No change to the status quo
- December to End of season 2010/11      Implement those recommendations we can
- Season 2011/12      Full implementation

We will however establish the two management groups that are recommended in the report as soon as possible so that work can commence to define the representative season windows discussed in the report, define player movement protocols, etc.

We will implement the recommendations that relate the Performance Pathway as soon as possible following Council Approval.

You will note from the report that we are, following the feedback received, recommending the establishment of robust windows in the playing season during which representative rugby activity (trials, training and matches) will take place. Times of the season outside of that window are reserved exclusively for clubs and schools. It is the intention to publish a Youth Structured Season incorporating those windows prior to the commencement of season 2011/12.

In outline, those windows will possibly be:

- 3 week window from mid-October
- 6 week window from mid-December
- 3 week window from mid-February
- 2 week window in late March/Early April (Easter)
- 1 week window in late April

## MEMORANDUM

The Player Development Sub-Committee of the Community Game Board will be charged with, after further consultation with the game, more exactly defining those windows ready for the publication of the 2011/12 Youth Structured Season.

I would like to thank all Council colleagues for leading the consultation, and for the high quality feedback we have received. It has been an excellent process.

Gentlemen, the report is before you, and as Chairman of the Task Group, I propose its adoption.

Kind regards,

Rob Udwin

**Chairman**

Player Development Pathway Task Group

## RFU Player Development Pathway Task Group - Summary of Consultation Feedback

Support	Concerns
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General support for two pathways</li> <li>• Move to September 1<sup>st</sup> eligibility</li> <li>• Wish not to disturb club &amp; school rugby as much as possible</li> <li>• Talent Identification audit and processes established across the game</li> <li>• Rugby is a late maturation / specialisation sport.</li> <li>• U15 Development Camp</li> <li>• Stand alone international fixtures around the country</li> <li>• Windows (robust) for representative rugby</li> <li>• Representative match preparation reduced</li> <li>• County representative activity window 2 windows October – January</li> <li>• Divisional Rugby preparation rationalised</li> <li>• England 18 Clubs &amp; Schools Team</li> <li>• England 18s be termed England Counties U18s</li> <li>• Establishing two working Groups under the Player Development Sub-Committee</li> <li>• No representative activity should take place prior to the October ½ term</li> <li>• Establishing an England Counties 20s Team</li> <li>• Eligibility criteria for U20s</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proposals to restrict ‘aspirational’ 16 &amp; 18 G trials to school holidays 1/2 term.</li> <li>• Rigid windows in December / January for 16 &amp; 18 CB games &amp; contradiction surrounding January</li> <li>• Ability / skills / training / expertise of Elite department to fulfil educational mentoring of young players</li> <li>• Easter Holiday proposals – there are up to three different types of Easter vacation now adopted by schools / LEAs</li> <li>• Divisional representative preparation in ½ term – lack of commonality across the country.</li> <li>• Limiting 2 development/preparation sessions per representative match</li> <li>• A minimum of 3 matches at CB level for U14-U16s is appropriate.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role of England U20s Counties, what purpose does it serve?</li> <li>• How U20s fits in with club league demands for players – creates more tension</li> <li>• Needs to be structured same time as senior CB XV</li> <li>• U20s Divisional single day Festival impractical</li> <li>• Additional match for England Students</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection / identification at U13 for SoR is far too young – the report is contradictory by establishing Rugby is a late specialisation sport but seeks earlier identification.</li> <li>• U13 SoR identification is largely taking place in the U12 year.</li> <li>• Quality of the SoR programme &amp; consistency</li> <li>• U15s SoR Festival – will there be sufficient quality players and players in each position?</li> <li>• SoR coaches should not necessarily enforced to be CB coach – different skills sets</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of Talent ID by coaches &amp; Selectors</li> <li>• Medical personnel are referred to as volunteers but these are usually “employed” by CBs / Divisions</li> <li>• Elite department providing templates for match preparation</li> <li>• Aspirational pathway for coaches essential – properly administered recruitment &amp; appointment protocols &amp; mentoring.</li> <li>• AASE Leagues/Teams</li> </ul>
<b>Issues Requiring further clarification</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Budgets per recommendation</li> <li>• Protocols for interaction between Elite Rugby &amp; Community Game (exit routes &amp; ID late developer)</li> <li>• Elite Rugby – does it include Academies</li> <li>• Rationale for losing the England U16s A</li> <li>• Greater resources to ensure the U20s process works from club to CB to Division to England</li> <li>• Promote / clarify two pathways to all stakeholders</li> <li>• Why England Students have increased their games to four, whilst the 18s &amp; 20s are limited to one game.</li> <li>• Clarify role of EPDG and its links to CB Schools of Rugby</li> </ul>	

# **RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION**

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

*May 2010*

**REPORT OF THE  
PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

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# **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. The RFU Management Board resolved in autumn 2009 to convene a Task Group to examine its player development pathway. Appendix A contains the Terms of Reference and composition of the group.
2. The objective of the group was “To determine the most effective player development pathway covering all age groups to achieve ongoing success in elite and community rugby in England.”
3. Four meetings of the Task Group were held in early 2010 to produce a preliminary draft report for consultation.
4. Consultation events were held around the country facilitated by Council members and supported by the Coach & Player Development Department of the Community Rugby Directorate.
5. Feedback from the consultation has now been incorporated into the preliminary draft to arrive at this final report.

