

# TOP FIVE TIPS FOR CLUBS



New Zealand Rugby has developed guidance for clubs to foster inclusive and welcoming environments for women and girls.

This guidance includes tips and considerations that are informed by our insights and further affirmed by women in clubs through a 2024 survey. The guidelines provide ideas, considerations and resource links to help clubs create supportive environments that prioritise the needs and the voices of women and girls. It is important to remember this is not an exhaustive list and is designed to give some simple starting points and considerations for creating inclusive clubs.

By using this tool as a foundation, clubs can begin their journey to promote equality, enhance participation, and empower all members to thrive within a club.



# INTRODUCTION

The New Zealand Women and Girls in Rugby System Strategy<sup>1</sup> highlights several barriers to participation in rugby clubs. In 2024, the Future of Rugby Clubs report further validates these challenges, stressing that the current club infrastructure is insufficient in supporting the needs of women and girls. The Voice of the Participant Survey – Rugby Clubs report also highlights and supports the need to consider improvements in similar areas.

FINDINGS FROM THE *FUTURE OF RUGBY CLUBS*<sup>2</sup> REPORT TOLD US:

## INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

The current infrastructure at many clubs does not adequately support women and girls.

## CONFIDENCE IN CLUB DELIVERABLES

While clubs are confident in delivering positive experiences for juniors, seniors, families, and social teams, their confidence drops significantly when it comes to providing a positive experience for women and girls, as well as for Māori and Pasifika communities.

## CLUB SUITABILITY

**34%** of clubs reported that they are not suitable for women and girls.

**32%** classified them as only "usable."

## MEMBER CONCERNS

Members echoed these concerns:

**25%** stating their clubs were unsuitable for female use.

**19%** saying they were just usable.

FINDINGS FROM THE 2024 *VOICE OF THE PARTICIPANT*<sup>3</sup> – RUGBY CLUBS REPORT TOLD US THE TOP 3 AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT ARE:

**PLAYER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES**

**QUALITY OF COACHING**

**FACILITIES**

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE NEW ZEALAND WOMEN AND GIRLS IN RUGBY SYSTEM STRATEGY:

## LACK OF CLUB/SCHOOL SUPPORT OR UNDERSTANDING

Many clubs and schools do not fully grasp the needs of women and girls in rugby.

## NEED FOR WELCOMING AND INCLUSIVE ATTITUDES

There is a strong need for more supportive, inclusive environments within clubs.

## BARRIERS IDENTIFIED BY CURRENT PARTICIPANTS

Common issues reported include inadequate uniforms, unsuitable changing rooms, limited availability of female coaches, and a lack of formats that cater to the size and age of players.

## INCREASED VISIBILITY AND CELEBRATION

There is a need for greater visibility, awareness, and celebration of women and girls' rugby.

## JUDGMENTAL ENVIRONMENTS AND ATTITUDES

Negative or exclusionary attitudes remain prevalent, hindering participation.

## LACK OF EQUITY AND RESPECT

There is a persistent lack of respect, value, and inclusion for female players.

# TOP 5 TIPS FOR RUGBY CLUBS TO BETTER SUPPORT WOMEN AND GIRLS:

1

## Governance & Committees

Ensure equitable representation of women in governance, committees and leadership.

2

## Appropriate Facilities

Provide adequate, well-maintained facilities for women and girls.

3

## Inclusion & Environment

Foster inclusive, supportive, and non-judgmental environments.

4

## Coaching & Development

Offer high-quality coaching that is tailored to the needs of women and girls.

5

## Visibility & Celebration

Promote and celebrate women's rugby to increase awareness and engagement.



# 1

## Governance & Committees

Strengthening the culture of governance, committees and women and girls advisory groups in clubs is vital for advancing gender equity and creating a safe, positive, and inclusive environment for all members (particularly women and girls). This standard focuses on empowering clubs to adopt inclusive practices and ensuring diverse representation in decision making roles.

### Consider:

- Are you intentionally seeking and inviting relevant women candidates?
- Do you identify and shoulder tap women to provide perspective and feedback to both men and women pathways and programmes?
- Have you considered tailoring your advertisements and promotion to speak to women? E.g.  
**“Join Our Rugby Board – We’re Looking for Passionate Female Leaders!”**  
*Are you passionate about rugby and dedicated to making a positive impact? We are actively seeking a female board member to join our rugby club and help shape the future of the sport for women and girls.”*
- Do you consider the skill of the chairperson who enables and empowers the voice of all members E.g. Invite women into the conversation with intention to develop rugby at all levels?
- Discussing and/or allocating equitable budget and resource to the development of women and girls' pathways and empowering the committee to influence resource allocation and expenditure.

---

### Check out the links for more information:

- North Harbour | Women’s Toolkit
- Sport NZ | Governance
- Sport Waikato | This is Me
- 2020 - Balance The Board

# 2

## Appropriate Facilities

Inclusive facilities for women and girls should be designed to create safe, welcoming, and supportive environments that cater to their unique needs. Findings highlighted club infrastructure does not completely support the use, and a sizeable percentage of club facilities are out of date and/or not fit for purpose. Considerations regarding future planning, allocation of certain space or facilities for women and girls will help foster a better experience.

