

# RFU SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Guidance & Procedures



England  
Rugby

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TEAMWORK RESPECT ENJOYMENT DISCIPLINE SPORTSMANSHIP

# Foreword

Rugby union is a powerful and positive influence. Enjoyment goes hand in hand with achievement and the RFU believes that for the game to thrive we must look after the children and young people who play rugby. Their welfare and wellbeing is fundamental. We all want the rugby environment to be a safe and happy one.

Rugby's core values of teamwork, respect, enjoyment, discipline and sportsmanship are attributes that we all want to impart. Our hope is that everyone children meet within our sport can act as a positive role model. As children develop qualities and skills like confidence, commitment and concern for others they become potential leaders for the future.

It is essential that we provide them with a positive experience and give them the opportunity to achieve their true potential. We have a duty to ensure that safeguarding children is prioritised and that each child's rugby experience is as good as we can possibly make it.

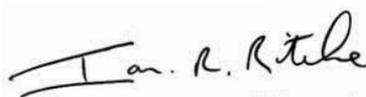
Safeguarding is a proactive concept based around promoting the child's welfare in every way. It means protecting children and young people from abuse and neglect but stretches much further to include all that we can do to ensure their appropriate development and to maximise life opportunities. Simply, safeguarding is about all the things we do to create child centred rugby and to prevent problems arising.

The RFU greatly appreciates the army of volunteers who give up their time to organise mini and youth rugby and strive to provide the highest standards of care for children in a safe and enjoyable environment. If you are involved in rugby in any capacity, whether as a player, coach, parent, volunteer or teacher, I urge you to adopt this safeguarding policy to help provide a positive experience for our young people. It is the responsibility of each and every one of us to ensure that children are experiencing the highest quality of experience possible.

In cases of possible abuse the RFU acts swiftly, working in partnership with police and social services, to protect an individual or individuals from harm. We have robust safeguarding procedures to manage these situations with confidence and efficiency.

This Policy and the following Guidance and Procedures are based on the principle of empowering children and young people. The onus is on everyone who has contact with children and young people to protect them from harm as well as to create a positive environment in which to participate. Based on best practice, the Policy provides information about abuse, advice on identifying problems, as well as policies and procedures for use by those involved in delivering rugby union around the country.

The RFU provides support for clubs, assisting them in making safer recruitment decisions for those involved with young people, systems for dealing with allegations or concerns and training programmes for all working with young players, as well as effective systems for working with other relevant agencies. Let us remain at the forefront of protecting young people in sport.



**Ian Ritchie**  
RFU Chief Executive Officer

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# Policy Statement

The Rugby Football Union (RFU) is committed to safeguarding the welfare of children in the sport. All children are entitled to protection from harm and have the right to take part in sport in a safe, positive and enjoyable environment.

## **This Policy statement is based on the following key principles:**

- The welfare of the child is paramount
- All participants regardless of age, gender, ability or disability, race, faith, size, language or sexual identity, have the right to protection from harm
- All allegations, suspicions of harm and concerns will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly, fairly and appropriately
- Everyone will work in partnership to promote the welfare, health and development of children



## **Effective safeguarding arrangements in every local area should be underpinned by two key principles:**

- **safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and**
- **a child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.**

Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2013)



# Definitions

## Children

Children are defined in the Children Act 1989 as people under the age of 18 years. For the purposes of this Policy the legal definition applies.

## Children's Workforce

All those who volunteer or are in a paid role at a rugby club and work with children are part of the children's workforce, providing services to children.

## Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

The DBS was created when the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) merged with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) in December 2012 as a result of the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (PoFA). The DBS runs checks at three different levels providing information on an individual's criminal records.

## Regulated Activity

The statutory definition of Regulated Activity applies to this Policy. In summary, this means teaching, training, instruction, care or supervision of children carried out by the same person frequently (once a week or more often) or on four or more days in a 30 day period, or overnight.

## Regulations 15 and 21

Regulation 15 is the RFU Regulation which deals with Age Grade Rugby and it is advisable for all those working with children in rugby union to read and refer to this regulation regularly. Regulation 21 relates to safeguarding aspects within the rugby union environment.

## Safeguarding Team

The Safeguarding Team consists of the Safeguarding Manager, Case Officer, Advisor and Compliance Officer all based at Twickenham. Their contact details are in the back of this policy as well as on the RFU website

## Safeguarding Toolkit

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding Toolkit which provides further guidance and advice on safeguarding matters.

