



SUGGESTED ONE YEAR PLAN

This document sets out to share learning's from Heart of England's touch rugby tournament and provides the information and contacts needed to establish touch rugby where previously none has existed. The planning timescale below is suggested and individual organisations may choose to shorten or lengthen the duration of their league.

Please visit www.sportandphysicalactivity.nhs.uk for the official NHS touch rugby rules which supports this booklet.

December

Establish project team.

Project team – this should consist of enough staff to deliver the work streams, particularly if the project team consists of members of staff with other responsibilities within the Trust. Ideally, this should consist of a project lead who can interact with the players/captains of each team. In most cases, this could be a member of your communications team or someone who has a keen interest in the sport.

Complete the project framework for the league.

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|---------------------------------|---|
| Purpose | Why are we doing this? |
| Objective | When will I know I'm finished? |
| Critical Success Factors | What does success look like? Anticipate expectations of key stakeholders and customers. |
| Scope | What needs to be done? Complete a brainstorming activity to establish responsibilities. |
| Risks | What could go wrong and how will I handle it? |
| Benefits | What will the legacy of the project be? Think who gets the benefit, what is it and when will they get it. |
| Costs | How much will all this cost? Create a finance tracker. |

This will enable you to define your aims and objectives for the project.

Submit business case to finance for funding (see website for example).



January

Arrange a meeting with project team, local sponsors, and organisers to discuss involvement and support requirements.

Venue – arrange a meeting with a venue near by. To play touch rugby, the venue needs to accommodate everyone’s needs and requirements:

- How far away is the venue?
- Is it easily accessible?
- Is the venue fully inclusive for those with any impairments i.e. disabled toilet, ramp for wheelchair users?
- Is there ample car parking space?
- Is it available for all dates?
- What added features are there i.e. bar facilities, catering, changing rooms and so on.

Also take into consideration if there are sufficient pitches for the size of the league. In 2008, the Heart of England League used one pitch sectioned into four quarters for a league with 16 teams. Dependent on the fitness of your players, you may want to provide half pitches.

The venue may be prepared to negotiate free usage in return for publicity from the in-house PR team and the media coverage the events will generate. Rugby clubs may wish to get involved with this if the venue is not in use that particular evening. Entice them with the thought that you can bring 200 people down to their venue and increase revenue through use of their facilities; an evening where they would normally have no-one there. Universities or local authorities may also wish to partner with the Trust and provide their facilities free of charge.

Once the venue is confirmed, arrange dates for use. Heart of England booked seven dates in total:

- Two evening dates in late March/ early April for taster sessions.
- One Wednesday date each month for April, May, June and July for monthly tournaments.
- One Sunday date in July for the finals.

Partners – Heart of England NHS Foundation Trust partnered locally with the rugby club, Birmingham Bulldogs and nationally with the Rugby Football League (RFL) and the Rugby Football Union (RFU). This provided a source of referees, players and equipment for the tournament and proved to be essential for the community links via the rugby community programme. Both Governing bodies are available to help NHS organisations set up programmes and we would suggest that organisations arrange a meeting with their rugby regional officers. These officers will be able to provide help and offer advice for any queries, in addition to supporting the development of the programme within your area. They can also provide support with refereeing and event management. Further details of your regional rugby development officer can be found on our website.



February

Recruiting – once dates and a venue are booked, we would suggest creating a recruitment pack explaining where each event will be held, maps to and from the hospital, rules of the games and contact details. These can then be distributed to those who are interested in joining (see website for example).

Whilst recruiting, ensure all teams are aware of the necessary time commitment and that they can attend each date. Allow two to four weeks to recruit. Ensure you have a cut off date and that you try to have an even number of teams which will make it easier when creating fixtures.

