

RFL COMMUNITY BOARD SUMMARY – 9TH JULY 2025

Dear Community Game Colleagues,

We're pleased to share with you the latest update following the Community Board meeting held on Wednesday, 9th July 2025. These summaries are designed to keep you informed and engaged with the key discussions, decisions, and developments shaping the future of the community game.

Welcome and Leadership

New Chair Appointed: Martin Coyd OBE was introduced as the new Chair of the Community Board. The Board welcomed him with confidence in his leadership and vision for the game.

Key Discussions and Updates

1. Community Board Role and Strategy

- **Board Influence:** Martin Coyd reinforced the Board's critical role in shaping the community game and called for greater autonomy, transparency, and strategic focus.
- **Strategy Delivery:** There was a renewed emphasis on driving the Community Game Strategy to ensure long-term sustainability and growth.

2. Armed Forces Partnership

- A new initiative with the armed forces will create career opportunities for players and offer additional support to community clubs.

3. Coaching Development and Education

The Board received a comprehensive update from the Education Department following a recent review and restructuring. Key developments include:

- **Coaching Standards & Challenges:** While strong practices exist, there are still concerns around touchline behaviour and a lack of ongoing coach development.
- **Coach Qualifications:**
 - Level 1: Required for coaches working with Primary age groups.
 - Level 2: Required for coaches working with 12+ age groups.
- **New 'Introduction to Tag Rugby League' Course:** Supporting the rollout of Tag Rugby in Primary RL in line with upcoming law changes.
- **CPD Programme:** A new Continuous Professional Development framework will support structured, ongoing learning.
- **Tackle Curriculum Review:** Focused on understanding and improving what is delivered at U13–U16, with support coming via player development programmes and coaching networks.
- **Rebrand to 'England RL Coaching':** Launching in Q3 2025, aligning coaching pathways with national performance objectives.
- **Digital Learning Platform:** The ETrainU system is live and well-received, with expansion plans for more workshops and content.
- **Team Expansion:** Two new Coach Development Officers have joined:
 - Anthony Atherton – covering North West & Cumbria.
 - Ellis Pascall – covering Yorkshire.
- **Partnerships and Funding:** Work is ongoing with key partners, including the DWP, National Lottery, and education bodies, to generate additional income.

4. RFL Community Trust – Social Impact Update

The RFL Community Trust shared progress on delivering meaningful, long-term social impact through Rugby League, aligned to the 2022–2030 Community Strategy. Highlights include:

- **OuRLeague Life Brand:** A platform to tackle inequalities, promote inclusion, and strengthen communities.
- **Partnerships & Hubs:**
 - 8 national partnerships established (target: 10).
 - 8 Community Hubs launched (target: 30).

- Impact to Date:
 - £946,000 of new income generated (target: £2m).
 - 5,999+ volunteers supported.
 - 1,070 participants engaged in inclusive formats (Wheelchair RL, LDRL, PDRL).
 - £4.5m invested in facilities (target: £15m).
 - 6.7% ethnically diverse representation (target: 7%).
- Trust's Role: The Trust now works in partnership with 34 Charitable Community Organisations (CCOs), with 23 Foundations meeting minimum standards to collaborate on delivery.
- Next Steps:
 - Finalise governance and legal structures.
 - Launch new projects through major funding streams (e.g. Climate Action Fund, Reaching Communities).
 - Increase visibility and programme reach via shared delivery models and community collaboration.

5. Open Age Rugby – Urgent Action Required

The Board were updated on the latest data and downward trends in Male Open Age Rugby, with participation down by over 30% since 2019. Many clubs are now relying on youth players to fulfil fixtures and struggling to field multiple teams, highlighting the urgent need for change.

Immediate Next Steps:

- Community Competition Structure Review (CCSR):
Revisit and refresh existing proposals to create a more flexible and localised competition framework that better reflects the modern game and supports participation growth.
- Strategic Alignment:
Ensure proposals are integrated into the broader strategic review to deliver a joined-up and sustainable approach across all levels of the community game.

Now is the time to modernise Male Open Age Rugby, protecting its future and supporting the growth of stronger, more resilient clubs and competitions.

6. Player and Club Discipline

Following the Respect and Discipline communication issued on 9 May, the Community Board were updated on both the response from the game and the disciplinary trends that have since emerged. This will be a standing agenda item at future meetings to ensure ongoing oversight and accountability.

We remain committed to working in partnership with clubs, volunteers, and local communities to ensure Rugby League continues to thrive at every level. Your feedback, ideas, and continued support are essential as we move forward together. If you have any questions or would like to contribute to any of the areas discussed, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Martin Coyd OBE
RFL Community Board Chair
RFL Executive Director