## **TWO PATHWAYS**

6. The group proposes that we establish two separate pathways appropriate for the two emerging types of participant.
7. Professional rugby, like any other major international sport, requires its participants to experience exceptional coaching, conditioning, strength, nutrition, and psychological support if they are to be successful.
8. Very few players will become professional. Those being identified with the potential should be placed on a development path that is commensurate with the demands of a high performance sport.
9. Player development of potential professional players should be carried out by knowledgeable and experienced professional elite athlete development experts – most of whom will have participated in sport at a high level.
10. Rugby is a late maturation & specialisation sport and so talented exponents (in any position) may be identified later than with most other sports.
11. It is therefore important to ensure that we have the programmes and mechanisms in place to:
  - Ensure mass participation in the sport from an early age
  - Keep as many players enthusiastically participating in the sport as possible while they grow to physical & emotional maturity
  - Identify those that have the potential to progress to the elite level
  - Deliver specialised training to players of potential to ensure early development of skills and understanding
  - Provide a “safety net” to catch late developing potential professional players

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

12. To achieve this, it is essential that there is a large and enthusiastic cadre of volunteers at all levels.
13. To retain players, coaches, referees and administrators, in the sport, they must be able to aspire to achieve their potential, whatever that might be.
14. For many people, aspirations involve representative rugby at various levels.
15. An aspirational programme is different to that required to develop the most talented participants to elite professional level. While both pathways should always interface, the aspirational programme should not impact detrimentally on the needs of the most talented.
16. From the above, the group felt it reasonable to conclude that there are two distinct development pathways in the modern game in England:
  - A high performance pathway, producing full-time professional rugby players, some of whom will achieve full international honours, and be the stars of the future. We are proposing that this will be designated the Performance Pathway.
  - A community pathway that allows every player to reach his/her potential, raises standards, enriches the game, and which attracts and retains players, coaches, referees and administrators. We are proposing that this will be designated the Aspirational Pathway.
17. However, neither the Performance Pathway nor the Aspirational Pathway can exist, nor should exist, in isolation, and they will interface and inter-relate to each other. Player “movement” between the pathways should be subject to specific protocols controlling such movement. We are proposing that these protocols be devised by the Player Development Sub-Committee of the Community Game Board.
18. One of the key proposals is that all representative rugby preparation and matches on the Aspirational Pathway takes place in discrete windows during the season. This will provide clubs, schools, Counties and other stakeholders certainty as to when this activity will take place, and allow for better planning. These windows will be part of the Youth Structured Season that will be published each year, one year in advance of the season to which it applies.
19. The Task Group believes that it is important and incumbent on all involved in the programmes discussed in this document to manage the aspirations of participants to ensure they are appropriate for the stage of development reached by each participant.
20. The main body for this report concerns the male game. There is a separate section to cover the women’s and girls’ game.

### **Recommendation**

- 1. Through extensive promotion, ensure that the game understands and accepts the rationale & processes for two distinct development pathways.**
- 2. Establish discrete windows during the season for representative rugby preparation and matches, and publish these as part of a Youth Structured Season one year in advance.**

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

### **THE PERFORMANCE PATHWAY**

21. Having proposed that there is a distinct Performance Pathway, the following paragraphs outline the form this will take.

#### **U13 – School Year 8**

22. This is the first year of the CB Schools of Rugby (SoR), and the age where the first large scale talent “trawl” takes place.
23. From an Elite Rugby point of view, there is no particular activity needed. However, the group believes it is important that talent identification capability is enhanced and developed further in clubs and schools to ensure that the right pupils are enrolled in the SoR.
24. County personnel have an important role to play to ensure this talent identification trawl is as effective as possible ensuring talented athletes from other disciplines have the opportunity to participate. Selection for the SoR should not take place earlier than Christmas of the U13 season to allow players to remain within their clubs and schools for longer.

#### **Recommendation**

- 3. Establish consistent and effective talent identification criteria and practices for County Development Squads, Schools of Rugby, Divisional and National teams. These models to be propagated to the wider coaching & selector community.**

#### **U14 – School Year 9**

25. It is at this age that players first start to really demonstrate talent and elite potential.
26. It is our view that the players in the SoR with the most potential should be identified through effective practice and placed into England Rugby Regional Academy Elite Player Development Groups (EPDGs) (where they will receive regular special attention), as determined by the Academy Manager based on recommendations from CBs. This will normally be a small number of players from each SoR.
27. The England National Academy coaches should visit each England Rugby Regional Academy, and provide some special coaching for the U14 Elite Player Development Group players from that Academy (each Academy has outreach programmes to minimise travelling as applicable). This would assist the Elite Rugby Department to start identifying the players with future elite potential.
28. Academies will be required to establish EPDG programmes in such a way to minimise travelling time and disruption to the identified player’s school and family life.
29. Some consistency is required to ensure that each Academy’s EPDG programme complements the requirements of both the Performance and Aspirational pathways.

