



COMMUNITY RUGBY LEAGUE  
**MORE THAN  
A SPORT**

**STRATEGY & VISION**  
**2022-2030**



## FOREWORD

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# Rugby League is “More than a Sport”.

Rugby League is “More than a Sport” that is the top line of our strategy for the sport for 2022-2030. It is a cultural identity, a passion, a way of life and a force for good. When I first agreed to join the Board of the RFL in 2019, it was because I recognised the powerful impact the sport makes in the communities it serves.

This Community Rugby League Strategy and Vision is pivotal to that all-sport strategy - “the Grassroots underpin everything”.

Over the last two years, I have had the privilege of chairing the superb Community Board. I have also worked with the RFL Community Team and my view of the impact and passion of those who work, play, and volunteer for our great game has been confirmed.

This Community Rugby League Strategy has been produced in partnership with the Community Board and you will see we have taken a bold and longer-term approach, building on the progress we have made since 2017, but continuing to highlight the vital work our volunteers do to support the delivery of the sport.

As we reshape, Rugby League can also lead sports in being genuinely player-centric with players’ voices well heard and players involved more in decision making across the sport.

We will use all of the knowledge, experience and passion to continue to support and improve the lives of people of all ages and abilities in some of the most challenging communities in our nation.

It is also worth noting that the wider RFL Strategy “More than a Sport” highlights the importance of diversity and inclusion, the difference social impact can make and combined, how they grow our sport. The importance of diversity and inclusion is reflected throughout this Community Rugby League Strategy as well.

Also inherent in the RFL strategy is a recognition that our grassroots underpin everything, which is a deep and unshakeable belief at every level of our sport.

## SANDY LINDSAY MBE

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Chair – RFL Community Board



## INTRODUCTION

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The Covid-19 Pandemic hit hardest in areas of socio-economic disadvantage. At a time when our communities were under huge strain, our clubs and the Community Game came to the fore. It is this resilience, this ability to act as a force for good in areas that will need it most, that gives us the confidence to put in place a long-term vision and strategy for the whole Community Game.

Whilst the pandemic caused unprecedented disruption across the sporting landscape, the preceding three years of the funding cycle resulted in three consecutive years of growth and the sport made huge strides in terms of becoming more diverse and inclusive.

The growth of the women's and girls' game, driven by the Women's Super League, the introduction of new inclusive ways to play, such as Physical Disability RL and Learning Disability RL, expansion of our volunteer led inclusive England Community Lions programme and the introduction of more player development focused playing offers, provided considerable success on the field.

Off the field we embraced new digital technology, delivering Game Day, our new competition management system and enhanced our digital platforms through Our League and our new online learning platform, Our Learning Zone. Through the RLWC2021 CreatedBy programme we invested more into improving facilities than ever before and, through Tackle It, we have recognised and begun to address the challenges we face in becoming the discrimination free sport we strive to be.

The pandemic has made levelling up in the North, where most of our clubs are based, far harder to achieve. However, the pandemic also provided an opportunity to reassess and reconsider our approach. We have recovery strategies in place to deal with the aftermath, but beyond that we are confident that our direction of travel is right. Our strategy and vision will be based on evolution not revolution.

Like all sports, we want to grow. We want more players, more coaches, more volunteers and a stronger, more sustainable Community Game. These remain our key goals which we will seek to deliver. We will do all of this through the lens of the Rugby League Dividend - supporting our people and our communities - and through tackling the inequalities and barriers that exist within society that prevent people from embracing the many benefits that engaging with our sport can deliver.

## MARC LOVERING

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Director of Participation and Development



# VISION & KEY FOCUS AREAS TO 2030

## VISION TO 2030

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To be a diverse, accessible and growing sport, delivering great Rugby League experiences and a positive social impact into the communities we serve”

**TO HELP US DELIVER OUR GOALS AND ACHIEVE OUR VISION BY 2030  
WE ARE FOCUSED ON 3 KEY AREAS.**



## OUR KEY FOCUS AREAS IN THE 2020'S

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SUPPORT OUR  
**CORE COMMUNITY GAME**  
PARTICIPANTS AND CLUBS

DELIVER BROAD AND  
FLEXIBLE PATHWAYS  
IN EDUCATION

TACKLE INEQUALITIES  
AND HAVE A POSITIVE  
**SOCIAL IMPACT**

We are the national governing body for Rugby League in England, committed to delivering, growing, protecting and maximising the impact of Rugby League at all levels.'



