

RFL COMMUNITY GAME STRATEGIC ADVISORY GROUP SUMMARY – 8 JULY 2026

Dear Community Game Colleagues,

We are pleased to share an update following the inaugural meeting of the Community Game Strategic Advisory Group (CGSAG), formerly the Community Board.

The change in name reflects the group's evolving role within the RFL's governance structure and its focus on providing strategic advice, challenge and leadership for the Community Game. This change aligns with the wider governance review and provides greater clarity between strategic oversight and operational delivery. Whilst the name has changed, our commitment remains the same - to support the sustainable growth and long-term development of Rugby League at every level of the Community Game.

The meeting focused on the continued implementation of the National Community Rugby League (NCRL), emerging strategic challenges across the game, and the opportunities available to grow participation through stronger partnerships and innovative delivery models.

A New Chapter for Community Governance

Members formally approved the revised Terms of Reference for the Community Game Strategic Advisory Group, marking an important milestone in the evolution of community game governance.

The updated Terms of Reference clarify the Group's strategic advisory remit, introduce a refreshed skills-based approach to membership, strengthen succession planning through staggered appointments, and ensure greater transparency around representation and governance. The revised Terms of Reference will now be submitted to the RFL Board for formal approval.

The transition to CGSAG reinforces the principle agreed earlier this year that operational matters should be managed through the National Community Rugby League Management Group and other specialist groups, enabling CGSAG to focus on long-term strategy, leadership and supporting the delivery of the Community Strategy.

National Community Rugby League Update

Members received a comprehensive update on the first season of the National Community Rugby League structure.

The new governance framework is now fully operational, bringing together Men's, Women's, Boys', Girls' and Primary Rugby League under a single structure with consistent oversight and reporting.

Members welcomed the progress made during the first season and recognised the significant commitment of volunteers, Competition Management Groups and RFL staff in delivering the new framework.

Whilst the overall position is positive, several strategic themes continue to emerge. Behaviour across the game remains a significant concern, with abandoned matches and serious disciplinary incidents highlighting the need for continued education, leadership and robust sanctions. The Group agreed that creating safe, respectful environments must remain a strategic priority.

Members also discussed referee shortages, volunteer capacity, fixture congestion and travel pressures in some regions. Future reporting to CGSAG will focus on strategic risks and issues requiring leadership and intervention, with operational matters continuing to be managed through the NCRL Management Group.

Growing Participation

A significant discussion centred on the future approach to participant growth following Sport England's announcement of a transitional funding year from April 2027.

Members considered how Rugby League can strengthen its place-based approach by bringing together clubs, Foundations, schools, local authorities and community partners to create more sustainable participation pathways.

The Group also heard an excellent presentation from Warrington Wolves Foundation, outlining an innovative development model focused on dedicated Rugby League Development Officers, stronger support for clubs and volunteers, enhanced school engagement and improved player pathways.

Members welcomed the model as an example of how participation growth and social impact can work together and agreed that further work should be undertaken to understand how similar approaches could be adopted more widely across the sport.

Looking Ahead

Due to the breadth of discussion on governance and participation, the planned agenda items relating to Commercial and Revenue Generation and Brand, Media, Marketing and Events were deferred until the next meeting.

However, members reaffirmed the importance of these strategic priorities. They recognised the need to continue strengthening the profile of the Community Game by sharing positive stories, celebrating success and demonstrating the wider impact Rugby League continues to have within communities.

Community Club Open Forums

As part of our commitment to listening to and supporting the Community Game, Martin Coyd OBE, Chair of the Community Game Strategic Advisory Group (CGSAG), will continue to host a series of Community Club Open Forums.

These sessions provide an opportunity for volunteers, administrators and club representatives to share their experiences of running a community club, discuss the opportunities and challenges they face, and help shape the future direction of the Community Game.

The online forum will take place on Wednesday 22 July, 7.00pm – 8.30pm

Join the meeting here:

[Online Forum Teams Meeting Link](#)

As the Community Game Strategic Advisory Group begins this new chapter, there remains a shared ambition to work collaboratively with clubs, volunteers, Foundations and partners to ensure the Community Game continues to thrive. The experience, passion and expertise of members will play a vital role in shaping that future.

Regards,

Martin Coyd OBE

Chair Community Game Strategic Advisory Group
RFL Executive Director