SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2025



This policy of the Irish Rugby Football Union will be updated every 2-years, next review 2027

Irish Rugby Football Union
10-12 Lansdowne Road | Ballsbridge | Dublin 4 | D04 F720
T +353 01 6473800 | **F** +353 01 6473801
www.irishrugby.com

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Message from the CEO Kevin Potts.

The game of Rugby offers young people exposure to many positive life skills; this includes the important concepts of teamwork, respect, celebrating success, building resilience in the face of defeat, learning from experience and valuing diversity.

In addition, rugby creates many life-long friendships and benefits a young person's physical and mental well-being.

The values of rugby are set out in *The IRFU Spirit of Rugby Charter*, to which we are all fully committed. These are our core foundations. This is what rugby offers.

The IRFU expects all participants in our sport to demonstrate and "live" these values and behaviours in all rugby related activities. These values and behaviours can only be expected if there is, at all times, a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment in which young people can train, play and enjoy their rugby.

The welfare of young people in our game comes first, always! It is our collective duty - at Union, Branch, Club and Schools levels- to ensure we deliver on this responsibility through those directly involved with our age-grade players.

To all players, coaches, administrators, staff, and volunteers; thank you for your ongoing commitment to our great game and to its values and thank you for your commitment to developing the next generation of rugby players.



Glossary

*"**Abuse**"* includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and sexual abuse as described in the "Children First National Guidance for protecting children and Cooperating to Safeguarding Children".

*"**Age Grade Player**"* means a player who is a member of an Age Grade Team and is not yet 18-years old.

*"**Age Grade Team**"* means a team of players which is regulated by reference to the dates of birth of the players.

*"**Association of Referees**"* means the Association of Referees Connacht Branch, the Ulster Society of Rugby Football Referees, the Munster Association of Referees or the Association of Referees of the Leinster Branch.

*"**Branch**"* means a branch of the IRFU. *"**Branch Welfare Officer**"* is a person appointed by a Branch to implement the directions of the "National Safeguarding Officer" and to follow the policy for Age Grade Players of the IRFU. This position will be held by the Spirit of Rugby Officer in each Branch.

*"**Club**"* means a club (including a school) affiliated to the IRFU. For the purpose of guidance and implementation of the IRFU Safeguarding Policy the Exiles will be considered in similar terms as a "CLUB" affiliated to the IRFU.

"Club Welfare Officer" is a person appointed by a Club to implement the directions of the National Safeguarding Officer and the Branch Welfare Officers and to be the voice of the child within clubs. This position is the equivalent of Designated Liaison Person as per 'Children First Guidance' and Cooperating to Safeguarding Children

*"**IRFU**"* means the Irish Rugby Football Union. *"IRFU Guidelines"* means the IRFU Safeguarding Policy and related IRFU Guidelines for Working with Children. *Abbreviated to "IRFU" throughout this Policy.*

"***National Protection Officer***" is the person appointed by the IRFU Executive Committee to advise the IRFU in relation to this Policy and Code. They sit on the Spirit of Rugby Committee.

*"**National Safeguarding Officer**"* is the senior employee with responsibility for safeguarding within the organisation and who leads the implementation of the safeguarding directions of the Spirit Committee. They are also the "*National Mandated Person",* the senior employee with responsibility for safeguarding appointed by the Union that is responsible for ensuring that all reports meeting thresholds of significant harm are reported to the relevant statutory authorities. They hold the position of '*Relevant Person'* as per Children First Guidance .

"Mandated persons" are people who have contact with children and/or families who, by virtue of their qualifications, training and experience, are in a key position to help protect children from harm. Mandated persons include key professionals working with children in the education, health, justice, youth and childcare sectors

*"**Parents**"* includes legal guardians.

*"**Referee**"* means a person who is a member of an Association of Referees recognised by the IRFU.

