



# YOUTH PLAYER DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

A GUIDE FOR CLUBS AND SCHOOLS



# Introduction

## WHY ARE SCOTTISH RUGBY INTRODUCING THIS FRAMEWORK?

The Youth Player Development Framework aims to support clubs and schools to enhance their programmes (at U16 & U18 age groups specifically), with the goal of growing participation and nurturing future professional and international players.

To enable this goal to be achieved, Scottish Rugby commits to following:

Scottish Rugby will directly support identified clubs and schools with technical support (e.g. coach development)

Scottish Rugby will embed this framework into all aspects of club, school and coach development.

Scottish Rugby will provide training to club and school leaders and coaches on key aspects of this framework

## Guidance on how to use this Framework

This framework is a guide for club and school leaders (e.g. Directors of Rugby) to form a plan on how to develop their youth talent development programmes. A suggested process is outline below:

### Step 1

Benchmark your club/school against each framework component.

Involve other key representatives from your club/school in this process, e.g. coaches, players, committee members etc.

This process can be supported by Scottish Rugby via the Talent Development Team

### Step 2

Identify key priority areas to improve on (max 3 areas).

What areas will have the biggest impact?

Where are our quick wins?

This should be a collaborative process, and with a clear understanding of the resources required to have an impact.

### Step 3

Create an action plan with identified people to lead on each area.

This action plan should have short, medium and long term objectives so that progress can be tracked.

Share this action plan with key stakeholders (e.g. parents) for visibility.

# Youth Player Development Framework Overview

This Youth Player Development Framework is categorised into three pillars – each with key components which are important considerations when developing your club / school programmes.

## LEADERSHIP, DEVELOPMENT & GOVERNANCE

Player Welfare & Safeguarding

Governance & Development

Facilities

## PEOPLE

Coaches & Team Managers

Medical Personnel

Match Officials

## TRAINING & COMPETITION

Training

Participation & Competition

Player Development

Values



# Pillar 1

## Leadership, Development & Governance

PLAYER WELFARE & SAFEGUARDING	GOVERNANCE & DEVELOPMENT	FACILITIES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Follow injury, concussion, and age banding policies</li> <li>2. Ensure PVG certification for all regulated roles</li> <li>3. Appoint a Child Protection Officer (CPO) visible online</li> <li>4. Committee complete Child Wellbeing &amp; Protection training</li> <li>5. Annual compliance with UKAD Anti-Doping regulations</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Clear vision for youth rugby development</li> <li>2. Accessible club/school development plan</li> <li>3. Commit to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)</li> <li>4. Include youth players in decision-making</li> <li>5. Collaborate and build partnerships with Scottish Rugby and external partners</li> <li>6. Use social media to promote youth teams</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Facility development and maintenance plan in place</li> <li>2. Indoor S&amp;C facility to accommodate needs of the programmes</li> <li>3. Well maintained pitches and changing rooms to accommodate usage rates and match schedules</li> <li>4. Indoor training area aspirational (e.g. artificial pitch)</li> </ol>

## Pillar 2

### People

COACHES & TEAM MANAGERS	MEDICAL PERSONNEL	MATCH OFFICIALS
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All coaches qualified and complete RugbyRight annually</li> <li>2. Clear coaching philosophy aligned with game values</li> <li>3. Specialist positional coaches (e.g., lineout, kicking) in place</li> <li>4. Advanced / L3 qualified U16 &amp; U18 lead coaches</li> <li>5. Individual Development Plans for U16 &amp; U18 coaches</li> <li>6. In-house Continuous Personal Development (CPD) for coaches</li> <li>7. Director of Youth Rugby to oversee player and coach development</li> <li>8. Physical development coaches supporting U16 &amp; U18 teams (UKSCA accredited preferably), aligned to Physical Blueprint</li> <li>9. Team managers in place to support coaches with on and off field duties</li> <li>10. Performance analyst in place (aspirational)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Level 1 First Aider at all sessions and games</li> <li>2. Level 2 qualified provider / physio for U16 &amp; U18 training and matches</li> <li>3. Medical Emergency Action Plan (MEAP) in place for all venues</li> <li>4. Suitable medical equipment available as per Scottish Rugby guidance</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ensure all match officials are qualified before officiating</li> <li>2. Train new match officials annually (1 new MO per team annually)</li> <li>3. Collaborate with Referee Societies</li> <li>4. Deliver a youth match officials programme with support from Scottish Rugby / Referee societies</li> <li>5. Provide law awareness training and support for players and coaches</li> </ol>