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

### **Recommendations**

- 4. Take appropriate steps to identify and enrol the most talented U14 SoR pupils in EPDGs, and ensure they receive regular specialised development and coaching from Academy coaches and occasionally England National Academy coaches.**
- 5. The Player Development Sub-Committee of the Community Game Board establish protocols to guide the provision of EPDGs to ensure they complement the two pathways.**

### **U15 – School Year 10**

30. School of Rugby activity will continue, as will EPDG activity.
31. We are proposing that SoR players should join other county players and participate in three county U15 matches during the designated representative rugby window. This important activity will allow England Rugby Regional Academy and CB SoR coaches to watch players in action.
32. In May of each U15 year, the Elite Department will organise a 12-a-side tournament, with each England Rugby Regional Academy entering one team. These teams would mostly, but not exclusively, be made up of participants in the EPDGs. This would allow the Elite Department Coaches to identify the most talented players at this age group.
33. From the 12-a-side tournament, 35 players would be identified by the Elite Department to participate in an Under 15 development camp. This would be held in August. Its purpose is to give this group of exceptionally talented players opportunities to further develop alongside players of similar ability and to benchmark progress.
34. An August Under 15 Development Camp would be an important community coach development opportunity, enabling particularly SoR coaches and county development squad coaches to receive tuition.

### **Recommendations**

- 5. SoR players participate in three county U15 matches during the designated representative window.**
- 6. The Elite Department run an England Rugby Regional Academy U15 12-a-side festival in May each year.**
- 7. The Elite Department run an U15 development camp in August each year for the 35 players with the greatest potential. This will also be a community-based coach development opportunity.**

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### **U16 – School year 11**

35. This is the first year where it is proposed that players with elite potential are effectively removed from the community game representative rugby structures.
36. The Elite Department would name an England Academy U17 squad, based on a 1<sup>st</sup> January birth date. This squad would have no more than 26 players.
37. Some of these players will be U16 based on a 1<sup>st</sup> September birth date. It is expected that this will be a small number of players (around 5) as determined by the Elite Rugby Department.
38. The playing and development programmes of these named players would be the responsibility of the Elite Rugby Department with the majority of the work being in development camps, culminating in two or three International games towards the end of the Season. Involvement in this programme would exclude them from any other representative programme.
39. Players would be named by 1<sup>st</sup> September of the year in question, with amendments being made to the squad in early January (in line with the announcement of the EPS). Player “movement” resulting from this later announcement would be subject to agreed protocols, established by the Player Development Sub-Committee of the Community Game Board (Recommendation 2).
40. Named players would not be “parachuted” back into any other representative teams on an *ad-hoc* basis, with the disruption this can cause, without agreement.
41. The Elite Department would assume responsibility for the pastoral care of these players, consulting experts to ensure that the programme is appropriate for each player with regard to their school and family life, and development as a “rounded” person.
42. The pastoral care programme will be proposed by the Elite Rugby Department, and agreed and “signed-off” by the relevant sub-committees of the Community Game Board to ensure clarity and transparency.

### **Recommendations**

- 8. The Elite Department would twice a year name an England Academy U17 squad of no more than 26 players based on a 1<sup>st</sup> January birth date.**
- 9. The playing, development and pastoral programmes of the named players would be the responsibility of the Elite Rugby Department. They would ensure the programme is appropriate for each player with regard to their school and family life, and development as a “rounded” person. The Elite Rugby Department will agree the pastoral care programme with the relevant sub-committee of the Community Game Board.**
- 10. These players would not be included in any community game representative rugby structures.**

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

### **U17 – School year 12**

43. By this age group, the players on the Performance Pathway are well established.
44. This age group may comprise some players who are in the England Academy U17 squad, and in the England U18 squad.
45. The Elite Department would assume responsibility for the pastoral care of these players, consulting experts to ensure that the programme is appropriate for each player with regard to their school and family life, and development as a “rounded” person.
46. The pastoral care programme will be proposed by the Elite Rugby Department, and agreed and “signed-off” by the relevant sub-committees of the Community Game Board to ensure clarity and transparency.

#### **Recommendations**

- 11. The playing, development and pastoral programmes of the named players would be the responsibility of the Elite Rugby Department. They would ensure the programme is appropriate for each player with regard to their school and family life, and development as a “rounded” person. The Elite Rugby Department will agree a pastoral care programme with the relevant sub-committee of the Community Game Board.**

### **U18 – School year 13**

47. The Elite Rugby Department would name an England U18 squad based on a birth date of 1<sup>st</sup> January.
48. This squad should contain 32 players who will be named by 1<sup>st</sup> September of the year in question. This will be reduced to 26 players following announcement of an amended squad in early January. Player “movement” resulting from this later announcement would be subject to agreed protocols, to be determined by the Player Development Sub-Committee of the Community Game Board.
49. This squad may contain both U17 and U18 players.
50. The Elite Department would assume responsibility for the pastoral care of these players, consulting experts to ensure that the programme is appropriate for each player with regard to their school and family life, and development as a “rounded” person.
51. The pastoral care programme will be proposed by the Elite Rugby Department, and agreed and “signed-off” by the relevant sub-committees of the Community Game Board to ensure clarity and transparency.