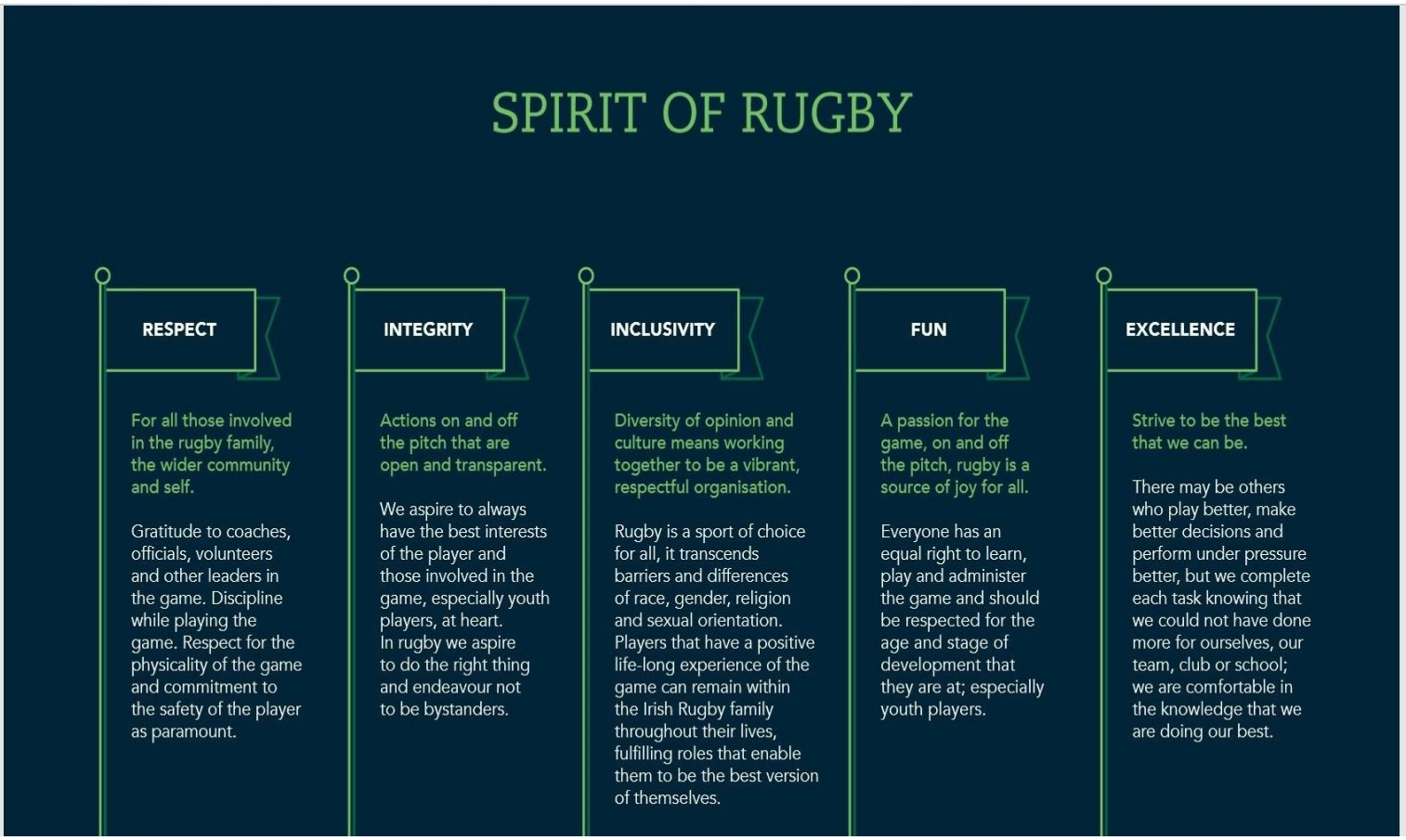
*"**Sports Councils' Guidance**"* means the Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People, (previously Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport) as published by the Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland and available at https://www.sportireland.ie/ethics and http://www.sportni.net/about-us/safeguarding/

*"**Sports Leaders"*** means all adults involved in children's sports. This includes coaches, referees, managers, volunteers assisting with youth and mini teams. This is the definition used in the Sports Councils' Guidance document(s). Throughout this document will be known as staff / coach / volunteer.

*"**Statutory Authorities**"* means in Ireland Tusla (Child and Family Agency, CFA) and An Garda Síochána ("Gardaí") and in Northern Ireland the Health and Social Care Trust and the Police Service of Northern Ireland ("PSNI").

SECTION ONE
IRFU SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS

Spirit of Irish Rugby Charter



CHILD SAFEGUARDING STATEMENT

The Irish Rugby Football Union (IRFU) provides rugby activities to young people through participation in 199 affiliated clubs and 4 Branches and through national programmes and events, including representative panels, mini and youth coaching and competitions, squad camps and participation programmes in schools and related youth events.

The IRFU is committed to the enjoyment of rugby by young people. It values and encourages the participation of parents, coaches and volunteers in rugby for participants under 18-years of age. The policy of the IRFU regarding safeguarding children is to respect the dignity and rights of Age Grade Players.

