

PITCH UP FOR RUGBY

2022

ACTIVATION GUIDE



England
Rugby



THE NATIONAL
LOTTERY

OFFICIAL PARTNER TO THE RFU

WELCOME TO PITCH UP FOR RUGBY 2022

Following the success of 2021, when close to 600 Pitch Up events were hosted by clubs nationwide, we are delighted the programme is returning to help you attract even more players, coaches, match officials and volunteers to your club for the upcoming season.

Supported by our national adult participation campaign, 'Play Together, Stay Together,' this year's programme will focus on two key groups of players – 17-22-year-olds and their transition from age grade to adult rugby, and 30+ men who tend to play in social XV's. As the game continues to rebuild following the pandemic, these two audiences have been identified by clubs as key to improving playing numbers to support match completion.

Many of you attended our webinar in June that outlined insights into the age grade audience, how they feel about the transition to adult rugby and suggestions for how you can create the best environments to support players at this age. It is great to see clubs embracing this and creating plans for the forthcoming season. For those who missed the webinar, links are available within this guide to help you access the information.

Pitch Up 2022 will take place over the weekend of 17/18th September and we hope to see you all participating as we come together once more celebrate the start of the new season. Our thanks go to The National Lottery who will again be supporting Pitch Up For Rugby weekends, helping to raise awareness of events and encouraging more players back to clubs. Full details of this programme and how you can use the assets we've created for your club channels are included in this guide.

We hope the whole rugby community will enjoy coming together to support the campaign to get more players on pitches nationwide, with Pitch Up For Rugby providing an early focal point in the season to help achieve this.

Best of luck for your events and we look forward to hearing more about them.



Bill Sweeney
Chief Executive



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WHAT IS PITCH UP FOR RUGBY?



Pitch Up for Rugby is a national celebration to get your club back together and helping you to maximise membership for the forthcoming season. A strong focus for 2022/23 is on encouraging 17-22-year-olds and 30+ males to stay in the game.

Over the weekend of 17th September we will see clubs across the country host events, supported by national communications to support your club and increase awareness of the event. Pitch Up for Rugby also gives you the opportunity to showcase your club to the local community, businesses and potential sponsors. All of this combined, will put your club in a great place as we enter the new season.

Your Pitch Up weekend will be supported by our 'Play Together, Stay Together' campaign for the 2022/23 season, which will help clubs in the retention of players and encouraging them back to the game. This messaging will be delivered via assets as shown later in this guide.

The campaign will include content to appeal to players in both the men's and women's game and to age grade

players who are ready to transition into the adult game.

There will be a heavy focus on player retention in the men's game due to the additional challenges faced in this area as the game rebuilds after the pandemic. The national campaign will form one strand of the 9-point [adult male rugby recovery plan](#) that the RFU is implementing across the 2022/23 season. This responds to club feedback where support is most needed as the game continues to rebuild following the pandemic.

The key focus in the women's game is on player recruitment. Therefore, alongside 'Play Together, Stay Together,' we will run a campaign in October and November dedicated to growing the women's game through Allianz Inner Warrior, aligned to the 2021 Rugby World Cup (playing in 2022).

We're fortunate that the Pitch Up for Rugby programme is being supported by The National Lottery, so you'll see their logo across many of the assets we're giving you. Over the last year alone, £3.8m of funding generated by National Lottery players has gone into helping grassroots rugby clubs and projects across the UK.



WHY RUN A PITCH UP FOR RUGBY EVENT?

Alongside a celebration to start the season for all your existing members, Pitch Up provides the ideal platform to help retain players who are considering dropping out of the game, providing you with a bigger pool of players to ensure your matches can go ahead.

Clubs are of course welcome to use Pitch Up For Rugby events to increase playing numbers in areas relevant to their needs. No one club will be the same. For this campaign the audiences we are focussing on respond to feedback provided by the majority of clubs, alongside data analysis of match completion rates. From this feedback on where support is most needed we have identified two key groups...



17-22-year-olds

Alongside changes in their lifestyles such as going to university or starting their first job. Our research highlighted both barriers and motivations for this age group to continue their journey into adult rugby.

We recently ran a webinar to take clubs through this insight along with ideas on creating a supportive culture for this group. You can view the webinar www.youtube.com/watch?v=18llILicHsM and an Age Grade to Adult rugby transition guide www.englandrugby.com/resources

30+ males



CREATING YOUR PITCH UP FOR RUGBY EVENT

It's a good idea to have a focal point for your event, so that a large crowd can form and help create a great atmosphere. Here are some ideas for your focal point:

- **Speech from club chairperson**
- **Attendance or speech from your local MP**
- **Attendance or speech from a former player who turned professional and may be well known in the area and encourage attendance**



CREATING YOUR PITCH UP FOR RUGBY EVENT

While the marketing campaign focusses on two key groups, it's important for your Pitch Up For Rugby event to be inclusive of all areas of your club and players. Everyone is welcome and Pitch Up events are a good way of celebrating this. So, you'll need to create a schedule that encourages all members to attend, by providing both on-field and off-field entertainment.

