



WOMEN IN RUGBY

ACTION PLAN 2018–23

Irish Rugby: Building success, together

OUR VALUES



Irish Rugby aspires to act in a responsible manner and show leadership throughout the game by empowering the rugby family to make informed decisions and demonstrate these behaviours in all rugby related activities.

SPIRIT OF RUGBY

The Spirit of Rugby Charter sets out how the Irish Rugby family aspires to live its values through its actions in each aspect of the game from grassroots to professional rugby. The values and standards of all involved, from player, coach, volunteer to spectator are vital to the work and reputation of the game. Our values are our moral compass, on and off the pitch.

SPIRIT OF RUGBY

RESPECT

For all those involved in the rugby family, the wider community and self.

Gratitude to coaches, officials, volunteers and other leaders in the game. Discipline while playing the game. Respect for the physicality of the game and commitment to the safety of the player as paramount.

INTEGRITY

Actions on and off the pitch that are open and transparent.

We aspire to always have the best interests of the player and those involved in the game, especially youth players, at heart. In rugby we aspire to do the right thing and endeavour not to be bystanders.

INCLUSIVITY

Diversity of opinion and culture means working together to be a vibrant, respectful organisation.

Rugby is a sport of choice for all, it transcends barriers and differences of race, gender, religion and sexual orientation. Players that have a positive life-long experience of the game can remain within the Irish Rugby family throughout their lives, fulfilling roles that enable them to be the best version of themselves.

FUN

A passion for the game, on and off the pitch, rugby is a source of joy for all.

Everyone has an equal right to learn, play and administer the game and should be respected for the age and stage of development that they are at; especially youth players.

EXCELLENCE

Strive to be the best that we can be.

There may be others who play better, make better decisions and perform under pressure better, but we complete each task knowing that we could not have done more for ourselves, our team, club or school; we are comfortable in the knowledge that we are doing our best.

INTRODUCTION

The Irish Rugby Football Union has a vision of being a sport of equal opportunity and access across all areas of our game.

We see the opportunity for Rugby to take a greater role in Irish society through increased participation of women in our sport. We aspire to give every female the opportunity to play and be involved in our game, where females can have a lifelong rugby experience, inspired by successful role models from within the game.



An independent review group was established by the IRFU in November 2017, co-chaired by Mary Quinn and Su Carty, to evaluate and discern the strategic focus for the development of the women's game in Ireland over the next five years. This was carried out to identify where goals had been achieved, progress has been made and where further work is required. A review of high-performance support structures was also undertaken. This work is the foundation on which this new plan is built.

To achieve our objectives for female rugby we recognise the need to build from grassroots to create a sustainable model for the game.

We aim to create a structured pathway which attracts young female players to club rugby where they can progress their rugby careers through Minis, Under-14, Under-16 and Under-18 levels towards the senior women's game.

In schools we are committed to creating opportunities for female students to experience rugby through an XRugby7s and Sevens pathway.

We will target increased participation through a quality player development pathway that enables players to achieve their full potential. This in turn, will support an increased flow of talent through the Women's AIL and provincial panels into national squads.

All of these steps will build depth to drive greater competition for representative places. That will propel Ireland's representative sides towards consistently strong performance levels on the international stage.

We want to grow the number of female volunteers working in support of these programmes as coaches, referees, managers and administrators. Furthermore, we want this growth reflected in the governance of the game at club, provincial and national level.

**Overall, we aspire to achieve:
a quality experience that drives
participation and supports the
ambition of each individual
female in rugby.**

OUR VISION

Irish Rugby:
Building success,
together

OUR MISSION

Build a strong
base to grow the
women's game

OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

1. Be a sport of equal opportunity and access for all.
2. Optimise the quality of experience provided for female age-grade rugby players.
3. Drive a performance system that demands and supports developmental and competitive excellence.
4. Build female participation to a minimum of 20%, and beyond, across the game, including players, coaches, referees, volunteers and committees.