The IRFU will strive throughout its organisation and spheres of influence to promote, create and maintain safe environments for Age Grade Players. It will endeavour to maintain the key values of Respect, Inclusivity, Integrity, Excellence and Fun. A detailed safeguarding policy can be found here, https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/safeguarding-policy/ and the Sport Ireland Safeguarding Sport Guidance should be used where the IRFU has not published specific guidelines, in particular with regard to the principles to safeguard children from harm, Safeguarding Sport | Sport Ireland

The IRFU carried out a risk assessment for any potential harm to a child while involved in rugby. These risks were categorised under the following headings Recruitment, Club and Coaching Practices, Reporting, Complaints, Facilities, Communication and General Risk of Harm. The assessment reviewed the areas of potential risk of harm, the likelihood of the risk occurring, and gives the required policy, guidance and document links required to manage these risks. A written risk assessment and the procedure for managing these risks are available at the end of this statement and on the IRFU website,
https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/

Our child safeguarding statement has been developed in line with requirements of the IRFU under the Children First Act 2015 and in Northern Ireland, the Club Framework for Safeguarding Standards. In addition to the procedures listed in our risk assessment, the following procedures are in place as part of the IRFU Safeguarding Policy and support our intention to safeguard children:

- Procedure for the safe recruitment and selection of workers and volunteers to work with children, http://www.irishrugby.ie/playingthegame/development/safeguarding/recruitment.php
- Procedure for provision of and access to child safeguarding training and information, including the identification of the occurrence of harm, http://www.irishrugby.ie/playingthegame/development/safeguarding/training.php
- Procedure for the reporting of child protection and welfare concerns to Tusla (Ireland) and Gateway (Northern Ireland) through the National Safeguarding Officer and appointed Mandated Person within IRFU: Stephen Gore, 086 6087943 / stephen.gore@irfu.ie. The National Safeguarding Officer is the Relevant Person as

per the Children First Act. Other staff and volunteers within the organisation may hold the role and responsibility of a Mandated Person as per Schedule 2 of the Act but have not been appointed by the IRFU and/or its affiliated clubs or organisations. They are always expected to act as a Mandated Person and when making a report in their professional capacity that involves rugby should always inform the IRFU Mandated Person that such a report has been made by them.

- Procedure for the management of allegations of abuse or misconduct against workers/volunteers of a child availing of our service and can be found in the case management policy, http://www.irishrugby.ie/playingthegame/development/safeguarding/concerns.php
- Procedure for appointing a relevant person for the purposes of the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement
- Procedures to minimise risk of harm of a child have been put in place and are available in the IRFU Safeguarding Policy, Irish Rugby | Safeguarding Policy

All procedures listed are available on the IRFU website, http://www.irishrugby.ie/safeguarding . The IRFU Management expects those involved within club age-grade rugby to adopt and supervise the implementation of these safeguarding principles and standards. The IRFU recognises that implementation is an ongoing process. It is committed to the implementation of this Child Safeguarding Statement and accompanying safeguarding policy and procedures to keep children involved in rugby safe from harm. This will be done through the implementation of the IRFU Safeguarding Guide and safeguarding audit.

The Safeguarding Policy is included in IRFU HR procedures and in relevant club documentation, it is an essential condition for funding for the Club Support Scheme. Relevant staff have received a copy of the policy and signed adherence through the Declaration of Intent. The Child Safeguarding Statement and related safeguarding policies are available to all parents/guardians and members of the public though the IRFU website and is available on request, Irish Rugby | Safeguarding

The IRFU will work with the Branch Spirit of Rugby on the Implementation of the policy and are available to assist the Club Welfare Officers and the related personnel and to deal with club queries. They can be contacted at:

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

Club Welfare Officers have completed relevant safeguarding training. They have been supplied with ID templates for display within club grounds for the purpose of raising concerns. Guidance and templates for carrying out a risk assessment and publishing the child safeguarding statement, a club action plan, an anti-bullying statement, club pavement signs and Spirit of Rugby 'Let Them Play' video clips have also been supplied for the purpose of implementing the IRFU safeguarding policy. They have also received training in vetting through the 'IRFU registration system'. This Child Safeguarding Statement will be reviewed in June 2027, or as soon as practicable after there has been a material change in any matter to which the statement refers. For queries, please contact the Relevant Person, Stephen Gore, stephen.gore@irfu.ie

Signed: Niall Rynne
IRFU Union Committee

Signed: Colin McEntee
Director of Rugby Development

Safeguarding Principles

IRFU is committed to safeguarding children and, by working under the guidance of our Safeguarding Policies our staff, both volunteers and employed, working with our young people, throughout the organisation, seek to create a safe environment for young people to grow and develop within sport. The following set of principles should be adhered to:

- **Importance of childhood** - The importance of childhood should be understood and valued by everyone involved in age-grade rugby.
- **Needs of the child** - All age-grade rugby experiences should be guided by what is best for children. This means that adults should have a basic understanding of the emotional, physical and personal needs of young people.
- **Integrity in relationships** - Adults interacting with young people in rugby are in a position of trust and influence. They should always ensure that young people are treated with integrity and respect, and the self-esteem of young people is enhanced.
- **Fair Play** - All age-grade rugby should be conducted in an atmosphere of fair play. The principles of fair play should always be emphasised, and organisers should give clear guidelines regarding acceptable standards of behaviour.
- **Quality environment & ethos** – Age-grade rugby should be conducted in a safe, positive and encouraging environment.
- **Competition** - Competition is an essential element of sport and should be encouraged in an age appropriate manner. A child centred ethos will help to ensure that competition and specialisation are kept in their appropriate place.
- **Equality** - All young people should be valued and treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of ability, age, gender, religion, social and ethnic background or political persuasion, as per the IRFU Charter

The Sports Councils' Safeguarding Guidance should be used where the IRFU has not published specific guidelines, https://www.sportireland.ie/ethics

Safeguarding Objectives

- Meet the required standards for safeguarding children in Ireland
- Maintain a robust case management system and disciplinary process for rugby
- Ensure well trained and informed staff and volunteers in relation to safeguarding topics and issues
- Ensure young people and vulnerable adults are listened to, ensuring their experiences of rugby are safe and enjoyable

Compliance with Safeguarding Policy & Guidance

- The IRFU has a Safeguarding Chair who shall be appointed on an annual basis to the Spirit Committee with full power and authority to implement, resource and supervise compliance of this Policy and the Sport Ireland Guidance. They will be assisted by the Spirit of Rugby team, including the National Safeguarding Officer and Branch Welfare Officers
- Compliance with this Policy and the Sports Councils' Guidance will be monitored by the IRFU through the Branches and with the clubs annually, using the Club Safeguarding Guide.
- The IRFU is committed to providing personnel and assistance for courses and training dealing with compliance issues arising from this Policy.
- The IRFU will monitor compliance with alleged breaches of this Policy and will discuss when necessary for the benefit, protection and information of Age Grade Players and their parents where it is permissible and reasonable.
- The IRFU will implement its 'Case Management Policy' to review breaches of the policy and ensure child protection and welfare issues are correctly reported. It will also ensure existing disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures of the IRFU will be regularly reviewed to accommodate the implementation and enforcement of this Code.

- The IRFU will review its Safeguarding Policy every 2-years and/or as legislative changes occur in Ireland and/or Northern Ireland
- It is the role and responsibility of every officer and member of a branch, club and school together with the IRFU to ensure that the **spirit** of this policy and the IRFU Guidelines are promoted, implemented and monitored successfully.

Implementation of Safeguarding Policy & Guidance

The IRFU expects those involved with age grade rugby to promote and implement the components of this IRFU policy, specifically through the implementation of the Club safeguarding guide.
Irish Rugby | Safeguarding Policy

The requirements in this Safeguarding Policy are expected to be complied with by all branches, clubs (including schools) that the IRFU support. Guidelines will be published and updated to assist in the application and interpretation of these requirements. The Sports Councils' Guidance of Ethics should be used where the IRFU has not published specific guidelines. Available at https://www.sportireland.ie/ethics and http://www.sportni.net/about-us/safeguarding/

All requests from the National Safeguarding Officer to adhere to, comply with or furnish evidence relating to this Code must be fulfilled promptly. This will include implementation of the Club Safeguarding Guide, key elements which are audited annually and when requested audits from Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland.

Seasonal Safeguarding requirements

In order to be compliant, host age-grade activities and for clubs to receive the Club Support Scheme Funding from the IRFU Clubs (and relevant bodies) must, as a minimum, achieve the following criteria under Safeguarding:
- To appoint a Club Welfare Officer to implement the IRFU Safeguarding Policy. Club Welfare Officers should be vetted and trained to IRFU Safeguarding 2 standard (Sport Ireland/Sport NI).
- To carry out a safeguarding risk assessment and sign and publish their Child Safeguarding Statement as a result (templates provided by IRFU). These documents most be uploaded to Rugbyconnect. Ensure copies can be made available to parents and coaches if requested.
- Display the CWO ID template (template supplied by IRFU)
- Complete appropriate vetting. All volunteers who engage in Age grade activities or with Vulnerable adults (e.g., coaches, manager, team assistants) that work regularly and continuously (or their role is a necessary part of working) with young people and/or vulnerable adults must be vetted before engage with players. This must be carried out through the Club Welfare Officer using Rugby Connect and includes an annual Declaration of Intent.
- All coaches/volunteers should complete the necessary safeguarding training, https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/training/

Once the fundamentals of safeguarding are in place the club should follow the rest of the Club Safeguarding guide to ensure that they are implementing the highest possible standards for safeguarding and ensuring adherence to the IRFU Safeguarding Policy.

