



Club Safeguarding Guide¹



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¹ Updated 26/27 Season

Irish Rugby Football Union

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SECTION ONE

Club & Volunteer Safeguarding Responsibilities

All clubs offering rugby to children and/or adults need to:



Adhere to the IRFU Safeguarding Policy



Appoint a Club Welfare Officer (CWO)



Make clear what the club ethos is



Follow safer recruitment practices for all staff & volunteers



Give staff & volunteers the opportunity to attend relevant training



Ensure that everyone has access & adheres to the Code of Conduct



Ensure appropriate ratio of suitably qualified or experienced coaches to players



Reinforce that activities should be fun & inclusive with a focus on playing & skills development



Promote a culture of safeguarding & inclusion across all levels of the game



Guide coaches to take the time to listen to the views of players



Ensure players & coaches are properly registered on RugbyConnect



Signpost to/seek guidance from expert organisations if needed

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IRFU

All coaches² working with children and/or adults need to:



Adhere to the IRFU
Safeguarding Statement
& guidance



Adhere to the Declaration
of Intent & Code of
Conduct



Complete the vetting
process before starting, if
appropriate³



Attend relevant training,
including safeguarding



Plan & prepare for each
training session & match



Ensure activities are fun
& inclusive



Have a good attitude &
respect for the ethos,
laws & traditions of rugby



Actively listen to players,
so that they can express
their thoughts & feelings



Encourage players to
solve problems & make
their own decisions



Turn mistakes into a
positive learning
experience for players



Be fair when dealing with
players, particularly with
selection & inclusion



Keep up to date with age
appropriate sports
information

Icons made by: Freepik; Wanicon; Eucalyp; Geotatah; Good Ware; Phatplus; Photo3ideastudio; Monkik; and Smash Icons from www.flaticon.com

² Term applied to all roles within rugby taking responsibility for supporting the development of children or adults playing the game. Individuals may have other names or roles such as 'helper', 'assistant', 'manager' etc

³ Everyone working in a **relevant role** with children and/or adults at risk must be IRFU Safeguarding Approved **prior** to setting foot on a pitch or carrying out any tasks with children and/or adults at risk

SECTION TWO

Club Action Plan

All clubs have a responsibility to promote a culture of safeguarding and inclusion across all levels of the game through the implementation of the Club Safeguarding Guide, supported by the Spirit of Rugby programme.

For an overview go to **SECTION ONE: Club and Volunteer Safeguarding Responsibilities**



The Club Welfare Officer (CWO) will co-ordinate this work, supported by other members of the club. **See SECTION THREE: Club Welfare Officer - Getting to Know Your Role**



Action: Appoint a Club Welfare Officer, and Deputy⁴ where possible, to lead on the implementation of the Club Safeguarding Guide and to be the first point of contact for any concerns raised.

Notify the Branch Welfare Officer(s) of any changes in Club Welfare Officer appointments in a timely manner. There may be no age-grade activities in the absence of a Club Welfare Officer being in position.

Clubs should actively plan for staff and volunteers moving on from their roles, identifying new people to fill roles as soon as possible.

- **Appoint a CWO**

(Key skills: approachable, good communication, relates well to children & adults, organised, computer literate)

- **Ensure that the CWO is vetted and completes training** as directed by the National Safeguarding Officer/Branch Welfare Officer(s) within the necessary timeframe of taking up the role.

- **Ensure that the CWO is well-known** within the club, publicise their role using a variety of channels including the CWO ID template which should be displayed prominently in the club.

*(The CWO poster with up-to-date contacts **must** be displayed and shared widely - noticeboard, website, social media platforms, parent & coach briefings - so that players, coaches and parents know how to get in touch)*

⁴ 'Club Welfare Officer' or 'CWO' is taken to include Deputy Club Welfare Officer for the purpose of this guide.



Action: Adopt the IRFU Safeguarding Policy, undertake a Safeguarding Risk Assessment and publish a Safeguarding Statement in line with the Club Safeguarding Guide and Club Support Scheme requirements.

Ensure that these are easily available to all members of the club.