Community involvement – this can be encouraged through a number of different ways should you want community teams involved. This can help make up the numbers or can encourage more game play. The RFL community contact will be able to provide some outlets, but others are also available. Emergency services or corporate contacts will have a sports programme and these can be invited to take part. Should you be involved with a local rugby club, use them as a point of contact when recruiting community teams.

PR & Communications – arrange a meeting with in-house communications department to discuss PR and media opportunities. Media invites can be sent out pre event with press releases sent out post event.

The event will generate interest both internally and externally. Information needs to be provided to staff and this can be done through the communications department via emails, posters and staff magazines. This mechanism will generate initial interest within the organisation and will provide information on how staff can get involved.

Your communications team may also issue you with a PR plan. A PR plan is a useful tool to identify opportunities for positive press coverage and ensure events are covered in all areas of media (see website for example). In the absence of media presence, it may be a good idea for you to arrange for a photographer to cover the event. This material can be used for both press releases and for internal communication updates on the progress of the tournament.

NHS organisations may wish to develop their own specific website to promote their own league. See Heart of England's touch rugby website for guidance www.nhstouchrugby.co.uk. Alternatively, you could request for your organisation to advertise events through the main website or use free social networking sites to reach further audiences. See the website for further details on this.

March

Kit & equipment – start purchasing equipment. Look on internet sites for cheaper deals. Teams can provide their own shirts or alternative suppliers can be investigated. Balls, whistles, cones and so on can either be purchased locally or provided by the local rugby club.



Depending on the amount of people and budget, purchase equipment to suit. Also take into consideration additional factors which may help those with any visual or hearing difficulties. Here is an example of what you may need for eight teams:

- If using four pitches, purchase between eight to ten size four rugby balls. Ensure these are brightly coloured.
- 100 flat circular cones to line out each pitch – can be bought in packs of 50 from local sport shops. Again, ensure that these are bright were possible.
- Identify each pitch separately so people can locate easily – maybe cone off with flags?
- An air horn and megaphone to ensure everyone can hear efficiently.
- Ensure a white board is available to write fixtures onto.

Medical cover – there needs to be at least one person available to cover any first aid needs which could be an A&E doctor from the Trust or the St John Ambulance Service. It is unwise to assign a player to be responsible for this. Heart of England's work and well-being department issued a health and well-being survey prior to games (see website for example). This ensured players were fit to play and were aware of any health related problems which could stop them from doing so. It also acted as a preliminary initiative to discover if staff highlighted any issues such as mental health, disabilities or even issues such as smoking, as it meant the team could offer support throughout the programme and ensure the tournament is organised to its best.

Medical Disclaimer – although touch rugby is a non contact sport, players play at their own risk and individual health organisations cannot accept liability for any injury, loss or damage arising from participating. Individual personal accident cover should be purchased if required.

Staff members playing NHS Touch at an RFL/RFU affiliated club or as part of an RFL/ RFU approved Touch Rugby event are covered by Personal Accident insurance through the national governing bodies at the relevant venues.

Taster session – arrange details for the taster session. A taster session is a useful way of introducing new players to the rules of the game. This can be done outdoors or indoors if needed. In 2008, the Heart of England taster evening was hosted by the local rugby club, Birmingham Bulldogs who played a demonstration game of touch.

Written copies of the rules of touch rugby can be distributed at this point, along with information regarding any campaigns relating to expected standards of behaviour of both players and spectators.

At the taster session, ensure all project leads are available to set the pitch and to communicate any details with those interested.



Teams – teams can consist of up to a maximum of 14 players however, having smaller numbers may encourage more teams to enter. The Heart of England touch rugby tournament consisted of mixed teams of men and women of all abilities and levels of fitness. This was to make the games more inclusive as opposed to competitive, bringing in a fun element to the game.

Per team, there are only six players on the field at any one time during a match. To encourage maximum game play, we suggest teams only recruit eight to ten players. This ensures extra players are not waiting around to get a game and can be used for substitutions, as touch rugby can be a very fast and tiring game.