## 17 Year Olds Playing in the Adult Game

This Policy covers all players under 18. However, in accordance with RFU Regulation 15, a male player can, with the necessary written consent, play in the adult game when he reaches his 17th birthday, although not play in a front row position until his 18th birthday. The only exception is England Academy players who require the written consent of the RFU Professional Player Development Manager in accordance with Regulation 15.3.8.

A club's management team must have assessed and continue to assess, that any 17 year old male player playing in adult games or training is both physically, emotionally and intellectually capable of taking part.

Those responsible for the management of adult teams which include 17 year olds, must at all times be mindful of their safety and wellbeing and ensure that a suitable adult from within the team and management acts as a mentor or buddy.

If a 17 year old boy is playing rugby under Regulation 15.3.7, while playing or training with the adults he is treated as an adult and the detail of this Policy does not apply.

However, as soon as he is out of that environment the player is once again a child and thus the policies and legislation regarding children apply.

This section does not apply to the women's game where female players may only play in the adult game from their 18th birthday. There is, however, an exception for 17 year old girls allowing them to play adult rugby within the RFU Women's Elite Rugby programme in accordance with Regulation 15.

# Core Values

Rugby Union is one of England's fastest growing team sports bringing new challenges and a need to promote the sport's strengths.

Our Core Values are:

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**TEAMWORK**  
**DISCIPLINE**  
**SPORTSMANSHIP**  
**RESPECT**  
**ENJOYMENT**

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The RFU, in partnership with Premiership Rugby and the Rugby Players Association, promotes the Core Values to everyone from the England team to those in the grassroots game. The Core Values are reflected throughout this document.

# Safer Recruitment

Children are entitled to participate in rugby union activities in a safe and welcoming environment. Safe recruitment procedures will enable clubs or Constituent Bodies (CBs) to reduce the risk of abuse to children. When recruiting employees or volunteers to the Children's Workforce all reasonable steps should be taken to ensure only suitable people are selected.

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**“Paid and volunteer staff need to be aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, how they should respond to child protection concerns and make a referral to Local Authority children’s services or the police if necessary.”**

Working Together March 2013, page 57, paragraph 37

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Regulation 21 sets out in detail the requirements the RFU has for those working with children and the DBS. The RFU requires any individual engaged in Regulated Activity to undertake a DBS check through their club (using the online e-application system) in order to work with children. Depending on the nature of the role and the level of supervision the RFU will require either Enhanced or Enhanced with barred list checks. Further information about the DBS and the e-application system is available on the [RFU website](#).

The people who work in every rugby club are the most important asset a club has. A good recruitment process is essential to ensure the best people are chosen for the roles they undertake.

These must be people who are suited to the club and who are less likely to harm children, intentionally or accidentally. A club which has good recruitment, induction and supervision processes shows those working there the value which is put on children's safety and wellbeing.

Official checks and vetting procedures are on their own, not enough to protect children. They are only part of a wider set of practices and an organisational culture which supports safe practice.

# Working Together: Roles & Responsibilities

In order to operate within the legal and regulatory framework, the RFU, its Constituent Bodies and member clubs will work together, each with a clear role, in order to safeguard children.

## The RFU

- Appoints a lead officer to manage its safeguarding programme
- Works in partnership with CBs, clubs, police, local Children's Services departments and the NSPCC
- Manages DBS clearance and notifies the DBS of anyone suspended or removed from the Children's Workforce because they have harmed or pose a risk of harm to a child, satisfied the harm test, or received a caution or conviction for a relevant offence.
- Co-ordinates a safeguarding programme through a network of volunteer CB Safeguarding Managers (CBSM) and Club Safeguarding Officers (CSO) and provides appropriate training and support to them
- Ensures that there is an up-to-date safeguarding plan supported by policies, procedures and practices
- Provides training and support for the wider paid and volunteer workforce
- Manages incident referrals in accordance with RFU regulations and protocols
- Takes disciplinary action against those who breach RFU Regulations.