WOMEN IN RUGBY: BUILDING A STRONG BASE TO GROW THE WOMEN'S GAME & DELIVERING A VIBRANT CLUB AND SCHOOL NETWORK



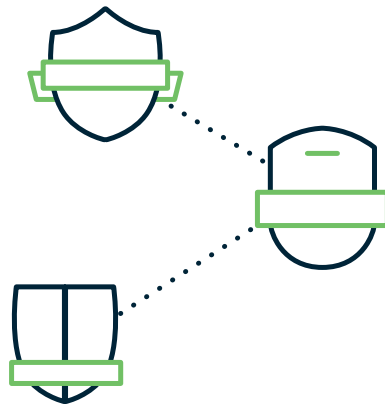
2018-2023 Strategic Plan Stated Objectives – Women in Rugby

	AREA	PRESENT	2018–2023
PARTICIPATION:	Adult Playing Base	1,341 active players	5,000 active players
	Youth players	2,500 active players	6,500 active players
	3rd Level players	553 active players	1,000 active players
	Aldi Play Rugby	43,000 girls (44%)	Maintain 40% plus
	Total No. of Teams	190 Womens & Girls teams	300+ Womens & Girls teams
	% Clubs offering separate Female Mini Offering	21%	50% of clubs
	Secondary Schools	87 engaged in branch programmes	200 engaged in branch programmes leading to 150 with full participation pathway playing XRugby7s or 7s (Junior & Senior teams)
	Lifelong Female Player Pathway	22 with full participation pathway	100 Clubs providing lifelong female Player Pathway (50% of total clubs)
PEOPLE:	Female Coaches	179	450+
	Female Referees	12	80+
	Female Coach Support	65% believe no clear female coach pathway	Less than 20%
		83% felt a greater challenge than male counterparts	Less than 20%
LEADERSHIP:	Committee & Management Roles	2%	20%
	National Youth Council Representation	25%	30+%



Participation

We will increase female participation in all sectors of the game through a wide range of accessible playing opportunities.



The IRFU are committed to supporting 100 clubs to develop a full participation pathway for females from mini through to adult rugby by 2023.

- Increased Club Community Rugby Officer support specifically for female rugby in identified clubs which support the development of schools in the club's locality.
- Build on recruitment and promotion campaigns for age grade and adult.
- Establish a set season calendar including Sevens rugby festivals for age grade and adult teams.
- Utilise initiatives and alternative formats of the game to increase the number of age-grade and adult XV's teams.

Develop 150 secondary schools with a full participation pathway (i.e. Junior and Senior teams) playing in rugby competitions (XRugby7s and Sevens).

- Upskill and support teachers to deliver XRugby7s and Sevens.
- Provide contact and non-contact rugby programmes for schools to introduce and develop girls' rugby.
- Provide more opportunities for girls to play rugby in school, including the introduction of a National Sevens competition.
- Ensure improved guidance, support and signposting of these players to their local rugby club.

Participation

Establish the Women's All Ireland League as a sustainable high-performance competition.

- Establish women's AIL participation criteria, linked to funding, to ensure sustainability and performance.
- Increase coaching workshops and support for AIL coaches and players.
- Develop a women's AIL Summer Sevens Series to support player development and recruitment of new players.

Create a pathway from Club to Province to improve the player development model for the progression of talented players to national programmes.

- Establish an expert group to define and develop the appropriate pathway for players.
- Create a structured season plan for female adult and age grade rugby which align domestic and representative rugby.
- Operate Interprovincial programmes at Senior and U18 levels in XV's and Sevens.

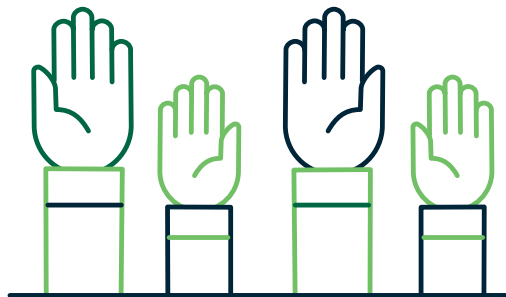
Grow the number of players in 3rd Level Institutions who have a rugby experience through a XV's and Sevens offering.

- Work in collaboration with Student Sport Ireland (SSI) and Irish Universities Rugby Union (IURU) to support and develop existing 3rd Level competition formats to increase playing numbers from 553 to 1000.
- Develop opportunities for new players to sample rugby through non-contact "Give It a Try" Programmes and Festivals playing XRugby7s.
- Create a two-tier Sevens competition format which includes an Elite Sevens Series.
- Increase coaching workshops and support for 3rd Level coaches and players for XV's and Sevens.



People

We rely on great people to help deliver our plans. Irish rugby cannot survive without the countless hours of volunteer input to support the game at every level. These volunteers are supported by professional staff.