For further information contact the Spirit of Rugby Officer in your Branch for assistance or see http://www.irishrugby.ie/playingthegame/development/safeguarding/recruitment.php.

Safeguarding Personnel

The IRFU Safeguarding Policy identifies four roles that come under the heading of 'Children's Officers' as per the Sport Ireland Guidance. These together with the necessary roles outlined in legislation are the definitions agreed upon for the IRFU:

i) *'National Safeguarding Chair'* is the person appointed by the IRFU Union Committee to advise in relation to this Policy, with specific responsibility for ensuring Spirit Committee are informed in relation to relevant safeguarding matters
ii) '*National Safeguarding Officer'* is the person appointed by the IRFU Committee to implement the policy and decisions for Age Grade Players of the IRFU. This person will act as **Designated Liaison Person, Relevant Person** and the **Mandated Person** for the IRFU as per the relevant section of the Children First Act, Children First Guidance and Our Duty to Care, with specific responsibility for reporting concerns to the Statutory Authorities.
iii) *'Branch Welfare Officer'* is a person appointed by the IRFU to implement the directions of the National Safeguarding Officer and to follow the policy for Age Grade Players of the IRFU. This role will be held by the Spirit of Rugby Officer in each Branch.
iv) '*Club Welfare Officer*' is a person appointed by a Club to implement the directions of the National Safeguarding Officer and Branch Welfare Officer and to act as the voice of Age-grade Players within clubs.

These officers operate within their respective spheres of influence at National, Branch and Club level to implement the IRFU Safegaurding Policy and to ensure compliance with this Policy and achieve the highest standards possible in relation to the Club Safeguarding guide and safeguarding guidance.

Working with Age-grade Players
Coaches, Volunteers and those working with Age-grade Players have a duty of care when working in clubs and schools and/or rugby related activities. They are acting 'in loco parentis'.

Those who have responsibility for Age Grade Players must commit to and follow the requirements of the Safeguarding Policy and should be informed about best practice as set out in related guidance documents.

While clubs are responsible for the appointment and deployment of coaches and volunteers, those working regularly and continuously with young people must be vetted and safely recruited by the IRFU **before** they begin a role with young people and/or vulnerable adults.

Those working with young people

- Must carry out vetting in line with current legislation through and /or in the manner directed by the National Safeguarding Officer. The Declaration of Intent must be signed by those working with young people. It is the responsibility of the staff / volunteer to be familiar with its content and ensure that all coaches/volunteers working with young people have registered on Rugby Connect and completed the necessary safeguarding credential.
- Must work with the National Safeguarding Officer without delay in relation to a risk assessment of the criminal record and convictions on file. Not all recorded offences preclude coaches from working with young people, each assessment is on a case-by-case basis and all information will be held in conjunction with relevant Data Protection Acts and guidance.
- Must follow the directions of the IRFU in relation to safeguarding training. Coaches and volunteers working with young people must complete IRFU safeguarding training through the IRFU Education platform Gainline and/or equivalent approved safeguarding training, such as completed with another approved NGB or Local Councils.
- Must make themselves aware of safeguarding standards within this policy, including the Child Safeguarding Statement and related guidance (such as supervision, physical contact, travel and touring)

Vetting should not be seen as a stand-alone procedure and should always be done in conjunction with signed Declaration of Intent, Codes of Conduct, appropriate supervision, relevant reference checks, commitment to training and adherence to this Safeguarding Policy.

Vetting procedures and full policy can be found here, https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/recruitment/

The Code of Conduct must be made available to players, parents and referees.

For assistant coaches under 16-years of age that cannot be vetted they can work with a senior coach with parental permission and having signed the Declaration of Intent.

Failure to comply with aspects of recruitment above could result in a coach/volunteer not being offered a position within the Club/Branch/Union. Good practice in management and supervision of coach/volunteer after appointment to a role is as important as vetting.

