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From 2023-24, the last placed team from the Premiership will playoff against the Championship winner (subject to promotion eligibility) for a place in the following season's Premiership. The new RFU Championship was formed in 2009-10 to provide a second tier of professional competition. The former National Division One was decreased from 16 clubs to 12 to accommodate the new fixture structure. For the first three seasons this included: a first phase of 22 regular season games for the top eight teams, a second group phase, with the teams split into two groups; the top two teams in each group advanced to promotion play-offs, with the winner earning promotion provided they met Premiership entry standards for the bottom four teams, a separate group phase, without a play-off, to determine the relegation place participation in a new British and Irish Cup with Irish, Scottish and Welsh clubs a minimum of 32 games per season Starting with the 2012-13 season, the second group stage was discontinued. The top four teams at the end of the home-and-away season entered play-offs to determine the league champion, which earned promotion providing Premiership entry standards were met. The bottom team at the end of home-and-away season was relegated to, and replaced by the champions of, the third tier National League 1. From 2017-18 through to 2019-20 and from 2021-22, the championship play-off was eliminated. The league-season champions earned automatic promotion (again, assuming that they meet Premiership standards). Relegation criteria did not change. However, there was a moratorium placed on relegation in both 2020-21 and 2021-22. From 2023-24 the winner (subject to eligibility) will contest a playoff with the bottom placed team in the Premiership for a place in the next season's Premiership. The new National League structure includes: The National League 1 was decreased from 16 to 14 teams. This resulted in a 26-game season on a home and away basis. The champions are promoted to the level 2 RFU Championship, and the bottom three sides are relegated to the level 4 National League 2 East, National League 2 West or National League 2 North depending on geographical location. The fourth tier is increased to three leagues of 14 teams each. The three league champions are promoted, with the bottom two in each league relegated to their respective regional division. With the restructuring, levels 5-11 became the new regional system. There are now 6 Regional 1 leagues, which are connected to the national leagues by promotion and relegation. The table below shows the current structure of the system. For each division, its official name, sponsorship name (which differs from its historic name) and number of clubs is given. At levels 1-3, each division promotes to the national division(s) that lie directly above it and relegates to the national division(s) that lie directly below it. Below that level, clubs relegate to the nearest local league.[9] Level League(s)/Division(s)vt 1 Premiership Rugby 10 clubs 2 Champ Rugby 14 clubs 3 National League 1 14 clubs 4 National League 2 North 14 clubs National League 2 West 14 clubs National League 2 East 14 clubs 5 Regional 1 North East 12 clubs Regional 1 North West 12 clubs Regional 1 South East 12 clubs Regional 1 South Central 12 clubs Regional 1 South West 12 clubs Regional 1 Midlands North 12 clubs Regional 2 Midlands North 12 clubs Regional 2 Midlands East 12 clubs 6 Counties 1 Cumbria 12 clubs Counties 1 Durham & Northumberland 12 clubs Counties 1 Hampshire 12 clubs Counties 1 Herefordshire 10 clubs Counties 1 Herefordshire 10 clubs Counties 1 Middlesex 10 clubs Counties 1 Northern North 12 clubs Counties 1 Northern South 12 clubs Counties 1 Western North 12 clubs Counties 1 Western South 12 clubs Counties 1 Midlands West (South) 12 clubs Counties 1 Midlands West (North) 12 clubs Counties 1 Midlands East (North) 12 clubs Counties 1 Midlands East (South) 12 clubs Counties 2 ADM Lancashire & Cheshire Counties 2 Durham & Northumberland Counties 2 Yorkshire Counties 2 Eastern Counties Counties 2 Essex Counties 2 Kent Counties 2 Hampshire Counties 2 Hertfordshire Counties 2 Middlesex Counties 2 Surrey Counties 2 Sussex Counties 2 Cornwall Counties 2 Devon Counties 2 Gloucestershire Counties 2 Somerset Counties 2 Berks/Bucks & Oxon West Counties 2 Berks/Bucks & Oxon East Counties 2 Dorset & Wilts North Counties 2 Dorset & Wilts South Counties 2 Midlands West (West) Counties 2 Midlands West (East) Counties 2 Midlands East (North) Counties 2 Midlands East (South) 9 Counties 3 ADM Lancashire & Cheshire Counties 3 Durham & Northumberland Counties 3 Yorkshire Counties 3 Kent Counties 3 Hampshire Counties 3 Hertfordshire Counties 3 Surrey Counties 3 Cornwall Counties 3 Devon North & East Counties 3 Devon South & West Counties 3 Gloucestershire North Counties 3 Gloucestershire South Counties 3 Somerset North Counties 3 Somerset South Counties 3 Berks/Bucks & Oxon North Counties 3 Berks/Bucks & Oxon South Counties 3 Dorset & Wilts North Counties 3 Dorset & Wilts Central Counties 3 Dorset & Wilts South Counties 3 Midlands West (North) Counties 3 Midlands West (South) Counties 3 Midlands East (North West) Counties 3 Midlands East (North East) 11 n/a Counties 5 Kent Counties 5 Surrey n/a n/a Rugby union in England ^ "RFU". 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