## Training & Competition

TRAINING	PARTICIPATION & COMPETITION	PLAYER DEVELOPMENT	VALUES
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual training and competition plan in place for the team and individuals</li> <li>c.6 hrs training per week: Min 2 x Rugby/skills sessions per week Min 2 x Physical Development sessions per week 1 x weekly performance analysis session 2 x periods of 24hrs rest</li> <li>Physical testing undertaken each season</li> </ol> <p>NOTE: Players within Scottish Rugby regional pathway programmes and or academy programme will have agreed Individual Development Plans (IDP) and an Annual Playing Plan (APP) in place.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>25 x players regularly training per squad</li> <li>Ambition to have 2 x teams per age group</li> <li>Minimum 18 competitive games per season per player (including club, school, regional and national representative games)</li> <li>Max 4 games in a 21-day period (to avoid over-playing and burnout)</li> <li>100% fixture fulfilment</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>IDPs for identified U16 &amp; U18 players (regularly reviewed)</li> <li>Align with the Blueprint.</li> <li>Inductions, interviews, and biannual player feedback</li> <li>Engage role models to inspire players</li> <li>Positive engagement with parents throughout the season</li> <li>Deliver life skills programs (nutrition, goal setting, resilience etc)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive sideline behaviours from all</li> <li>Clear plan for developing a positive learning environment in the club/school</li> <li>All coaches and players agreed to a code of conduct</li> <li>Clear process in place to deal with poor behaviours</li> </ol>

# Physical Development

Developing physical competence and robustness is essential to enhance player performance, reduce injury risks, and foster long-term engagement in sport.

An effective youth player development programme will have suitably trained lead physical development coach(s) in place. Scottish Rugby recognises the UKSCA as the leading accreditation body.

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR A CLUB ARE:

- How can we support players to develop their physical competence?
- What facilities do we need access to?
- Who can support us to deliver a physical development programme?

The key components of the Blueprint physical curriculum are outlined below:



## Guiding Young Athletes: Effective Load Management

Players juggle the demands of rugby, school, other sports, travel, and family commitments. Without effective planning, this can lead to 'overload' which can result in an increase in risk of injury, illness, and burnout.

Clubs and schools play a key role in preventing overload. Collaboration between stakeholders is essential to help young athletes manage their time and load. It's not just about scheduling training sessions and games; it's about ensuring balance, structure, and recovery time.

### Key principles to follow:

**Individualised Approach:** Every player is unique in their physical maturity, sports history, and academic commitments. Understanding each player's needs will help you tailor their training load effectively.

**Gradual Build-Up:** Training intensity should increase progressively over time. Rushing into heavy workloads risks injury and can stunt growth both physically and mentally.

**Mental Resilience:** As players start to focus on rugby, fostering mental toughness is as important as physical training. Support your athletes in developing resilience, self-discipline, and the ability to manage pressure both on and off the field.

Supporting players how to listen to their bodies, manage their time, and develop a balanced approach to sport is crucial to their success as athletes and individuals. By building these skills early, you're setting the foundation for sustained performance and long-term involvement in rugby.

# Training and competition load (per week)

The below information is for guidance only for players who are motivated to develop their overall rugby performance, with aspirations to play representative rugby. Careful consideration needs to be made to ensure a player's personal 'load' (e.g. academic work) and rugby 'load' are balanced appropriately.

Player load should be considered on an individual basis, involving the player, their parents and other key stakeholders (e.g. representative coach) where appropriate.

The training and competition load information below is a guide for clubs and schools to use. Players involved in Academy and/or representative programmes will have an individualised plan which may differ from this.

## Competition

1 x competitive match per week (based on 70mins)

Max 4 games in a 21-day period

More than this volume of games could have a significant impact upon their ability to recover and undertake physical development sessions which could impact their long term development

## Team and Skills

2 x training sessions (c.90mins each) including:

Individual, unit and team coaching linked to the blueprint

Conditioning (with ball in hand)

## Physical Development

2 x speed & agility sessions (delivered as part of warm-up)

2-3 x physical development sessions (c.45-60mins each)

- age and stage appropriate (aligned to the Blueprint)

All physical development programmes should be overseen by a qualified and experienced coach

## Rest & Recovery

2 x 24-hour periods of rest



# Example Weekly Plans

The example weekly plans below illustrate how clubs and schools can manage player training and competition loads.

Players involved in Academy or representative programmes will have an Individual Development Plan (IDP) and Annual Playing Programme (APP) in place to ensure their load is managed.