#### **Recommendations**

- 12. The Elite Department will name 32 players for an England U18 squad by 1<sup>st</sup> September based on a 1<sup>st</sup> January birth date. This would be reduced to 26 players following announcement of an amended squad in early January.**

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- 13. The playing, development and pastoral programmes of the named players would be the responsibility of the Elite Rugby Department. They would ensure the programme is appropriate for each player with regard to their school and family life, and development as a “rounded” person. A pastoral care programme will be developed by the Elite Rugby Department and agreed with the relevant sub-committee of the Community Game Board.**
- 14. These players would not be included in any community game representative rugby structures.**

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

### **THE ASPIRATIONAL PATHWAY**

52. The following paragraphs set out the details of and preliminary recommendations for the Aspirational Pathway as proposed by the Task Group.
53. The recommendations are set out with the purpose of creating programmes that raise standards and enrich the community game in England by providing opportunities to players, coaches and administrators.
54. By raising standards and enriching the game, we would ensure that rugby is a better and more attractive sport, able to compete more aggressively with other recreational activity, and greatly aiding the long-term retention of participants.
55. As things stand, the game in England experiences severe player drop-off leading into school year 12 (under 17), and as players leave school and start working, take gap years, and go to higher education establishments away from home (under 19). We believe the programmes laid out below provide an extra tool to ensure we keep young players in the game as they progress through life.
56. One of the prime objectives of the recommendations is to remove as much tension from our structures as possible. Tension currently exists over player availability due to conflicting requirement to participate in school rugby, club rugby, and representative rugby. The Task Group has attempted to structure the season to ensure that tension is significantly reduced. In doing so, we believe it would be necessary to create a Youth Structured Season where activity is, from a representative rugby point of view, carried out in set “windows” during the season.
57. To further raise standards throughout the game, and relieve tensions, the group contends that most young players will receive most of their development most of the time in their clubs or schools and with their peer group. To achieve this, the group believes it is a collective responsibility on us all to devote human and financial resources, and work assiduously to raise coaching standards in clubs and schools, and to remove players from clubs and schools for other activity as infrequently as possible.
58. The Aspirational Pathway provides opportunities to recognise and reward talented players within the community game, and is no longer the primary vehicle for identifying players for the Performance Pathway. Accordingly it is important to prepare players sufficiently at each level to ensure they find the experience rewarding and a balance between preparation and playing needs to be reached at each level (county, divisional & England).
59. It is important that an aspirational pathway is established in parallel for coaches and administrators. We recommend that appointment and mentoring processes supported by the Coach & Player Development Department are established to provide succession planning between each level, particularly for coaches.
60. As we have already discussed, rugby football is a late maturation & specialisation sport, and so the programmes we create must provide a “safety net” for late developing potential elite players to ensure that exceptional talent is not missed. To that end, there must be various points where the two pathways touch.
61. All activity in this Aspirational Pathway is based on a 1<sup>st</sup> September birth date.

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

62. The Performance and Aspirational Pathways separate at U16 (school year 11). The recommendations below consequently deal only with the game from this age group.

### **Recommendations**

- 15) The Youth Structured Season should require County, Divisional and National representative rugby activity (training and matches) to be carried out only in set “windows”.**
- 16) All activity in this Aspirational Pathway is based on a 1<sup>st</sup> September birth date.**
- 17) We recommend that appointment and mentoring processes supported by the Coach & Player Development Department be established to provide succession planning between each level.**

### **U16 – School year 11**

63. The Task Group has set out to separate school and club activity from representative activity. It is recognised that the majority of school rugby takes place in the 1<sup>st</sup> term of the school year, and only during term time. There is also a need to support club rugby at this age group by not removing players in the early part of the season to allow clubs to get their season established. To this end, we need to ensure that all representative rugby activity (trials, preparation & matches) takes place during set ‘representative windows’.
64. Representative rugby will comprise trials, preparation & matches at County, and Divisional level, culminating in the same for an England U16 team.
65. The activity in this area would not include players named in the England Academy U17 squad as described in the Performance Pathway (paragraph 36).
66. The proposed structure of the season would be:
- County representative activity (trials, preparation & matches) would commence from mid-October. It would continue within two designated windows in October, and then in December and January. This would include selection for U16 Divisional squads at the end of January.
  - Divisional preparation would take place from mid-February in a specified three week window which will include a Divisional Festival providing opportunities to select:
    - An England U16 squad, and
    - England North U16 & England South U16 squads.
  - The final week in the Divisional window will include preparation time for the above three squads.
  - An International Festival (Wellington) will take place at Easter and include the above three squads. The North and South squads would participate in the festival, and the England squad would spend time in a preparation camp for one match at the end of the Festival.