A schedule example is shown here, but you can adapt this to the size of your club and the variety of teams you have playing, using all the playing space that you have.

Holding a combination of events across the day will ensure there is something for all your members and their families. It's also a great way to showcase your facility to the local community and show the range of activities that you host.

TOP TIP

Create a mini working group to plan your event, sharing out responsibilities to create an effective event. Regular Zoom calls are a great way of updating each other

- 
- 12:00 CLUB HOUSE OPENS**
 - 13:30 THE TOUCH UNION RUGBY SESSION**
 - 14:15 MINIS & JUNIORS**
 - 14:30 FOCAL POINT**
 - 15:00 MEN'S 1ST XV / 2ND XV**
 - 17:45 WOMEN'S 1ST / 2ND XV**
 - 19:00 ENTERTAINMENT**

CREATING YOUR PITCH UP FOR RUGBY EVENT

Use local businesses and contacts within your club to add additional elements to your Pitch Up for Rugby event, this will encourage players, spectators and the local community to attend and stay for longer.

TOP TIP

Have a membership stall where potential new players, coaches and volunteers can talk to a club member and sign up

BBQS



MINI COMPETITIONS



INFLATABLE ACTIVITIES



FACE PAINTING



PROMOTING YOUR EVENT

To support you in promoting your event, we've also created a suite of assets that are available via the resources page - www.englandrugby.com/resources. Each of these assets can be downloaded and used as provided, or they have editable fields allowing you to add your club logo, or your own imagery. The assets available to you include:

- Social media posts
- Email
- Press release for local media
- Posters
- Press ad

TOP TIP

The press releases could also be used as news stories on your website

To ensure consistency in the campaign and to help us promote The National Lottery, we ask that you only use official assets for your Pitch Up for Rugby weekend.

PLAY TOGETHER STAY TOGETHER

Fancy a fun-filled weekend of rugby? Then don't miss our Pitch Up For Rugby 2022 event on [insert date] between [insert times]. We've got loads of activities lined up for everyone to enjoy - so come along and get involved.

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PITCH UP FOR RUGBY

PITCH UP FOR RUGBY

SEE YOU AT PITCH UP FOR RUGBY 2022

Our annual Pitch Up event is back. On [insert date] between [insert times], we'll be kicking off the season with a fun-filled programme of activities for all ages to enjoy - both on and off the pitch.

Come and join in the fun at [insert club name].

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Address or logo

PLAY TOGETHER STAY TOGETHER

PITCH UP FOR RUGBY

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PITCH UP FOR RUGBY

PLAY TOGETHER STAY TOGETHER

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WE PLAY RUGBY

PLEASE REMEMBER

// RESPECT EVERYONE EQUALLY

// SHOW YOUR SUPPORT

// NOBODY'S PERFECT

// ALWAYS BE KIND

// IT'S ABOUT HAVING FUN

PLAY TOGETHER STAY TOGETHER

Rugby football icon. The RFU icon is an official registered trademark of the Rugby Football Union.

PROMOTING YOUR EVENT

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a vital communication tool for reaching your audience. The assets we're providing can be used within your club pages to advertise the event to your followers and if you wish to raise additional awareness, you could consider a paid campaign to reach a new audience.

WE RECOMMEND POSTING ABOUT YOUR EVENT AS SOON AS YOU HAVE CONFIRMED DATES.

Consider following this up with a minimum of one post a week, with teaser information about what will be happening at your event, to encourage engagement. Where possible create interaction with your followers in the build up by asking questions e.g. What are you most looking forward to about next season?



Set Pitch Up for Rugby up as an event on Facebook and invite all your followers to attend



#PlayTogetherStayTogether

Use the #PlayTogetherStayTogether hashtag across all communications and encourage your members to use it as well

@EnglandRugby
@RFU

Tag @EnglandRugby and @RFU in your communications to help show this is a national campaign

NATIONAL CAMPAIGN OVERVIEW

Our national campaign will focus on the friendships developed through being part of your local rugby club and how they can become a key part of your life. This will all be delivered under a campaign called 'Play Together, Stay Together'.

Plans are currently being developed for this campaign to continue across the season, supporting you in the retention and recruitment of players.

