



2025/26

RFU MEN'S LEAGUES

MID SEASON BRIEFING

Competition Updates and Reminders

Introduction

As we enter into the last few months of the season, please find below information and updates for clubs playing in RFU leagues.

Following information and useful reminders provided to clubs playing in RFU Leagues before the start of the season, we thought it would be useful to provide similar information midway into the season.

We would welcome feedback on any content you would like to see included in future. Please forward your feedback to Competitions-Development@RFU.com . If you have any questions, please use the same email address.

National League 2 Format - 2026-27

After considerable research and debate, covering a variety of rescheduling options, the NLR executive voted unanimously to maintain the current structure of three leagues of 14 teams (North, East & West) for season 26-7. It was felt that all the other potential options impacted negatively on substantially more clubs than the current unsatisfactory situation and on the integrity of the leagues. In the interim, NLR will continue to use its best endeavours to refine the process of allocation of clubs to National 2 Leagues to minimise the travel burden for Clubs and players across the country. The process is refreshed annually to continually minimise travel and the Committee may in its discretion apply variations for the benefit of the game of rugby union overall in the locality. Further details on the process to be used will be circulated to National League clubs by the end of this season. It should be noted that this is unlikely to bring about any major change and clubs will continue to be allocated within the fixed constraints of club demographics and geography. The NLR and RFU will continue to review the present structure with a view to bringing about change in future seasons but in the context of the game as a whole.

Allocation of Clubs to Regional 1 and 2 Leagues for Season 2026-27

All Clubs shall be allocated to leagues in accordance with RFU Regulation 6, Appendix 2.2 under the criteria laid down below. Any such decision will be final and therefore not open to appeal.

- Teams at each level shall be grouped geographically across the country and the process is refreshed annually to continually minimise travel.

- ‘Lowest Total Mileage’ calculations may be utilised to complete the requisite number of clubs in each league.
- Where two Clubs have an identical Lowest Total Mileage (within 2%) a club competing in the same league in the previous season shall have precedence to remain there, otherwise it shall be the highest placed club.
- A club shall be exempt from being moved leagues AT THE SAME LEVEL for a second (or more) consecutive season unless that club agrees to such a move.
- In exceptional circumstances the Committee may in its discretion vary the above criteria for the benefit of the game of rugby union overall in the locality.

Regional League Webinars - Next Steps

Many thanks to all the clubs that attended the Regional League Webinars and completed the survey. We received responses from over 120 clubs, and we have outlined the key actions as follows:

Replacements for Regional 1: The evidence from the engagement and subsequent data analysis indicates that an increase in the number of replacements in Regional Leagues 1 to 5, without requiring an additional Front Row Replacement, could be a positive solution. This will now be a decision for the Community Game Board and we will communicate accordingly one way or other with the affected clubs before the end of the season.

Structured Season: Final amendments are being made to next year's season, which will be confirmed before the end of the season. Based on feedback from the webinars and surveys, we have adhered to the key principles: a slightly delayed start, a winter break, and completing the regular season fixtures in April.

Play-Off Update

The schedule and illustrative fixtures based on latest league standings can be viewed on all ROC websites via the following coordinated link <https://rfulondon.com/forms/play.pdf>

Update on the Community Cups

The Men’s National Community Cup Competitions return for another season in 2025/26. Fixtures are now online on the [Fixtures & Results](#) section of the website.

The following are the competition dates:

- 20 September 2025
- 25 October 2025
- 31 January 2026
- 2 May 2026
- 9 May 2026
- Finals - 16/17 May or 23/24 May 2026

The venues and dates for the Finals will be the following:

Competition	Matches	Date	Venue
Men's South Plates	3	Saturday 16/5/26	Shaftesbury Park
Men's North Plates	3	Sunday 17/5/26	Castle Park
Women's Plates + Counties 3 Central Plate	3	Sunday 17/5/26	Butts Park Arena

Men's Championships (Counties 1 - Counties 3+)	3	Saturday 23/5/26	Allianz Stadium
Women's Cups & Championship Playoff	3	Sunday 24/5/26	Allianz Stadium

Travel Funding – Community Cup 2025/26

Competition funding has been confirmed to follow the same format as last season. Please be advised that clubs **do not** need to apply for this funding, it will be calculated and sent to clubs after the completion of the competitions.

Thresholds will also apply to matches involving clubs from the Channel Isles, IoM and IoW participating in these cup or knockout competitions. No further funding for air travel or crossing the Solent, applicable for RFU League matches, is provided for participating in these cup competitions.

