RUGBY FOOTBALL UNION

Safeguarding Toolkit

RUGBY FOOTBALL FOUNDATION
FUNDED

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INTRODUCTION

This Toolkit is designed to assist Club Safeguarding Officers in their role. It should be read in conjunction with the RFU Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults in Rugby Union Policy and Guidance RFU Regulations 15 and 21 all of which can be found on rfu.com. The aim is to ensure that children and vulnerable adults experience and enjoy the game within a safe environment. Clubs following this best practice guidance will create a rugby environment in which boys, girls and vulnerable adults will have fun, achieve success and continue to participate in the sport.

The guidance provided in this toolkit is primarily aimed at rugby union events. However, it also applies to activities taking place at clubs out of season.

Whilst this document has endeavoured to address the majority of issues that a club might face, it is impossible to cover them all. When clubs are considering what steps to take in respect of matters not covered in this document they must put the welfare of the child first and use common sense to determine the best course of action.

Working Together to Safeguard Children (Department of Children, Schools and Families 2010) states that:

> "Everyone shares responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people, irrespective of individual roles. Nevertheless, in order that organisations and practitioners collaborate effectively, it is vital that all partners who work with children – including local authorities, the police, the health service, the courts, professionals, the voluntary sector and individual members of local communities – are aware of, and appreciate, the role that each of them play in this area."

CODE OF RUGBY

Everyone involved in Rugby in England, whether as a player, coach, referee, administrator, parent or spectator is expected to uphold the Core Values of our sport.

TEAMWORK RESPECT ENJOYMENT DISCIPLINE SPORTSMANSHIP

- Play to win – but not at all costs.
- Win with dignity, lose with grace.
- Observe the Laws and regulations of the game.
- Respect opponents, referees and all participants.
- Reject cheating, discrimination, violence and drugs.
- Value volunteers and paid officials alike.
- Enjoy the game.

Rugby club and Constituent Body codes of conducts should encompass the Code of Rugby.

RFU SAFEGUARDING POLICY STATEMENT

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

The key principles on which this policy statement are based:

- The welfare of the child or vulnerable adult 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 and suspicions of harm 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 and vulnerable adults
- The interests of those who work or volunteer with children and vulnerable adults will be protected

The full RFU Safeguarding Policy can be found at **www.rfu.com/ManagingRugby/Safeguarding**

RFU Regulation 21 – Safeguarding

Regulation 21 sets out how allegations of abuse are dealt with and may be found at www.rfu.com/TheGame/Regulations

Definition of a child

"Child" means a person under the age of 18 years as defined by the Children's Act 2004. Children means more than one child.

Definition of a vulnerable adult

"Vulnerable adult" means a vulnerable adult as defined in Section 59 of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006. In summary, vulnerable adults are defined as someone 18 years or older with a dependency on others, or a requirement for assistance for others, in the performance of basic physical functions; severe impairment in the ability to communicate with others, or impairment in a persons ability to protect him or herself from assault, abuse or neglect.

17 Year Old Males Playing in the Adult Game

RFU Regulation 15 states that a male player can, with written parental 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 form may be found at www.rfu.com/AdultRugbyForm. Once completed and signed it must be kept as a record of the decision. The only exception is for players within the Elite England Rugby performance pathway, whose playing development is managed through the England National Academy.

A club's management team must have assessed (prior to any training or playing) and continue to assess, that any 17 year old player playing in adult games or training is both physically and emotionally capable of taking part. Those responsible for the management of adult teams which include 17 year olds, must at all times be mindful of the 17 year old player's safety and wellbeing and ensure that a suitable adult from within the team and management acts as a mentor.

If a 17 year old is playing rugby in accordance with Regulation 15, while playing or training with the adults he is treated as an adult. This includes showering and changing facilities. It is advisable for a mentor to be appointed from a member of the coaching team as someone for them to turn to if there is any issue which causes them concern. This person should be appropriately vetted in the usual way. Once a player returns to U18 rugby he is once again a child and the policies regarding children apply.

