# IRFU Leadership Development Programme 2027

## Applications Open for Phase 1

The IRFU Pathway Leadership programme offers training and support to club committee personnel on various stages of their Leadership journey. It is an opportunity for clubs to offer support to male and female volunteers as well as identify potential mentors for succession planning for future committees.

The aim of the programme is to develop the volunteers' ability to lead change and influence others. It does not focus on rugby knowledge but rather on how to work with others to make the best use of everyone's experience.

There are **4 elements of the Leadership Development** programme:

1. **The Club Programme Phase 1**
2. **The Club Programme Phase 2**
3. **Female Support Programme**
4. **Mentor Development Programme**

The **Club Programme** is open to existing members of club or provincial committees, with **56** places being offered in **phase 1**, with an option for **30** people to progress to **phase 2**. Your club can nominate at least **1 male and 1 female active club administrators**, that have been involved for 2 seasons, ideally those on the Club Executive Committee. Previous attendees include Directors of Rugby, Chairs and Presidents, Hon. Sec and Treasurers.

"The IRFU National Leadership Course was one of the most valuable experiences I've had, both in my rugby journey and in my professional life. It challenged my thinking, strengthened my leadership skills, and connected me with passionate people from across the game. I would strongly encourage all Presidents and executive members to take part—it's an opportunity that will elevate both your club and your personal development"

**Ed Gunning - Ballina RFC**
**(President 2024)**

The **Female Support Programme** is for members of Provincial Committees and Sub-committee. Nominations will be taken through the Branch Hon Secretaries.

The **Mentor Development Programme** is open to those who have completed at least Phase 1 and have shown an interest in assisting the development of other volunteers through non-directive learning and self-directed guidance. This programme focuses on developing mentoring skills for other volunteers irrespective of the role the mentee is holding throughout clubs in Ireland and is designed to give objective guidance to tackling issues that arise outside of your club environment. Applications are sent to those who have completed previous Leadership training and have shown an intertest in mentoring others.

# Volunteer Focused Content

The content is covered through a blend of online modules, zoom sessions, a personal executive coaching and peer coaching session.  This allows participants the chance to do the work in their own time while also to getting to share best practice and network with those in similar roles, during group sessions online.

The executive coaching session takes place on completion of the '**OneSmartWorld**' profiling tool, designed to maximise the volunteers' leadership style along with group peer coaching sessions. In previous programmes, these sessions have been the most popular element of the programme, where volunteers have a chance to engage professional executive coaches to enhance skills in a 1-to-1 setting.

**Topics covered include:**




**It focuses on personal leadership skills in the sports setting, without reference to on-pitch rugby knowledge or committee development; it's about being the best performing volunteer for the future.**

# 2027 Phase 1 Programme Dates:

- Skill Development **Zoom sessions**: Tuesday 26th January and Tuesday 23rd February (6.30pm-8pm)
- Access to Online modules – sent to participants in January on registration with **Jo Hopkins Consulting** via IRFU to review in their own time
- Executive **coaching session** after 1st zoom session to be arranged to suit volunteer's schedules
- **Peer coaching** sessions (choose 1 from 2nd March, 4th March, 10th March and 11th March (12-1.30pm)

# Why Get Involved?

"The IRFU Leadership Programme was a positive game-changer for me. It provided me with the tools, confidence, and networks to help me lead our club volunteers with clarity and create a clear, unifying purpose. The various modules all supported my transition into the club's Director of Rugby role, which ultimately led to me taking on the Chair's appointment in recent years. My focus now is on fostering club cohesion, improving communication, and supporting our fantastic volunteers to deliver long-term strategic growth across all areas of our club. The IRFU programme has been a key step in shaping my leadership journey within the game - I would highly recommend it to everyone."

**Andy Burke, Club Chair,**
**Kilrush RFC**

# Notes:

- **Minimum of 2 volunteers** per club, with gender balance, one male and one female
- Applicants can apply directly, or clubs may nominate volunteers, applications are agreed with the Club Committee.
- Course fees (worth £4,000) will be **paid by the IRFU**, the course is delivered by Jo Hopkins Consulting including access to global coaching executives

- Phase 2 dates are 20th April, 18th May and 15th June, 6.30-8pm, with 2 executive coaching sessions in May & June.
- Female Programme dates are 11th March, 8th April and 6th May, 12pm-1.30pm, with peer coaching session 3rd June
- Mentor Programme dates are 2nd & 23rd March & 27th April – applications will open in January

Interested parties can email **annemarie.hughes@irfu.ie** in the meantime.

**APPLY HERE**