## The CB

- Appoints and manages a CB Safeguarding Manager and, where appropriate, a deputy
- Ensures that the CBSM has representation or a reporting mechanism within the CB structure
- Conducts a Safeguarding Audit on a minimum of 10% of member clubs per year.
- Ensures that each club running activity for children has its own safeguarding policy which reinforces the RFU Safeguarding Policy and procedures which reflect each club's unique local circumstances
- Co-ordinates the management of DBS disclosures through the CBSM
- Ensures that all safeguarding incidents or issues are reported to the RFU Safeguarding team and manages disciplinary cases referred back to the CB by the RFU

## The Club

- Appoints a Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO), and where appropriate a deputy, as the first point of contact for safeguarding and welfare concerns
- Ensures that the CSO:
  - is a member of, or attends the appropriate club committees making safeguarding issues a priority at the proper level; and
  - works in accordance with the Safeguarding Toolkit
- Develops a safeguarding training plan ensuring that as a minimum:
  - the CSO attends an “In Touch” Workshop within six months of taking up the post
  - each mini and youth age group has at least one person who has attended the “Play It Safe” course
- Informs all members, parents and children when a new CSO is appointed
- Publishes the club’s own safeguarding policy which reinforces the RFU Safeguarding Policy and procedures which reflects the unique local circumstances for that club and makes it accessible to all members
- Ensures all club officers and committee members are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities
- Ensures that at any youth disciplinary panel the CSO supports the child and ensures the panel considers the child’s emotional wellbeing throughout
- Identifies any signs of harm and reports them to the CBSM and/or the RFU Safeguarding team
- Ensures that the club’s children’s workforce have up-to-date DBS checks in accordance with Best Practice Guidance and Regulation 21.

## The Volunteer and Employee

- Works towards creating a safe, friendly and welcoming environment and treats children with respect in accordance with the Core Values
- Understands and complies with their club’s safeguarding policy
- Aims to follow all guidance in this document when working with children
- Completes any training considered appropriate for their role
- Those working in Regulated Activity have an enhanced DBS disclosure processed and cleared by the RFU, in accordance with RFU Regulations.

# What is Abuse?

## Types of abuse

There are four main types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional and neglect. An individual may abuse or neglect a child directly or may be responsible for abuse by failing to prevent another person harming that child.

### Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child.

Examples of physical abuse in sport include extreme physical punishments; forcing a child into training and competition that exceeds the capacity of his or her immature and growing body or limitations of a disability; assaulting a person; or where the child is given drugs to enhance performance or in the case of a child, delay puberty.

### Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing a child to take part in sexual activities, which may involve inappropriate touching, penetrative or non-penetrative sexual acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual photographic or online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

### Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on their development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing them from participating in normal social interaction.

Emotional abuse may involve a child seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another as well as serious bullying, causing children to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may also occur alone.

Examples of emotional abuse in sport include subjecting children to constant criticism, name-calling, and sarcasm or bullying. It could also include their regular exclusion from an activity, non-selection for a team, failing to rotate squad positions or more subtle actions such as staring at or ignoring a child. Putting players under consistent pressure to perform to unrealistically high standards is also a form of emotional abuse.

### Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of their health or development. Neglect may involve a parent failing to provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment), failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger, or to ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers) or to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Examples of neglect in sport could include: not ensuring children are safe; exposing them to undue cold or heat or unsuitable weather conditions, or exposing them to unnecessary risk of injury.

## Bullying

Bullying is often considered to be a fifth type of abuse but when it does occur it usually has elements of one or more of the four categories identified. The bully can be a parent who pushes too hard, a coach or manager with a 'win at all costs' attitude or another intimidating child. It should also be recognised that bullying can take place in the virtual world of social networking sites, emails or text messages.

Bullying should not be ignored and the victim should be supported through what can be a traumatic experience. Bullying will not just go away. Bullies can be very cunning and develop strategies to avoid it being seen by anyone but the victim.

Bullying takes many forms but ultimately it is the perception of the victim that determines whether or not they are being bullied rather than the intention of the bully.

There are opportunities to bully at any rugby club or activity. It is the way that incidences are dealt with which makes the difference between life being tolerable or becoming a misery for the victim.

## Poor Practice

Incidents of poor practice arise when the needs of children are not afforded the necessary priority, compromising their wellbeing. Poor practice can easily turn into abuse if it is not dealt with as soon as concerns are raised or reported.

Examples of poor practice may be shouting, excessive training, creation of intra-club 'elite squads', ridicule of players' errors, ignoring health and safety guidelines and failing to adhere to the club's code of conduct.