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- One further stand-alone fixture will take place following the International Festival for England U16.
67. In suggesting this programme it must be noted that:
- The purpose of county rugby at this age should be for providing opportunities to non-SoR players, the benchmarking of SoR players' progress, and providing a showcase for Divisional selection. It is important to prepare players sufficiently at each level to ensure they find the experience rewarding and are afforded the opportunity for selection to the next level. Preparation should be kept to a minimum with no more than two to three training/preparation sessions recommended before each match. (The Player Development sub-committee of the Community Game Board will develop a match preparation framework / guidelines for all representative rugby.)
  - It is recommended that SoR coaches are part of the county squad coaching and/or player assessment structure to ensure consistency.
  - The purpose of Divisional Rugby at this age is to provide a showcase for England U16 selection. It is important to prepare players sufficiently at each level to ensure they find the experience rewarding and are afforded the opportunity for selection to the next level .
  - The primary purpose of the England U16 team would focus on providing an aspirational opportunity for players, coaches and administrators. Such preparation should be appropriate for this purpose as outlined earlier. It should be understood that the England U16 team will no longer be the primary vehicle for identification and selection for the Performance Pathway.
68. The group believes the structure outlined above also fits with the girls' programme at U16, and so a cohesive Aspirational Pathway for both genders would be achieved.
69. The England team at this age group would be called "England U16".
70. The Under 16 Divisional and National representative playing programme would be facilitated by the Tournaments and Competitions Department and delivered by ERFSU 16 Group personnel who would actively engage Clubs personnel in this process.

### **Recommendations**

- 18) U16 County squad activity (trials, preparation and matches) would take place during two set windows, one in October, and one in December to the end of January. There will be no more than 4 county matches.**
- 19) CB SoR coaches should be integrated into the County squad coaching and/or player assessment structure.**
- 20) Divisional Rugby will take place in a three week window from mid-February and include selection for England 16 and England North and England South U16 squads.**
- 21) An International Festival (Wellington) will take place at Easter with the England North and South squads participating, and the England U16 squad preparing for one match at the end of the festival.**

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

**22) One further stand-alone fixture for England U16 will take place following the International Festival.**

### **U17 – School year 12**

71. County Development squad activity would continue for this age group.
72. There would be no Divisional or National representative rugby at this age group in the Aspirational Pathway.

### **U18 – School year 13**

73. As with the U16 programme, the Task Group has sought to remove tensions from the U18 programme by establishing set windows during the season for representative rugby.
74. It is recommended that Representative rugby at this age group will comprise of county preparation & matches and Divisional rugby, culminating in an England U18 Clubs & Schools team.
75. Only players who participate in U18 County representative squads would be eligible for upward selection.
76. Note that the activity in this area would not include the 32 players named in the Elite Department's England U18 squad (paragraph 47).
77. It is possible that there will be tensions between CBs, AASE Colleges and England Rugby Regional Academies surrounding player release for county squads. For the avoidance of doubt, all players except those named in the England U18 squad would be eligible for the programme laid out here. However, it is important to recognise that participation in county squads would be a matter of individual choice for each player.
78. The Youth Structured Season would incorporate AASE league matches, which should take place only outside of the representative windows.
79. It is incumbent on all involved in county squads to drive up the quality of the programme and ensure provision is of the highest standards in terms of coaching, medical provision, playing facilities, administration and communication.
80. The structure of the U18 representative season would be:
  - County representative activity (trials, preparation & matches) would commence from mid-October. It would continue within two designated windows in October, and then in December and January. This will include divisional trials and selection at the end of January.
  - Divisional preparation would take place during the representative window in February with no Divisional matches played at this time.
  - Two Divisional matches would be played during the early part of the Easter representative window providing a showcase for England U18 Clubs & Schools selection.

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- There would be one England U18 Clubs & Schools match during the designated representative window towards the end of April.
81. In outlining this proposed programme it must be noted that:
- The purpose of county rugby at this age is to provide a showcase for Divisional selection, and provide further development for the players involved. It is important to prepare players sufficiently at this level to ensure they find the experience rewarding and are afforded the opportunity for selection to the next level. Therefore preparation should be kept to a minimum – no more than two to three training/preparation sessions before each match. (The Player Development sub-committee of the Community Game Board will develop a match preparation framework / guidelines for all representative rugby.)
  - The purpose of Divisional Rugby at this age is to provide a showcase for England U18 Clubs & Schools selection. It is important to prepare players sufficiently at this level to ensure they find the experience rewarding and are afforded the opportunity for selection to the next level
  - The primary purpose of the England U18 Clubs & Schools team would now focus on providing an aspirational opportunity for players, coaches and administrators. As such preparation should be appropriate for this purpose, i.e., no more than two/three training/preparation days before a match. It should be understood that the England U18 Clubs & Schools team will no longer be the primary vehicle for identification and selection for the Performance Pathway.
82. There are player insurance issues for participation in representative rugby at this age which would need to be addressed by the Tournaments and Competitions Department.

### **Recommendations**

- 23) U18 County squad activity (trials, preparation and matches) would take place during two set windows, one in October, and one in December to the end of January. There will be no more than 4 county matches.**
- 24) Divisional squad preparation will be scheduled within a set representative window during February.**
- 25) Two divisional matches to be played during the Easter representative window.**
- 26) An England U18 Clubs & Schools team would be selected from the two divisional matches, and would play one match by the end of April.**
- 27) There should be a limit of three match training/preparation sessions before each representative match in the programme laid out above.**
- 28) All players except for those named in the England U18 squad would be eligible for county squads, divisional squads and the England U18 Clubs & Schools team.**

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

### **Under 20**

83. The Task Group accepted that U20 County Championship rugby has real value in creating interest, enriching the Community Game, driving up quality and aiding retention of all participants.
84. It was agreed that the U20 County Championship would be greatly strengthened by the aspirations created if there was an England representative team at this age, with players having to have played in the County Championship to be eligible. This team would be designated the England Counties U20.
85. Only England qualified players would be eligible for selection.
86. The England Counties U20 squad would play one fixture per annum towards the end of the season.
87. There would be a single day Divisional Festival to provide players with an additional opportunity to showcase their talents to the England Counties U20 selectors. Travel and the Festival would be on a single day; no overnight accommodation would be provided.
88. Players would only be selected for the four Divisional squads from the County Championship.
89. Players would only be selected for the England Counties U20 team from the Divisional Festival.
90. Only players at clubs from level 3 in the league structure and below would be eligible for the U20 County Championship. England Rugby Regional Academy scholars would not be eligible.
91. The window for County U20 fixtures will be based around weekends with reduced club-league activity.