CB & CLUB RESPONSIBILITIES

As set out in the Policy, the RFU as the governing body of the sport, has responsibility for the development and management of the Safeguarding Policy and programme. Constituent Bodies are responsible for implementing policy and practice within their member clubs. Each will appoint a CB Safeguarding Manager (CBSM) who will co-ordinate their network of Club Safeguarding Officers (CSO). The CBSM will provide support and advice to CSOs to enable them to carry out their role within their clubs. Further details of their respective responsibilities are set out in the Policy.

Consent & Parental Responsibility

The RFU Safeguarding Policy assumes that **both** parents have parental responsibility for their child. Clubs may also assume that this is the case.

There may be a number of different issues for which parental consent is required; consent to participate in the game, the taking and publishing of any photographs or medical issues are all examples of occasions when consent may be needed. For example, when signing a registration form a **parent** should be asked to sign the document, provide their full name and their relationship to the child.

The question of parental responsibility may, very occasionally, arise within children's rugby. The issue is complex and if it arises you are advised to contact the RFU Safeguarding team for further guidance.

Recruitment and Supervision of Volunteers & Staff

A rugby club should be a safe, friendly and welcoming environment where all staff and volunteers involved with children and vulnerable adults should be suitable to work with them. All reasonable steps must be taken to prevent anyone who may pose a threat to children or vulnerable adults from working with them. A thorough recruitment process will help to identify those not suitable to work in this environment.

Criminal Records Bureau Disclosures

Volunteers and staff who work closely with children and vulnerable adults are required to complete a CRB disclosure application in accordance with RFU Regulation 21. A detailed explanation of the application process is presented below.

Clubs must regularly risk assess their workforce to identify those who are eligible for a CRB disclosure due to the regular turnover of volunteers and staff. Please refer to the CRB Eligibility Guidance available on rfu.com

Clubs need to recruit new members and volunteers in order to grow but should consider asking for written or verbal references for volunteers unknown to anyone at the club. Where a role does not meet the strict CRB eligibility criteria it is particularly important to request references and follow these up for example a bar manager, groundsman or committee member. If any aspect of a reference raises concerns the club must inform the RFU Safeguarding team so a full and objective risk assessment can be undertaken.

Any vacancy advertised, locally or on-line, should indicate that a CRB disclosure may be required if appropriate.

Induction

All new volunteers and new members of staff should be made aware of the identity of club officials, in particular the Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO). Club policies and procedures on safeguarding issues should be brought to their attention as well as any policies on health and safety, kit, nutrition and training.

Training and Monitoring

An individual's personal training needs should be identified and progressed as soon as possible after their initial deployment. It is strongly recommended that all adults who have a coaching role for children and/or vulnerable adults attend an appropriate Rugby Union Coaching Award course and an RFU Play It Safe training course.

Supervision

Once the RFU has received and approved the individual's CRB disclosure, their RugbyFirst record will be updated. Until such a time, they must be supervised by another CRB checked coach. An individual may have received their CRB disclosure but the RFU Safeguarding team may be making further enquiries about the information appearing on the disclosure; until their RugbyFirst record indicates a CRB by way of a green tick against their name, supervision is mandatory.

If an individual is helping with a training session it must be within sight of a qualified and suitably vetted coach. Sessions should always be conducted openly and visibly. If training equipment (e.g. scrum machine or fitness equipment) is used out of the sight of other coaches more than one coach should be involved in this training session.

Planning should ensure that in an emergency levels of supervision are upheld by an appropriate number of CRB cleared and qualified individuals. Club managers should also have plans or contingencies in place in respect of coach absences so that basic supervision levels are maintained.

CRB Disclosure Process

Regulation 21 requires an individual working closely with children or vulnerable adults to apply for a CRB disclosure within 4 weeks of their appointment. The RFU does not accept CRBs obtained through third parties, for example, schools, local authorities or other sports governing bodies. All staff and volunteers must renew their RFU CRB disclosure every three years.

