



National Youth Council

YOUTH SURVEY 2010

Your Game, Your Voice, Get it heard!



1. INTRODUCTION

The RFU National Youth Council (NYC) was created in 2009 as a tool to establish the youth opinion on the game of rugby union in England. With 78% of participants playing rugby union being under 25, it seemed logical to have a formal youth structure established to communicate views, needs and opinions to the governing body.

The NYC consists of eleven members from a diverse spread of the youth game. We are from a variety of locations, roles, ages, educational background, careers, pathways and genders. The main thing we all have in common is a passion for rugby union and improvement of the game.

What makes us unique is that we are the only sporting youth group to have a direct link into the decision making and management process of its sport. The NYC currently sits as part of the Schools, Colleges and Universities Sub-Committee (SCUS) which in turn feeds into the Community Game Board (CGB).

Our key aim is to engage with the youth audience of rugby union and to seek their opinion, on the game as well as its organisation and management. We decided the best way to address this would be through an online survey for young people. This will hopefully highlight the areas of the game which young people enjoy, feel are beneficial and successful as well as those which are potential issues or seen in a more negative way.

2. METHODOLOGY

As mentioned above, we decided the best way to establish a representative and meaningful cross section of youth opinion was through an online survey for young people. We felt we were able to get the best understanding and engagement with the young person, as the questions were written and phrased by young people for young people. Some of the key points which the survey wanted to address were:

- ❖ What young people enjoy about rugby union.
- ❖ What young people don't enjoy about the sport.
- ❖ Why do/don't young people participate in rugby union.
- ❖ Why people might drop out of playing.
- ❖ Potential strategies for improving enjoyment for young people in rugby.
- ❖ How young people like to be communicated with.

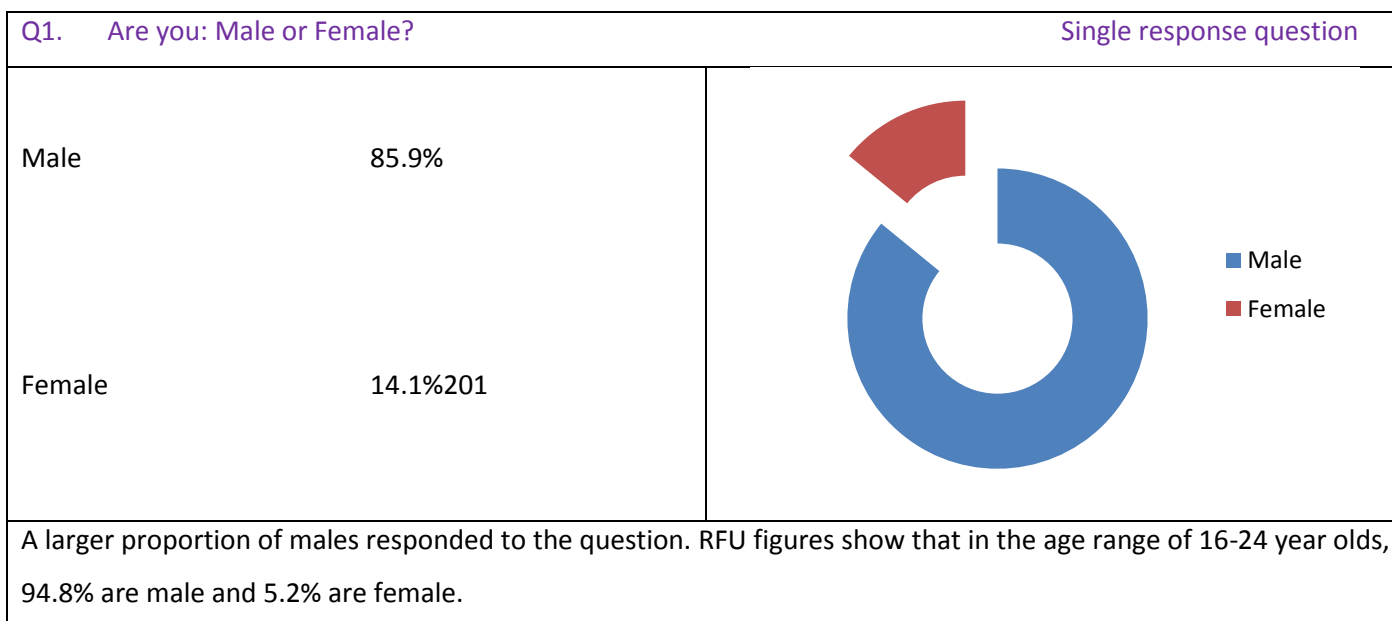
To ensure we had a large number of responses, the survey communication plan was paramount to its success. All of the standard channels of communication in the RFU were utilised such as; Regional Development Teams contacts, RugbyFirst, Constituent Body (CB) contacts, RFU.com, Touchline and the Schools Newsletter. Likewise

