ULSTER
Rugby

Club Information Booklet

2026/27



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Spirit of Rugby

Spirit of Rugby aims to support players, coaches, volunteers and parents. Its primary purpose is to educate those within the game about their rights and responsibilities on and off the field, embodying and promoting the core values of the game –

Respect, Inclusivity, Integrity, Fun and **Excellence**



Kerry Spence
Spirit of Rugby Officer
kerry.spence@ulsterrugby.com

Safeguarding

One of the key aspects of the Spirit of Rugby programme is to help create safer environments for people to enjoy the game of rugby, particularly our young players.

All clubs offering rugby to children and young people need to:



Adhere to the IRFU Safeguarding Policy



Appoint a Club Welfare Officer & display Club Welfare Officer ID template



Carry out a Safeguarding Risk Assessment



Publish a Child Safeguarding Statement



Vet coaches & other relevant volunteers



Ensure coaches & volunteers attend relevant training

Useful Links:

Club and Volunteer Responsibilities
IRFU Safeguarding Statement
Club Safeguarding Guide
Vetting Documents
What Safeguarding Training Do You Need?

CODE OF CONDUCT

RESPONSIBILITY

TAKE OWNERSHIP OF YOUR ACTIONS

- Be accountable for your behaviour.
- Treat everyone with respect.

EQUALITY & INCLUSION

EVERYONE BELONGS

- Welcome everyone into our club.
- Value diversity and inclusion.
- Bullying, harassment and discriminationwill not be tolerated.

SPORTSMANSHIP

PLAY STRONG. PLAY FAIR.

- Respect opponents and match officials.
- Play by the Laws and Spirit of the Game.
- Win with humility. Lose with dignity.

PRIDE IN OUR CLUB

REPRESENT OUR CLUB WITH PRIDE

- Be a positive role model.
- Respect our club, teammates, volunteers and supporters.
- Represent our club with pride.

ETHICS

DO THE RIGHT THING

- Act honestly and with integrity.
- Don't post anything negative or abusive online.
- Do the right thing, even when no one is watching.

CARE

LOOK AFTER ONE ANOTHER

- Put safety and wellbeing first.
- Support safeguarding.
- Speak up if something isn't right.

TEAMWORK

TOGETHER WE ACHIEVE MORE

- Encourage effort and participation.
- Support one another.
- Work together to create a positive rugby environment.

ZERO TOLERANCE

- Abuse, violence, bullying and harassment have no place in our club.
- Breaches of this Code of Conduct may result in disciplinary action.

IRFU | RESPECT OUR GAME

Anti-doping

The Spirit of Rugby programme supports AIL players and clubs to provide the best possible environment to keep rugby clean from the threat of performance enhancing drugs.

All AIL players and support staff should complete their Keep Rugby Clean certificate and upload this to Gainline. The Keep Rugby Clean certificate should be renewed every 2 years.

Resources, including wallet cards will be sent to AIL clubs annually and should be distributed to AIL players and support staff.

Anti-doping education is also available for any youth and senior squads who wish to enhance player knowledge in this area.

Useful Links:

Anti-Doping Information

World Rugby - Keep Rugby Clean

World Rugby - Anti-doping Handbook



Volunteer Recruitment & Development

Volunteer Recruitment

The Club Together Programme offers assistance to clubs who want to build capacity and recruit volunteers into their club. Each club will recieve one-to-one assistance from Ulster Rugby staff members, but is essentially club led. The programme offers clubs an opportunity to focus engagement with a targeted audience in an informal setting, which provides clubs with an opportunity to discuss volunteering opportunities and register interest of potential volunteers.

Ulster Rugby will provide resources such as information, guidance and templates to help your club to:

- Map and identify need for volunteers in your club
- Identify and create clearly defined roles and role descriptions
- Assist clubs with delivering an informal event.
- Remind & encourage clubs to follow up with potential volunteers
- Match the right person to the right role

Volunteer Recruitment - Club Together Programme

Young Volunteers

The Sports Inspire Awards recognises the hours of volunteering that young people aged 14-24 contribute to their club. This award is managed in partnership with the IFA and the GAA and awards young people for their milestone achivements with 50,100 & 200 hour certificates.

- It's a great Incentive to get young people involved in volunteering in your club.
- Volunteering gives young people the opportunity to gain skills, knowledge and experience which could enhances UCAS forms, CVs and employment applications for their future career.
- Can be done alongside UK Duke of Edinburgh Awards and ROI President's Gaisce Awards.