RugbyFirst membership records indicate the CRB status of the individual, as shown below. Each CSO should familiarise themselves with the club membership list (including 'pending' members) and the reporting tool which will allow them to support and manage their staff and volunteer CRB clearance.

How to apply for CRB

There are two ways of applying for an RFU CRB check:

1. using the RFU's online CRB e-Application system
2. on a paper application sent to the RFU

Full details on these two application systems can be found on the RUSafe website, www.rfu.com/crbprocess or by contacting the Safeguarding team.

CRB e-Applications

In order to use the e-Application system a club must have an appointed Club Safeguarding Officer registered on RugbyFirst and have registered to use the system with the Safeguarding team. In order for individuals to complete an application they too must be registered with the club on RugbyFirst. For further details or to register contact the team on crbeapps@therfu.com or 0208 831 7454.

CRB Payments

Volunteers are not required to pay for their CRB application. However, the CRB charge, currently £44, for staff; clubs are required to pay the fee prior to the application being processed by the RFU.

The RFU is a Registered Body, approved to process CRB applications; the CRB conduct an annual audit of volunteers to ensure that all appropriate payments are made. Inaccurate reporting of volunteer status could result in the RFU having its Registered Body status revoked.

Safeguarding Courses

The RFU has produced two NSPCC approved safeguarding training courses. Both courses whilst non-assessed are certificated by the RFU.

The Play It Safe course is aimed at all club volunteers and staff in order to increase their level of knowledge and awareness of best practice safeguarding principles as well as how to recognise and report abuse and concerns. CSOs must do this course prior to attending the In Touch outlined below.

In Touch is designed to give CSOs the knowledge, confidence and practical skills to implement the Policy within their own club. It also outlines how to deal with incidents and concerns that are reported to them in their role. Regulation 21 requires all CSOs to complete this course within 6 months of being appointed to their post.

GUIDANCE & BEST PRACTICE

The Best Practice Guidance in the Policy explains how to implement the Policy in a rugby club such as being a good role model and sets out the recommended staff to participant ratio. Whilst the guidance is detailed, it is not exhaustive, and local circumstances often require local solutions. There will always be unforeseen circumstances where deviation is unavoidable; common sense should always prevail whilst always considering the needs of the child or vulnerable adult.

If best practice is followed by staff and volunteers they will be supported and protected as they carry out their roles. Below are some additional considerations:

Environment

As a year round sport weather conditions present rugby clubs with a range of considerations: extremes of heat, sun, rain, frost and snow. It is the responsibility of the club to risk assess environmental conditions both before and during a game or training session. Conditions such as frost and drought can result in a hard and dangerous playing surface. Children should always be advised to wear appropriate clothing for the season and all players should be monitored to ensure their wellbeing throughout a session.

All players should be encouraged to keep hydrated throughout a session particularly during the warmer months.

Frequency of play

The RFU take overplaying and over commitment seriously, especially where it relates to players under the age of 18. Regulation 15 and its guidelines identify the parameters in relation to the amount of time any player is playing or training.

Rugby is only **part** of a child's development and should always be balanced alongside other academic and sporting commitments.

Playing Kit and Equipment

IRB Law 4 details the definition of playing kit and also goes on to regulate for any additional items of clothing including pads, mits, medical support and mouthguards. It also goes on to identify banned items of clothing such as jewellery, sharp items and zips. Ultimately, it is the referee's decision to determine whether any item of the players' clothing is acceptable or not and his decision is final.

Names on shirts: there are no RFU regulations governing the appearance of players' names or nick names on their kit. However, it is considered poor practice to do so as it allows the child to be easily identified by those to whom the child is otherwise, unknown.

Mouthguards: whilst the wearing of a mouthguard is not mandatory, it is a recommendation that all age grade players wear one. It is, however, mandatory in certain competitions and festivals.