# **CORE COMMUNITY**

**THE COMMUNITY GAME PROVIDES THE FOUNDATION ON WHICH THE SPORT IS BUILT. SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE GROWTH THROUGH TARGETED INITIATIVES, APPROPRIATE PLAYING OPPORTUNITIES AND MORE FLEXIBLE WAYS TO PLAY ARE OUR PRIORITIES.**

**RETAINING PARTICIPANTS IS KEY TO OUR ABILITY TO GROW. DRIVING CULTURE CHANGE, IMPROVING OUR ENVIRONMENTS AND ENSURING WE ARE PLAYER CENTRED IS FUNDAMENTAL TO OUR AMBITIONS.**

## CORE COMMUNITY – GOALS, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES

THE FOLLOWING GOALS, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES OUTLINE WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT AND ACHIEVE OUR VISION BETWEEN NOW AND 2030.

### CORE COMMUNITY GOALS

- Deliver culture change to change behaviours.
- Grow the number of participants and increase retention every year across all forms of the game.
- Ensure all players have access to appropriate playing opportunities through improved player engagement and development.
- Continue the accelerated growth in the number of women and girls playing Rugby League.
- Deliver a more sustainable Community Game, less reliant on public funding and generating additional funds to invest in growth.
- Provide strong governance and first-class administration.
- Targeted support for areas and participants that need it the most.





## CORE COMMUNITY – GOALS, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES

THE FOLLOWING **MILESTONES** LINKED TO OUR GOALS OUTLINE WHAT STEPS WE NEED TO HAVE TAKEN BY 2025 TO HELP US ACHIEVE OUR VISION BY 2030.

### **PARTICIPANT GROWTH**

- Reinvigorate and rebuild traditional Rugby League areas where participation has stagnated and there is capacity for growth.
- Continued expansion in developing and new areas where Rugby League can have a positive impact on communities and under-represented groups.
- Ensure we are player-centred through improved communication and increased development focus driven through digital platforms, appropriate playing offers and aspirational playing opportunities.
- Increase numbers of participants through evolving non and limited contact RL offers including Touch RL, Tag RL, X-League and Masters RL.

### **PLAYING OPPORTUNITIES**

- Embed the ethos and principles of Player Development Leagues within the existing youth and junior competition framework.
- Deliver a network of youth and junior Player Development Leagues across the country.
- Targeted initiatives to increase retention of players and improve transition, particularly between youth and open age settings.

### **INCREASE NUMBER OF FEMALE PARTICIPANTS**

- Delivery of a full national pyramid with elite women's competition at the pinnacle.
- Introduction of Girls Development Hubs and appropriate youth and junior playing opportunities across all regions.



## CORE COMMUNITY – GOALS, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES

THE FOLLOWING **MILESTONES** LINKED TO OUR GOALS OUTLINE WHAT STEPS WE NEED TO HAVE TAKEN BY 2025 TO HELP US ACHIEVE OUR VISION BY 2030.

### SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY GAME

- Roll out of Club Development Plans and comprehensive use of health checks.
- Introduction of RFL Club Accreditation.
- Through work with our Foundations drive additional resources to engage support and inspire our communities.
- Support Foundations to assist in delivery of RFL Development Plans specific to each area.
- Fully embed Our League Active generating additional funds to invest in the Community Game.

### STRONG GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

- Consistency of competition rules and removal of barriers to players taking part, delivering customer-centric competitions.
- Produce a whole game calendar.
- Create regional groups to support operation and delivery of RFL growth and development in each region.
- Ensure the RFL Community Board and subgroups are representative of the Community Game.
- Introduce League Accreditation process.



## CORE COMMUNITY – GOALS, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES

THE FOLLOWING **MILESTONES** LINKED TO OUR GOALS OUTLINE WHAT STEPS WE NEED TO HAVE TAKEN BY 2025 TO HELP US ACHIEVE OUR VISION BY 2030.

### SUPPORT FOR AREAS THAT NEED IT THE MOST

- A significant number of our clubs are based in some of the most deprived parts of the country. We will offer tailored support for clubs and participants in these areas.