### Consider:

- Do women and girl's players, coaches, referees have access to women's only toilets and changing room facilities for training and games?
- Are toilets safe, clean, and well-stocked? Provided sanitary bins or closed-lid bins in each cubicle?
- Do you have designated baby changing areas?
- Do your women and girl's teams have access to full training fields with lights and in proximity toilets/ changing rooms?
- Do your women and girls' team have access to a physio and or medical staff provided by the club?
- Have you considered a long-term plan to upgrade your facilities to suit women and girl's needs?
- As a safety consideration, do you have lit up areas in the carpark?

---

### Check out the links for more information:

- Best Practise Changing Rooms
- NZ Spaces and Places Framework
- Women in Rugby Clubs toolkit

# 3

## Inclusion & Environments

Inclusion and positive environments for women and girls are essential for fostering empowerment, confidence and growth. These rugby environments require respect, diversity, equality and creating a sense of belonging where everyone feels valued and heard. By championing supportive interactions and collaborative opportunities such environments encourage women and girls to express themselves freely and overcome challenges. Promoting inclusion ensures that women and girls can thrive and inspire one another and contribute meaningfully.

### Consider:

- Do you have a club social committee? Does your club social group/committee have a women and girls' representative?
- Consider using FABS/Tight Five when looking to host or run any events or sessions at your club (see supporting links).
- Do you offer a whānau (family) area and or child-minding service available for participants?
- Are you dedicating specific time, space, and effort to getting to know the women and girls in your club space? Organise team bonding session at the start of the season? This could include setting clear expectations, emphasising what the club has to offer and how they can best support women and girls to foster connections between players, volunteers, and coaches. Organise a session focused on team, club goals, values and building relationships. This may help create positive and supportive environments for all.
- Have you considered having an external person/ Provincial Union to come in and talk about club culture and or how to create a good culture within team environments?

---

### Check out the links for more information:

- [Tight Five | Inclusive Environment](#)
- [F.A.B.S](#)
- [Women in Rugby Clubs toolkit](#)

# 4

## Coaching & Development

Appointing and supporting the right coaches is key to the success of women and girls in rugby. Coaches need to be supported and nurtured by the club to build strong relationships which will build confidence between the coach and player. Coaches who inspire and care for their players help create an environment where athletes can thrive on and off the field. This standard highlights the importance of quality coaching.

### Consider:

- Have you considered touching base with your local Provincial Union around course/upskilling opportunities that may be available for coaches – specifically in the women's space? E.g. Ako Wāhine
- Have you considered been intentional regarding advertising and/or shoulder tapping coaches specifically for women and girls' teams?
- Do your coaches get the opportunity to have coach education/development opportunities/coach mentoring?
- Does your club offer coach forums/chat forums where all coaches can be a part of a wider network within the club?

---

### Check out the links for more information:

- [NZR Ako Wāhine brief](#)
- [Clinics and Workshops](#)
- [Foundation Course](#)
- [Sport NZ Coaching and Development](#)
- [World Rugby Women in Rugby Toolkit](#)
- [Coaching Gig](#)

# 5

## Visibility & Celebration

Create awareness and raise the profile of women and girls in rugby clubs to increase participation, visibility and value of women's rugby and women in rugby.

### Consider:

- Utilising visual images by displaying women and girls in poster form in your clubrooms. Potential Images of women and girls in your reports (AGM), PowerPoint presentations, websites. Use women and girls team photos displayed in clubrooms if you have them.
- Have you considered profiling and or elaborating women and girls' teams (and or individuals) to promote on social media platforms? Share the achievements of women's teams and players through social media, club events and local newsletters? Highlight individual players' progress and team successes to inspire others and raise awareness for the women's programme?
- Have you engaged with community and considered hosting women and girls rugby events, open days, and skill days to attract and engage new players, families, and volunteers? Partner with local schools and businesses to increase visibility and create a strong connection within the local community. Leverage off events such as Mother's Day, Pink Ribbon events, give it a Go Days, Junior Musters, standalone Girls Only Festivals.

---

### Check out the links for more information:

- ✔ [Sport NZ | Value and visibility](#)
- ✔ [Oceania Football Gender Equality Playbook](#)
- ✔ [World Ruby Accelerate Programme Strategic Planning toolkit](#)



## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>New Zealand Rugby. (2023). *New Zealand Women's & Girls In Rugby System Strategy 2023-2033*. New Zealand Rugby. New Zealand Rugby

<sup>2</sup>Visitor Solutions Ltd. (2023). *Future of Rugby Clubs - Report* [Unpublished report]. New Zealand Rugby

<sup>3</sup>New Zealand Rugby. (2024). *Voice of Participant Survey – Club Report* [Unpublished report and 'one pagers']. New Zealand Rugby