- 98 miles - £174.57
- 147 miles - £218.21
- 196 miles - £261.86
- 245 miles - £305.50
- 294 miles - £349.14
- 343 miles - £465.52
- 392 miles - £523.71
- 441 miles - £581.90
- 490 miles - £611.00
- 588 miles - £640.09
- 686 miles - £669.19
- 784 miles - £698.28
- 882 miles - £727.19

In addition, there will be accommodation support payments awarded to teams traveling:

- Over 441 miles - an additional payment of £304.18
- Over 686 miles - an additional payment of £596.85

Regulations – Community Cup 2025/26

The Adult Male Community Cup competition regulations can be found [HERE](#)

Relegation from Counties 1 and below (Potential Cascade Effect)

Clarification on Promotion and Relegation - Best Playing Record

The league winner from each Counties 1 league will be promoted to Regional 2. There will be FIVE extra promotions allocated to the 2nd placed Clubs with the Best Playing Records;

Relegation from Counties 1 leagues is as detailed in the Pre-season Briefing document. Regular updates of the current predictions can be viewed on all ROC websites via the following coordinated link <https://rfulondon.com/forms/promote.pdf>

The impact of relegation from Counties One will continue down through the leagues in each respective leg. Additional information on promotion & relegation in the Men's League Structure can be found in [Regulation 6, Appendix 2](#)(opens in a new tab).

Transfer deadline reminder and changes to registration processes in GMS

The transfer deadline applies across the majority of RFU Leagues. If your league/competition is not listed then no transfer deadline applies. Please see the dates below:

Men's registrations at clubs at National League Rugby	Friday 27th February 2026 , the Waiting Period (if applicable) having been completed before the Transfer Deadline is reached.
Men's registrations at Championship Clubs	Friday 27th March 2026 , the Waiting Period (if applicable) having been completed before the Transfer Deadline is reached.
Men's registrations at Premiership Clubs	Friday 17th April 2026 , the Waiting Period (if applicable) having been completed before the Transfer Deadline is reached.
Men's registrations at Regional Leagues to Counties 2 (levels 5 to 8)	Friday 6th February 2026 , the Waiting Period (if applicable) having been completed before the Transfer Deadline is reached.
Women's registrations at Championship 1 to National Challenge 1 (levels 2 to 4)	Friday 27th February 2026 , the Waiting Period (if applicable) having been completed before the Transfer Deadline is reached.
Women's registrations at Premiership Women's Rugby	Friday 3rd April 2026 , the Waiting Period (if applicable) having been completed before the Transfer Deadline is reached.

Once the transfer deadline for your respective competition has passed, players who need to be/are RFU Registered will be unable to move clubs and become active until the end of the season.

Fundamentally, the transfer deadline processes remains largely the same as in previous seasons.

What changed in 2024/25?

Many of you will be aware that there are now two adult registration types: RFU Registration and Club Registration. For an illustration and a reminder of which registration types are required for which league levels, please click [here](#).

RFU Registration

Essentially, there is no change. Any player RFU Registered, once the respective transfer deadline has passed, will be unable to move clubs nor change their registration type.

Club Registration

Any player who is Club Registered will be able to continue to move clubs, right up until the end of the season. The transfer deadline **DOES NOT** apply to Club Registered players. Any player who is Club Registered after the transfer deadline passes will not be able to apply for RFU Registration with another club. Players will be able to apply for RFU Registration at their existing club(s), but not with a 'new' club.

Changing RFU Registration to Club Registration

This season, clubs have had the flexibility to be able to change a player from RFU Registered to Club Registered. This functionality will be removed on 6th February for all men and 27th February for all women.

Men's National Leagues: The transfer deadline for Men's National Leagues is 27th February. Players can move between teams in these leagues up until this point, in line with the regulations.

PLEASE NOTE: Should clubs at this level have 2nd, 3rd or 4th teams in RFU Leagues, incoming/transferred players will only be eligible to play for these teams if they have RFU Registered at these clubs prior to the 6th February transfer deadline.

For further and more detailed information, including examples, please click through to the article in Community Rugby Help by clicking [here](#).

'Renewal Required' status change

From the 26th January for men and 16th February for women, any player still with an 'Renewal Required' status will have their status changed to 'Inactive'. This will ensure that any players registering for the first time in the 25/26 season will be able to select which club they register for, and not need to transfer.

Please note this is only for players registering for the first time in the 25/26 season and does not impact upon any other registration type.

Walkovers, Postponements and Abandoned Games

A reminder: if your match is postponed or a walkover, you should NOT complete the electronic match card but advise your League Secretary (Men's) and the Results Service (Men's & Women's) without delay.

If a game is abandoned, you should telephone the results service with details of the amount of time elapsed when the game was stopped, the reason for it and the score at the time. **Again, there is no requirement to complete the EMC.**

Please remember the result stands automatically after 60 minutes ONLY if the referee stops the match because of deteriorating weather conditions.