Studs and Blades: these must not be sharp or abrasive. It is the referee's decision as to whether or not a player's studs, or blades, are acceptable. It is advisable for players to have boots with interchangeable studs so that they may be replaced if they become worn or dangerous.

Goggles/glasses: players may not wear glasses whilst playing. Only players up to and including under 12s age group may wear specially designed and manufactured sports goggles. Regulation 15 sets out the parameters in detail. Contact lenses may be worn.

Hearing aids: whilst contrary to IRB Laws of the Game, the RFU provide detailed guidance on the issue of hearing aids and cochlear implants. This can be found at http://www.rfu.com/ManagingRugby/FirstAid/FAQs.aspx

Sponsorship: there are no RFU regulations governing sponsor's logos appearing on players clothing. However, clubs should give consideration to the appropriateness of the sponsor and their business being associated with children's teams. Please note that there are regulations regarding the use of any RFU related logos, for example the rose, and the use of any of these should be referred to the RFU Sponsorship team.

Under 6s

Clubs which provide the opportunity for U6s, to participate in rugby related activities need to ensure that they are aware of the additional factors which should be taken into account.

Whilst all parents/guardians should be encouraged to remain on the premises throughout a session it is particularly important for those of this age group. Activities should be located within easy reach of shelter and toilets. A session should not exceed one hour and there should be at least one break for refreshments. Adults should be alert to the mental and physical capabilities of the individual children involved and be prepared to adapt/curtail sessions in the event that the children become tired or lose concentration. Whilst all children will normally start activities at the same time, their parents/guardians should be instructed that they may withdraw them at any time during the session. Where there is a wide range of children they should be matched to activities according to age and development.

The format of any session should be designed to give these children confidence in carrying out basic movement skills, in the context of fair play, sharing and co-operation. Children need to spend time learning how the game works and its laws, so they become familiar and confident with the game before joining those who are more experienced.

The group must be functionally separate from all other age groups and no matches may be played between the children and those of different clubs.

Managing challenging behaviour

There will be times when members of the paid and volunteer workforce will have to deal with children or vulnerable adults' challenging behaviour. Strategies and sanctions are suggested and those which are unacceptable are also identified. Guidance on a range behavioural conditions can also be found via the RFU's 'RUAble' website clubs.rfu.com/Clubs/portals/RUAble/

Autism, Aspergers, Dyspraxia, ADD and ADHD are being more widely recognised and diagnosed and it is increasingly possible that clubs will have children or vulnerable adults affected by one or more amongst their players and members. It should not be seen as a bar to playing rugby and indeed competitive sports can often improve a child's behaviour.

Clubs should do everything possible for children with these conditions to be able to play rugby; listening to the parents and learning from their experience is an important part of this.

Insurance

All players, volunteers and match officials are insured under the RFU insurance for catastrophic injuries resulting in death and permanent disability only. All coaches, match officials and volunteers are covered for third party liability. This is cover for the season, as set out in Regulation 11, and includes touring subject to the prior permission of the RFU. Any participation in competitive matches outside the season requires the prior written consent of the RFU. Cover only applies if the activity falls within the RFU Rules and Regulations. Further information can be found at www.rfu.com/managingrugby/insurance.

Parents and players are encouraged to take out individual personal insurance if they wish to be covered for less serious injuries.

Serious Injuries

The RFU takes the safety of all its participants very seriously. It is however a contact sport and injuries will occur. In order to try to reduce the number of injuries to players the RFU monitors all injuries that require admission to hospital. It does not include those who attend an accident and emergency department and are allowed home from there. The RFU Reportable Injury Event Report is available at www.rfu.com/firstaid.

CYBER-GUIDANCE

Websites are a key part of the daily operation of most clubs. They are probably the most flexible way to communicate with members, and to anyone interested in joining a club. They also have the potential to be a very safe way to communicate with children, given their wide accessibility.