### CULTURE CHANGE

- Adapt the overly competitive competition framework placing greater focus on player development.
- Improve touchline behaviours and environments; changing ‘win at all costs’ mentality.
- Protect our people through a game-wide and coherent approach to disciplining unacceptable behaviours.
- Raise the number, status, and quality of coaches offering greater support and dissemination of best practice.



## CORE COMMUNITY – GOALS, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES

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THE FOLLOWING **MEASURABLES** WILL HELP US TRACK PROGRESS AGAINST OUR GOALS.

- Increase the number of players within Community Club settings to 60,000, contributing to total number of Active Participants of 150,000 by 2030.
- Increase the number of Women and Girls participants in core community club settings to 9,000 by 2025.
- 75% of Community Clubs to be Accredited with Club Development Plans by 2025.
- Increase the % of participants from high IMD areas to 50% by 2030.



## **EDUCATION**

**THE DELIVERY OF RUGBY LEAGUE WITHIN EDUCATION SETTINGS GIVES US THE OPPORTUNITY TO REACH PARTICIPANTS WHO MAY OTHERWISE NEVER GET TO EXPERIENCE THE SPORT.**

**DELIVERING A BROAD AND FLEXIBLE EDUCATION PATHWAY THAT CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF RUGBY LEAGUE ACROSS THE COUNTRY IS A SIGNIFICANT PART OF OUR GROWTH STRATEGY.**

## EDUCATION – GOALS, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES

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THE FOLLOWING **GOALS**, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES OUTLINE WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT AND ACHIEVE OUR VISION BETWEEN NOW AND 2030.

### EDUCATION GOALS

- Widen our playing offers and educational resources across all education settings to offer all variations of the sport.
- Engage and develop young people who may not wish to play, but may wish to learn to be the next generation of coaches and match officials.
- Deliver a broad and flexible educational pathway that can contribute to the growth and development of Rugby League across the country.



## EDUCATION – GOALS, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES

THE FOLLOWING **MILESTONES** LINKED TO OUR GOALS OUTLINE WHAT STEPS WE NEED TO HAVE TAKEN BY 2025 TO HELP US ACHIEVE OUR VISION BY 2030.

- Embed Touch and Tag RL on School Games Framework with full resources working with SGO's and Active Partnerships to maximise school uptake.
- Full programme of playing opportunities including Nines, for secondary schools across the country enabling them to compete at an appropriate level.
- Establish pathways in playing, leading, and officiating with clear exit routes.
- Full suite of accessible CPD opportunities and teaching resources for pitch and classroom to increase number of teachers delivering Rugby League.
- Targeted secondary schools' delivery to underpin wider growth initiatives such as Player Development Leagues.

### COLLEGES

- Increase the number of Development Academies or Further Education Development programme opportunities across the country.
- Full programme of playing opportunities including non-contact formats to cater for colleges with varying degrees of Rugby League experience.
- Develop fully resourced programmes of leading and officiating with clear exit routes.



## EDUCATION – GOALS, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES

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THE FOLLOWING **MILESTONES** LINKED TO OUR GOALS OUTLINE WHAT STEPS WE NEED TO HAVE TAKEN BY 2025 TO HELP US ACHIEVE OUR VISION BY 2030.

### UNIVERSITIES

- Raise the aspirations of young Rugby League players through the re-introduction of scholarship opportunities.
- Offer all university clubs support through Club Development Plans.
- Enhance the health and well-being of students through appropriate non-contact playing opportunities.
- Deliver an elite National League for both men and women delivered in partnership with professional clubs and higher education providers.





## EDUCATION – GOALS, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES

### THE FOLLOWING MEASURABLES WILL HELP US TRACK PROGRESS AGAINST OUR GOALS.

- Increase the number of players within Education settings to 60,000 contributing to total number of Active Participants of 150,000 by 2030.

- Increase the number of teams in Further Education settings by 50% by 2025.
- Introduce a minimum of 3 FE Development programmes across the West, Midlands and London by 2025.

- Deliver an elite men's and women's university competition as part of a wider national pyramid.