alternative methods were used to engage with young people, these include Facebook, Pitchero, Twitter and word of mouth.

So we could establish an opinion from young people it was important to include open questions which allow a qualitative response. This would allow survey participants to express their views and explain what they mean in their own words. This was done through Questions 7, 11, 12 and 16. The issue with qualitative responses is how to report and summarise the views expressed. To overcome this we chose to organise all the responses into survey determined categories. The way we did this was by reading through the answers and categorising each response into broader topics. As the categories grew we either allocated the result to its appropriate category or continued to create a new, more specific category for comment. This gave us a true analysis of the survey without predetermining the categories and the results. This allows to identify key issues were before analysing them further.

The survey opened at the start of the autumn internationals and closed on the 31st December. It yielded a total of **2,428** responses.

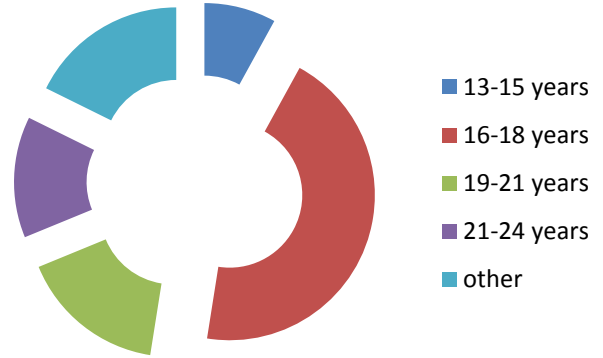
3. SURVEY RESULTS



Q2. How old are you?

Single response question

13-15 years	8.0%
16-18 years	44.5%
19-21 years	16.3%
21-24 years	13.5%

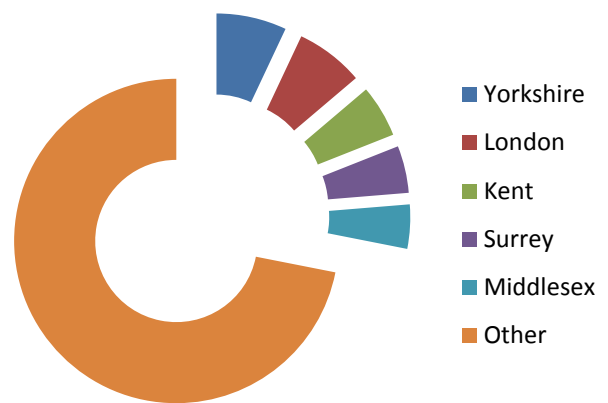


The biggest response age group is that of 16-18 years, this is interesting as the player development pathway between county, regional and national set up starts here. Likewise this is when lots of young people leak from the game in the transition from school, college and university. The largest single age group was 17 years.

Q3. Which county do you live?