Club Websites

However, in the same way that a club has responsibility for the physical safety of a junior member when visiting the club's premises, that club must also ensure that there is nothing on its website which could harm a child, directly or indirectly. A club is legally and morally responsible for the content of its website.

There are two key risks to guard against, abusive or inappropriate content (photos, video or text), on the site itself or on linked sites (including adverts, especially from Google or other 'sponsored links) and disclosing personal information about a child to people accessing the website. This could be the child's name, address, or any information about a child's life, interests or activities which would help a stranger target a child, or engage that child in conversation.

Another aspect of inappropriate content can be perceived as bullying. This could be material on the site which criticises or humiliates a child. It could also be information which places undue pressure on the child to participate in some aspect of a club's activities.

Blogs

Blogs are a type of content becoming commonplace on websites. The creation of a blog is straightforward. It does not require technical or design expertise, and it can be updated remotely.

Blogs present two particular challenges: a central part of the attraction of a blog is that it is updated frequently. However, the same risks apply to its content as apply to all other content on the site. A club cannot distance itself from the content of a blog it chooses to include on its site. Further, blogs often contain a lot of opinion, as opposed to purely factual information.

Linked sites

Many sites contain links to other sites. This could be for commercial reasons, such as the sites of sponsors or advertisers, or simply to communicate information to be found on other websites. Before creating a link, a club should check thoroughly the content of the other website, both for child protection reasons, and to ensure the content poses no other risk to the club's reputation. Once a link is included on the site, the club should check its content periodically, and remove any link immediately if concerns arise.

Photos and video

Photos and video clips can make any child featured vulnerable to grooming if information about the child (name, address, activities or interests) is also disclosed. Furthermore, posting an image on the website carries a risk that the image could be taken and adapted for an inappropriate use. For further guidance on photographs see section on Photographic Images below.

Mobile and on-line communication with children

Technology is moving very fast in this area. There are now many different ways for people to communicate. On-line communication can be by email, instant messaging or social networking sites.

The risks posed by such methods of communication arise from a variety of issues: the privacy provided, the wide range of content that can be transmitted, including content of a violent, sexual or hateful nature, the ease with which images can be forwarded onto others and the difficulty in knowing truly who you are communicating with.

In sport, there are additional risks: inappropriate pressure can be exerted by adults, particularly coaches, on children or inappropriate criticism of a child's performance. An official position or role within a club, such as coach, can carry with it a level of authority, and engender a level of trust, that facilitates the control of a child.

Against this background, a club needs to establish rules covering how adults connected with that club communicate with children connected with that club.

It is therefore recommended that:

- When communicating by phone, where possible Club Officials and coaches should speak to the parent of a child

- Club Officials and coaches should not communicate with individual children by text or on-line at any time, on any matter, unless there is an immediate risk to the welfare of that child which can be lessened by such contact

- If a club needs to communicate club-related information to children by email (such as training or match details), it should use email groups comprising email addresses given by parents. It is inadvisable for a coach to communicate by email on a one-to-one basis with a child; if replying to an email from a child the parent should be copied in to the response

- Coaches and Club Officials should not communicate with children through social networking sites such as Facebook. Coaches should not be "friends" with the children they coach and they should not comment on their status as this can open a coach up to allegations

It is impossible to address every issue or cover every scenario a club or coach might encounter when communicating with children and it is appreciated that different ages will need to be treated differently. However, in all cases the above guidelines should be considered when determining the most appropriate method of communication in any given circumstances.

In order to address these issues it is recommended that a club devise written policies which cover its own particular circumstances, and meet its particular needs, then to ensure the policies are followed fully and widely publicised.

PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGES

The RFU positively encourages parents and spectators to take photographs of participants involved in rugby union to celebrate the ethos and spirit of the sport.

However, once a photograph has been taken it is important to maintain control of it to avoid it being misused. Any photograph (digital or printed) which is produced and released into the public domain may be misused by anyone as once this has been done, control has been lost. In this day and age when it is so easy to upload or email a photograph within seconds of it being taken, it is worth taking a moment to consider the issue of control.