- **Adopt the IRFU Safeguarding Policy**
(this must be agreed and minuted at an Executive Committee meeting and updated as the policy is reviewed)
- **Carry out a Safeguarding Risk Assessment** which must be agreed and minuted at an Executive Committee meeting.
(A template will be provided by the National Safeguarding Officer/Branch Welfare Officer(s), this must be amended to ensure statements are specific to club activities)
- **Sign and publish the Safeguarding Statement** following completion of the risk assessment.
*(A template will be provided by the National Safeguarding Officer/Branch Welfare Officer(s), this must be amended to ensure it is specific to the club. The Statement **must** be displayed and shared widely – noticeboard, website, social media platforms)*
- **Upload the Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment** to RugbyConnect by mid-October every year as part of the Club Support Scheme documentation.

These are live documents and should be reviewed every 2 years as advised by the National Safeguarding Officer/Branch Welfare Officer(s) in line with the IRFU Safeguarding Review. Throughout the 2 years, clubs must be active in ensuring the identified actions are carried out.)



Action: Follow safer recruitment practices for all staff and volunteers.

*Ensure that everyone working in **relevant roles** with children and/or adults at risk are IRFU Safeguarding Approved **prior** to setting foot on a pitch or carrying out any tasks with children and/or adults at risk.*

- **Follow safer recruitment practices** for all staff and volunteers in accordance with the IRFU Vetting Policy. This should include communicating the Spirit of Rugby values and club ethos.
(Job/role description, application form, interview/meeting, references, vetting - for relevant roles only – confirmation of role, induction, support & supervision)

- **Ensure that those working with children and/or adults complete appropriate safeguarding training** as directed by the CWO prior to carrying out any rugby-related activities. This must be renewed every 3 years.
- **Ensure that those working with children and/or adults** are made aware of the Declaration of Intent and the Code of Conduct.
- **Ensure that those working in relevant roles with children and/or adults at risk carry out vetting** in line with current legislation and the IRFU Vetting Policy. This must be renewed every 3 years.
- **Ensure appropriate ratio of suitably qualified or experienced coaches to players** in line with the Supervision and Safety Guidelines. Players and coaches must be properly registered on RugbyConnect and must be assigned to their respective panel(s). Registration information should record relevant medical/disability information and for players U18 this will include gathering parental consent for participation in rugby activities.

(Medical/disability information needs to be downloaded from RugbyConnect and shared with relevant coaches. It's important for coaches supporting the players to be aware of any potential barriers or supports required to ensure rugby is inclusive to as many people as possible)

Vetting Policy, Declaration of Intent, Code of Conduct, Supervision and Safety Guidelines, Guide for Downloading Additional Member Information & the Sports Passport available on request from the CWO, Branch Welfare Officer(s) or by emailing safeguarding@irfu.ie

The Code of Conduct should be widely available to everyone, not just staff and volunteers. It should be displayed on the noticeboard and website and distributed widely through social media platforms.



Action: Manage and respond to referrals and/or concerns in an efficient and fair manner, through the Club Welfare Officer, following the Case Management Policy.

If the Club Welfare Officer is unavailable or implicated in a concern this should be escalated directly to the Branch Welfare Officer(s). Where appropriate, take action against those who breach the Spirit of Rugby Charter, Safeguarding Policy, and/or Codes of Conduct.

- **Involve the CWO as quickly as possible** should a safeguarding concern arise about a child or adult
- **All concerns should be dealt with using the IRFU Case Management Policy** which takes account of relevant guidance documents and legislation.

(Clubs should not carry out their own internal investigations until directed by the IRFU Case Management Group)

- **Any intervention should be reasonable, justified and proportionate** to the perceived level of risk and perceived impact of harm.

Concerns that do not meet the threshold for safeguarding, but which require further attention, may be directed in a more appropriate way including signposting to expert organisations.)

Case Management Policy available on request from the CWO, Branch Welfare Officer(s) or by emailing safeguarding@irfu.ie



Action: Ensure safeguarding information is available in accessible formats where required and support individuals to raise concerns using communication methods appropriate to their needs.