Single response question

Yorkshire	7%
London	6.8%
Kent	5.2%
Surrey	4.7%
Middlesex	4.4%
Other	71.9%

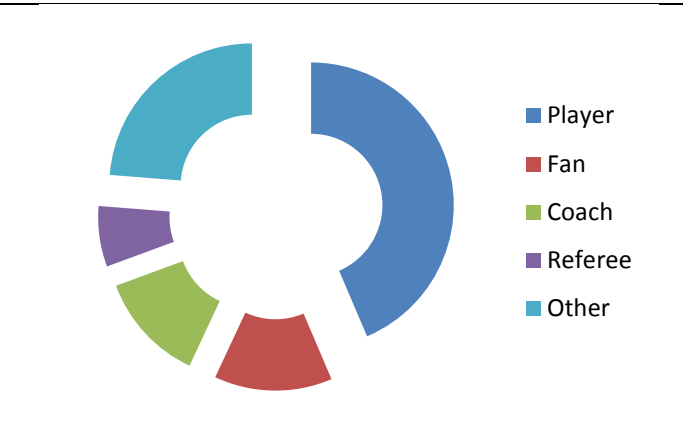


There is a good response from across the country with a large number of responses in highly populated areas.

Q4. How are you involved in rugby?

Multiple choice question

Player	43.6%
Fan	13.4%
Coach	12.4%
Referee	6.9%

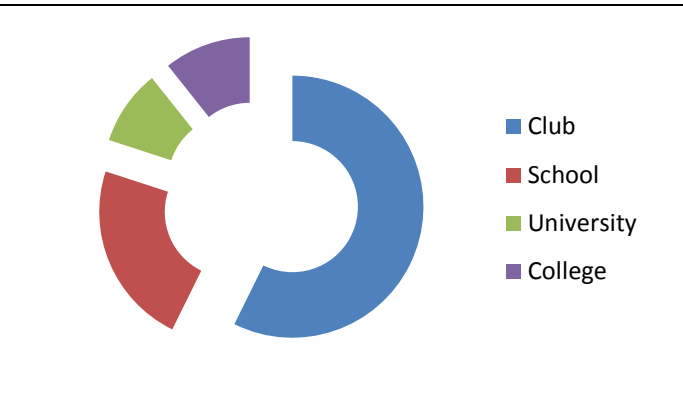


As you can see a large proportion of our responses were from players. This shows a reflection of the participation of rugby union within the 16-24 age range. This may also influence the results in regards to the perceptions of players.

Q5. Where are you involved in rugby?

Multiple choice question

Club	57.3%
School	22.7%
University	9.3%
College	10.7%



This shows that a large proportion of people in our survey who participate in rugby do so at their club. However there are 42.7% of participants who are not involved with a club.

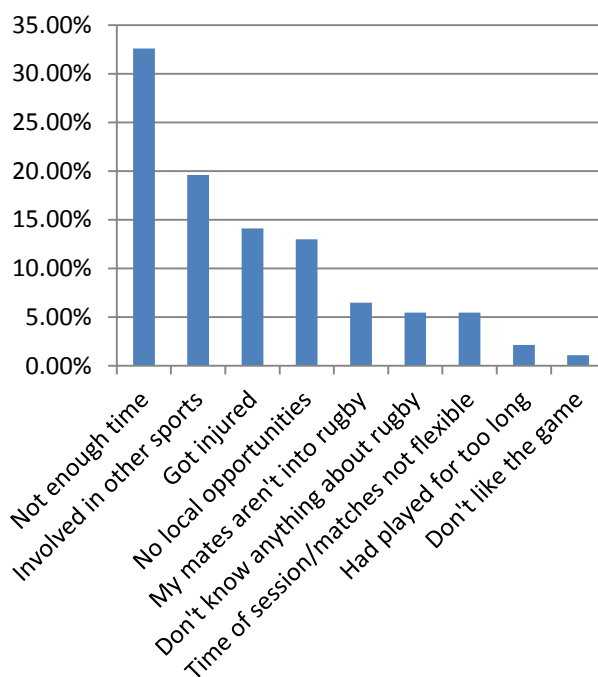
Respondents could select more than one area, the NYC believe it is vitally important to identify all places young people are involved in the game, at what age and the percentages of those that play in more than one place therefore further detailed analysis will take place on this question.

Q6. Why are you not currently involved?