Club Photographic Policy

Common sense should be used when clubs write their photographic policy as it is not the intention of the RFU to prevent photographs being taken for legitimate purposes. Care should be taken when placing photographic images on club websites and promotional material.

The key points are:

- Personal information which can lead to a child or vulnerable adult being identified should never be used. If it is necessary to name a child ensure you have written parental consent and have informed the parents as to how the image will be used. This is particularly important when issuing press releases and match reports
- Photographs should be of the activity or team, not on one individual
- Clubs should ensure they obtain parental consent for photographs to be taken whilst a child or vulnerable adult is either at the club or away fixtures. This can be done easily at the beginning of the season when obtaining contact information and membership details
- Children and vulnerable adults must be appropriately dressed when being photographed. It is never acceptable to capture any images in changing rooms, showers or at any time when players are dressing. Images should be neither sexual, of an exploitative nature nor open to misinterpretation or misuse
- Parents should be made aware if a film is being taken to be used as a coaching aid. Clubs and CBs should ensure that any footage will be carefully monitored and stored securely
- It is not an offence to take photographs in a public place. On privately owned or leased land it is the owner who may regulate whether or not photographs may be taken. Clubs must have their own photographic policy appropriate for their own specific needs and circumstances
- When clubs meet for fixtures/festivals it is recommended that confirmation is obtained from each club that parental permission has been given for all the children or vulnerable adults participating. If there is a child who is the subject of a court order who should therefore not have their photograph taken, this should be addressed before the event
- Parents should be aware that they may be asked to register their intention to take photographs

Commissioning Professional Photographers & the Local Media

If the club commissions professional photographers or invites the press to cover an activity, ensure everyone is clear about each other's expectations. The key is to plan ahead and communicate early on. Clubs and CBs should:

- Ensure that the photographer has been appropriately vetted prior to the event
- Provide a clear brief about what is considered appropriate in terms of content and behaviour
- Inform them of the club's commitment to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Establish who will hold the recorded images and what they intend to do with them
- Issue the professional photographer with identification, which must be worn at all times

ABUSE AND POOR PRACTICE

Recognising abuse, bullying and poor practice

It is important to recognise the signs and indicators of abuse and to be aware of how it should be dealt with.

A child or vulnerable adult may be being abused or bullied if they:

- change their usual routine;
- begin to be disruptive during sessions;
- become withdrawn anxious or lacking in confidence;
- have possessions going missing;
- become aggressive or unreasonable;
- start stammering or stop communicating;
- have unexplained cuts or bruises;
- start bullying other children;
- are frequently dirty, hungry or inadequately dressed;
- display sexual behaviour inappropriate for their age;
- seem afraid of parents or carers;
- do not want to attend training or club activities, or even leave the club;
- stop eating;
- are frightened to say what's wrong.

One of these signs on its own is very unlikely to be an indicator of abuse. However, cumulatively they should be taken seriously. Members of the staff and volunteers need to be aware of these possible signs and always report any concerns to the CSO.

Types of abuse

There are four main types of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional and neglect.

An individual may abuse or neglect a child or vulnerable adult directly or may be responsible for abuse by failing to prevent another person harming that child or vulnerable adult.

The categories of abuse detailed above refer to both children and vulnerable adults; the terminology used in respect of vulnerable adults can vary somewhat from that used for children but in essence is very similar. There is however an additional category recognised in respect of vulnerable adults, that of 'financial and material abuse'. This refers to theft, fraud, exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Physical abuse

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

Examples of physical abuse in sport include extreme physical punishments; forcing a child or vulnerable adult 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 (or vulnerable adult) is given drugs to enhance performance or in the case of a child, delay puberty.