Guidance

Further guidance related to this safeguarding policy is contained within the safeguarding documentation and factsheets on the IRFU website, www.irishrugby.ie/safeguarding**.** The following guidance should be widely advertised**.**

- Guidelines in relation to behaviour when working with young people, Irish Rugby | Best Practice
- Guidelines in relation to Supervision and Safety

Clubs should follow safety / premises guidelines as set out by IRFU, see fact sheet under club guidance using the best practice link Irish Rugby | Best Practice

- Guidelines in relation to medical

Follow professional medical advice in determining when an injured Age-Grade Player is ready to play again and be reasonable in demands on the Age-Grade Players' time, energy and enthusiasm. See https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/medical/

- Guidelines in relation to overnight trip and tours

Please find the factsheet in regard to Overnight trips and tours in club guidance section using the best practice link Irish Rugby | Best Practice

- Communication and technology

With the increased use of technology (video or photographic) in rugby it is important for clubs to be aware of guidance in relation to the use of photographic images of Age-Grade Players. In addition, there should be adequate vigilance regarding use of technology in training and social media as a form of communication. See Staying-Safer-Online.pdf and Cyberbullying.pdf

- Player Welfare, Nutrition & Supplementation

To protect the health and well-being of Age-Grade Players and to ensure they thrive within a safe and fun environment, IRFU request that all those working with Age Grade Players do not promote, condone or use sports supplements contrary to the IRFU Guidelines and Recommendations, "Sports Supplements and Young Rugby Players", and remain vigilant to the health and safety of young players. They should also promote the importance of caring for a person's positive mental health and take active measures to minimise psychological stress, burnout and drop out of Age Grade Players. See https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/ and https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/health-wellbeing/

Parents

Involving parents is an important step in creating and maintaining a child-centred environment. The positive encouragement and support of your child can't be over emphasised. How you behave and what you say will have huge impact on how your child experiences the game. For further information see https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/parents-guardians/

Bullying
Bullying is defined by Department of Education and Skills as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons), and which is repeated over time. It is similarly defined by the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Alliance as repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online.

Bullying should always be considered in conjunction with the Codes of Conduct. Poor practice should always be tackled early, warnings should be given and in the case of Age-Grade Players especially, there should be an opportunity to correct the poor behaviour.

Persistent poor practice may escalate into bullying if allowed to go unchecked. Incidents must be dealt with immediately and should not be tolerated. More extreme forms of bullying may be reported as concerns to Statutory Authorities.
It is the responsibility of the club to deal at the outset with bullying that may take place. Each club should take a stance on bullying and the anti-bullying statement should be visible to all , Anti-Bullying-Statement.pdf

For information in relation to online bullying and social media guidance see https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/ and/or the Sport Ireland training module, Safeguarding Training | Sport Ireland

Children's Discipline

Children should be helped to become responsible about the decisions and choices they make within sport, particularly when they are likely to make a difference between playing fairly and unfairly. There should be no place for fighting, over-aggressive or dangerous behaviour in sport. The Code of Conduct should be enforced with opportunities for players to demonstrate a change in behaviour. While this Code advocates for the rights of Age-grade Players this should not be done at the expense of their responsibility towards the team, the club and/or themselves. For more information on Codes of Conduct see https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/best-practice/.