Multiple choice question

68 responses – 2.6% of total

Not enough time	32.6%
Involved in other sports	19.6%
Got injured	14.1%
No local opportunities	13.0%
My mates aren't into rugby	6.5%
Don't know anything about rugby	5.5%
Time of session/matches not flexible	5.5%
Had played for too long	2.1%
Don't like the game	1.1%



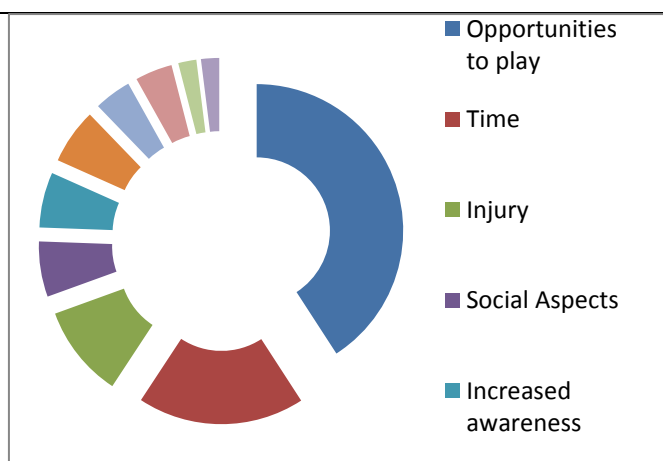
This indicated that people need both time to participate and that the time of the activity needs to be convenient to fit in with their lifestyle. People may also not have the time to participate due to clashes between the timings of sports they currently participate and rugby union. It also shows that injury is the third biggest reason people are not currently active in the sport.

Q7. What would make you get involved in rugby?

Qualitative

44 responses – 1.8% of total

Opportunities to play	40.8%
Time	18.4%
Return from injury	10.2%
Social Aspects	6.1%
Increased awareness	6.1%

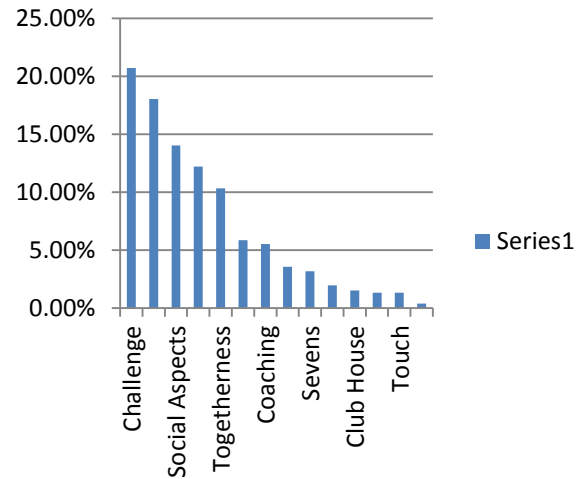


As indicated in the response to this question, it seems there aren't enough opportunities to play the game in a way that appeals to all young people. Also the access to where rugby is played may be a barrier for why people aren't currently participating. This could link with either not having enough time or again the time not being suitable for the person's lifestyle. Injuries also force people to stop playing.

Q8. What do you enjoy most about rugby union?

Response weighted question

Challenge	20.7%
Physicality	18.0%
Social Aspects	14.0%
Fitness	12.2%
Togetherness	10.3%
Technical aspects	5.9%
Coaching	5.5%
Spectating	3.6%
Sevens	3.2%
Refereeing	2.0%
Club House	1.5%
Volunteering	1.3%
Touch	1.3%
Non-contact	0.4%

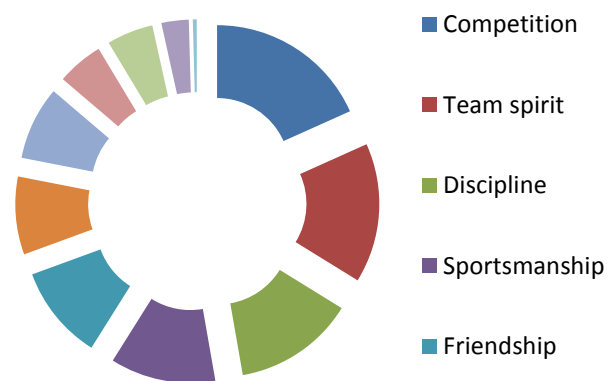


Challenge, Physicality and Fitness are all in the top 4 reasons for why people enjoy about rugby union. Challenge and physicality both relate more to the contact game. It is positive to see that togetherness and social aspects of rugby have come up in the top 5, showing the rugby community is something people really enjoy. It is interesting to see that touch, non-contact and sevens all have low response rates.