On the 24th August we will launch a film that captures stories of friendships developed through the game, featuring players such as Jonny Hill and Hannah Botterman, alongside stories from your clubs. The film will be supported by paid media in September to increase the reach of the campaign.

We will share the video when launched and encourage you to share it on your social channels. Your club may also want to consider putting paid media behind the content to increase the reach to your local community and people who may not follow your clubs social channels.



LOCAL PR

Getting your local newspapers, radio and TV stations and local news websites interested in your local Pitch Up for Rugby event can be a great way of promoting what you have happening and getting the local community interested in coming down.

Here are 5 hints and tips of how best to capture the attention of your local media.

TOP TIP

Make local media aware of your event as early as possible, then contact them again a week before to check if they can attend.



THINK ABOUT WHAT YOU HAVE TO OFFER AT YOUR PITCH UP FOR RUGBY WEEKEND EVENT THAT MIGHT GRAB THEIR INTEREST, FOR EXAMPLE:

Do you have any notable local figures attending; local MPs, mayors, famous local faces.

Will you be recognising any players or volunteers that have an interesting back story; such as a volunteer who has been with the club for a long period of time, someone who has overcome huge adversity to be where they are today or someone who has raised a lot for the local community during the pandemic?

Are you celebrating a particular anniversary (e.g. the age of the club) or other milestone moments.

LOCAL PR



LOCAL PRESS WANT TO COVER STORIES THAT SHOW POSITIVE COMMUNITY CONTRIBUTIONS SO MAKE CLEAR THE ROLE YOU PLAY IN THE COMMUNITY, DON'T BE AFRAID TO TELL THEM ALL THE GOOD YOU DO! EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

Talk about your successes from last season and how your members welcomed the return to rugby and being back as part of your club. If you have players who have returned part way through the season and can highlight the benefits being part of the club gave them, arrange an interview with them. This can help encourage other players to return – it's never to late.

Talk about any other voluntary or charitable initiatives you have, particularly if these help the local community.



USE THE TEMPLATE PRESS MATERIALS WE PROVIDE TO TELL YOUR LOCAL MEDIA ABOUT THE EVENT. YOU WILL HAVE THE FOLLOWING YOU CAN SHARE:

A press release to send to media about the event before it takes place for them to use to encourage people to come down to the event beforehand.

A broadcast notice, this is a specific note you can send to your local TV and radio stations to invite them to come down and record or film your event.

A press release to use after the event to update them on what happened.

LOCAL PR

WHEN IT COMES TO WHO TO INVITE, IT'S WORTH CONTACTING THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF MEDIA (NOT EXCLUSIVE)

- Local sport reporters
- Local newspaper picture editors
- Writers who focus on community initiatives
- Local 'what's on' and diary writers



FOLLOW YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPERS AND BROADCASTERS ON SOCIAL MEDIA FROM YOUR CLUB ACCOUNTS.

You can then 'tag' them in any posts or comment on posts they have.



INVITING LOCAL VIPS

To increase the profile of the event, you should consider inviting some big names from your local community, such as:

- FORMER PLAYERS WHO HAVE TURNED PROFESSIONAL OR ARE WELL KNOWN IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY
- ANY LOCAL CELEBRITIES THAT A MEMBER OF YOUR CLUB MAY KNOW

Attracting well-known people will increase the PR story for your event and help encourage local press to attend. And, if you're able to promote their attendance in advance on your social pages, this should motivate more people from the local community to come too.



SPONSORS

Pitch Up for Rugby provides the ideal opportunity to engage local businesses and attract new sponsors to the club. With a high number of attendees, Pitch Up for Rugby gives you a platform to showcase how your club can support in promoting the business to the local community, while the business can also be seen to be giving something back.

Consider who your existing sponsors are and identify businesses that wouldn't conflict with them. Invite those businesses to be part of the day – you could consider allowing them to promote their businesses at Pitch Up for Rugby if appropriate.

TOP TIP

Our experience suggests you're likely to gain better traction with local businesses that can make sponsorship decisions at a local level