Sexual abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing a child or vulnerable adult 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 or vulnerable adults in looking at, or in the production of, sexual photographic or online images, watching sexual activities, or encouraging children or vulnerable adults to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Emotional abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on their development. It may involve conveying to children or vulnerable adults 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 or vulnerable adult'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 or vulnerable adults to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children or vulnerable adults. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child or vulnerable adult, 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 or vulnerable adult. 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 or vulnerable adult'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 or vulnerable adult 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 or vulnerable adult'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.

If bullying does occur it should not be ignored and the victim should be supported through what can be a traumatic experience. Bullying will not just go away.

Bullying takes many forms but ultimately it is the perception of the victim that determines whether or not they are being bullied and not 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. Bullies can be very cunning and develop strategies to avoid it being seen by anyone but the victim.

Poor practice

Incidents of poor practice arise when the needs of children and vulnerable adults 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.

Positions of Trust

Everyone working with children and vulnerable adults is in a 'position of trust' with power and influence, invested in them by the parents, the organisation deploying them, and the child or vulnerable adult.

No-one in a position of trust should encourage a physical or emotionally dependant relationship to develop between themselves and the child/vulnerable adult in their care.

If there is an additional competitive aspect to the activity, and the person in a position of trust is responsible to some extent for the child/vulnerable adult's success or failure, their dependency on the individual will be significantly increased. This may include elite teams at club, CB (ie School of Rugby), Academy and national level.

In sport, there have been examples of individuals using their position of power to gain access to children or vulnerable adults, win their trust and abuse that trust for inappropriate or illegal purposes.

Sexual Relationships

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 consensual sexual relationship between an adult in a position of trust (eg. a coach or someone involved in Regulated Activity) and a child over 16 years of age is contrary to this Policy as it is a breach of that position of trust and an

abuse of their position. Whilst this may not be an offence in terms of criminal law (unless occurring in an educational setting) in a rugby union setting it will be treated with the utmost seriousness and may result in RFU disciplinary action, including a suspension from attending rugby clubs. Such a breach of trust involving a 'vulnerable adult' may also result in disciplinary action.

Adults sending inappropriate and/or sexually provocative messages or images by text, web-cam or other electronic media to children is a breach of this Policy, and may be a criminal offence.

A child may suffer sexual abuse or sexually harmful behaviour from another child or children. A 'position of trust' applies to children who take on a leadership role as well as to adults in the sport.

HOW TO DEAL WITH CONCERNS

The RFU's aim is to create a culture where everyone feels confident to raise concerns without prejudice to their own position. Anyone with concerns about the behaviour of a coach, official, volunteer, administrator, professional staff or any other member of the paid and volunteer workforce which may be harmful to the child or vulnerable adult in their care must report them in accordance with the RFU Safeguarding Policy.

If you have witnessed or heard about an incident which concerns you, it is important to report it to someone in authority, in the first instance to the Club Safeguarding Officer (CSO). In their absence the Constituent Body Safeguarding Manager (CBSM) or RFU Safeguarding team.

Remember to:

- stay calm, but don't delay
- re-assure the child or vulnerable adult that they are not to blame
- do not make any promises of confidentiality or outcome
- keep questions to a minimum
- make brief accurate notes at the earliest opportunity

If a vulnerable adult is at risk of abuse or discloses information, their consent to the statutory agencies being contacted should be obtained if possible before doing so.

The RFU Safeguarding Incident Form, which can be found on rfu.com, is the most appropriate way to report any concerns. It is best completed by the CSO with the assistance of the parents/victim/witnesses as appropriate. It is also extremely useful if a "cast list" is supplied to the RFU Safeguarding Team to enable the team to fully understand the whole scenario as well as the names and roles of those involved.

The RFU, when dealing with a serious incident, will immediately notify the local statutory agencies (Police/ Social Care/Children's Services/Local Safeguarding Children Boards) and continue to work in partnership with them throughout any investigations.

Any internal RFU investigation will only commence once the statutory agencies have completed their investigations and referred the case back to the RFU. The wellbeing of the child must be central to any procedures involving them.