Q9. What are the most positive aspects of rugby for you?

Response weighted question

Competition	18.3%
Team spirit	15.5%
Discipline	13.4%
Sportsmanship	11.7%
Friendship	10.5%
Respect	8.7%
Getting fit	8.2%
Sense of belonging	5.2%
Game for all	5.2%
Family sport	3.0%
Nothing positive	0.4%

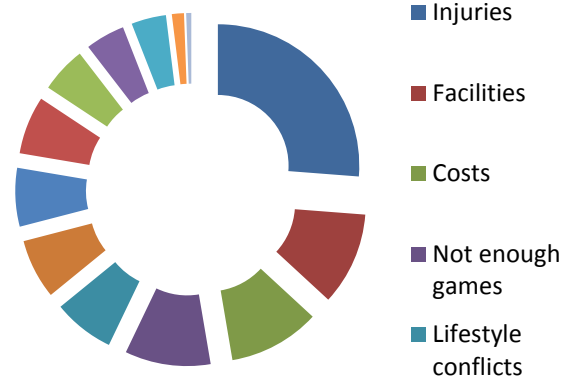


This indicates that the RFU core values are correct as team spirit, discipline, sportsmanship and respect are all in the top responses. Likewise it shows that there is a thirst for competition.

Q10. What do you see as the negatives to rugby?

Response weighted question


Injuries	26.2%
Facilities	10.6%
Costs	10.5%
Not enough games	9.8%
Lifestyle conflicts	7.0%
Lack of referees	6.8%
Lack of volunteers	6.7%
Lack of medical support	6.6%
Macho culture	5.3%
Training times	4.5%
Drinking	4.0%
Too many games	1.4%
Physicality	0.6%



Lots of people deem injuries a negative to involvement in rugby union. This could be for many reasons including the high physicality of the sport which has been identified in question 8. Facilities and cost have also been highlighted as a negative to rugby. Again time and lifestyle conflicts are highlighted.

Q11. Is there anything you feel stops young people taking part in rugby?

Qualitative

Opportunity to play	531	
Image	251	
Physicality	228	
External Pressures	206	
Injury	151	

The top categories for this question were:

1. Opportunity to play
2. Image of the game
3. Physicality of the game
4. External pressures
5. Injuries

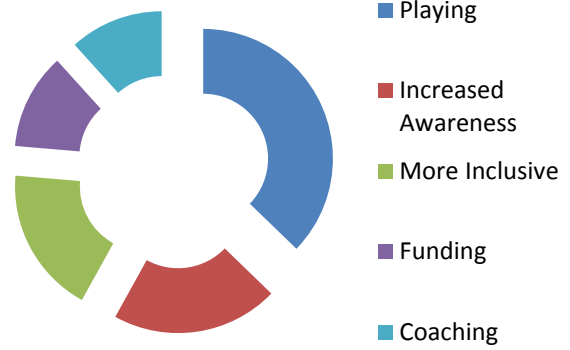
On reviewing the results, the opportunity to play has been highlighted as the main area for concern, with lack of opportunities in state schools seen as the biggest barrier to participation. The responses suggest that the lack of promotion of the game within state schools, the image of rugby union being a public school sport and the lack of training for teachers are some reasons given for people not participating in rugby union. There is also a lack of basic and specialist equipment to allow schools to deliver rugby within school time. Transport costs were also highlighted as being a barrier.

As you can see in the above table there is a significant drop in responses for the second category which is the image of the game. The responses suggest rugby union can be described as a “macho” and “elitist” game which isn’t accessible to all. From the results the women’s and girls’ game suffered most from a negative image, stopping girls taking up the sport.

The third category of physicality covers perception/fear of injury, small and new players feel they are at a disadvantage and the image of the game portrayed by the media or by those that are not involved is that it can be too fierce.