# Best Practice Guidance

The RFU's aim is to create a culture where everyone feels confident to raise legitimate concerns without prejudice to their own position. Concerns about the behaviour of coaches, officials or any members of the children's workforce which may be harmful to a child in their care must be reported to the RFU Safeguarding Team through the Club Safeguarding Officer or CB Safeguarding Manager.

While remembering that it is the safety and welfare of children that is of paramount importance, there will be times when those responsible will need to exercise discretion and common sense to ensure their wellbeing. This Guidance is designed to provide information on a number of different topics which CBs, clubs and their volunteers and employees may find useful and will help them to create safe, friendly and welcoming environments for children.

Further guidance is available from the Club Safeguarding Toolkit, the RFU website, or the RFU Safeguarding Team. There is also guidance relating to Regulation 15 on the RFU website which may be useful when considering this section.

## Safe Environments

A safe environment is one where: the possibility of abuse is openly acknowledged; volunteers and employees are appropriately recruited and trained; and those who report suspicions and concerns are confident that these will be treated seriously and confidentially.

Communication is central to maintaining a safe environment; this includes information given to parents at the start of the season (such as the CSO's name), choosing the correct and appropriate method of providing information to children (email/phone to parents), listening to children's views on matters which affect them, as well as considering how to communicate in an emergency (mobile/landline).

Messages relating to children, sent via telephone, emails and texts, should be through their parents/guardians. Where appropriate older players may be copied in but this should always be done by blind copying in order to protect their data. Direct personal communication with children should be avoided, unless in exceptional circumstances.

## Recruitment

Clubs should have a suitable children's workforce and all reasonable steps should be taken to exclude anyone who may pose a threat to children. When recruiting new members of the children's workforce, clubs should consider asking anyone unknown to the club to provide a written reference, which the club should then verify.

## Training

Clubs should encourage all adults who have a coaching role to attend an appropriate Rugby Union Coaching course and a "Play It Safe" course. This is an introductory level safeguarding course designed for any club members.

All Club Safeguarding Officers must, within six months of being appointed, attend the RFU "In Touch" Workshop, which covers their role and responsibilities. Failure to attend means they may not be permitted to continue in the role. This course is a more detailed course providing information about reporting and responding to incidents. Any club official is encouraged to attend this course to ensure their club is fully aware of its responsibilities. The behaviour and performance of new volunteers and employees should be monitored for a period to ensure they are following best practice.

## Supervision

To provide a safe environment, clubs should ensure that their volunteers and employees when working with children avoid working in isolation out of the sight of parents or other volunteers. Whilst volunteers and employees are awaiting their DBS disclosure they must be supervised by someone who does have DBS clearance.

Contingency planning should ensure that if a player's injury requires significant attention, or coaches are absent or away with a team, levels of supervision can be maintained by suitably DBS checked adults. However, in an emergency, the first attention must be paid to an injured player and if there are insufficient suitably DBS checked adults available to supervise the remaining players, clearly, other responsible adults will need to be asked to step in.

## Adult : Child Ratios

There should always be at least one DBS checked adult in charge of any group of children.

The RFU recommends a minimum ratio of adult to children of:

- 1:10 for children over 8 years old aged at least 9
- 1:8 for children under 8 years old aged 7 and 8
- 1:6 for children under 7 years old

## On Tour

These Policy guidelines apply equally on tour as at the club. When on tour if an adult is solely there supporting their own child they will not need DBS clearance but they will if they are acting in any official capacity with other children. This would apply to those on bedtime or other supervisory duties.

For more detailed guidance please read the Safeguarding Toolkit and Tour guidelines which may be found on the RFU website.

## Inappropriate Relationships with Children

An adult in a position of trust must not enter into a sexual relationship with a child in their care. Sexual intercourse, sexual activity, or inappropriate touching by an adult with a child under the age of 16 years is a criminal offence, even where there is apparent consent from the child.

A sexual relationship between an adult in a position of trust and a child over 16 years of age is a breach of trust and an abuse of the adult's position. Whilst it may not be a criminal offence, in a rugby union setting it will be treated very seriously and may result in RFU disciplinary action, including suspension from attending rugby clubs.

The RFU has a legal duty to refer anyone removed from Regulated Activity to the DBS. Therefore, an adult in a position of trust involved in a sexual relationship with a child over 16 years of age may be referred to the DBS for consideration. This could result in the adult being barred from working with children by the DBS.