## **SOCIAL IMPACT**

**SUPPORTING OUR PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES THROUGH TACKLING THE INEQUALITIES AND BARRIERS THAT EXIST WITHIN SOCIETY DRIVES US.**

**WE WILL BECOME EVEN MORE INCLUSIVE THROUGH EXPANDING OUR DISABILITY SPORTS OFFERS AND MORE DIVERSE THROUGH SUPPORTING OUR CLUBS TO BECOME MORE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE COMMUNITIES WITHIN WHICH THEY ARE BASED.**

**WE WILL MAXIMISE RUGBY LEAGUE'S PROVEN ABILITY TO DELIVER POSITIVE SOCIAL IMPACT THROUGH 'OUR LEAGUE LIFE', THE RFL'S SOCIAL IMPACT BRAND. SOCIAL IMPACT PROGRAMMES DEMONSTRATE OUR REACH AND RELEVANCE AND ARE A MAJOR PART OF THE SPORT'S SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.**

## SOCIAL IMPACT – GOALS, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES

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THE FOLLOWING **GOALS, MILESTONES AND KPIs** OUTLINE WHAT WE NEED TO DO TO HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT AND ACHIEVE OUR VISION BETWEEN NOW AND 2030.

### SOCIAL IMPACT GOALS

- Deliver appropriate nationwide playing opportunities and pathways for Wheelchair RL, Learning Disability RL and Physical Disability RL participants of all ages.
- Diversify the participants engaged in Rugby League through supporting clubs to become more representative of the communities within which they are based.
- Establish a sustainable Social Impact programme that uses the power of Rugby League to drive social change.
- Build stronger community clubs to enable them to play a greater role in delivering local social impact.



## SOCIAL IMPACT – GOALS, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES

THE FOLLOWING MILESTONES LINKED TO OUR GOALS OUTLINE WHAT STEPS WE NEED TO HAVE TAKEN BY 2025 TO HELP US ACHIEVE OUR VISION BY 2030.

- Establish appropriate youth offers across Wheelchair RL, Learning Disability RL and Physical Disability RL.
- Develop a network of regional playing offers, giving more playing opportunities across the country.

- Support a minimum of 30 Community Clubs in Rugby League's most ethnically diverse areas to encourage more participants from diverse backgrounds.
- Regular reporting of numbers of BAME participants

- Develop 10 partnerships across a diverse range of sectors, including health and well-being.
- Establish network of 30 Our League Life Community Hubs, delivering positive social impact into the heart of our communities.

- Improve playing capacity, security of tenure and facilities underpinned by a new RFL Facilities Strategy.
- Transition the RLWC2021 Volunteering programmes and ensure our volunteer workforce feel valued and supported by a new Volunteer Workforce Strategy.



## SOCIAL IMPACT – GOALS, MILESTONES AND MEASURABLES

### THE FOLLOWING MEASURABLES WILL HELP US TRACK PROGRESS AGAINST OUR GOALS.

- Reach 3,000 participants taking part in Inclusion forms of the sport including Wheelchair RL, Learning Disability RL and Physical Disability RL by 2030.

- Meet all Targets and Measurements contained within the RFL's Tackle It Action Plan relating to players and volunteers.

- Generate £2m of additional income for the wider sport to deliver social impact programmes by 2030.

- Deliver £15m of facilities development funding to better support/enable the delivery of social impact programmes and build stronger communities.
- Introduce 1000 volunteers supporting individual development and improving physical and mental health.



**COMMUNITY RUGBY LEAGUE -  
STRATEGY & VISION 2022-2030**

# **COMMUNITY RL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK**

## COMMUNITY RL STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The overview in each of the three focus areas set out in this document will be underpinned by a series of Strategic Framework Documents which will set out in more detail the strategy and vision underpinning the various parts of the Community Game.

We will work with Clubs, Foundations and other key stakeholders to deliver linked Club and Area Development Plans. This includes a tailored development plan for southern regions.

These documents, together with specific Facilities, Volunteer Workforce and Match Officials Strategies will ensure a coordinated approach to Community Rugby League.

### RFL STRATEGY 2022-2030

- The Community RL Strategy 2022-2030 aligns to and builds on the community commitments given in the RFL Strategy.

**‘Our Grassroots Underpin Everything’**

### SPORT ENGLAND – UNITING THE MOVEMENT

Sport England has a new ten-year vision to transform lives and communities through sport. We share that vision and the desire to tackle inequalities. We share the desire to engage and support communities traditionally left behind and the desire to remove the barriers to taking part in our sport. Working with key partners, including Sport England, will strengthen our ability to deliver change through the Rugby League Dividend.