- **Reasonable adjustments should be made** where required to enable people to understand information, communicate concerns and participate safely in rugby

Club Season Plan

Many activities are ongoing but the season plan below highlights key actions:

Start of Season

- Appoint a CWO – vetted & trained (*renewed every 3 years*)
- CWO Briefing
- Safeguarding Risk Assessment & Safeguarding Statement (*every 2 years*)
- Information Evenings
- Coach & volunteer recruitment, registration, vetting & safeguarding training
- Player registration & permissions

Mid Season

- SG3 training
- Share best practice, advice & guidance
- Support the voice of the player to be heard in the club
- Encourage others to get involved
- Manage/respond to concerns

End of Season

- Sport Ireland Audit
- Succession planning

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SECTION THREE

Club Welfare Officer

Getting to Know Your Role

All clubs have a responsibility to promote a culture of safeguarding and inclusion across all levels of the game through the implementation of the Club Safeguarding Guide, supported by the Spirit of Rugby programme.



The Club Welfare Officer (CWO)⁵ will co-ordinate this work, supported by other members of the club. Upon taking up the role, the CWO **must**:



Complete the vetting process



Attend relevant training, including safeguarding



Display the CWO poster with up-to-date contacts

It is important for CWOs to develop a good working relationship with the Branch Welfare Officer(s) and to familiarise themselves with the resources available to support their role.

Branch Welfare Officers/Spirit of Rugby Officers

- Laura Scuffil (Connacht) – laura.scuffil@connachtrugby.ie
- Billy Phelan (Leinster) – billy.phelan@leinsterrugby.ie
- Siobhan Barrett (Munster) – siobhanbarrett@munsterrugby.ie
- Kerry Spence (Ulster) – kerry.spence@ulsterrugby.com

⁵ 'Club Welfare Officer' or 'CWO' is taken to include Deputy Club Welfare Officer for the purpose of this guide.

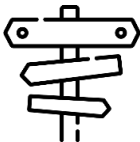
Key Activities



Action: Promote a culture of safeguarding and inclusion across all levels of the game. Lead on good practice, be known in the role and accessible to others.

*The CWO poster with up-to-date contacts **must** be displayed and shared widely - noticeboard, website, social media platforms, parent & coach briefings - so that players, coaches and parents know how to get in touch.*

- **Be friendly and approachable**, able to communicate well with both children and adults.
- **Have a good understanding of the importance of confidentiality and impartiality.**
- **Support the voice of the player** by influencing policy & practice through sitting on the Executive Committee or having access to meetings. Create opportunities to listen to the voice of the player and to support others to do the same.
- **Work closely with other key officers in the club** to implement policies, procedures and practices that deliver best practice in safeguarding.
- **Involve others, especially young people, in spreading welfare messages across the club** including the Code of Conduct, Anti-Bullying Statement and Social Media policies.



Action: Share information, advice and guidance received from the Branch Welfare Officer(s) as relevant and signpost other members of the club to relevant resources and training.

- **Communicate relevant information** to players, coaches and, if appropriate, parents throughout the season.
(This could be done in a variety of ways including an information evening at the start of the season, a welcome pack, club noticeboard and website, through the convenors/lead coaches and in short bursts through the club's social media channels. Templates are available from the Branch Welfare Officer(s) which give guidance on the type of information to share at the start of the season including Expectations, Code of Conduct, Role of the Player/Parent/Coach, Reporting Procedures etc)

- **Maintain club noticeboard** in relation to safeguarding information, in line with the Safeguarding Risk Assessment.
(Sample noticeboard in SECTION FOUR)
- **Ensure wide distribution of the Code of Conduct** on a regular basis.
(It should be displayed on the noticeboard and website and distributed widely through the convenors/lead coaches and social media platforms)



Action: Support the club to ensure that all staff and volunteers working in relevant roles with children and/or adults at risk are IRFU Safeguarding Approved **prior** to setting foot on a pitch or carrying out any tasks with children and/or adults at risk.

Provide necessary support and information to the staff, volunteers, section convenors and committee, following up when needed to ensure successful completion of vetting and safeguarding training.