### **Recommendations**

- 29) There should be an England Counties U20 squad playing one match per annum towards the end of the season and selected from County Championship matches and a single-day Divisional Festival.**
- 30) To be eligible for selection, players would have to participate in the U20 County Championship, and be England qualified.**
- 31) Only players from clubs at level 3 and below would be eligible for selection to the County Championship squads. England Rugby Regional Academy scholars would not be eligible.**
- 32) County U20 fixtures and the Divisional Festival should complement club league activity**
- 33) There should be a limit of two match training/preparation sessions before each representative match in the programme laid out above.**

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

### **England Students**

92. Student rugby is an increasingly important component of the community game as the number of students continues to increase year on year. It is imperative that we have programmes in all universities to ensure we retain as many young men and women in the game as possible.
93. As with the other programmes discussed as part of the Aspirational Pathway, it is clear that an England Students' team has an important role to play in enriching the student rugby experience, recognising the quality of student rugby, providing aspirations for young players with a view to improving participant retention, and providing a safety net for late maturing players.
94. Currently, the England Students team plays three matches. The Task Group believes that this might be increased to four to further raise aspirations in this sector.
95. The Task Group notes that there is an emerging Further Education Colleges setup in England. Representative rugby for players in Colleges up to the U18 year should be provided by County, Divisional and England U18 Clubs & Schools rugby.
96. Representative rugby opportunities for College students from U19 should be provided by the England Students.
97. The Task Group recommends that Student Rugby Football Union (SRFU) and the Elite Rugby Department enter into a dialogue to agree how universities can better support the Academy structure, and vice versa. However, it was accepted that student rugby is very much part of the community game, and not part of the Performance Pathway.

### **Recommendations**

- 34) Continue with an England Students team, playing a minimum of three matches.**
- 35) SRFU and Elite Rugby to discuss and agree how universities can better support the Academy structure, and vice versa.**

### **Proposed Management Structures**

98. It is recommended that budgets to support the Aspirational Pathway activity laid out above are held by the Community Rugby Department, and that the programmes are facilitated by the Tournaments and Competitions Department.
99. It is recommended there be two Working Groups reporting to the Player Development Sub-Committee of the CGB. They would be to oversee the policies for, and volunteer personnel involved in, the England squads outlined above. These would be as follows:
- Community Age-Grade Representative Rugby Working Group. This would take responsibility for the England U16 and the England U18 Clubs & Schools programmes.
  - Community Adult Representative Rugby Working Group. This would take responsibility for the England Counties U20, the England Students, and England Counties XV programmes.

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

100. Each age group programme would have a Delivery Team associated with it, who would do the work required to select and field the representative team. This would vary depending on the requirements of each programme, but might contain a Manager, Assistant Manager, Coaches, Medics, Chairman of Selectors and Selectors.
101. Proposed Terms of Reference for the Working Groups can be found at Appendix B

### **Recommendations**

- 36) Budgets to support the Aspirational Pathway activity laid out above would be held by the Community Rugby Department, and the programmes would be facilitated by the Tournaments and Competitions Department.**
- 37) There should be two Working Groups reporting to the Player Development Sub-Committee of the CGB to oversee the policies for, and volunteer personnel involved in the England squads outlined above.**
- 38) Each programme would have a delivery team responsible for selecting and fielding its representative team.**

### **Other Recommendations**

102. There are some other general recommendations, which the Task Group wish to make. These are shown below.

### **Recommendations**

- 39. All County, Divisional and England teams in the Aspirational Pathway would provide details (name and date of birth) of all players involved in their squads for each match to the Tournaments and Competitions Department. T&C would maintain a database of those players, and track their progress in the Game to enable the RFU to assess the impact of these programmes on player retention.**
- 40. The recommendations made in this document would be reviewed after two complete years of operation to ensure that they are still appropriate for the game. This review would have the power to amend, remove or make further recommendations as necessary.**

### **PROPOSED WOMEN'S & GIRLS' PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY**

103. The structure outlined above is similar to the existing Player Development Pathway within women's and girls' rugby, and thus a cohesive pathway for both genders will be achieved.
104. County rugby (CB squads) would become a formal part of the Player Pathway.
105. It is suggested that regional rugby be replaced by Divisional rugby (South West, London & South East, Midlands, North) at U15, U18 and Senior age groups.
106. Divisional rugby should incorporate both player development and competition.

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

107. National level programmes would be provided for the most talented players in all age groups.
108. The club programme should be supported through RFUW calendar changes.