Example 1	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
AM		Alt Gym	Recovery	Gym		Game	Recovery
PM							
Evening	Analysis + Gym + Rugby Skills	Rugby Session		Rugby Session			
Example 2	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
AM			Recovery			Game	Recovery
PM							
Evening	Analysis + Gym + Rugby Skills	Rugby Session		Gym + Rugby Session			
Example 3	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
AM		Alt Gym	Recovery	Alt Gym		Game	Recovery
PM							
Evening	Analysis + Rugby Skills	Gym + Rugby Session		Gym + Rugby Session			
Example 4	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
AM	Alt Gym	Recovery		Recovery	Alt Gym	Recovery	Alt Gym
PM			Game				
Evening	Analysis + Rugby Skills				Gym + Rugby Session		Alt Gym

## The importance of a Multi Sport experience

Scottish Rugby supports a multi-sports approach within youth rugby.

Playing multiple sports when you're young can have significant benefits to rugby performance (e.g. enhanced motor skills, transferable skills, athletic versatility etc).

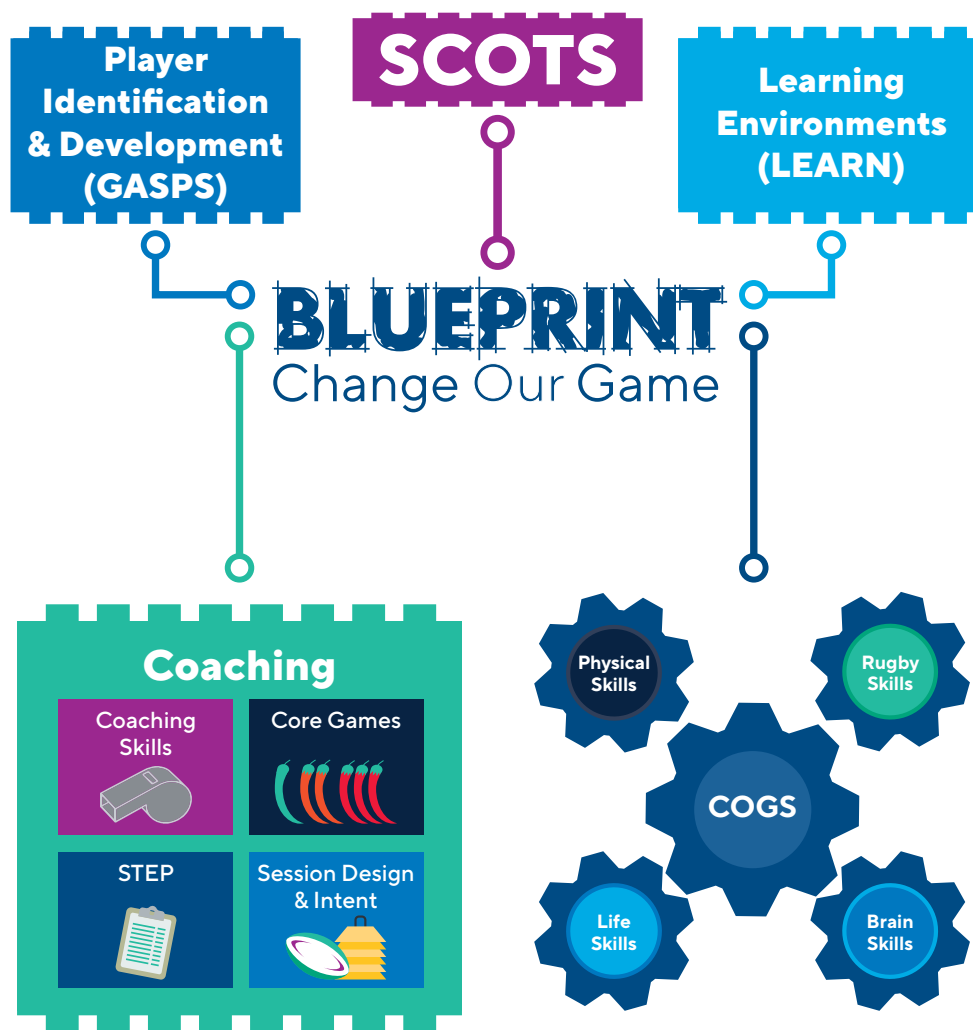
Once aspirational players reach 17/18/19 years old, they will start to specialise in Rugby if they are entering performance pathway programmes with ambitions to be a professional players.

# Alignment with the Blueprint

The Scottish Rugby Blueprint is a resource to support clubs and schools develop a cohesive player development programme and improve the quality of the game in Scotland.

A key component of an effective youth talent development programmes is to have a strong link to the Blueprint throughout all coaching practices.

Clubs and schools should consider all areas of the Blueprint when developing their action plan.



