

IRFU Welcoming Clubs Programme



How to start a new team

A nucleus of 3-5 people who are dedicated to making it happen and to making it continue to happen. It will be hard work but rewarding.

Structure

The founding members must set out the aims of the new team and build a structure needed to achieve them. Initially the dedicated few should include a lead **chairperson, secretary and a treasurer**. This “committee” should be expanded where possible to spread the workload and responsibilities to utilise expertise and flair, to include a fixtures secretary, public relations officer, a social convener and fundraiser. A recruitment officer / development officer would also be useful. To ensure full integration in the club a committee member should sit on the overall club committee.

In all likelihood these people will be mostly players and coaches although as the team matures the administration could hopefully be left in the hands of non-players and former players. People should be matched to jobs / tasks for which they are suited. Avoid delegating volunteers to positions they may find difficult. Do not put volunteers in a position where they are unlikely to succeed. Encourage people to take an active role in the running of the team; an enthusiastic volunteer is better than no volunteer.

Development of new teams

Women’s Rugby has been fully endorsed by the International Rugby Board (I.R.B.), which recognises not only the present status of the game but the need to focus on growth potential.

Irish Women’s rugby is an integral part of Irish Rugby and is fully integrated into all aspects of the IRFU. Women’s rugby is growing rapidly with new teams being established each year.

Requirements

An established Rugby club is an ideal starting point providing the members are actively supportive and enthusiastic. The existing infrastructure would already be in place such as;

- The use of facilities: - clubhouse, pitches, training equipment etc.
- Expertise, in the administration of the game
- Financial assistance may be available through the “club support scheme”
- Coaching assistance should be sought from club members.

http://www.irishrugby.ie/club/welcomingclubs/welcoming_clubs_index.php

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Costing

Membership or club subscriptions for an established club can be expensive for beginners and should be negotiated with the club. A large part of this cost may be for (team insurance), which is a must before anyone starts to train or play.

Personal insurance may be considered as an option for individual players and would be the responsibility of the individual. However, all clubs should encourage members to avail of personal insurance. The IRFU understand the costs involved with establishing a new team and therefore women's teams are exempt from paying the insurance premium in the first year.

Travelling expenses can be high as the distance between clubs in a developing sport can be great. However, most Provinces have development leagues within their Province reducing travel requirements. As your team develops and progresses through the Leagues the travel requirements increase, with the All Ireland 2nd Division being split North & South and with the 1st Division being on an all Ireland basis.

Post match hospitality in the forms of meals and refreshments is usually expected depending on distance travelled. Individual costs would include a share of the above plus personal equipment i.e., boots, shorts, socks, protective gear such as gum shield, head protector shoulder pads etc. (Gum shield and football boots are a must before any player starts to train.)

Fundraising is necessary. Sponsored events raffles, quiz nights, discos and such like are typical. Some funding may be available from the Provincial Branches; this depends on Sponsorship deals secured throughout the year.

Local companies are found to be more sympathetic than large national or multinational organisations. Again approach the club for advice and/ or assistance. **Personal contacts produce better results** than an approach from a stranger.

Can we start a brand new club?

At Present there are no exclusive Women's Rugby Clubs in Ireland. You will need a Club name, colours and logo. (You will need to obtain the use of a playing/training ground.) This could be facilitated by the use or hire of public sports grounds, those of an existing club, school or centre for 3rd Level education.

You will need to acquire training equipment and organise team insurance, and a place that can be used as a clubhouse for meetings and the all important post match socialising which is still an integral part of the women's game.

What will attract players to your team / club?

Rugby:

- Is challenging, exciting and enjoyable to play
- Caters for all races, creeds, social and political backgrounds and for both genders.
- Caters for all body types and physical abilities.
- Inspires fitness and health through participation.
- Develops character and self discipline through teamwork and challenge both on and off the field of play.
- Creates social ties and lifelong friendships.

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Where will you get the players?

New players can be attracted to the club, and indeed to rugby, by promotional '**development days**' or open days in your area. This would include girls in 3rd level education as well as post leaving cert.

The promotion could entail a beginners coaching course in rugby and/or a beginners "**blitz**" in touch rugby, maybe allied to a club Happy Hour or a barbecue. You can get assistance with these events from the development officers at your Provincial Branch and you will find that existing women's teams will be helpful in assisting you.

With Tag fast becoming the summer sport to play this can also be a great way to recruit players or even get your team started.