### **Under 15**

109. Players U13, U14 and U15 at 1<sup>st</sup> September.
110. Selection for Divisional Squads would be from CB Festival or nomination (depending on age-group).
111. Where a CB festival does not take place, selection would be through an open trial in January.
112. Divisional Rugby: weekend training sessions Feb and March. Divisional matches would take place within a Divisional festival (or its equivalent) during the Easter school holidays.
113. Following U15 Divisional trials (January) individual player development sessions would be delivered through the Schools of Rugby programme (where feasible).
114. There should be an agreed Summer divisional programmes, to be run in June, July or August.
115. Selection for National U15 programmes would take place during the Divisional programme.
116. The National U15 Talent Development Group (TDG) would be delivered in conjunction with the U18 TDG programme. It is anticipated that U15 TDG programme would mirror the U18 programme in terms of content and the focus on individual core and unit skills development. The development programme would be modified in accordance with the Long Term Athlete Development model (LTAD) and consideration given to the physical and mental development of the athletes involved.
117. Players would be selected into the U15 National Talent Development Group (TDG) from the U15 Divisional Squads. Players would be assessed during Divisional training and matches and at Divisional camps prior to the National TDG camp. Players would be invited to attend an U15 National TDG Camp in the summer of each year. Approximately 30 U15 players would be selected in to the U15 TDG.

### **Under 18**

118. Players U16, U17 and U18 at 1<sup>st</sup> September.
119. It is proposed that selection for Divisional Squads would derive from CB Festival or nomination (depending on age-group). Where a CB festival does not take place, selection would be through an open trial in January.
120. For divisional rugby it is suggested that weekend training sessions would take place in Feb and March. Divisional matches would take place within a Divisional festival (or its equivalent) during the Easter school holidays.
121. It is recommended that there be agreed Summer divisional programmes, to be run in June, July or August.

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

122. Additional skills sessions would be delivered at sub-Divisional level (two per division, dependant of geographical location of players) in between January and August.
123. Selection for National programmes would take place during the Divisional programme.
124. The development of talented U18 players is vital to the overall success of the England Women's Rugby and the pathway as a whole. The U18 Talent Development Group (TDG) should remain in place with a slightly revised format and would continue to be an integral part of the player development programme.
125. The TDG provides the very best players and the players identified with potential to progress further along the pathway with further development opportunities. The TDG programme also provides recognition and kudos for aspiring players.
126. Players would be selected into the National Talent Development Group (TDG) from the U18 Divisional Squads. Players would be assessed during Divisional training and matches and at Divisional camps prior to the National TDG camp. Players would be invited to attend an U18 National TDG Camp in the summer of each year. Approximately 30 players, aged 15, 16 and 17 years old (on the 1<sup>st</sup> September) would be selected in to the U18 TDG.

### **Senior**

127. Players 18+ at 1<sup>st</sup> September.
128. Selection for Divisional Squads would take place at a CB Festival or through nomination (depending on age-group).
129. Where a CB festival does not take place, selection would be through an open trial in January.
130. For divisional rugby there would be weekend training sessions comprising 5 sessions in Feb and March. This would include three games against the other divisions.
131. There should be agreed Summer divisional programmes, to be run in June, July or August.
132. Additional skills sessions would be delivered at sub-Divisional level (two per division, dependant of geographical location of players) in between January and August.
133. Selection for Super 4's would take place during the divisional programme.

# **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

## **APPENDIX A – TASK GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE**

### **RFU PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

To determine the most effective player development pathway covering all age groups to achieve ongoing success in elite and community rugby in England.

#### **TERMS OF REFERENCE:**

1. Determine the optimum elite performance player development pathway to achieve the greatest continued international success.
2. Determine the optimum community rugby player development pathway that will raise standards throughout the game, improve the retention of players in the adult game, and increase the participation of players, coaches, match officials, medics and volunteer administrators actively involved in the game.
3. Determine the interfaces between the elite performance pathway and the community development pathway, and how these will interact and operate.
4. Determine what programmes and representative teams are required to support the elite performance and community development pathways, taking into account all relevant factors such as education, maturity, season structure, etc.
5. Ensure that the competitive programme that supports the elite performance and community development pathways meets the needs and expectations of players and all other stakeholders.
6. Formulate and recommend for approval, policies to achieve the above.
7. Recommend changes to management structures to the CEO and/or Management Board as appropriate to ensure delivery of the agreed policies.

#### **COMPOSITION:**

Robert Udwin (Chairman)

Rob Andrew

Chris Kelly

Stuart Lancaster

Bob Reeves

Andrew Scoular

Paul Jackson

Terry Burwell

Robin Wannop

Rosie Williams

Malcolm Ross

Elisa Blackborough (Secretary)

Fred Batchelor

# **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

## **APPENDIX B – COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE RUGBY WORKING GROUPS**

### **Community Age-Grade Representative Rugby Working Group**

This group will report to the Player Development Sub-Committee of the Community Game Board, and will be responsible for the England U16 and England U18 Clubs & Schools programmes.

#### **Objective:**

Make recommendations on policies and strategies that enable England Age Grade Representative Teams (outside of the auspices of the Elite Rugby Department) to achieve the agreed outcomes of the RFU's Player Development Pathway; ensuring that the core values of the sport are applied at all times.