# Appendix

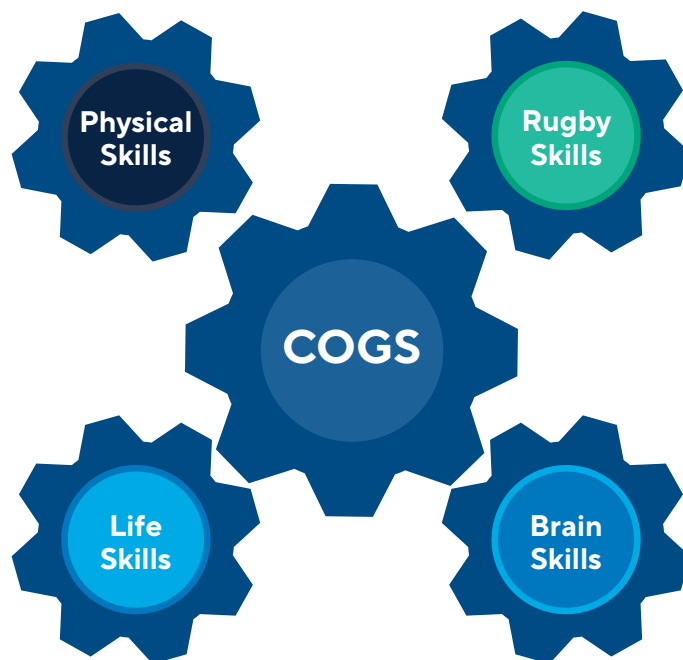
## Individual Development Plans (IDPs)

The purpose of an IDP is to help create a structured and personalised approach to nurturing a player's long-term development towards their goals and aspirations.

When done well, an IDP will be owned and driven by the player themselves, be holistic in nature, and focus on the players strengths (and how to make them super strengths) and areas for improvement.

The information gathered through an IDP process should inform the players training and competition programming.

An IDP should consider all COGS of the Blueprint and the SCOTS priority skills and behaviours.



<b>S</b>	<b>SELFLESS</b> help the team		A SCOTS player will put the team first before individual success.
<b>C</b>	<b>CREATIVE</b> problem solve in different ways		A SCOTS player will have a positive mindset on mistakes and the role they play in learning.
<b>O</b>	<b>OPTIMISTIC</b> hopeful and confident about the future		A SCOTS player will actively seek a positive outcome to all situations and use them as learning experiences.
<b>T</b>	<b>TENACIOUS</b> persistent in pursuit of excellence		A SCOTS player will have a high work ethic and push themselves to improve.
<b>S</b>	<b>SELF-ORGANISE</b> use information to effectively coordinate as a team		A SCOTS player will work as a team to find solutions to tactical challenges without coach intervention.

## What does a U16 / U18 coaching structure look like?

Coaches are pivotal to creating a positive environment which players want to be part of. Quality coaching is also critical to player development and the overall individual player development.

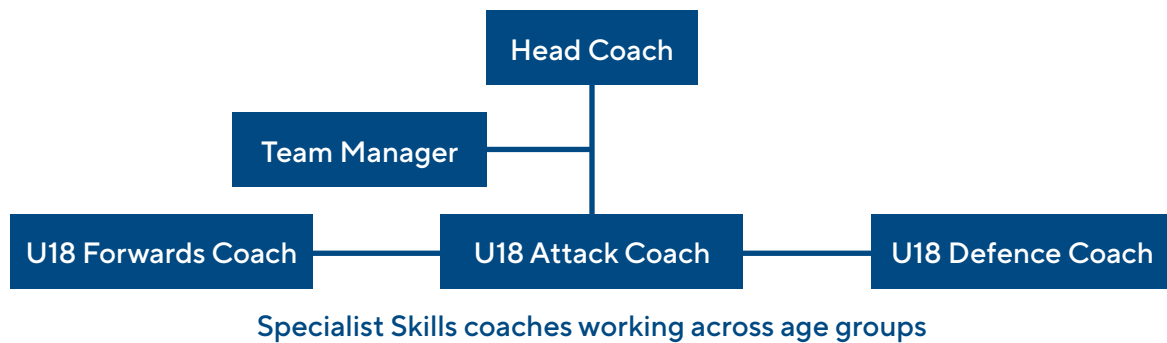
This example coaching structure outlines what a possible coaching structure could look like within a club/school U18 and U16 section. Clubs and schools should consider the following questions when creating their coaching set-ups:

How can we bring coaching quality and consistency within our youth teams?

How will we support coaches throughout the season?

Where are our next group of coaches coming from?

Are there any partnership opportunities with other clubs, schools, HE/FE that could be beneficial?





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