Age Grade Forum (Boys 13-16 and Minis)
Tuesday 24th February at Newcastle Red Bulls

In Attendance:
Andrew Neal - Chair of Age Grade NRFU
Nicola Smith - Percy Park
Claire Sharpe – County Office

Ben Adcock – Novos, Mike Dungait – Morpeth, Tim Snaith – Blyth, Elaine Holland – Alnwick, Rob Miller – Alnwick, Keeley Wilkie Smith - Tynedale, Laura Murphy - Percy Park, Amy Moody – Morpeth, Ben Towell – Northern, Dan Simpson – NRF, Andrea Cook – Wallsend, J Blacklock – Tynedale, Paul Hulme - Percy Park, Ben Hunter – Northern, Jon Nugent – Gosforth, Dan Thompson – Northern, James Knox – Northern, Mark Read – NRFU, James Ponton NRB, John Fletcher – NRB, Allen Marks - Tynedale

1. **The Northumberland Way:**

AIMS (From last brainstorming forum) -
Instill a love of rugby to find players that want to play and move into adult rugby
Fun and enjoyment for Coaches (they give up their time and need to love what they are doing)
Build the social side of age grade rugby and find ways to get players and parents to enjoy rugby away from matches and practice
Equip children with life skills linked to TREDS (teamwork, respect, enjoyment, discipline, sportsmanship) all of which are fundamental skills for life
Inclusive for all – players, parents, referees, club members – it needs to be fun, people need to enjoy.
Develop the rugby community across the county, help other clubs and work together with other teams
Help the players to achieve their dreams and goals, play adults social rugby, play at uni, make the Academies or County Squads play 1st team etc. Give them the skills they need.

CHALLENGES:
Numbers of registered players in Northumberland are down YOY
Only 2 Clubs in Northumberland have increased numbers in last 5 years
Senior sides in Northumberland facing a challenge to get teams out
Impact of Winter on pitches

ACTIONS:

- Schools are the long game. Keep knocking on doors and pushing, good relationships with local schools will help increase numbers.
- Look into Facilities and future options, Can county look at block bookings then re hire? Can a list of available facilities be drawn up?
- Don't skip training. Find a way. Beaches, fields, sports halls etc. Do something every week. Think outside the box.
- Buddy up with clubs to get facilities where possible
- Look into impact of NCL Foundation and feedback success stories
- Coaches to look at why players are leaving clubs, what can teams, coaches and clubs do. Are there good practices that can be gained from clubs that have grown numbers?
- Look into CPDs, work with NRB and feedback future cpd opportunities.

2.Newcastle Redbulls

ACTIONS:

- NRB will be looking to put a CPD programme together for coaches.
- Coaches and players are welcome to attend any of the Monday night Academy sessions. Just let Jimmy or Fletch know you are coming as they are happy to come and talk to you / your players.
- NRB looking at Competition and how that can help and what it could look like

3. Age Grade Discipline

Update from RFU – recent issues nationally re incidents where parents, coaches, spectators have ran onto the pitch and police have had to be called.

ACTIONS:

- Keep going and increase what we are doing – there has been an improvement.
- Keep reinforcing positive touchline behaviour.

4.Silent Sunday and other measures

Actions:

- Clubs to talk to players and feedback options and ideas about what to call silent Sundays.
- Increase to the amount of player led Sundays for next season
- Look into respect barriers as an option or ways of moving the support back from the playing area briefing / reference document for clubs, players and parents – why we are doing this, what we are looking to achieve, how we will achieve it, note what you can do (all the positives) before you note what you shouldn't do.

5.Age Grade Calendar

ACTIONS

- Be creative on a match day – think outside the box. Don't cancel and don't refuse to play.
- Calendar to be looked at in march and a full comprehensive calendar will be sent out asap

6.County representative sides

A Brief was given on nominations and assessments process and dates

7.Combining teams:

Some clubs have no option but to play as combined teams (example U12s and U13s combine and play to U12s regulations).

RFU Reg 15 guidance on this is very clear and clearly states what you can / cant do.

Issues this year with some clubs refusing to play teams that are combined. Goes back to initial point of we need to keep pushing forward and help each other.

ACTIONS:

- LOOK AT HOW THE GAMES WITH COMBINED SIDES CAN BE MANAGED. Try to keep the game on, play skills games, loan players work together etc. Focus on development and not winning
- Guidance document on how to manage combined teams to be looked at
- Look at SRFU method for handling players ages