Q12. If you were in charge of rugby union for a day what would you change to make the game better for young people? Qualitative

Playing	458
Increased Awareness	256
More Inclusive	225
Funding	147
Coaching	144



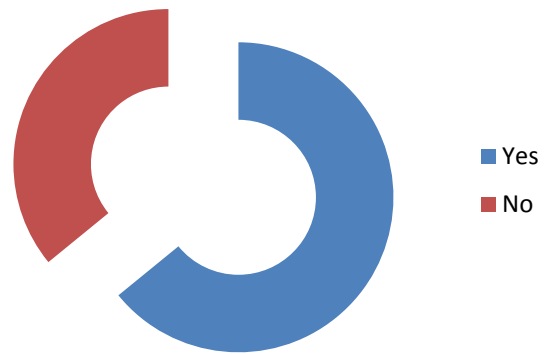
The survey has indicated from the responses, the main category was playing related. With the top sub-category being the laws, regulations and variations of the game. These are sometimes perceived to be inconsistent and complicated. Within this category the interpretation of the game, particularly the speciality of the scrum was highlighted as something young people would like to change, again there were mixed views on how this might be done but it was felt that consistency was paramount. The second sub-category highlighted the complications of current playing structures. There were mixed views on the good and bad structures with people indicating a need for simplicity at all age grades and talent pathways. The next highlighted sub-category within playing was the need for good quality and consistent referees and coaches and this contributed the quality of playing opportunity. The 'playing' category having the highest response will be a reflection of the high number of players taking part in the survey.

Increased awareness of the game was the 2nd highest category, it was clear that responses came from people who were already involved in rugby union. Within that, the professional game was indicated as the highest area for improvement. It was felt that the premiership and elite game has distanced itself from its grassroots counterpart. It was suggested that use of premiership/elite players would inspire young people and assist with awareness of rugby union. This relates to our fourth category 'funding' which detailed the need for discount rate tickets for young people at premiership and international matches.

Our third category was 'more inclusivity' of the game, which included; women and girls, player pathways, transparent decision making and non-playing opportunities.

Q13. Do you receive enough information relevant to you about rugby?

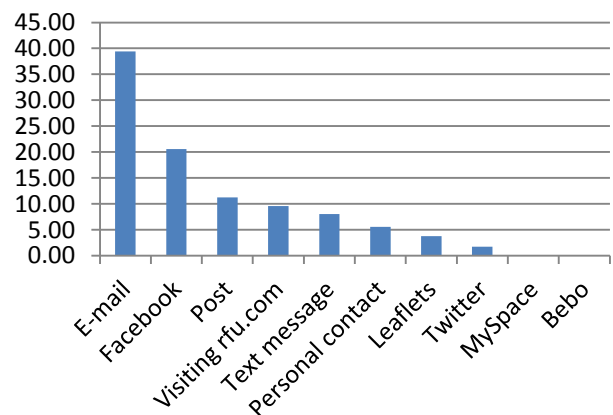
Yes	64.1%
No	35.9%



This indicates that most people receive enough information about the Rugby Football Union however there is still a large market to engage with.

Q14. How would you prefer to be contacted by and to contact the Rugby Football Union?

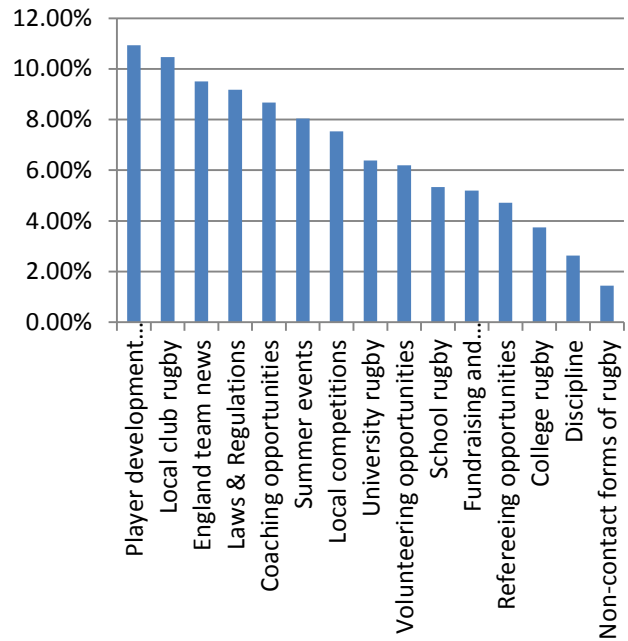
E-mail	39.44%
Facebook	20.56%
Post	11.27%
Visiting rfu.com	9.58%
Text message	8.03%
Personal contact	5.54%
Leaflets	3.76%
Twitter	1.74%
MySpace	0.05%
Bebo	0.05%