No-one in a position of trust should encourage a physical or emotionally dependent relationship to develop between them and a child in their care; this is often referred to as grooming.

Adults must never send children inappropriate or sexually provocative messages or images by text, or other electronic media.

## Safeguarding disabled children

Disabled children and their families may need additional information, help and support. The club's paid and volunteer workforce may require training and advice to ensure they include and safeguard them.

Some children may be more susceptible to harm than other participants because they may: lack the mutual support and protection of a peer group, require higher degrees of physical care and support, have limited communication skills, find it difficult to resist inappropriate interventions, have several carers making it difficult to identify an abuser, have a history of having limited or no choice or have a degree of dependency on a carer conflicting with the need to report harm or raise concerns.

It is also important to be aware of the additional vulnerability some children experience as a result of a wide spectrum of issues such as autism, attention deficit disorder and a variety of other disorders. There is guidance on how to deal with some of these issues on the RFU website.

## Good role models

The children's workforce should consistently display high standards of personal behaviour and appearance and refrain from pursuits considered unhealthy in front of their players. They must not make sexually explicit comments to children and any language which causes them to feel uncomfortable or lose confidence or self-esteem is unacceptable, as is the use of obscene or foul language.

## Alcohol

It is important that all rugby clubs' management committees take considered, positive action to ensure that they are responsible licensees.

It is against the law:

- To sell alcohol to someone under 18
- For an adult to buy or attempt to buy alcohol on behalf of someone under 18

# Best Practice Guidance Continued

- For someone under 18 to buy alcohol, attempt to buy alcohol or to be sold alcohol
- For someone under 18 to drink alcohol in licensed premises, with one exception - 16 and 17 year olds accompanied by an adult can drink but not buy beer, wine and cider with a table meal
- For an adult to buy alcohol for a person under 18 for consumption on licensed premises, except as above

At training sessions and games for children, adults' drinking habits may affect both children's attitude to alcohol and their emotional well-being. As role models adults should avoid excessive drinking in their presence.

The unexpected can always happen; there should always be adults who abstain from drinking alcohol to deal with any emergencies and to manage the safety and welfare of children in their care.

## Contact rugby

The wellbeing and safety of children must be placed above the development of performance. Contact skills must be taught in a safe, secure manner paying due regard to the physical development of the players involved.

Adults and children must never play contact versions of the sport together including training games or contact drills. They may play either tag or touch rugby together if these games are managed and organised appropriately (see the RFU website for further information). A risk assessment on the conditions, players and apparent risks should be carried out by a person responsible for the overall session. There is further information available in the Guidance to Regulation 15 which also provides a variety of alternatives.

## Coaching techniques

Any inappropriate or aggressive contact between adults and children is unacceptable and a number of principles should be followed when teaching contact rugby:

- Physical handling by a coach must only be used for safety reasons or where there is no other way of coaching the technique (Level 1 Coaching Award in Rugby Union)
- The reasons for physical contact should be explained wherever practicable so that children and their parents are comfortable with this approach

- The activity should always be conducted in an open environment and in the presence of another adult.

## Physical intervention

Discipline on the field of play is the responsibility of the players. Coaches, team managers and parents must always promote good discipline amongst their players, both on and off the field. Penalising lack of discipline on the field of play which contravenes the laws of the game is the responsibility of the referee. Coaches, managers and spectators should not intervene or enter the field of play.

In a situation where individuals have to consider whether to intervene to prevent a child being injured, injuring themselves or others, physical intervention should always be avoided unless absolutely necessary. In these situations it is imperative to:

- Consider your own safety
- Give verbal instructions first
- Use the minimum reasonable force and only when necessary to resolve the incident, the purpose being restraint and reducing risk
- Do not strike blows, act with unnecessary force or retaliate
- Avoid contact with intimate parts of the body, the head and neck
- Stay in control of your actions

The CSO or CBSM should be notified at the earliest opportunity of an incident of physical intervention which involves possible dispute as a complaint might be lodged with the RFU or the police by a parent whose child has been physically restrained. The incident should be recorded on the RFU Initial Issue/Concern Reporting Form which may be found on the Safeguarding pages of the RFU website and sent to the RFU's Safeguarding Team.

Physical intervention, often referred to in education as 'Positive Handling', should only be used to achieve an outcome in the best interests of the child whose behaviour is of immediate concern or other children involved and never as a form of punishment.