Try and recruit an even number of teams. Eight teams is always a good figure to work with as you will then be able to arrange a round robin using four pitches.

Team registration – following the taster session, interested parties should be invited to submit their team details. This should include the team name and details of the captain and individual players, including email addresses which can be included into your website for future communication (see website for example).

Following this, take into consideration anyone who specifies any health issues or disabilities. Effective planning should enable you to accommodate everyone's requirements as the game should be enjoyable for all. Once players have been recruited, ensure the committee and the venue understands the severity of those with any specific impairment that may need to be taken into consideration at each of the events.

April

Training – in order to improve levels of fitness and skills, weekly training sessions can be organised for those wishing to take part. Heart of England sponsored a 'Trust Coach' who led the training sessions and also gained a formal qualification. These training sessions can take place either at the agreed venue or on a more informal basis at local municipal parks. Alternatively, contact your local rugby development officer who can offer support with this.

Referees – without referees, matches cannot happen. Referees can be players or staff interested in taking part. In order to secure referees, Heart of England asked each team to assign one member who would referee for the games. Two referee nights were then held to train referees to a level one coaching standard. Both the RFL and RFU can provide additional support for training referees.

Events – we recommend that you host your events during the April to July period, missing out any school holiday dates and starting after the clocks have changed, meaning it is lighter to play in the evenings. Week night events work best as weekends may not suit everybody. For example, providing each game is 20 minutes long, half time is three minutes and you accommodate seven minutes to get on and off the pitch, you could arrange four rounds of games between the hours of 6:00 - 9:00pm:

| | |
|------------------------|----------------|
| 6:20pm | Round 1 |
| 6:50pm | Round 2 |
| 10 minute break | |
| 7:30pm | Round 3 |
| 8:00pm | Round 4 |

Also, keep the day of the events consistent.

Match events

One week before event checklist:

- Referees available.
- Medical cover arranged.
- Distribute fixtures to players.
- Equipment available (cones, balls, whistles, hooter etc).
- Teams confirmed.
- Photographer confirmed.
- PR arranged.

One week prior to each match, details of the league structure and fixtures should be communicated with the players, along with the timing schedule.

Referees need to be arranged and assigned to the individual games they will preside over.

Pitches – in touch rugby, the usual size for a pitch is 60m x 40m but this can be varied depending on the fitness of the players. The pitches need to be marked out for the event, either with white lines or with cones. For the Heart of England tournament, we tended to mark out four pitches on one main football pitch which worked well for our touch players due to their ability.

Fixtures – duration of the game is varied to suit your local circumstances. As a guide, your touch rugby game will consist of either 2x10, 2x15 or 2x20 minute halves with a short two to three minute break in between. At Heart of England, we found that a game of ten minutes each way worked well for us with three minutes for half time.

First match fixtures – at the first event, each team captain confirms that all players have registered with the tournament. Equipment needs to be provided to the referees such as whistle, fixture list and pad to write results on. It is likely that more than one game will take place at any one time and if this is the case, a central timer is more effective to keep the event on schedule. This can be achieved with the use of an air-horn.

It is helpful to display a copy of the fixtures for players to refer to on the evening, as well as a list of the teams and players. Pitches should be either named or numbered and the schedule detailing the individual games should include this information. At the end of the event, results should be collected from the referees and entered onto your website/social networking site as soon as possible.

Subsequent league sessions – after the first match, the format remains similar. New players to the tournament will need to complete the registration documentation and copies of this need to be available at each match event.

During the Heart of England tournament, each team was awarded points when they either won or lost a game, for example, if a team won, they scored four points, if they drew, two points and losing was one point. At the end of the four events, each team was given a seeding based on their overall score. A knock out event then occurred for our finals which then secured our winners for the league.

Useful websites

www.nhssportandphysicalactivity.nhs.uk

www.nhstouchrugby.co.uk

www.therfl.co.uk

www.rfu.com