#### **Terms of Reference:**

1. To determine a rolling three-year playing programme for all Community England age-grade representative teams
2. To ensure that there is an adequate competition structure at CB and Divisional level to support all Community England age-grade representative teams;
3. To make representation to CGB through PDC in respect of budgets for all Community England and Divisional age-grade activity.
4. To confirm the appointments of and regularly review the performance of the Team Manager, Chairman of Selectors, medical personnel and Coaches of Community England U16 and U18 age-grade teams.
5. To ensure that the core values of the sport are promoted and maintained throughout the community game as an aid to participation and retention.
6. Receive and approve proposals from the Elite Department for pastoral care for 16 & 18 Group players.

### **Community Age-Grade Representative Rugby Delivery Team**

There will be one of these teams for the England U16s, and 1 for the England U18 Clubs & Schools. The team for the England U16s will comprise personnel from the ERFSU in the majority.

#### **Objective:**

To manage and oversee the delivery of match programmes for the [team] including selection and preparation for all matches.

#### **Terms of Reference:**

1. To manage the delivery of [age grade] representative rugby, including trials and matches;
2. To make recommendations to the Community Age-Grade Representative Rugby Working Group in respect of appointments of Team Manager, Chairman of Selectors, Coaches and other relevant personnel.
3. To assist the Community Age-Grade Representative Rugby Working Group in the preparation of playing programmes and budgets

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

### **Community Adult Representative Rugby Working Group**

This group will report to the Player Development Sub-Committee of the Community Game Board, and will be responsible for the England Counties U20, England Students, and England Counties XV programmes

#### **Objective:**

Make recommendations on policies and strategies that enable England Adult Representative Teams (outside of the auspices of the Elite Rugby department) to achieve the agreed outcomes of the RFU's Player Development Pathway; ensuring that the core values of the sport are applied at all times.

#### **Terms of Reference:**

1. To determine a rolling three-year playing programme for all Community England adult representative teams
2. To ensure that there is an adequate competition structure to support all Community England adult representative teams;
3. To make representation to CGB through PDC in respect of budgets for all Community England adult representative activity.
4. To confirm the appointments of and regularly review the performance of the Team Manager, Chairman of Selectors, medical personnel and Coaches of Community England adult teams.
5. To ensure that the core values of the sport are promoted and maintained throughout the community game as an aid to participation and retention.

### **Community Adult Representative Rugby Delivery Team**

There will be one of these teams for the England Counties U20, England Students, and England Counties XV.

#### **Objective:**

To manage and oversee the delivery of match programmes for the [team] including selection and preparation for all matches.

#### **Terms of Reference:**

1. To manage the delivery of [team] representative rugby matches.
2. To make recommendations to the Community Adult Representative Rugby Working Group in respect of appointments of Team Manager, Chairman of Selectors, Coaches and other relevant personnel.
3. To assist the Community Adult Representative Rugby Working Group in the preparation of playing programmes and budgets.

# **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

### **CB Schools of Rugby:**

The SoR programme aims to identify and develop young players and athletes who have the potential to play at the elite levels of the game in England.

It provides a route for players into the England Rugby Regional Academy system through the Elite Player Development Group (EPDG).

### **Elite Player Development Group (EPDG):**

(England Rugby Regional Academy) Elite Player Development Group - Players might progress from the CB SoR into an EPDG, to possibly become a member of an England Rugby Academy. These players will be identified mainly (but not exclusively) from the SoR as outstanding performers.

### **County Development Squads:**

The County Development squad identifies able players as a first step on the representative ladder and are a key mechanism to identify and benchmark potential elite players for the SoR

### **England Rugby Regional Academies:**

There are currently 14 England Rugby Regional Academies established across England under an agreement between the Rugby Football Union and Premier Rugby Limited. These 14 Regional Academies serve specific geographic areas. Twelve are sited at Premiership clubs, and one at Bristol and one at Exeter.

### **England National Academy Coaches:**

RFU employed coaches from the Elite Department; National Academy Coaches have a team coaching role and are also able to cover individual skill requirements within a mentoring role.

### **Regional Academy Liaison Group (RALG):**

The RALG facilitates interaction between the CBs and England Rugby Regional Academies within the designated Academy region. They also ensure that the CB Schools of Rugby in that ERRA region are operating a quality programme effectively, and meeting all the objectives of the SoR programme.

### **AASE Colleges:**

Advanced Apprenticeship in Sporting Excellence (AASE) programme is designed to meet the needs of young people, aged between 16 and 18 who have the potential to achieve excellence in rugby while pursuing an education at the same time.

The scheme has been running in 12 England Rugby Regional Academies. The academies running the RFU apprenticeship scheme have established partnerships with a local school or college to deliver the Technical Certificate and Key Skills, with the Academy staff delivering the rugby element.

## **REPORT OF THE PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PATHWAY TASK GROUP**

### **International (Wellington) Festival:**

The International Festival is a 2nd Tier competition for the U16/17 age group. It includes teams from England, France and Italy, plus emerging nations who are keen to develop their age-group rugby participation such as Belgium, Canada, Portugal and Romania.

The Festival currently involves 8 International Teams, and there is no overall winner, instead each team plays 3 matches during the course of the 7 day event.