Further guidance on managing challenging behaviour can be found on the RFU website.

## Changing rooms & showers

Adults and children must never use the same facilities to shower or change at the same time.

Adults must only enter changing rooms when absolutely necessary due to poor behaviour, injury or illness. Adults must only ever enter the changing rooms by themselves in an emergency and when waiting for another adult could result in harm to a child.

If children need supervising in changing rooms, or coaches or managers need to carry out a range of tasks in that environment this must involve two individuals cleared to work in Regulated Activity of the same gender as the children. For mixed gender activities separate facilities should be available.

If the same facilities must be used by adults and children on the same day a clear timetable should be established. No pressure should be placed on children who feel uncomfortable changing or showering with others, if this is the case they should be allowed to shower and change at home.

Where a disability requires significant support from a parent; or carer, the person concerned and their parents should decide how they should be assisted to change or shower.

Before any assistance is offered by another person, appropriate consent should be given by a parent.

## Transportation

Clubs should develop a transport policy preferably publicised to parents via the club welcome pack and club website giving advice on dropping off and collecting children.

It should be made clear that in most instances it is the responsibility of parents, not the club, to transport their child to and from the club or nominated meeting point. If parents make arrangements between themselves this is a private arrangement and at the parents' discretion.

If a club hires a coach from a reputable commercial coach company it is entitled to assume that the company provides properly maintained and insured vehicles and properly licensed drivers. However, children must never travel unaccompanied. A member of the club must travel with the children and that adult's contact details must be readily available to any parent who has reason to contact them.

If the club formally arranges transport eg using minibuses or people carriers (as opposed to facilitating travel arrangements between parents) then the club should ensure that:

- Drivers have a valid driving licence and recruitment procedures, including vetting criteria have been followed and appropriate insurance and breakdown cover has been arranged
- The vehicle is suitable for the number of passengers and has operational safety belts and appropriate child car seats
- Parents give their consent and have the driver's contact details, with the driver having easy access to parents' contact details including mobile phone numbers
- No child is left alone in the car with the driver, unless it is the adult's own child. If, in extenuating circumstances, this situation arises the child should sit in the back of the car if possible
- The children involved are happy with the arrangement and adults are alert to any signs of disquiet.

In the event of a late collection of children, coaches and volunteers should: attempt to contact the parents, wait with the child, preferably in the company of others, notify the CSO/ club official and remind parents of their responsibility to collect their child promptly.

## Photographic Images

The RFU welcomes the taking of appropriate images of children in rugby clubs and has developed guidance for parents and the children's workforce to enable suitable photographs to be taken celebrating the Core Values of the sport.

There are risks associated with the use of photographic images. RFU Guidance on Photographic Images and professional photography can be found in the Safeguarding Toolkit; it is based on common sense. Clubs are advised to ensure that everyone is fully aware of, and complies with, this guidance. The key principle is that clubs should ensure they obtain parental consent for photographs to be taken whilst a child is either at the club or at away fixtures.

## Sharing of electronic material/media

Clubs and CBs should be made aware of the advice contained in the Cyber- Guidance, available in the Safeguarding Toolkit. Websites can be a positive way to communicate with children. However, there are risks associated with internet usage. Rugby clubs are legally responsible for their website content and there should be nothing included which could harm a child, directly or indirectly. It is important to note that it is not acceptable to share sexually explicit or inappropriate material via any form of media with children. The online environment is ever changing; the guidance will be reviewed and updated when necessary.

# Procedures

How to react to concerns about the welfare and safety of children

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility. This means that everyone in rugby has a responsibility to respond to any concerns that they or others, may have about a child, or the behaviour of an adult. This relates to concerns which arise both within the rugby environment and outside of the rugby environment.

Harm in the context of this Policy is an action or behaviour which has a detrimental effect on a child's physical or emotional health or wellbeing. Harm is often referred to as neglect, abuse or bullying. Harm may start as poor practice, which might include: shouting, excessive training, ignoring health and safety guidelines, failing to adhere to the club's Safeguarding Policy, poor management of multiple squad age groups, including favouring or discriminating against particular teams and ridicule of players' errors. Neither poor practice nor suspicions of harm should be ignored. Whether physical, sexual, emotional, bullying or neglect, suspicions of harm should always be reported and victims supported throughout. Please refer to the flowchart for the steps to be followed. The flowchart does not distinguish between the environment in which the concerns arise whether inside or outside the rugby environment. It is also appropriate to follow this procedure for allegations of abuse by one child against another.