This shows that e-mail is clearly the best method of communication with the 16-24 age range. Facebook follows in second and should be considered more for communication. Bebo, MySpace and Twitter all ranked low in the response. The highest single age group was 17 years, so this will have an impact on the results so the NYC will analyse this further.

Q15. What do you want to hear about?

Player development pathways	10.9%
Local club rugby	10.5%
England team news	9.5%
Laws & Regulations	9.2%
Coaching opportunities	8.7%
Summer events	8.0%
Local competitions	7.5%
University rugby	6.4%
Volunteering opportunities	6.2%
School rugby	5.3%
Fundraising and recruitment	5.2%
Refereeing opportunities	4.7%
College rugby	3.8%
Discipline	2.6%
Non-contact forms of rugby	1.5%



4. HEADLINE RESPONSES

From the data and information we have received from the survey we would like to highlight the following key themes which are evident throughout the responses and feedback:

Playing Opportunities

1. There are not enough school playing opportunities – promotion and accessibility to state sector is poor, there is a lack of teachers trained to deliver rugby, a lack of equipment, and cost of transport is a barrier.
2. Complexity of the game and playing structures put young people off.
3. Existing playing opportunities need to be more diverse, varied, inclusive or fit into lifestyles of young people more.

Image of the game

1. Injuries – perception and the fear of.
2. Not enough media coverage to the masses or to rival football, better access to the elite end of the game was seen as part of the solution.
3. Still seen as an “elitist” and “macho” game.
4. The Professional and Community games are seen as separate entities.

Physicality

1. Those currently playing rugby are playing the 15 a side game and enjoy the physicality of contact and are not interested in variations.
2. It is perceived/reported that those that don't currently play are put off by the physicality of the contact game.

5. FINDINGS & ACTIONS

From the findings of the survey the NYC believe that the following recommendations and actions will best address the key issues indicated by the results:

- Get more schools playing, particularly state schools, preferably during lesson time
- Make the rules simpler for players to follow, tinkering with these added with 'interpretation' of laws has young people confused
- Offer a variation of times for young people to be involved in rugby union, look at the amount of training sessions that are really needed, look to supply a rock up and play culture
- There is a thirst for competition across the board but many are confused by the structures, make sure the competition opportunities are clear for players, local to avoid further costs and flexible where possible
- Target CPD for teachers, offer coaching at refereeing at teacher friendly times
- The representative structure was not understood and perceived as unfair so make the system more transparent and consistent
- Media coverage – use players to send positive messages to 16-24 year olds, use all types of media, push the local aspect of the game into the spotlight
- Look at ways of countering the “macho” and “elite” image perception
- Highlight injury rate in comparison to numbers playing and other sports, tell young people what to do if they think they might be injured, give them approximate recovery times and or actions to follow, promote touch as a game for those returning from injury
- Game variations should be used to recruit new players in new environments
- Bring RFU and Premier Rugby closer together to sell the complete package of the sport to young people not yet involved
- Bring the elite and community games closer together to promote the inclusive nature of rugby union

The above actions and recommendations are still in the initial review stage and will therefore be discussed and finalised at the next NYC meeting in June. Also included in the final recommendations will be the comments of the Community Game Board, SCUS Sub-Committee members and the further analysis outlined in the report. The final recommendations will be circulated to all stakeholders and RFU departments whom the NYC will seek to work with on implementation. This will form the majority of NYC work programme for season 2011-12 during which we will continue to communicate with people across rugby union to search for solutions that keep young people involved in all areas of this great game.

Thank you for taking the time to read our report.

The RFU National Youth Council