



PROTECTING OUR PLAYERS

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 and should follow Irish Rugby's Case Management Process.

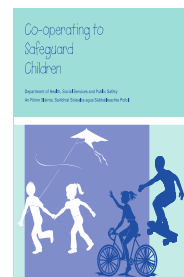
All those working with Young People and/or Vulnerable adults should be aware of the sign and types of abuse and be mindful of the following:

- Knowledge of the appropriate action and response to be taken
- Vigilance and avoidance of situations conducive to risk or harm
- Open, trusting and cooperative relationships within the club and with parents / guardians and others concerned with children's welfare



Categories of abuse are outlined in Children First (ROI) and Cooperating to Safeguard Children (NI), <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/individuals-working-with-children-and-young-people/what-are-the-types-of-abuse-and-how-do-i-recognise-them/> and <http://www.safeguardingni.org/what-abuse>

Adults working with young people are not expected to be experts in identifying abuse, however to fulfil our duty to 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 or is in harm.



Harm is defined as the ill-treatment or the impairment of the health or development of a child. Whether it is significant is determined by the child's health and development as compared to that which could reasonably be expected of a child of a similar age, (Children First Guidelines, page 20 and Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People Northern Ireland Page 13).

Online training modules should be completed in order to appropriately respond to concerns. The information below also outlines steps to be taken. Training can be found here: <https://childrenfirstuniversal.hseland.ie/> and or <http://courses.sportni.net/>

Any person who knows or suspects that a child is being harmed or is at risk of being harmed has a duty to convey his/her concern to Statutory Authorities and/or IRFU, using the Safeguarding Incident Report Form.



Dealing with a Concern

Concerns, complaints or suspicions of child abuse relating to an Age Grade Player wherever and whenever arising must be reported to the Spirit of Rugby Officer without delay. The complaint or suspicion of abuse will be assessed for referral to the Statutory Authorities and to the National Safeguarding Officer who will implement Irish Rugby's Case Management Policy. In addition, any immediate steps to safeguard the Age Grade Player will be taken.

- If the concern is from an age-grade player, person under 18-years of age and/or vulnerable person you should listen to their story (**Section A below**)
- Using the Incident Report Form IRFU will establish if there are 'reasonable grounds for concern' (**Section B below**) through the Club Welfare Officer and/or Spirit of Rugby Officer.
- If so, the concern is passed to the Statutory Authorities via the IRFU Mandated Person (**Section C below**)
- If not, the IRFU Case Management process is put in place with the Club Welfare Officer and may include the safeguarding disciplinary process (**Section D below**)

Section A Responding to an Age-Grade Player

Deal with any disclosure of abuse in a sensitive manner though listening to and facilitating the Age-Grade Player to tell their story.

- Stay calm and do not show any extreme reaction to what the Age-Grade Player is saying
- Take it seriously
- Listen - permit the Age-Grade Player to speak without interruption (ask open questions for clarification only)
- Reassure the Age-Grade Player that he/she was right to tell you
- Do not promise to keep it a secret
- Check back with the child that what you have heard is correct and understood.
- Indicate what should happen next, such as informing parents, the Club Welfare Officer, or Statutory Authorities, etc.

Next Steps

- Any and all consultations with others should be entirely confidential and should not involve investigating further.
- Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible after the discussion has taken place – [online reporting tool](#)
- Inform Club Welfare Officer
- Treat the information confidentially, subject to the requirements of legislation and data protection



Section B Reasonable Grounds for Concern

A concern should be passed to Statutory Authorities if any of the following criteria are in place:

- Evidence, for example an injury or behavior, that is consistent with abuse and is unlikely to have been caused in any other way
- Any concern about possible sexual abuse
- Consistent signs that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect
- A child saying or indicating by other means that he or she has been abused
- Admission or indication by an adult or a child of an alleged abuse they committed
- An account from a person who saw the child being abused

Section C Reporting Process to Statutory Authorities

Remember that reporting suspected child abuse in good faith is not the same as making an accusation of abuse, i.e., reporting does not mean accusing.

- Complaints or suspicions of abuse relating to an Age Grade Player wherever and whenever arising must be reported to the Club Welfare Officer without delay who must take immediate steps to safeguard the Age Grade Player and to refer the complaint or suspicion of abuse to the Statutory Authorities and to the National Safeguarding Officer (Mandated Person).
- Make a written record of the conversation as soon as possible after the discussion has taken place.
- IRFU will assist with making contact with Statutory Authorities and/or National Safeguarding Officer
- If threshold of harm is not established the IRFU Case Management Process will be used to respond to the report
- All concerns and allegations made should be carefully recorded and ensure confidentiality (on a need to know basis) is maintained at all stages using IRFU Safeguarding Incident Report Form

If there is a delay in making contact and where child abuse is suspected make contact with duty social workers in your local area, <http://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/duty-social-work-teams/> (ROI) and (NI) <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/gateway-service-teams-contact-details>

Section D

If the concern is not to be dealt with by the Statutory Authorities the IRFU Case Management Process will be used. A club may be requested to carry out a 'Safeguarding Disciplinary Process'. For further information see, <http://www.irishrugby.ie/playingthegame/development/safeguarding/concerns.php>

Considerations

- Reasonable steps will be taken to protect Age-Grade Players. This will be done in conjunction with the Statutory Authorities so that investigations are not compromised.
- A member against whom a complaint relating to abuse of an Age-Grade Player is made to the Statutory Authorities may be asked to step aside from activities that involve Age-grade Players until after the relevant determination has been made and/or conclusion of the investigation.
- Within a school, concerns relating to child abuse must be reported immediately to the Headmaster / Principal (DLP).