## Signs of harm

It is important that in the rugby environment signs of harm are not ignored. These signs may include a child:

- Changing their usual routine
- Beginning to be disruptive during sessions
- Becoming withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- Having possessions going missing
- Becoming aggressive or unreasonable
- Starting to stammer or stopping communicating
- Having unexplained cuts or bruises
- Starting to bully other children
- Being frequently dirty, hungry or inadequately dressed
- Displaying sexual behaviour or using sexual language inappropriate for their age
- Seeming afraid of parents or carers
- Stopping eating
- Being frightened to say what's wrong
- Not wanting to attend training or club activities, or even leaving the club

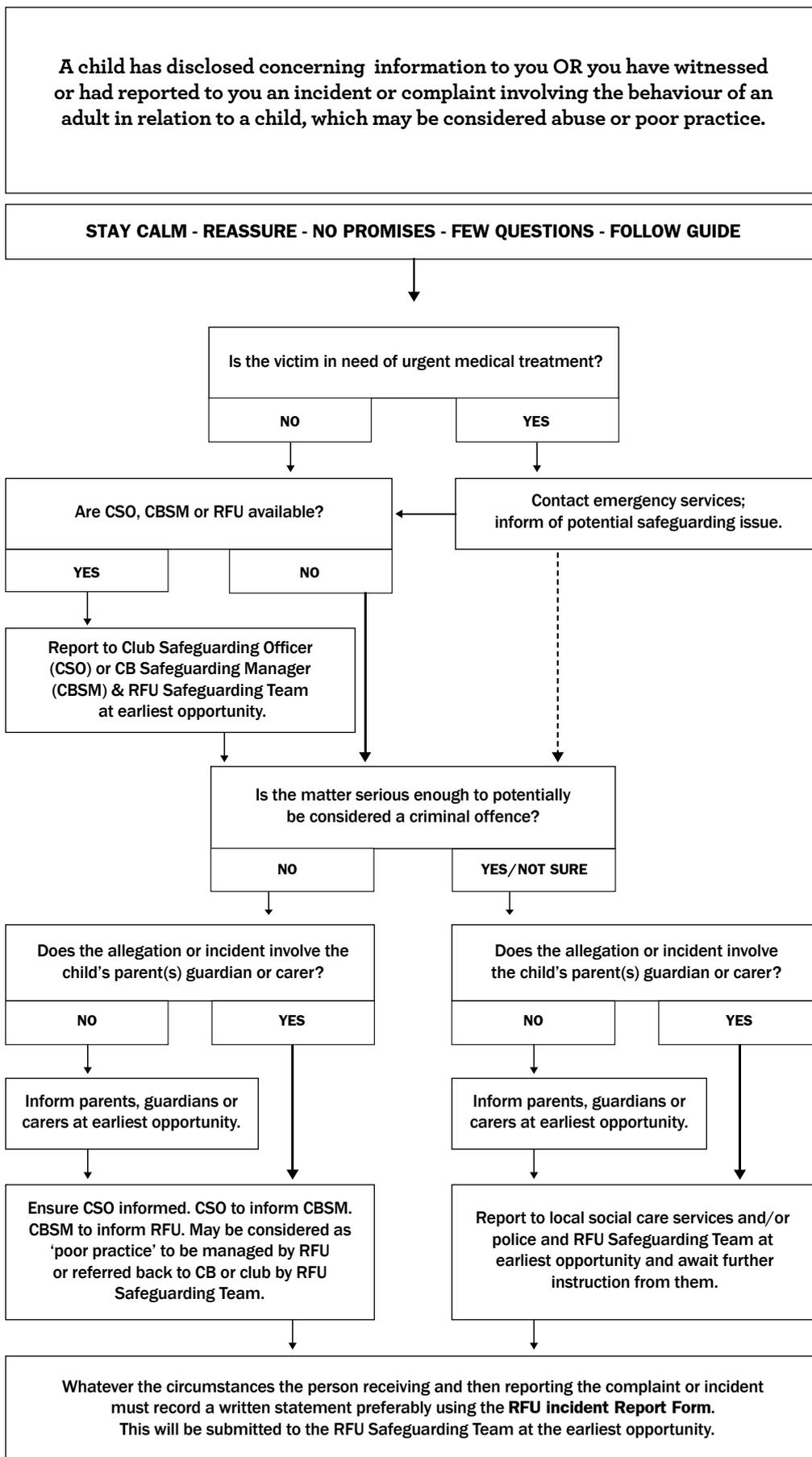
The above indicators should always be taken seriously and any concerns should be reported to the CSO. In their absence the CBSM or RFU Safeguarding team should be informed at the earliest possible opportunity. Any report must be made in writing and the RFU Initial Issue/Concern Reporting Form is the most appropriate way of doing this. The Reporting Form may be found on the Safeguarding pages of the RFU website.