The IRFU PLAY RUGBY Programme will assist in targeting mini girls or youth players should this be the audience that you are looking to target. For information on the programme follow the link to the Age Grade section of the IRFU website www.irishrugby.ie/agegrades

Social Media such as Facebook, Twitter, Gumtree and local advertising platforms are a great way to reach a wide audience. Poster advertising in local sports clubs, gyms, schools where interest may already exist can capture the immediate local audience. **Local media**, such as newsletters, local papers, radio stations, involvement would be very useful as some local papers are short on content and would be happy to put a piece in about your up and coming team. And of course word of mouth through friends and relatives and those involved in local sport generally would be a huge help.

The Competition?

On the playing front **realistic targets** must be set.

This will depend on the level of skill, development and experience of the players attracted to your club. It may be simply to develop a 7-a-side touch team in your first year or more ambitiously to play 15-a-side full contact rugby in a league competition.

A range of levels exists in between, including 7's and 10's touch, TAG or full contact matches.

You will need to liaise with your Provincial Branch Women's Development officer, the Provincial women's committee and/or recently and established women's clubs in your province, to discuss what best suits your needs.

Who will coach your team?

You should seek a person(s) who is/are consistent, competent and accredited. (To find out more about accreditation you can contact your Provincial Branch)

Personal contacts will usually supply the coach/coaches through the existing club, a local club or school. The Provincial Committee may be able to help. The main thing is to ensure they are qualified to coach to at least Level 1, through a recognised rugby Union or through the IRFU

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Can you have a second team?

Yes. It is hoped that this will be a reality in the near future, as it exists in other countries. Realistically to play full contact 15-a-side you will need a squad of 20 to 26 players on your books for one team. Some women's clubs in Ireland are at the stage where they have two teams playing in different divisions and others have two teams where one of them is an under-age side.

How often should you train?

That is up to your team and coach. Most successful clubs train **2 times per week** and most matches are played on Sunday afternoons.

While getting established

Contact the women's development officer in your Province and get your club registered to the appropriate level. All players must be registered online through your club to enable them to play in all competitions, as pin numbers are required on all team sheets. Inform your Provincial Women's Fixtures Secretary whether your club will take part in provincially organised competitions during the season. Once registered you will receive a contact list for all clubs in Ireland as well as other useful names and contact details.

You will be put on a mailing list where you will receive information about women's rugby in both Ireland and in your province.

Referees

In order to obtain a referee for a match **7 days notice** must be given to the Provincial Branch. The best way to contact the referees association is by email through your Provincial Branch.

Referees cannot be guaranteed due to the high numbers of games played periodically each week. The Association of Referees will try their utmost to facilitate. Do not assume that by asking for a referee that one will automatically be provided. Referees number will be advised to the host club. In the event of the match being cancelled and the referees not advised a substantial fine may be imposed.

When established and playing

It is the **club with home advantage's responsibility to organise any fixture**. This may include the following;

- informing the travelling club of Kick-Off and Venue
- Organising referee and touch judges by contact the referees' office at your Provincial Branch.
- Providing refreshments for the travelling team and referee
- Ensuring match-card for fixture is completed and returned to the appropriate person
- Informing Fixtures Secretary of any problems with the scheduling/fulfilling of the fixture
- Other duties which may contribute to the promotion, enjoyment and safety of the game

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Things to Avoid:

- Remember most clubs are stretched and have a few teams, so if you show you are willing to **be flexible**; they will accommodate you a lot easier.
- Avoid looking like you are trying to “sponge” off the club. Most clubs are strapped financially and don’t need to see the women’s team as a financial burden

Contact Information

Who should you contact?

Your Provincial Women’s Committee

LEINSTER

Lorna O’Connor

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MUNSTER

Denise Hickey

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ULSTER

Johnnie Neary

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CONNACHT

Sarah Healy

sthealy@hotmail.com

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This committee is affiliated to the Provincial Branches of the Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU). It reports to both the Branch Domestic Games Committee and, through a representative, to the IRFU Women's Committee.

You can also contact your Provincial Women's Development Officer;

LEINSTER

Jennie Bagnall

Jennie.bagnall@leinsterrugby.ie

ULSTER

Joy Sparks

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MUNSTER

Amanda Greensmith

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CONNACHT

Wendy Hickey

Wendy@cbirfu.com

- Another good source of information is the internet, more specifically

www.irishrugby.ie

www.Leinsterrugby.ie

www.munsterrugby.ie

www.connachtrugby.ie

www.ulsterrugby.com

www.scrumqueens.com

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