Ulster Rugby Sports Inspire Awards

Volunteer Training

Ulster Rugby work with clubs to identify training need for volunteers to assist them in their personal development and enhance skills which will help them in their volunteering role. These take the form of online or in person workshops. These workshops and training sessions are normally advertised on our **Rugby in Ulster X Page.** These information and training sessions will include both on-pitch and off-pitch roles such as:

- Promoting and developing female leadership in sports
- Building a positive and respectful culture in sports
- Inclusive clubs - engaging underrepresented groups in sports

For more information and how your club can get involved any of the above, please email Nicci Wilson (below)

Club Clinics

This season we piloted our first **Club Clinic**, a series of short, informal sessions designed to give club volunteers practical advice, useful tips and an opportunity to ask questions.

Our first clinic focused on **Compliance**, covering Safeguarding, Coaching and Club Support Scheme Funding. We hope to build on this with future sessions covering topics such as **Volunteer Recruitment, Finance, Funding and Fundraising**.

Club Clinics are open to **all club volunteers**, so please share upcoming sessions with your wider volunteer network. Keep an eye on our socials and club communications for further details.



Nicci Wilson
Volunteer Development Officer
nicci.wilson@ulsterrugby.com

Participation Rugby

Participation Rugby Road-Map

An internal review of Rugby Development in Ulster led to a conclusion that the landscape of programmes and provisions could be confusing and that the intention of each programme was not always obvious.

As a result, we have designed a 'Road-Map' for clubs to use that allows identification of the programme/s and support that best suits your needs. This Road-Map positions the needs of our clubs at the centre of the model and aims to provide clarity as to the range of supports available.

This tool will allow you to identify your target audience (engaged, new, lapsed or retired), and guide you through the programmes and support available to achieve your aims.

Useful Links: ***PRR Guide*** ***PRR Tool***



CCRO Programme

Ulster Rugby, Outreach & Club Community Rugby Officer is a programme designed to take the game to new people and offer an introduction to the game of Rugby through a short programme of school/community-based coaching sessions.

Clubs may choose to plan their own community outreach programme but may also apply for funding from Ulster Rugby to fund Club Community Rugby Officer positions. The application process runs annually with a May deadline.



Ally Skelding
Rugby Participation Lead
ally.skelding@ulsterrugby.com

Funding Support

A key role within the Ulster Rugby Foundation and Development Department is to provide information and support for clubs in relation to project development and the acquisition of grant aid.

Although a range of resources have been developed to assist clubs in making successful funding applications, including our Club Funding Model, the team also strive to engage with clubs on a more personal basis across a range of areas.

These include:

- Development planning, alongside the Rugby Operations team as appropriate, to design 'fundable' projects and ensure good club governance.
- Technical direction and guidance based on past experience, awareness of best practice examples from elsewhere and understanding of statutory requirements.
- Grant identification, exploring the market to source opportunities of relevance to individual club projects and needs. Project alignment to funder priorities is a critical component of this.
- Advice and practical support associated with composing a high-quality grant application form centred around an 'attractive' project. This includes the utilisation of appropriate language while ensuring the checklist of information required by the funder is met.
- General support to clubs to build understanding and capacity around the grant funding process so that, over time, clubs build the confidence to seek out funding for themselves with a little more independence.

Over the past 8 years, we've helped clubs secure in the region of £8 million towards the delivery of both capital (bricks and mortar) and revenue (timebound programmes, often focusing on increasing participation) projects through a range of grant providers. These include, among others: Local Authorities; Sport NI; Sports Capital Programme; Lottery Funding; Peace Programmes; and more recently, funding through the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund.

Depending on need and demand across clubland, the team will also deliver officer training in key identified areas, again with the aim of building knowledge and capacity across topics linked to developing quality projects and the successful acquisition of grant money.



Aimee Davey
Fundraising & Grants Officer
aimee.davey@ulsterrugby.com



Matthew Holmes
Funding Manager
matthew.holmes@ulsterrugby.com

Game Administration/Rugby Connect

Ulster Rugby and IRFU both host a wealth of online resources to support clubs with Game Administration. Included below is small selection of the most commonly used forms and resources.