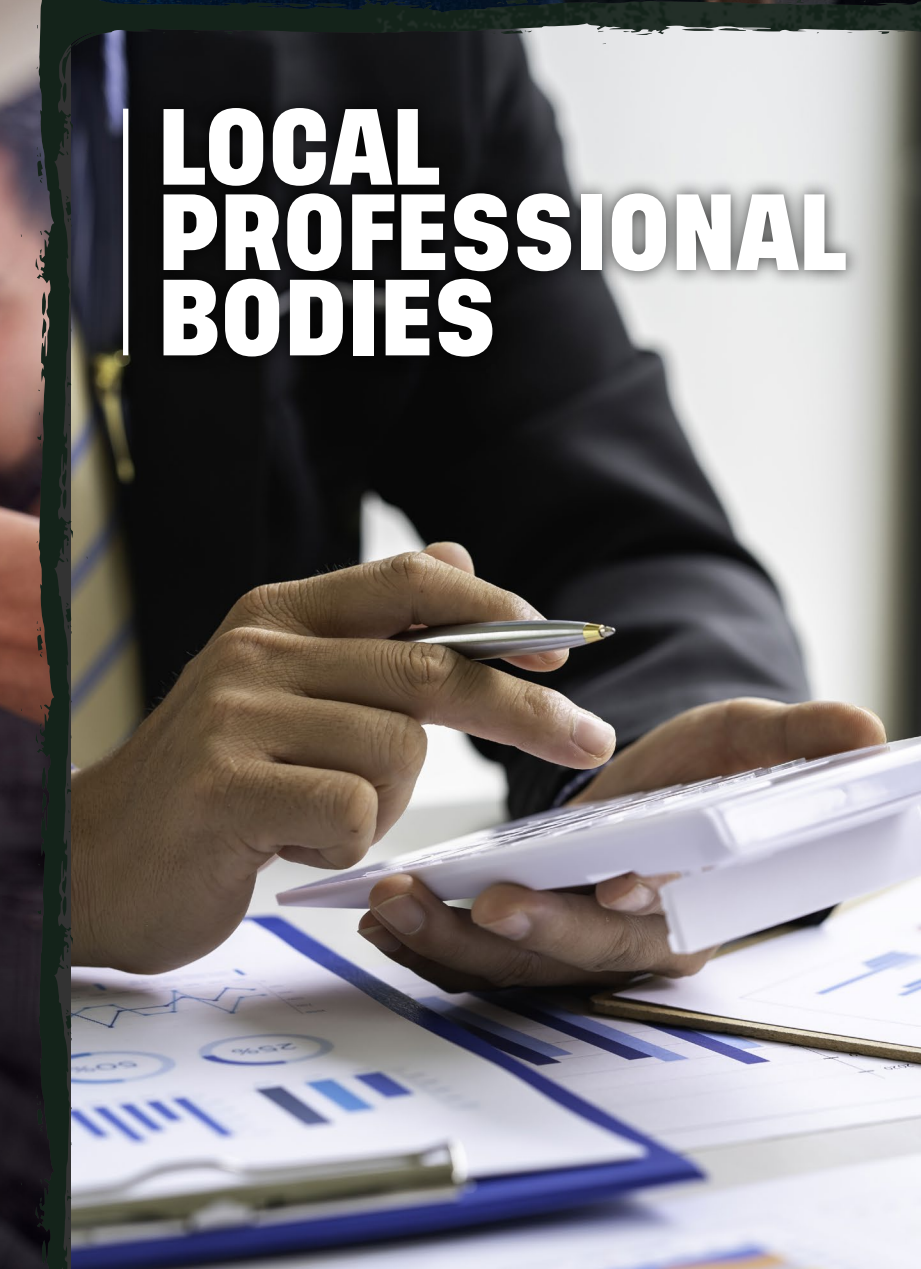
CAR DEALERSHIPS



HOSPITALITY



TRADESMEN



LOCAL PROFESSIONAL BODIES



ESTATE AGENTS

SUPPORTING YOUR PLAYERS RETURN TO RUGBY

Players often cite concerns over injury and fitness as barriers to playing, here are resources players can access to support this:

www.englandrugby.com/participation/playing/prepare-to-play/prepare-to-play-home

keepyourbootson.co.uk/rugbysafe-toolkit/activate/



EVENT DAY CHECKLIST

BEFORE

- ✓ Complete and update risk assessments, plus health and safety measures
- ✓ Ensure you have checked the latest RFU guidelines on playing protocols
- ✓ Plan activities within current government guidelines
- ✓ Identify skills required and delegate responsibilities
- ✓ Email existing members and invite local MP/VIPs
- ✓ Promote your event via social media press releases, website, leaflets/posters for local businesses

DURING

- ✓ Take photographs
- ✓ Collect short quotes from attendees
- ✓ Be the best host
- ✓ Update social media throughout the day

AFTER THE EVENT

AFTER YOUR (NO DOUBT SUCCESSFUL) EVENT, MAKE SURE YOU FOLLOW UP BY:

Sending an email to all attendees and membership

Publishing a story about the event on your website

Thanking sponsors by email or over the phone

Sharing photos and videos on social media

Issuing a press release, with photos, for local press