Once the RFU has completed its investigations in accordance with Regulation 21 and decided on the appropriate action to be taken it will then consider referring the individual to the Independent Safeguarding Authority in line with its legal obligations.

If you are unsure how to deal with any incident please do feel free to contact the RFU Safeguarding Team to discuss the appropriate course of action.

RFU Safeguarding Executive should be contacted on

0208 831 7479
Or 24 Hour Helpline on 0208 831 6655

Referral Management Group

When an incident is referred the RFU Safeguarding Team will collect further information as required – for example the individual's account of an incident, witness statements, probation reports and club references for consideration by the RMG or it's Sub-Group.

The Referral Management Group (RMG) is a cross-departmental group which allows a variety of divergent opinions to be heard when considering incidents referred to the RFU by clubs, parents or statutory agencies.

In more serious cases the RMG considers the information available, possibly after an investigation, and may recommend to the RFU Legal Officer that a Temporary Suspension Orders should be issued. It is the Legal Officers decision to issue such an order.

The RMG or its Sub-Group also makes the recruitment decision when an individual's CRB certificate is received.

When making the recruitment decision based on an individual's CRB certificate a number of different factors are taken into account: rehabilitation since the conviction, age of the individual at the time of the incident, the sanction received, the type of incident (eg domestic violence, road rage, neighbourhood disputes), the offenders attitude to the disposal, the time since the incident occurred and any non-conviction information provided which may indicate Police concerns.

DEALING WITH MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Child abuse is an issue which will generate media interest.

The RFU can help you handle media enquiries and have experience in helping clubs and Constituent Bodies deal with these difficult issues. However, it is important that you handle initial enquiries in a way that will not aggravate the situation or generate negative publicity. It is also important to be aware of legislation that prevents the naming of children and young people in the media. The RFU is committed to investigating all allegations, but the potential damage the publication of false allegations can do to an individual or club must not be underestimated.

Be prepared

- Each Constituent Body or Club should have a press officer or representative who acts as a single point of contact for media enquiries.
- If you know of an allegation of child abuse it is important to be prepared in advance for potential publicity.
- Contact the relevant RFU Regional Press Officer (RPO) for your area or the Community Rugby Media Manager and give them all the facts. A current contact list is on the RFU website.
- Don't hide anything or pretend the situation is not as serious as it is or might become. The press can put a large headline on even the smallest story and it is important that the RPO is aware of all the details.
- What to do when approached or contacted by a journalist.
- A journalist may hear of an alleged case of abuse from a source or directly from a relative or acquaintance of the alleged victim.
- They are likely to approach a club, constituent body, coach or official and ask for their response. It is worth remembering that the journalist may already have the story mapped out in their own mind so what you say is important.
- Make sure you make a note of the name of the journalist and the media they are working for.
- Make sure you fully understand what the journalist is asking you. Ask them to repeat a question if necessary. You may or may not be aware of the incident concerned.
- Do not say 'No comment'. It makes you sound as if you have something to hide.
- Instead take a contact number and find out when their deadline is, then contact the RPO for your area and discuss the matter.
- The RPO will work with the RFU Safeguarding team to formulate an appropriate response, will respond to the journalist and inform you of that response.

The follow-up

Allegations of child abuse are rarely one-day stories so be prepared for more phone calls and media enquiries. Just because one response has been given does not mean that the media will not have more questions in the future. Follow the same procedure as before and contact your RPO.

Going 'off the record'

Journalists like nothing better than going 'off the record'. They use this tool to get more information but with the undertaking that they will not publish what you say. Do not speak off the record in any situation involving safeguarding issues.

FINALLY

Whilst this document has endeavoured to address the majority of issues that a club might face, it is impossible to cover them all. When clubs are considering what steps to take in respect of matters not covered in this document they must put the welfare of the child first and use common sense to determine the best course of action.

Contact details and further information
All RFU regulations can be found on the website at
www.rfu.com/TheGame/Regulations

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