- **Ensure that those working with children and/or adults complete appropriate safeguarding training** prior to carrying out any rugby-related activities. This must be renewed every 3 years.
(The CWO's role is to share the relevant links to enable completion and track completion through RugbyConnect)
- **Ensure that those working with children and/or adults** are made aware of the Declaration of Intent and the Code of Conduct.
- **Ensure that those working in relevant roles with children and/or adults at risk carry out vetting** in line with current legislation and the IRFU Vetting Policy. This must be renewed every 3 years.
(The CWO's role is to share the relevant guides to enable completion, verify the vetting credential and track completion through RugbyConnect)
- **Encourage others to get involved** including parents, family members, friends and spectators.
- **Speak to players when they are leaving** about their reasons for leaving. Try to spot trends and/or potential harmful issues that might arise from poor coaching, team or club practices.

Training links, Declaration of Intent, Code of Conduct, Vetting Policy & Vetting Guides available on request from the Branch Welfare Officer(s) or by emailing safeguarding@irfu.ie

The Code of Conduct should be widely available to everyone, not just staff and volunteers. It should be displayed on the noticeboard and website and distributed widely through social media platforms.



Action: Be the main point of contact for any support, concerns, advice and training related to safeguarding.

Have the ability to deal with sensitive situations with empathy and integrity.

- **Manage and respond to referrals and/or concerns** in an efficient and fair manner, through the Branch Welfare Officer(s), following the Case Management Policy.
(Clubs should not carry out their own internal investigations until directed by the IRFU Case Management Group)
- **Advise the club on a course of action** for those who breach the Spirit of Rugby Charter, Safeguarding Policy, and/or Code of Conduct. Any intervention should be reasonable, justified and proportionate to the perceived level of risk and perceived impact of harm.
- **Report to the club committee** on any issues or concerns, bearing in mind the need for confidentiality.

Concerns that do not meet the threshold for safeguarding, but which require further attention, may be directed in a more appropriate way including signposting to expert organisations.

Case Management Policy available on request from the Branch Welfare Officer(s) or by emailing safeguarding@irfu.ie

In addition to the activities listed above there may be, from time to time, other activities such as the Sport Ireland Audit to be completed. These activities will be directed by the Branch Welfare Officer(s) and support will be provided.

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SECTION FOUR

Sample Noticeboard

There is a lot of information to share. One way to do this is through the use of a noticeboard (or a virtual noticeboard). Examples of information that should be shared:



CWO poster with up-to-date contact details



Safeguarding Statement



Safeguarding Risk Assessment



Code of Conduct



Anti-Bullying Statement



Reporting Procedures

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More information and resources on the following topics can be found on the Irish Rugby website or by contacting the Branch Welfare Officer(s) or emailing safeguarding@irfu.ie

This list is not exhaustive and is regularly reviewed and updated.

Best Practice

- Bullying – Anti-bullying Statement, Banter or Bullying
- Club and Volunteer Responsibilities
- Code of Conduct
- Images
- Physical Contact

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- Supervision and Safety
- Trips & Tours – Checklist, Consent Form
- Working with External Providers

Coach Resources

- Club and Volunteer Responsibilities
- Dealing with Difficult Conversations with Parents
- Top Tips for Coaches Talking to Age Grade Players

Concerns

- Case Management Policy

Online Safety

- Cyberbullying
- Images
- Staying Safer Online

Parents

- Finding the Right Rugby Club for your Child
- Parent Responsibilities
- Positive Sideline Behaviour
- Supporting Your Age Grade Player
- Top Tips for Talking to Your Age Grade Player

Players

- Is Rugby Fun for You
- Player Responsibilities

Player Welfare <https://www.irishrugby.ie/irfu/medical>

- Concussion Guidelines
- SAFE Rugby
- Injury Reporting
- Tackle Behaviour
- Team Doctors
- Medical Rooms & Equipment
- Team First Aid Kits
- Defibrillators
- Cardiac Screening

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- Emergency Action Plan
- Club Team Physio
- Breast Health

Training Courses <https://educationstore.irfu.ie/> (*under Spirit/EDI*)

- Autism Awareness
- Disability Awareness
- Diversity and Inclusion
- Mental Health
- One Good Coach
- Safeguarding
- Tackling Bullying Behaviour

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