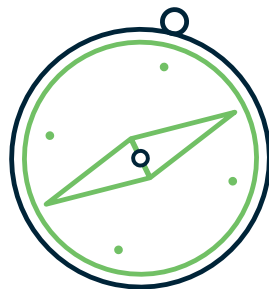


We will support our people by:

- Creating a clear and easily understood pathway for female coaches and referees to progress throughout the game.
- Ensuring that education and development programmes for volunteers, coaches and referees are appropriate to the needs and preferences of women – including female-only initiatives.
- Assisting clubs to build a more diverse volunteer workforce and committee structure.
- Establishing supports for volunteers, coaches and referees already active within the women's game.
- Developing campaigns which promote the benefits of volunteering, coaching and refereeing to females.
- Encouraging former players to continue their involvement in the game as coaches, referees and leaders.

Leadership

Organisations are made great by strong leaders and the IRFU is committed to supporting the needs of its current leaders and ensuring systems are in place to identify the leaders of tomorrow.



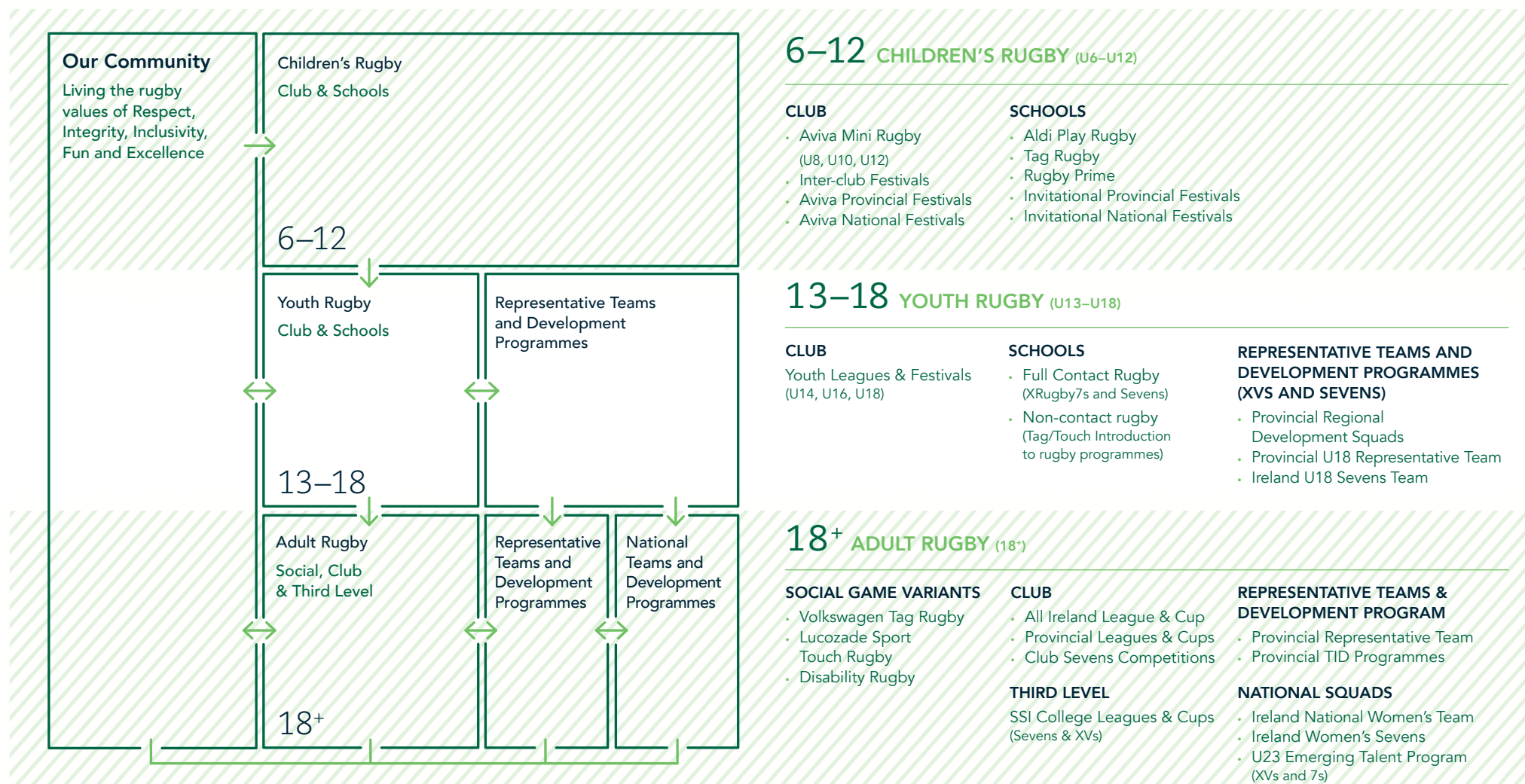
We will support and grow our leaders by:

- Setting up a Women's Rugby Advisory Group to monitor and implement this plan.
- Increasing gender diversity with a target of 20 per cent of board and committee positions in clubs, Branches and the IRFU to be held by women.
- Reconstituting the IRFU Women's Committee and the Provincial Women's Committees.
- Reviewing the laws, regulations and policies of the IRFU, revising them where required, to ensure inclusion and integration of women within the Union's governance and management processes.
- Ensuring that the IRFU's values relating to inclusion are fully observed in all IRFU and Branch committees and operations.
- Promoting an organisational culture which actively promotes the development of both female and male rugby.
- Establishing a leadership development programme to identify and support the next generation of leaders.

DELIVERING PERFORMANCE: PRODUCING WINNING TEAMS









IRFU Player Pathway: Female Game



Our vision is to drive a performance system that demands and supports developmental and competitive excellence.

2018–2023 Strategic Plan Stated Objectives

PERFORMANCE

						
	Women's 6 Nations	Women's Rugby World Cup	Women's Sevens World Cup	Olympic Games Sevens	World Rugby Sevens Series	U18 Sevens
AT PRESENT	3rd	8th (2017)	6th (2018)	DNQ Rio Olympics	1 Top 6 finish (2017/18)	3rd
2018–2023	Consistent Top 3 finish & win 1 Championship during the term of the plan	WRWC21 Qualification & Top 6 finish	2022 Qualification & Top 6 finish	Tokyo Olympics Qualification	Win two tournaments & consistent Top 6 finish	Consistent Top 2 finish in Europe



Achieving Outcome Goals

The High Performance Unit will work closely with the Rugby Department to create pathways and competition structures to ensure a wider talent pool of players is created. We will continue to appoint the best coaches and support staff in the relevant positions. This will ensure players are identified and developed to create a competitive selection environment which underpins performance.

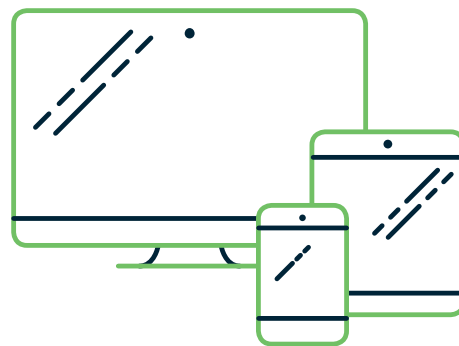
We will do this by:

- Having a fully integrated XV's and Sevens high performance programme, providing appropriate training and competitive opportunities.
- Maintaining and developing a world class Women's High-Performance Unit. Provision of quality management, coaching and support services to national programmes. It will also support individual players within their locality.
- Having a clear progression pathway from clubs and schools to XV's and Sevens representative squads.
- Continued development of the Ireland Women's U18 Sevens programme and increasing the number of competitive opportunities.
- Introducing a women's U18 talent development programme with annual U18 National Festivals in both XV and Sevens rugby.
- Appointing a National Talent ID Co-Ordinator to oversee the women's development pathway from 15 to 19 years.
- Continue to focus on developing Emerging Talent primarily in the U18 to U23 age bracket with training programs, physical development and international match opportunities that are fit for purpose.
- Developing talent identification programmes to recruit high-quality athletes from other sports with the potential to play rugby at the highest levels.
- Working closely with World Rugby and Rugby Europe to ensure that the international season allows clear and separate windows for XV's and Sevens rugby.
- Continue to organise XV's internationals in the November test window.



Delivering Effective Engagement

The IRFU has built one of the most engaged online communities in sport. Using all communications channels available we will promote the programmes and initiatives outlined in this plan to support the recruitment of more women and girls to the sport.



We will do this by:

- Building on the existing promotion of the female game across all platforms.
- Increasing the visibility of women in rugby in all capacities – players, coaches, officials and volunteers to support the IRFU’s commitment to the female game.
- Continuing to develop current players as the inspiration for future players.
- Developing a schedule of events in support of the overall action plan.
- Supporting initiatives such as the Federation of Irish Sport’s 20x20 programme to grow participation, coverage and match attendance.
- Engaging leading females in the game as ambassadors and role models.
- Building promotional campaigns in support of the initiatives and objectives of this plan.

