



SAFEGUARDING DISCIPLINARY, COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PROCEDURES

For cases that are to be dealt with by the club it is recommended to implement the Age-grade disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedure outlined below. However, it is important that the following points are considered before implementing the procedure:

- The investigation of suspected 'harm' is the responsibility of the Statutory Authorities and should not be undertaken by the club or any one person in the club.
- Discussion in relation to the reporting procedure regarding all incidents involving an Age-grade Player should be held with the **Club Welfare Officer and/or the Branch Spirit of Rugby Officer using the IRFU Case Management Policy**.
- For suspected abuse/harm of a child the standard reporting procedure will be followed according to statutory guidance and IRFU safeguarding policy: <http://www.irishrugby.ie/playingthegame/development/safeguarding/concerns.php>
- Complaints that do not meet the threshold for statutory reporting will be assessed by the case management committee of IRFU and a route will be determined.

The following are the recommended procedures for the Club Welfare Officer and/or Honorary Secretary (club committee) in receiving a complaint that involves a player under 18 years of age and/or his/her coach, manager, etc. Such complaints should be measured against the Declaration of Intent and/or Code of Conduct that has been agreed to by the coach, volunteer, players, etc. Advice should be sought from **Club Welfare Officer and/or the Branch Spirit of Rugby Officer**

- Complaints should be received in writing and the correspondence should be acknowledged by the Club Welfare Officer and/or Hon Sec within 5-working days.
- As per safeguarding guidelines for confidentiality the content should be discussed **only** with the Club Welfare Officer to establish if there is a safeguarding issue. The Declaration of Intent and/or Players' code of conduct will assist in establishing if there is a concern.
- If the CWO establishes that there are '**grounds for concern**' then the matter is referred to Spirit of Rugby Officer and/or National Safeguarding Officer and is not discussed internally. The reporting procedure with respect to Statutory Authorities will then be implemented, <https://www.irishrugby.ie/playing-the-game/spirit-of-rugby/safeguarding/concerns/>
- The club should establish a disciplinary committee that will include the Club Welfare Officer, the Hon Sec and one other member of the management committee, ideally with experience of the Age-grade section within the club.
- The disciplinary committee should receive and review any relevant paper work and hold any necessary meetings with all parties to proceed with complaints into any incident of suspected misconduct that does not relate to child abuse. This should be done within 10 working days.
- The disciplinary committee should furnish the individual with the nature of the complaint being made against him/her and afford him/her the opportunity of providing a response either verbally or in writing, but usually at a meeting with the disciplinary committee.
- Consideration should be given to the IRFU Safeguarding Policy and if there have been previous concerns in relation to any personnel involved



- The nature of the complaint should be considered in respect of the level of experience of adults working with children, the level of training and/or experience of the adult, the age of any child involved and the potential impact on the age-grade player with respect to their involvement in rugby.
- Where it is established that an incident of misconduct has taken place, the disciplinary committee should notify the member of any sanction being imposed. The notification should be made in writing, setting out the reasons for the sanction. If the member is under 18 years of age, correspondence should be addressed to the parents/guardians.
- If the member against whom the complaint was made is unhappy with the decision of the disciplinary committee s/he should have the right to appeal the decision to an appeals committee (independent of a disciplinary committee but which should discuss safeguarding aspects with the Club Welfare Officer). Any appeal should be made in writing within 10-days of the decision of the disciplinary committee.
- The chairperson of the appeals committee should be a member of the Executive/Management Committee. The appeals committee should have the power to confirm, set aside or change any sanction imposed by the disciplinary committee.
- If any party is not satisfied with the outcome the matter can be referred to the Branch who may consult with IRFU safeguarding officers. However, efforts to resolve the issue at local level should be exhausted before the IRFU is engaged in attempts to resolve the matter

On completion of the process:

- Written confidential records should be sent to IRFU HQ, (safeguarding@irfu.ie), where a note of the case and outcome will be held in line with IRFU retention policy and all originals will be shredded
- The CWO will inform the Branch Welfare Officer and National Safeguarding Officer of the outcome of the process via phone and/or email.