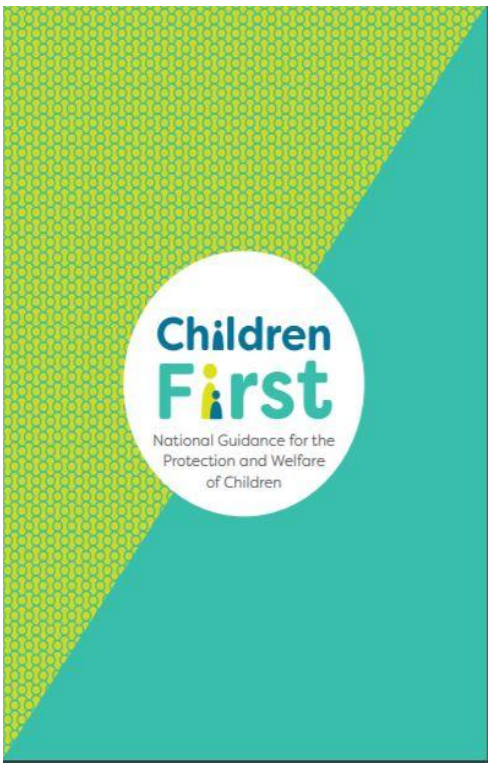
Conclusion

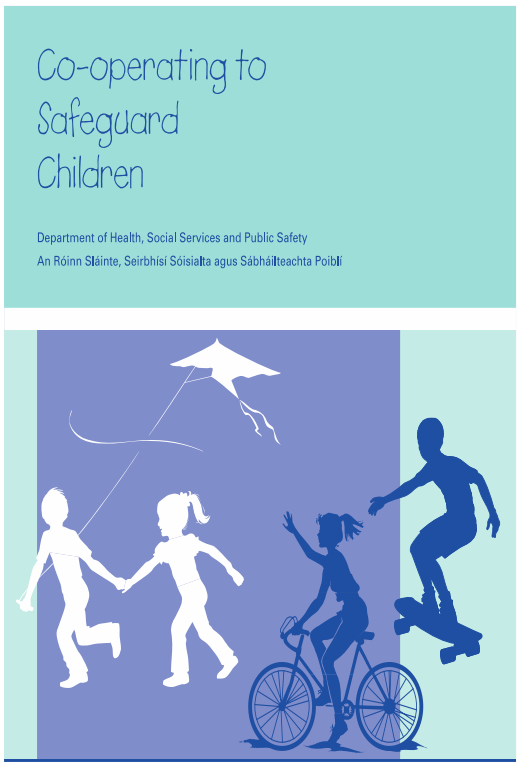
The IRFU Child Safeguarding Statement and related IRFU safeguarding standards above are implemented through Club-Safeguarding-Guide.pdf (d19fc3vd0ojo3m.cloudfront.net) is the framework for creating and maintaining a child-centered approach within the club. IRFU will work with its constituent bodies to ensure the highest standards are achieved for Age-grade Players.

The way we work with Age-Grade Players, how we behave around them and our attitudes towards them will contribute to the way young people feel about themselves and their experience in rugby.

SECTION TWO

Safeguarding Concerns





Safeguarding Concerns

Should an Age-Grade Player be at risk of harm, it is the duty of those in a position of responsibility to take the necessary steps to minimise and/or help to remove the risk and to ensure that all procedures are undergone in accordance with statutory guidelines.
If you believe a child is at risk the concern should be brought to the attention of the Club Welfare Officer who will implement the **IRFU Case Management Process**. This will establish if the concern is likely to meet the threshold for reporting to Statutory Authorities or is a concern that may not be in line with IRFU's safeguarding policy. The online reporting tool, will begin the IRFU Case Management Process. Ideally this will be completed by the Club Welfare Officer, but it is available to anyone who has a concern about an age-grade player in rugby.
If you have a concern that needs immediate reporting to the Statutory Authorities you can make contact with duty social workers in your local area, http://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/duty-social-work-teams/ or use the Tusla reporting portal Tusla Portal (Ireland) and (NI) or http://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-protection-system/northern-ireland/reporting-your-concerns/

Adults working with young people are not expected to be experts in identifying abuse. However, to fulfil our duty of care it is necessary to know how to forward a concern that meets reasonable grounds for concern and how to respond to a child who raises a concern, for further details see **Protecting Our Players** https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/concerns/

Categories of abuse are outlined in Children First (ROI) and Cooperating to Safeguard Children (NI). Further details on this and Statutory guidelines are in 'Protecting Our Players' https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/concerns/ or can be found at http://www.tusla.ie/children-first and http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect.

Training should be completed by all, see here for links to relevant training, https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/training/. Alternatively, training can be found here by logging in and creating an account, https://childrenfirstuniversal.hseland.ie/ and Child protection training in Northern Ireland | NSPCC Learning

Sometimes it may be necessary for a club to implement a disciplinary process in relation to safeguarding, details of this can be found in 'Safeguarding Disciplinary Process' guidance. Safeguarding-Disciplinary-Process.pdf

RESPONDING TO A CONCERN

Concern(s) raised by individual(s) about Age-Grade Players or those working with Age-Grade Players should be passed on to Club Welfare Officer / Branch Welfare Officer (Provincial Spirit of Rugby Officer)

Club Welfare Officer receives concern and works with Branch Welfare Officer to complete online 'Safeguarding Incident Report Form'

National Safeguarding Officer implements Case Management Process to decide if…….*there are 'reasonable grounds for concern', as per statutory reporting guidelines?* *https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/parents-and-guardians/how-do-i-report-a-concern-about-a-child/ and Cooperating to Safeguard Children and Young People NI*

No

IRFU case management panel will assess 'incident/concern and

1 Carry out case management process as outlined in case management policy

or

2 Revert to clubs to implement the Safeguarding Disciplinary Process in their club

http://www.irishrugby.ie/playingthegame/development/safeguarding/concerns.php

Yes

Report to Statutory Authorities PSNI /HSS Trust(s) (NI) and An Garda Síochána & Tusla Child and Family Agency (Ireland)

Report to National Safeguarding Officer / **Mandated Person in IRFU**

http://www.irishrugby.ie/playingthegame/development/safeguarding/concerns.php

ALL concerns should be referred to the Spirit of Rugby Officer (Branch Welfare Officer)

Are you concerned about 'harm' of a child?