Tours

Permission is required for all matches against clubs from outside the IRFU. Clubs must complete tour form in full and return to: **tour.approval@ulsterrugby.com** in good time (ideally one month in advance)

Approval for union of opposition team is also required in all cases and should be forwarded to the above mailbox

Incoming Tour Form

Incoming Tour Approval Form

Outgoing Tour Approval Form

Trip & Tour Checklist

Trips & Tour Consent Form

Insurance

To qualify for the IRFU Insurance Subvention, clubs need to follow conditions laid out in Club Support Scheme guidance notes. Further information, including further contact info, on insurance can be found **HERE**.

Injury Reporting

All injuries that require hospital treatment and all confirmed/suspected concussions should be reported. Info on injury reporting and concussion protocols can be found **HERE**.

Regulations and Laws

It is the responsibility of all clubs to ensure that they comply with all relevant regulations.

Ulster Rugby Club Resources

If you have any further questions or enquiries regarding game administration, please contact Graeme Ormiston



Graeme Ormiston
Rugby Support Officer
graeme.ormiston@ulsterrugby.com

Rugby Connect

Rugby Connect is the IRFU platform for various aspects of game and competition administration. Clubs are required to use the system for various aspects of Game Administration including for player/coach registrations, completion of E-teamsheets and submission of documentation for the Club Support Scheme.

Registrations

All players, coaches, and committee members must register on Rugby Connect each season and can do so via the following link:

Rugby Connect

Committee Members should be assigned the relevant role by the Club Admin via the 'Role Profiles' function.

User Guides/Manuals

There is useful info, including user manuals and video guides for all aspects of the Rugby Connect system. These guides can be found via the following link:

Rugby Connect

Administrator Access

Clubs should only have a limited number of users that have administrator access on the system. Requests for administrators to be added/removed should be made via the Honorary Secretary to **rugbyconnect@ulsterrugby.com**

Club Support Scheme (CSS)

Clubs must utilise various aspects of the Rugby Connect system to qualify for the associated funding. The IRFU CSS guidance document contains guidance on specific requirements, including a step-by-step guide of required actions.

Clubs should ensure that **all** coaches are correctly registered on Rugby Connect and assigned as an 'Official' to the correct Teamsheet Panel (i.e. to the team(s) that they are an active coach/helper).

All required documentation must be uploaded via the 'Attachments' section on Rugby Connect.

Further Help

Clubs with queries on Rugby Connect can contact the Ulster Rugby Connect Mailbox: **rugbyconnect@ulsterrugby.com**

Clubs can also raise a ticket directly to Sportlomo for Technical Issues by clicking **HERE**

Media Engagement & Social Media

Engaging with local media, and through social media, can be a great way to bring attention to the activities taking place at your club. At Ulster Rugby, the Communications team is on-hand to provide support and guidance on proactive and reactive activity with journalists and through your own online channels.

Ulster Rugby Communications



Paul McIntyre
Communications Executive
paul.mcintyre@ulsterrugby.com

Media Enquiries

Should you receive a direct media enquiry which you are unsure how to respond to, please contact Paul McIntyre (above).

Social Media

The team at Ulster Rugby are keen to share your content on the Rugby in Ulster social media channels. Please tag us in your content – and we will aim to re-post as much as we can throughout the season.

Twitter/X **Instagram**

Top Tips

- Get to know your local media outlets – and engage with the journalists on an ongoing basis
- Feel free to use press releases and content from Ulster Rugby channels if you think it is relevant to a local journalist or the audience on your channels
- Got a great story? Flag it with the Ulster Rugby Communications team
- If you are unsure about how to respond to a journalist, get in touch with Ulster Rugby
- There is lots of great activity going on at your club every week – share pics and short videos on social media, and don't forget to tag the Rugby in Ulster channels
- Keep your website updated with the latest information and contact details
- Check-out what other clubs and sporting organisations are doing on social to get inspired

Discipline

All clubs are required to sign an undertaking to agree to the Rugby Code of Conduct- anyone not adhering to this is liable to face disciplinary action. All clubs should appoint a Referee Liaison Officer to ensure that Match Officials are welcomed and respected whilst conducting their roles.

Referee Liaison Officer

All clubs are required to appoint a Referee Liaison Officer (RLO), whose main role is be the point of contact with referees at home matches and to ensure any reported breaches of the code are followed up by the club through the Club's Hon Secretary.

All club matches (youth and adult) must have a Referee Liaison Officer or a designated nominee in attendance.

In the event of an incident of referee abuse the referee should report the problem as soon as it occurs to the RLO who should then take immediate action to address the issue and then to notify the Club's Honorary Secretary that something has occurred..