There may be a number of reasons why a child displays concerning behaviour or their behaviour changes. It is advisable to discuss concerns with parents or carers in the first instance except where this may place a child at increased risk.

If a child discloses information to you, you should:

- Stay calm
- Reassure them that they are not to blame
- Avoid making promises of confidentiality or outcome
- Keep questions to a minimum
- Make brief, accurate notes at the earliest opportunity

An individual who becomes aware of any suspicions or concerns about the safety or welfare of a child must pass these on to the CSO as soon as possible. If they feel the child is in immediate risk of abuse then a statutory agency (local children's services or the police) should be contacted immediately.



# How the RFU will respond to suspicions or concerns

The RFU encourages and supports “whistle-blowing” and will, where appropriate, notify the statutory agencies of any allegation and work in partnership with them. RFU investigation will usually commence once the statutory agencies have completed their investigations and refer the case back to the RFU.

The wellbeing of the child must be central to any procedures involving them. The RFU will work in partnership with local children’s services and rugby clubs to support the victim and witnesses.

## Incident Referral Process

Regulation 21 requires all incidents, suspicions and concerns regarding a child to be reported to the RFU Safeguarding Team as soon as possible. Once the RFU Safeguarding team receives written notification of an incident, allegation or disclosure they will assume management of the case. If the case is being investigated by the police the Safeguarding team will liaise with them and discuss whether or not to proceed with RFU disciplinary action prior to or alongside the police investigation.

Once the RFU assumes management of the case the club should take no further action until advised to do so by the RFU or relevant authority. The RFU will ensure that the club and Constituent Body are kept informed of procedure and progress.

Safeguarding investigations are handled by the RFU Safeguarding team and presented to the RFU’s Referral Management Group (RMG) or it’s Sub-Group for consideration. The RMG is a cross-departmental group charged by the RFU with assessing the risk that individuals pose to children. The RMG is supported by an independent safeguarding advisor. Incidents may be referred by the RMG or it’s Sub-Group to the RFU Discipline department.

## Those under investigation

Under this Policy the RFU is committed, first and foremost, to protecting the interests of the child. In the course of a referral being made to the RFU or statutory agencies, individuals who are accused of causing harm will be informed of the procedures by the RFU. They may also request at any time an update on the progress of the referral. Investigations are concluded as quickly as possible to ensure that those guilty of causing harm are dealt with expeditiously and those falsely or mistakenly accused are able to return to the game with reputation intact.

## Suspension from Rugby Union

A temporary suspension order or suspension order may be issued by the RFU Legal Officer in accordance with RFU Regulation 21. Please refer to the Regulations in the RFU handbook or on the RFU website for further information.

The RFU procedures establish a clear route through which complaints, incidents, problems and enquiries are handled, as set out within RFU Regulation 21.

# Useful Contact Details

## **RFU**

The RFU Safeguarding team contacts are:

Richard Smallbone  
Safeguarding Manager  
richardsmallbone@rfu.com  
T: 0208 831 7832

Kath Bennett  
Safeguarding Case officer  
kathbennett@rfu.com  
T: 0208 831 7479

Annie Davis  
Safeguarding Advisor  
anniedavis@rfu.com  
T: 0208 831 7480

Chris Rawlings  
Safeguarding Compliance Officer  
chrisrawlings@rfu.com  
T: 0208 831 7454

## **NSPCC Helpline**

T: 0808 800 5000  
[www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)  
(for adults - 24hrs)

## **Child Protection in Sport Unit**

T: 0116 234 7278  
[www.thecpsu.org.uk](http://www.thecpsu.org.uk)



**Rugby Football Union  
Rugby House  
Twickenham Stadium  
200 Whitton Road  
Twickenham  
TW2 7BA**

**[rmg@therfu.com](mailto:rmg@therfu.com)**

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