- Consult the Club Welfare Officer and/ Branch Welfare Officer who will advise if 'Reasonable Grounds for Concern' apply and/or what route your concern should take
- IRFU may contact Tusla Child & Family Agency (CFA) or An Garda Síochána and ask for an "informal consultancy" or consult with the Child Protection in Sport Unit (NSPCC) in Northern Ireland for further advice
- When reporting to Statutory Authorities follow the statutory reporting process as per guidance and legislation through the Club Welfare Officer and National Safeguarding Officer
- Cooperate with Statutory Authorities investigations
- On completion of Statutory Authorities investigations IRFU may initiate the safeguarding disciplinary process
- IRFU will advise and assist on procedures regarding media and general enquiries
- A coach/volunteer against whom an allegation of abuse has been made will be informed by the CWO that this is not an accusation and that the procedures being undertaken are in accordance with Statutory guidelines, that is, a claim that something may be wrong with the child and/or environment and needs clarification.

Concerns Not Meeting Thresholds

Some concerns may not meet the criteria of 'harm' or constitute 'reasonable grounds for concern' that would require making a report to the Statutory Authorities, however the complaint may require a response. In such cases all adults have a responsibility to protect Age-grade players from harm. Should you witness or receive information that leads you to believe that a serious breach of this Safeguarding Policy has occurred, you should bring the matter to the attention of the Club Welfare Officer, Spirit of Rugby Officer and/or National Safeguarding Officer

- You are not to discuss the matter with persons not already involved, unless required to assist with an investigation of the matter
- The IRFU Case Management process will be implemented
- Complete online safeguarding incident report form and submit to National Safeguarding Officer (Mandated Person)
- Case Management Panel will inform club/organisation of the process
- Club Welfare Officer will in some cases deal with the concern using a safeguarding disciplinary panel to decide if codes of conduct have been breached
- National Safeguarding Officer will deal with issues between clubs and inform Branch and Clubs of the concern(s) and action taken where appropriate.

Please note: Should a person not be happy with the initial outcome of the process they may refer this issue to the National Safeguarding Officer.

Information is based on guidelines from Children First (Ireland) and Co-operating to Safeguard Children & Young People (Northern Ireland). **All Concerns should be dealt with using the IRFU Case Management Process** which takes account of both of these guidance documents and relevant legislation**.** Clubs or Branches should not carry out their own internal investigations until directed by IRFU case management panel.

Data Protection

All safeguarding documents will be kept according to, or each case of any amending legislation, the requirements of the Irish Data Protection Act 1988-2018 and the UK Data Protection Act 1998; and the Privacy and Electronic Communications Directive 2009/136/EC and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 ("**GDPR**"). This includes requirements for the collecting, storage and requests of personal data. For general information on Data Protection consult the Data Protection Commissioner's Irish web site on Data Protection Act 2018or the UK Information Commissioner's web site Information Commissioner's Office (ICO)

Exclusion in data protection includes:
Information about a data subject, which would be likely to affect the way crime is detected or prevented, catching or prosecuting offenders, the assessment of taxes or duty, need not be made available. There are also specific rules on information, which reveals the name of a third party (i.e. any other person mentioned in the data such as, for example, the name of a spouse or dependent).

Contacts for All Concerns

Branch Welfare Officer(s)

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

National Safeguarding Officer and Mandated Person
Stephen Gore Stephen.gore@irfu.ie

CONCLUSION

The policy of the IRFU with respect to safeguarding children is to respect the dignity and rights of Age Grade Players, and in particular, to safeguard children from harm.

The IRFU will strive throughout its organisation and spheres of influence to promote, create and maintain safe environments for Age Grade Players.

IRFU is committed to safeguarding children and, by working under the guidance of our Safeguarding Policies our staff, both volunteers and employed, working with our young people, throughout the organisation, seek to create a safe environment for young people to grow and develop within sport.

PLAY YOUR PART, LET THEM PLAY