Clubs should note that following consultation with the Ulster Branch Clubs Committee in June, it was agreed that where no RLO is appointed, then by default this role will automatically be assigned to the team captain (in adult rugby) or team coach (in age grade rugby).

All clubs make the relevant team captains and coaches aware of this change.

The main role of the RLO is as follows:

- Welcome match official to the club (home RLO)
- Be point of contact/club rep for any off pitch issues
- Support the referee if they require RLO assistance
- Check that everything was ok with the referee and that there were no issues that might be subsequently reported

IRFU Discipline Webpage

Ulster Branch Disiciplinary Procedures- See appendix for details on Red Cards, Citings and Off Field incidents.

Citing Form- The IRFU citing form can be found ***HERE***

Disciplinary Queries- **discipline@ulsterrugby.com**

Respect OUR Game Resources

Key Contacts

Club Development / CMC
graeme.ormiston@ulsterrugby.com

Coaching Courses
Ulster Rugby Coaching Courses Webpage

Disability Rugby
stan.cinnamond@ulsterrugby.com

Discipline
discipline@ulsterrugby.com

Fixtures
fixtures@ulsterrugby.com

Funding
matthew.holmes@ulsterrugby.com
aimee.davey@ulsterrugby.com

Media
paul.mcintyre@ulsterrugby.com

Participation Rugby
ally.skelding@ulsterrugby.com

Rugby Connect
rugbyconnect@ulsterrugby.com

Rugby Participation Officers
Each club has an assigned RPO.
Any questions on this can be directed to Ally Skelding (email above)

Spirit of Rugby
kerry.spence@ulsterrugby.com

Volunteers
nicci.wilson@ulsterrugby.com

Women and Girls' Rugby
mollie.davies@ulsterrugby.com

Appendix
Disciplinary Process

Red Cards

Red Cards may be issued by USRFR appointed match officials or by Affiliate Referees. Sanctions will be determined by the Ulster Rugby Disciplinary Committee

STEP 1

Branch Referee completes Red Card Report Form within 48 hours of fixture and sends to USRFR Disciplinary Support Officer.

STEP 2

Red Card report sent from Branch staff to Honorary Secretary of club of offending player and to Disciplinary Committee. Player asked to fill in Player Directions Form in response to referee's report. This should be completed within 24 hours, alongside any supporting evidence and returned to **discipline@ulsterrugby.com**

STEP 3

Player accepts red card report- case reviewed by single judicial officer.

Player does not accept red card report-online hearing set up. Player and referee should be both be available for this. This usually will take place on a Wednesday evening.

STEP 4

Sanction communicated to player. Please note that a player may not play until outcome of Red Card sanction has been reached (and any ban served)

*Reports on red cards issued by Affiliate Referees should be sent to **discipline@ulsterrugby.com** directly and will be dealt with via same process

Citings

Acts of Foul Play not sanctioned by Match Officials that non-offending club wish to bring to the attention of the Disciplinary Committee

STEP 1

Gather Evidence in relation to incident - this can be witness statements, video evidence and other information pertinent to Citing Form.

STEP 2

Submit Citing Form in full and associated evidence within 72 hours of end of day that match occurred. This should be done in writing by the Honorary Secretary of club and sent to: **discipline@ulsterrugby.com**

STEP 3

All information passed from Branch staff to Disciplinary Committee, as well as cited player and their club.

STEP 4

Disciplinary Committee will convene and decide whether citing meets red card threshold.

STEP 5

Citing does not meet threshold - club informed that there will be no sanction (player may still receive a written warning).

Player accepts citing - reviewed by single Judicial Officer

Player does not accept citing - online hearing set up.

STEP 6

Sanction communicated to player. Please note that a player may continue to play until conclusion of a club reported citing hearing.

Off Field Disciplinary

STEP 1

Referee completes Disciplinary Report Form in full within 48 hours of fixture and sends to USRFR Disciplinary Support Officer.

STEP 2

USRFR consider report and then forward to Ulster Branch Honorary Secretary for investigation.

STEP 3

Full details of report sent to Honorary Secretary of club in which complaint is made against. This club has 7 days to respond in writing to the complaint, via the Ulster Branch Honorary Secretary.

STEP 4

Information from both parties then passed on to Disciplinary Committee for consideration.

STEP 5

Discipline Committee meet to discuss and decide on next course of action.

Appeals

Please note that any appeals to decisions of the Discipline Committee must be made in writing from the Club Honorary Secretary within 14 days- in line with IRFU Discipline Regulations. Appeals must be accompanied by the sum of £250



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